

# **The Ethical Egoist Case for Dietary Veganism,**

Or The Individual Animal and His Will to Live

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## English brief summary

In this thesis in applied ethics, «The ethical egoist case for dietary veganism, or the individual animal and his will to live», I argue that taking non-human animals into consideration can be argued for from an approach of ethical egoism. I argue that from the standpoint of egoism, in most cases you would be well advised to adopt a vegan diet, that means, practically speaking, a diet rid of animal products.

The thesis is divided into four main chapters. The first presents other approaches to animal ethics and the issue of dietary vegetarianism or veganism. I briefly present the standpoints of Peter Singer, Tom Regan and Mark Rowlands. Their approaches are utilitarian, rights based and principle based respectively.

In the second part I present ethical egoism as a model. It differs from the approaches met in the first in that egoism places the emphasis on the moral agent himself and states that his actions should benefit himself. I present mainly some of the thinking of philosophers Max Stirner, Friedrich Nietzsche and Ayn Rand. The version of egoism I end up with is not completely similar to any of them, though especially Stirner and Rand influence it strongly. What you do should further your life and strengthen yourself. This you do by keeping a healthy lifestyle, pursuing what is valuable and taking care of the values you already have. Values can be many things, depending on context and the moral agent's preferences and strategies. Something is *not* a value if it damages its possessor more than it benefits her. What is detrimental is a non-value or worthless. An important rule is never to sacrifice, that is giving up a value for something of lesser value or for something worthless to yourself.

In the third part, I present the egoist case for taking animals into consideration and for dietary veganism. People are different, and a given individual might have health issues or allergies that complicate the picture, thus allowing for exceptions. Also, people might differ in what extent they are even *able* to form attachments to non-human animals or feel empathy for them. For them, living animals are possibly non-values. Many can, on the other hand, be expected to have the capacity for meaningful companionship with non-humans, thus making living animals true values. However, given that the meat of dead animals is unhealthy, something I make a limited case for, and given that the taste of meat can be replicated by vegetable sources, eating meat is a sacrifice, hence immoral according to egoism. For those who are actually able to enjoy the company of living animals, meat production is even more problematic as it is a practice that turns values into worthless products. It turns potential companions to unhealthy food. This leads

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to the conclusion that supporting this practice by eating meat is immoral according to egoism, as long as there are other options available.

In the fourth chapter I try to anticipate some potential criticisms and responses to these. Most damaging to my argument would be if a moral agent is unable to bond with animals or see their potential value, or if a meatless diet could be shown to be less healthy than one containing meat.

## Norsk kort sammendrag

I denne oppgaven innen anvendt etikk, kalt «The ethical egoist case for dietary veganism, or the individual animal and his will to live» argumenterer jeg for at hensynstagen til ikke-menneskelige dyr kan argumenteres for også fra et etisk egoistisk ståsted, og ikke minst at man ifølge etisk egoisme i de fleste tilfeller bør velge et vegansk kosthold, det vil si et kosthold uten animalske produkter.

Oppgaven er delt inn i fire hoveddeler hvor jeg først presenterer viktig tidligere tenkning rundt dyreetikk og spesielt vegetarisme og veganisme. Her viser jeg frem de sentrale argumentene til filosofene Peter Singer, Tom Regan og Mark Rowlands. Disse har andre innfallsvinkler til dyreetikk enn egoisme.

I den andre hoveddelen presenterer jeg etisk egoisme som modell. Etisk egoisme avviker fra både utilitarisme og tradisjonell plikt- og rettighetsetikk i og med at fokus er på at handling eller livsstil først og fremst skal komme den som handler, deg selv, til gode. Her trekker jeg også veksler på flere filosofer, men spesielt Max Stirners og Ayn Rands tenkning er viktig for oppgaven, i tillegg til Friedrich Nietzsche. Det du gjør skal gavne deg selv. Du styrker deg selv gjennom en sunn livsstil og ved å samle og ta vare på verdier. Verdier er et vidt begrep som avhenger i stor grad av kontekst og aktørens preferanser og strategi. En verdi kan ikke overveiende være skadelig for aktøren. Det som er mer skadelig enn godt, er en ikke-verdi, eller verdiløst. Et viktig imperativ er at man aldri bør ofre noe, det vil si å bytte en verdi for noe med lavere verdi, en ikke-verdi eller noe verdiløst.

I den tredje delen argumenterer jeg for hvorfor man gitt etisk egoisme bør ha et vegansk kosthold. Folk er riktignok ulike, og allergier og helseproblemer kan gi spesielle utslag for individet jeg ikke får fanget opp i oppgaven. Mange vil imidlertid oppleve at de kan knytte seg emosjonelt til ikke-menneskelige dyr, og at ikke-menneskelige dyr til og med kan ha spesielle egenskaper individer fra menneskearten ikke kan. Noen mennesker vil muligens ikke kunne knytte seg til dyr. For disse vil, muligens, levende dyr ikke kunne utgjøre noen verdi. Gitt at kjøtt er usunt, noe mye tyder på, og som jeg bruker litt plass på å argumentere for, er imidlertid kjøtt også for disse menneskene en anti-verdi ettersom det kan forringe helsen deres. For mennesker som kan knytte seg til dyr og for hvem levende dyr kan tjene rollen som verdier, fremtrer praksisen med å slakte dyr for så å spise dem som enda mer verdiløs. Et potensielt verdifullt dyreindivid konverteres gjennom slakt og videreprosessering til et verdiløst produkt. Den som kunne vært verdifullt selskap blir omgjort til usunn mat. Å støtte kjøttproduksjon

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gjennom å kjøpe kjøtt, dersom man har andre valgmuligheter, er dermed umoralsk gitt etisk egoisme.

I fjerde kapittel forsøker jeg å forutse mulige innvendinger og hvordan disse eventuelt kan imøtegås. Farligst for argumentet mitt her, er den moralske aktørens potensielt manglende evne til å knytte seg til, eller se verdien i, levende dyr, eller om et kjøttfritt kosthold skulle vise seg å være mindre sunt enn et kosthold som inneholder kjøtt

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## Introduction

### What is this project?

My master thesis, «The ethical egoist approach to dietary veganism, or the individual animal and his will to live» is a thesis within the field of applied animal ethics. Animal ethics is here understood to be ethics concerned with the human treatment of non-human animals (Sagdahl 2016).

This thesis in applied ethics seeks to ground the concern for non-human animals in ethical egoism, one ethical model among others. An ethical model consists of one or several ground premises on which to base moral decisions. Ethical egoism holds that whatever the moral agent, that means an individual who is able to act morally, does, it should benefit her- or himself, if not necessarily immediately, then at least in the long run. This will be explained in further detail in Chapter 2, «Ethical egoism». The egoist approach to animal ethics argues that the moral agent will himself benefit from taking non-human animals into account much the same way as he does with human animals. Specifically I argue that for most people, the moral choice is to avoid meat products and adopt a vegan, or other meatless, diet, because that is what will benefit themselves and is in their self interest. What you do should further your life. Avoiding meat probably furthers your life, and if so, is the moral choice. The moral choice is the choice that is good for yourself, and most commonly this will be not to harm animals and not to eat their bodies. This is what I will argue for in this thesis.

Although veganism is the practice of abstaining from products made from animals *and* to avoid using animals merely as means, not only pertaining to the food industry, I choose to narrow down the topic to the diet aspect since the pros and cons for a human moral agent of, say, fur farming, may differ from that of diet (Patrick-Goudreau 2013: 10-12). There is simply not enough space to go into all the different ways nonhuman animals are used by human animals, and the food industry seems to be the one that affects the most individuals, thereby, if judging by pure numbers, the most important (Singer 2015: 95).

While I present a model of ethical egoism and try to point out weaknesses in other models, specifically utilitarianism and rights based ethics, it is important to emphasize that my main goal is not to defend ethical egoism or prove the superiority of this model. The main aim is to anchor the case for dietary veganism in this ethical model and try a new approach to the issue of dietary veganism. I will soon return to why this topic is so important.

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### Method and literature

For this thesis in applied ethics I have relied on literature. Especially I had to familiarize myself with literature on animal ethics, ethical egoism, as well as nutrition.

The tools used besides literature are computers and the internet and its search engines as well as my own mind. What I've done is to read works on normative ethical egoism in order to look for what could be relevant to animal ethics, and what could be used to argue for the abstention from eating animal products, avoiding all or some of them. I've read works on animal ethics arguing for dietary vegetarianism or veganism, looking for flaws as well as arguments that did not crash with egoism.

The goal has been to create an ethical egoist defense or argument for dietary veganism. Although egoism places the emphasis on the agent her- or himself, the intention has been to place this within the realm of animal ethics, primarily. Therefore both literature on animal ethics and ethical egoism has been useful and necessary in order to create what's more of a synthesis between some of the approaches I encountered and will present here.

When it comes to animal ethics, the literature I have relied *the most* on has been «Animal Liberation» by Peter Singer (2015), «The Case for Animal Rights» by Tom Regan (2004) and «Animals Like Us» by Mark Rowlands (2002).

When it comes to ethical egoism and individualism, the most important books have been «The Ego and its Own» by Max Stirner (2016), «On the Genealogy of Morals: A Polemic» by Friedrich Nietzsche (2013), «The Virtue of Selfishness» and «The Fountainhead» by Ayn Rand (1964, 1993), «Personal Destinies: A Philosophy of Ethical Individualism» by David L. Norton (1976) and «Ayn Rand's Normative Ethics: The Virtuous Egoist» by Tara Smith (2007).

When it comes to nutrition, first and foremost, I have relied on «Den plantebaserede kost»<sup>1</sup> by Maria Felding and Tobias Schmidt Hansen (2016), in addition to several scientific articles.

Also, for real examples of bonding between human and nonhuman animals, I will refer to «Mannen og katten»<sup>2</sup> by Nils Uddenberg (2014) and «Esther the Wonder Pig: Changing the World One Heart at a Time» by Caprice Crane, Steve Jenkins and Derek Walter (2016).

Other books – and articles – have been read (and will be mentioned too), but the above mentioned are the ones that inform my thesis the most.

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<sup>1</sup> I'd translate this Danish title to «Plant based nutrition».

<sup>2</sup> I'd translate this Norwegian title to «The man and the cat».

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### Why did I choose this topic?

I have long been interested in both ethical egoism and concerned with animal rights. My experience in this field, has convinced me that this combination is rare. Still, these topics are highly relevant to the debates of today. Especially important is the issue of farm animals, as there are so extremely many of them. How we treat them, and whether we continue to support the meat industry or not, affect these many individuals.

The human population of the world has risen likewise extremely and continues to do so. In 1804 there were a billion humans on this planet, but by 2011, we had already reached seven billion. Impressive, and the last billion took only 12 years to establish, up from six billion people in 1999 (Herbener 2016: 237). The wild animal population, however, has been reduced by half only between 1970 and 2010 (Herbener 2016: 26-27). The loss of wild animals continues rapidly as estimates are the reduction will have been by 2/3 from 1970 to 2020 (Elster 2016). The farm animal population, which exceeds the human population, continues to grow, however (Monbiot 2015). Only in the US, according to Joy, 10 billion animals are slaughtered each year, not including fish and sea animals (2011: 38). On the other side of the Atlantic, in the small country of Norway, the average Norwegian human eats approximately 1352 nonhuman animals in a lifetime, according to a report from environmental organization Framtiden i våre hender (Thoring 2015). Thus the topic of meat eating is not the least bit trivial. If it is wrong to eat animals, then there are lots of individuals wronged. If the morality of eating animals depends on how they are treated while alive, then still there are many individuals who could potentially not be treated right.

Meat production is also associated with high emissions of climate gases, thus being detrimental to environment (Monbiot 2015). The global human population, the global meat consumption and the global climate gas emissions are simultaneously on the rise. The topic of environmentalism is not covered by my thesis, but meat eating is. My initial thinking on this makes me believe that it is easier to argue for taking non-human animals into consideration from an egoist standpoint than it is to talk environment. This could be wrong, but is anyway outside the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, the ethical aspects to buying and eating meat should be of interest also to those primarily concerned with the protection of environment.

The idea that the avoidance of practices leading to the death of non-human animals, and the avoidance of the consumption of products made from them, could be argued for from an egoist position might seem counter-intuitive. Therefore, the task of defending dietary veganism from a position of egoism seems like a stimulating challenge. It is my conviction that philosophy

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should try to challenge common perceptions of important issues and firmly held beliefs. If not exactly egoist, keeping non-human animals confined for most of, or their entire lives before killing them and eating them may not seem to be done as a *service to* the animals. At the very least, the practice of raising animals for slaughter is not there *for* the sake of the animals, although some argue that them being provided food and shelter could be better than the alternatives of never having been born or living in the wild not having the guarantees of shelter and food (Narveson 1983: 49-50, 55). But if the animals suffer and live lives in misery not able to follow their impulses, go with their instincts, socializing or withdrawing at will, being stressed by unnatural conditions or being inflicted pain upon by practices such as debeaking in the case of chicken, why do we accept it? It could be because we put our own interests first (Ellefsen 2013: 138). Indeed, the rational egoist Jan Narveson writes:

*We have much to gain from eating them, and if one of the main planks in a moral platform is refraining from killing merely for self-interest, then it is quite clear that such a plank, in the case of animals, would not be worth it from the point of view of most of us.* (Narveson 1983: 57).

But what if the practice of raising animals for slaughter, killing them and eating them is not even in our own interest? What if the practice and the support of it is simply irrational, superfluous and detrimental? What if the animals' suffering isn't taken into account, not because of self-interest, but because of us being creatures of habit, continuing to support a practice now obsolete? What if self-interest is not to blame, but rather sheer ignorance?

However, psychological egoism and ethical egoism are not the same. While ethical egoism is an ethical model on which the moral rightness of a choice can be judged, psychological egoism is the conviction that everything we do is really based on self-interest. This means that people who believe they are altruist, that is acting to the benefit of the other, regardless of, or contrary to, their own self-interest, are wrong (Sagdahl 2015). I am personally inclined to believe that this is mostly so. This means that actions that are appearantly altruist, may in reality benefit the moral agent, thereby collapsing the dichotomy of altruism and egoism. Also, appeals to altruist moral codes, in their crudest form putting the other above oneself, can conceal a wish to rule and dominate. This is also an important insight from Rand's philosophy (1993: 637). Aspects of psychological egoism may therefore seep into ethical egoism. Paradoxically, we could argue that someone who is vegan and argues his point on the basis of another ethical model than egoism, psychologically still does so for egoist reasons. It's also highly likely that many of those who eat meat or even those who «produce» it, do not consider themselves egoists, either, but that, psychologically, both groups, vegans and meat eaters alike, are egoists and do what they do because they subconsciously act to what they intuit are their own interests. In my thesis

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here, however, my mission is to outline a model of ethical egoism and argue on behalf of that why you should quit all or some animal products. Although I include the word «vegan» in the thesis title, I also open for the possibility that some people might be better off not quitting *all* animal products. What to do, after all, depends on what's in the moral agent's self-interest.

The thesis should obviously be of interest to those primarily interested in the rights of animals. The concept of rights is not embraced by the model of ethical egoism I present here, although there are versions of egoism incorporating a concept of rights, such as that of Rand (1964: 108-117). However, animal advocates might in my thesis find a line of reasoning which could be useful and effective on some people, where other approaches may fail because they don't resonate with the people they talk to.

### On language

Although my mother tongue is Norwegian, I have decided to write my thesis in English. There could be several reasons to write this thesis in Norwegian. First of all, being my mother tongue, the writing would be easier. Secondly, because of Norwegian having few speakers and Norway being a small country, there has been written comparatively little on the topic of animal ethics in Norwegian compared to English. It certainly would have been a good thing to make more material available in Norwegian. Thirdly, although most Norwegians are quite proficient in English, writing this thesis in Norwegian would make it more accessible for many people in Norway.

However, most of the literature I've used while working with this thesis, is in English. This means I'll be discussing material which people are familiar with in English, sometimes agreeing, sometimes disagreeing. It seems only fair to give the writers as well as those interested in their thinking, an easy way to see what I've written about them and how I've represented their arguments. Also, although I do include some Norwegian sources and also do mention some Norwegian cases, the thesis is far from country specific and should be just as relevant for non-Norwegian speakers as for Norwegian speakers. The decision to write the thesis in English was therefore mainly in order to make it accessible to more people.

### Assumptions

The title of the thesis is «The ethical egoist case for dietary veganism, or the individual animal and his will to live». The title plays on the individualist view of animals that will gradually be introduced. Humans are considered animals too, and the will to live and further one's life the cornerstone of egoist ethics. Although the thesis argues for dietary veganism from an egoist

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approach, we will also look into a more general egoist potential way of relating to non-human animals. This is a way of thinking from which it should be possible to proceed to also discuss other issues concerning non-human animals.

Underlying my writing here, as said, is a certain view of human and non-human animals. That is first and foremost that humans are animals. I consider the dichotomy between human and animal life to be false. Humans are animals and therefore we can expect to share many similarities with other animals. Probably because of being biased by enamoration of our own species ingroup, we still often fail to incorporate the knowledge of ourselves being animals into daily language, and possibly our belief systems. Possibly, in Norway and other Western countries, even in scientific and day-to-day language and even among self-proclaimed atheists, parts of the belief systems of the Judeo-Christian tradition linger on. In particular I refer to humans being created in the face of god and having a special status as the managers of the earth, thus being *substantially* different from other animals, if the human is considered an animal at all, and *entitled* to dominion (Herbener 2016: 28, 119, 124, 130, 135).<sup>3</sup> I disagree with this view and consider it unscientific given what we know today of evolution and continuity between species. The language in my thesis will reflect a view of the human as animal and of nonhuman animals as individuals, not as uniform manifestations of species characteristics or something essentially different from humans. I will continually use the terms «human animal» and «non-human animal». Because it is common to divide animals into the two categories of «humans» and «animals» a text that proposes a change to how the latter group is treated by the first group, will for simplicity's sake often make mention of those groups. Non-humans will also not be denigrated by the impersonal pronoun «it», but assigned the genderized pronouns «he» or «she», to underline the assumption that we are talking about individuals and not commodities or lifeless objects.

Human animals, for the most part, in this thesis, are expected to, except when discussing deviant cases, to have the capacity for attachment, empathy and the ability to be rational. Exceptions to this exist, such as perhaps people with schizoid personality disorder when it comes to attachment and people with antisocial personality disorder or narcissistic personality disorder

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<sup>3</sup> Of course, Christianity and Judaism can be interpreted in ways friendly to nonhuman animals. Frans from Assisi is famous for being compassionate with animals (Herbener 2016: 132). To those interested in a more animal friendly theology, the book «After Noah: Animals and the Liberation of Theology» by Andrew Linzey and Dan Cohn-Sherbok is highly recommendable (1997). Also, the Adventist prophet Ellen White encouraged a vegetarian diet and being kind to animals (1897).

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when it comes to empathy (Martens 2010).<sup>4</sup> I assume that one can be an ethical egoist and still have the capacity to form relations, be empathic *and* rational.

### Potential biases and ethical concerns

The purpose here is to argue for dietary veganism. I myself have had different versions of a meatless diet for more than five years. That is, I am arguing for a diet I have already embraced myself. However, everyone has a diet, and hopefully, they eat what they feel comfortable with. Having a diet that contains meat does not make one impartial in a way that having a vegan diet does not.

Although the issue here is to make a case for dietary veganism from an ethical egoist approach, placing the subject in the realm of animal ethics, I will also go into the subject of nutrition. Here it is important to give a warning: everyone is different, and although a diet claim can be valid for a majority of people, there are often exceptions for whom the general rules do not apply. A substantial diet change should be carefully considered and although I am going to argue that vegetarian and vegan diets can be healthy and even superior to diets containing meat, any reader about to take that advice needs to modify it to the special requirements of him- or herself.

Also, I've worked in various health food stores which do sell a lot of products targeted at the vegan consumer segment of the population. My interest in nutrition and animal rights started before those jobs, but I am aware that the case I am making here would rather benefit this section of the economy than harm it. However, I do doubt that this influences my thesis directly. I assume that I could have written this thesis regardless of my work background and I am certain that someone without this affiliation could have argued the same points.

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<sup>4</sup> Reflecting the individualist outlook, I don't think that the term «personality disorder» or these ways of being having received labels and been pathologized, somehow write these cases out of the human condition. We could just as well say that *some* humans do not seek out social interaction, or that *some* humans do not feel empathy, instead of using potentially stigmatizing labels. These individuals may be few, but it is important to note that when we reason about humans and assume they are a certain way, there may be exceptions and if our line of thought, or ethical reasoning, depend on people having a certain characteristic, such as ability to feel empathy, we should be aware that we do not speak for all. The same goes for reason or rationality. I suspect that this overlooking of exceptions often happens in moral reasoning. We overlook differences and varieties between people. Thinking we've made a logical and sensible argument, it fails on some people because they are not like ourselves, regardless of ourselves being in the majority or minority or not, and we are blind to the aspects of our nature that make us reason in this particular way. I strongly suspect that rigid personality traits or even genetical dispositions are responsible for some of our disagreements when it comes to how we relate to non-human animals. We may be predisposed to conceive of, or relate to nonhuman animals in certain ways. I will return to this briefly in chapter 4, «Potential criticisms» under headline «Criticism 8: Whether you eat meat or not is morally irrelevant because it has more to do with who you are than what you do».

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### Layout

Now we are approaching the main part of the thesis, which is divided into four chapters. The first one, «Ethical arguments for vegetarianism and veganism» present three different ways of arguing for dietary vegetarianism and veganism.

The second chapter presents the ethical model of egoism. The model I'll use here borrows from several different philosophers but do not replicate neither of their models completely.

In the third chapter I bridge animal ethics, that is particularly the issue of dietary veganism, with egoism and argue for it from an egoist standpoint. This chapter is divided into two sub chapters, the first dealing with why a living animal can be valuable to a human moral agent subscribing to egoism, the second dealing with why meat, that is the dead animal, is *not* valuable. Thus killing an animal for food is to turn a value into a nonvalue.

Finally, in the fourth chapter, I try to anticipate criticisms and how they can be met.

### Thank you

My supervisor, philosopher Einar Duenger Bøhn, has done an excellent job inspiring me to approach this work with eagerness, suggesting works and pointing out what was lacking in my drafts as well as helping me accommodate my thesis to the demands of philosophy.



## Chapter 1: Ethical arguments for vegetarianism and veganism

### Introduction

In this chapter we'll take a look at how dietary *vegetarianism*, that is the abstention from eating animals who have been killed, and dietary *veganism*, the abstention from eating animals who have been killed or confined, as well as their byproducts, have been argued for by three well-known philosophers. These are Peter Singer, Tom Regan and Mark Rowlands. The goal is not to give a total picture, as so many thinkers have concerned themselves with this issue that it would be impossible to present them all. Rather, the goal is to familiarize the reader somewhat with the field. In chapter 3 I will argue for veganism from an *ethical egoist* standpoint. The approaches presented in this introductory chapter differ markedly from egoism, although some of the points encountered in this chapter can be extrapolated to the logics of egoism as well. Especially useful is what is known as *the argument from marginal cases* which the reader will encounter already in this chapter and meet again in chapter 3.

In this chapter the reader will be acquainted with the utilitarian approach of Peter Singer as well as the deontological, or rights based, approaches of Tom Regan and Mark Rowlands. Presenting these will serve to illustrate how the egoist approach differs from them, and in what ways they are similar. Another reason to devote an entire chapter to previous thinking on the ethical reasons to be vegetarian, is to give credit to those who have trodden up the path before. Singer and Regan are probably the two philosophers who have influenced thinking on animal ethics the most in recent decades. More of a writer, Rowlands has written several books and articles successfully simplifying the message and making it more approachable.<sup>5</sup>

There is no lack of literature on animal ethics in general, or vegetarianism in particular, and several philosophers have contributed.<sup>6</sup> Even though the topic seems to have sparked considerable interest in the West in the last decades, how to treat animals has been a topic of discussion within Indian philosophies and religions for thousands of years (Singer 2015: 209-210, Phelps 2004). Space, time and relevance force me to make a selection, and for my purpose

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<sup>5</sup> See for example «The Philosopher and the Wolf» (Rowlands 2009: 145) in addition to «Animals Like Us» (2002).

<sup>6</sup> Apart from those looked at here, you could check out Carol J. Adams' «The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory» (2015) for a feminist outlook, Gary L. Francione's «Introduction to Animal Rights: Your Child or your Dog?» (2000), Martha C. Nussbaum's «Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership» (2007) and for a Buddhist perspective, you could check out Norm Phelps' «The Great Compassion: Buddhism & Animal Rights» (2004).

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here, I think a few approaches will be sufficient. The chapter will close with pointing out what the approaches presented fail to do which egoism hopefully will do better or at least differently.

### Peter Singer's utilitarian approach to animal ethics

Peter Singer's «Animal Liberation», first published in 1975, is perhaps *the* most known work on animal ethics. Singer's writings figure in university syllabuses, and was but one of the early writings on this topics that was soon followed by many others.<sup>7</sup>

Singer himself states that «Animal Liberation» is written in order to make the reader change his mind about how he relates to animals of other species than our own (2015: xviii).

Singer is a utilitarian. A utilitarian is a person supporting the moral theory of utilitarianism. Utilitarianism is a consequentialist moral theory maintaining that what's important is the effect of our actions on the welfare or utility for those affected. The right choice is the choice that maximizes total welfare or utility (Nyeng 1999: 36-38). The core basis for Singer's animal ethics is a kind of utilitarianism called *preference utilitarianism*. Singer's core point is that the like interests of different individuals are not to count more or less than the like interests of another. That is, the individual who holds the interests is not as important as the interest itself (Singer 2015: 5-9, Nussbaum 2007: 339, 341, 343-345).

### Speciesism

If individual A and individual B have a similar interest in not suffering, then we ought to respect their interests equally. What other characteristics, except further interests, we can find for the individuals are of no relevance. However, arbitrary characteristics of individuals have historically been used to justify discrimination in many different cases, and still are used in this way. One well-known example is that of treating people differently because of them having different skin color. It is hard to see any valid moral basis for such discrimination. If individual A is white and individual B is black, they should receive like consideration in similar situations. Although this seems to be quite accepted today, it hasn't always been so. Today, though, those who would want to consider the like interests of people with different skin color differently because of their differing skin colors are given a label: they are called *racists* (Singer 2015: 3-6). Discrimination based on *gender*, is also commonly seen as unjust today. This is called

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<sup>7</sup> The article «All animals are equal», in Norwegian translation as «Alle dyr er likeverdige», translated by John Stanghelle was included in one of the syllabus books, «Exphil II Tekster i etik» at the University of Oslo for the introductory course to philosophy, Exmen Philosophicum, or ExPhil, an obligatory course in most education programs in Norway, when I took it in 2010 (Pedersen (ed) 2009: 149-159)

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*sexism*. It is not *who* has interests that matters, but the interests themselves. If the interests and abilities of person A and B are like, gender should not play into the equation.

Differential treatment of *like preferences* is also unjust when based on *species*. It is arbitrary and unfair to let a non-human animal suffer through something we would not let a human suffer through, *simply because* that individual is not human. Singer calls this kind of unjust discrimination *speciesism*. He defines it thus:

*Speciesism [...] is a prejudice or attitude of bias in favor of the interests of members of one's own species and against those of members of other species* (Singer 2015: 6).

The argument from marginal cases

Sometimes, the justification for discrimination on behalf of species is made by pointing out some valuable trait of humans. The problem with this, according to Singer, is that it always fails to find such a trait which *all* humans share, and which *no* non-human animals share. Often, the criterion supposed to give humans special status is that of intelligence or rationality. The problem with this is that intelligence is not shared by all humans, and in fact, *some* non-human animals will surpass *some* humans when it comes to this trait. Singer gives as an example an infant human with irreparable and massive brain damage (2015: 18-19). Like *all* human infants, he does not compare well intellectually to an adult dog, pig or chimpanzee. A common counter-argument when this is said about normal infants, is that they will *potentially* become something else in the future, when they grow up. In the case of *some* conditions, however, like irreparable and massive brain damage, this is *wrong*. *This* infant will *never* become a human more intelligent than a normal, grown-up pig. Clearly, no matter how one argues the point that intelligence is a criterion of higher, or *any*, moral worth, it will fail to include *all* humans. That means that some humans will fall below some non-humans in the hierarchy of moral worth, if reason is to be the criterion for consideration.

If one is to defend special treatment of all humans *as a group*, or special species, one would need to find a relevant criterion that was shared by *all* humans, and by no non-humans. Of course, one would also have, convincingly, to make the case that this criterion was morally relevant. When this fails, one is left with the choice of either including the non-humans into moral consideration, or leave out the humans who fail to qualify.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Of course, one can dogmatically state that humanity is special and nonhuman animals are not. Why would anyone argue against that? Humanity's specialness is self-evident, one could say. I would argue that it would be no hard case to find people to whom it is *not* self-evident, not to speak of individuals from other species who most probably do not recognize human specialness the same way. As it is not self-evident to all, the appeal to dogma fails to convince anyone but those who are already convinced. One can

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This argument – that some humans fail to possess reason or other criteria supposed to privilege human animals – is later called *the argument from marginal cases* (Rowlands 2002: 44-47). Mark Rowlands, to whom we will return for his own take on animal ethics presents the argument from marginal cases as follows

**Premise 1:** *X is proposed as a morally relevant difference between humans and non-human animals.*

*The next step is to point out that not all humans have X, whatever that is:*

**Premise 2:** *There are certain human beings who do not possess X.*

*That gives us the conclusion:*

**Conclusion:** *Therefore, either (a) those humans possess no more moral rights than animals, or (b) the claim that X is a morally relevant difference must be abandoned* (Rowlands 2002: 44-45)

While Singer uses this argument to include animals into consideration from a utilitarian standpoint, this argument is also, and can also be, used to include animals into consideration in other ethical models. It will be central in my case for consideration based on ethical egoism.

#### The capacity to suffer

Something all humans *do* have in common is the capacity to feel pain and enjoyment (2015: 237). However, this is also shared by most or all non-human animals (Singer 2015: 7-15). If we use the capacity to suffer as the criterion for moral consideration, many more individuals would have to be taken into account than those who normally are. The capacity to feel pain is important, because if one couldn't, it would be difficult to fathom any other interests. This capacity must be in place before discussing interests in a meaningful way, opines Singer (2015: 7).<sup>9</sup>

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of course resort to pathologizing those who fail to see this, calling them abnormal and not worth listening to because of their failure to understand the dogma. This appeal to normality, however, is of course not an appeal to truth, but simply to convention, which is a fragile construct. The specialness of the human species and right to privilege argued this way would be just as arbitrary as racism or sexism, and not much of an ethics. It is however possible that there are biological or psychological predispositions that make us see the relation between nonhumans and humans differently. I'll briefly return to that possibility in chapter 4, «Potential criticisms», under the headline «Criticism 8: Whether you eat meat or not is morally irrelevant because it has more to do with who you are than what you do».

<sup>9</sup> Interestingly, Martha Nussbaum disagrees with this, and states that other things than the capacity to feel pleasure and pain, could have intrinsic value (2007: 362). There could be an intelligent creature, for example, who lacks sentience, and still its intelligence would be valuable in itself (Nussbaum 2007: 362). It is, however, worth noting that Nussbaum's ethics, called the capabilities approach, is very different from Singer's (Nussbaum 2007: 350).

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Speciesism has permitted humans to treat non-human animals in ways we would describe as horrible and even sadistic if we did the same to fellow human animals. We perform actions on animals that clearly are not in their interest, in cases where we would take the interests of humans into account, and not perform those actions. In his book, Singer focuses on scientific experimentation on animals (2015: 25-94), and the food industry (2015: 95-157) as fields where we find examples of such actions. In line with the topic of my thesis, here we will focus at what Singer writes about animal farming, leaving out what he says about animal experimentation.

### Animal farming

Animal farming is in its essence speciesist, as we would not breed *humans* into this world solely for the purpose of becoming food for others, after an existence in a facility designed to make them grow as fast as possible while minimizing resource wastage in order to maximize profit for a farmer, upon which they would be transported to a slaughterhouse to be killed. Singer uses a vast array of examples of the suffering animal farming incurs in animals (2015: 95-157). We will not go into many of these cases here, but will take a closer look at the situation of pigs. Suffice it to say that Singer focuses especially on chicken (2015: 98-106), the egg industry (2015: 107-119), pigs (2015: 119-129), the veal industry (2015: 129-136), dairy (2015: 136-139) and cattle raised to become beef meat (2015: 141).

### Pigs

The example of pigs is interesting, both because of the pig's intelligence being comparable to or higher than that of a dog (Singer 2015: 119), and because pigs are now also being kept as «pets» or «companion animals» by some people.<sup>10</sup> While eating dogs or cats would probably seem disgusting to most people in the West, perhaps because they are commonly assigned the roles of companions rather than food, pig meat is commonly eaten (Joy 2011: 11—28). It remains to be seen whether the practice of eating pigs will be challenged to another extent than the eating of other animals if pet pig «ownership» increases, but the fact that pigs *can* and *are* being assigned roles of companionship, shows that the pigs raised for meat could *potentially* be something else *to us* entirely. This we will see an example of in chapter 3.1 with the couple Steve and Derek who adopted a pig named Esther.

Although intelligence shouldn't matter in order to give an individual moral consideration, it matters when it comes to discussing *what kind of* consideration (Singer 2015: 119). Intelligence

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<sup>10</sup> I am not buying into the idea of intelligence being a criterion for moral worth here, in and by itself. Intelligence in non-human animals is interesting because it perhaps creates more needs for them, since they can be bored if intelligence is not stimulated. Also, it is interesting because some opponents of animal rights are concerned with intelligence.

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might make an animal seek various kinds of mental stimulation, thus demanding more than merely the absence of pain. Singer refers to a study on commercial pigs showing that when released into a seminatural enclosure, they started living actively, forming stable social groups, building communal nests and using dunging areas away from the nest (2015: 120). Modern factory farms make it impossible to act on these impulses by confining the pigs to limited space, leaving them with nothing else to do than eating, sleeping, standing up and lying down – a life in utter boredom, that is (Singer 2015: 120). Different animals, when locked up in an overcrowded place, will start developing what is called «vices» – in this setting understood as destructive patterns developed as a response to being in unnatural surroundings not suitable to the nature of the animal (Singer 2015: 99-100, 113-114, 121). In such cases of stress, pigs might take to bite the tails of each other. Apart from being a problem to the pigs themselves, it might also reduce the farmers' profits because it causes fighting, leading to higher calorie usage which prevents fast weight gains. To avoid the problem, the *farmers* will often cut off the pigs' tails so that the pigs are not tempted to bite each other (Singer 2015: 121). Singer quotes the U.S. Department of Agriculture: «Tail docking has become a common practice to prevent tail biting of pigs in confinement. It should be done by all producers of feeder pigs. Cut tails ¼ to ½ inch from the body with side-cutting pliers or another blunt instrument. The crushing action helps to stop bleeding. Some producers use a chicken debeaker for docking; this also cauterizes the cut surface» (in Singer 2015: 121).

Sometimes pigs in modern farming develop «porcine stress syndrome», the symptoms of which are, in addition to extreme stress: rigidity, panting, blotchy skin, anxiety and sometimes sudden death (in Singer 2015: 122). If too many pigs died, it would of course signify profit loss, but as long as they are not too many, the efficiency that comes with modern farming will still weigh up for the losses, economically speaking (Singer 2015: 122).

Another problem frequent in pig farming, is the early separation of mother and child, causing distress to both (Singer 2015: 125). Singer writes the following about breeding sows:

*Under the best conditions there is little joy in an existence that consists of pregnancy, birth, having one's babies taken away, and becoming pregnant again so that the cycle can be repeated – and sows do not live under the best conditions. They are closely confined for both pregnancy and birth. While pregnant they are usually locked into individual metal stalls two feet wide and six feet long, or scarcely bigger than the sow herself; or they may be chained by a collar around the neck; or they may be in stalls yet still be chained. There they will live for two or three months. During all that time, they will be unable to walk more than a single step forward or backward, or to turn around, or to exercise in any other way. Again, savings on feed and labor are the reason for this brutal form of solitary imprisonment (Singer 2015: 126)*

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### Becoming vegetarian

There are several things to do in order to make the situation better, like contacting politicians, spreading information and protesting publicly. However, Singer also recommends that we stop *eating* animals (2015: 159). This might contribute to end the painful practices of the meat industry by reducing demand for their products, so that production gradually will be decreased in response (Singer 2015: 163).

If the only problem associated with meat production was suffering, one might imagine an animal who had lived a happy life ended painlessly, without it being problematic (Singer 2015: 159). However, Singer claims that it is impossible, practically and psychologically, «to be consistent in one's concern for nonhuman animals while continuing to dine on them» (2015: 159). Raising animals for food is to regard the animals as means to our ends. The factory farm, while modern, is an old idea – it is speciesism fused with modern technology (Singer 2015: 160). Importantly, while meat production causes suffering and killing of animals, being vegetarian is *not* a *sacrifice* as a vegetarian diet can be as healthy, or perhaps even healthier than an omnivore diet (Singer 2015: 170-171, 179-180). Drawing the line as to how strict one should be as a vegetarian can be hard, as we can always discuss how conscious and aware the *most simple* creatures are, like shellfish, for example, thus raising questions whether they have interests (Singer 2015: 170-177). However, the more animal products eliminated from one's diet, the better (Singer 2015: 173). It is better to err at the safe side of the line, not contributing to the needless suffering of other animals (Singer 2015: 174). Avoiding all animal products means being vegan (Singer 2015: 175).

### Going vegan

The term «vegan» was originally coined by Donald Watson, who himself became a vegan in 1942, and helped form The Vegan Society in 1944 (Patrick-Goudreau 2013: 11). He defined veganism as «a philosophy and way of living which seeks to exclude – as far as is possible and practical – all forms of exploitation of and cruelty to animals for food, clothing, or any other purpose» (in Patrick-Goudreau 2013: 12).

A properly planned vegan diet is sufficient in all nutrients, save vitamin B12, which is a necessary food supplement when eliminating all animal products from one's diet (Singer 2015: 182). Still, Singer writes that «You must decide for yourself where you are going to draw the line, and your decision may not coincide exactly with mine. This does not matter all that much.

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We can distinguish bald men from men who are not bald without deciding every borderline case. It is agreement on the fundamentals that is important» (Singer 2015: 170).

Summary and critique

Here I've tried to present the essentials of Singer's view as it comes through in «Animal Liberation», although I could impossibly do full justice to it here, as the magnitude of examples of cruelty to animals presented don't lend themselves to being comprimed to a few pages. Neither did I have room for Singer's presentation of the history of speciesism or response to counter-arguments (2015: 185-248).

We should treat like preferences alike. Animals have an interest in not suffering and not being killed. When it can be avoided and not outweighed by greater harm or done for a greater good, animals should not be made to suffer or die. Today animals suffer in animal farming. This is not morally permissible since it is done to bring about products we could do, perhaps even better, without. We should boycott the meat industry by not eating meat or buying meat products.

Although Singer's presentation of the situation in animal farming and experimentation probably seems horrifying to many or most people, Singer's arguments have their problems. Utilitarianism is often criticized for allowing for the distress of a minority or an individual, so long as the majority is made better off by it. Although utilitarianism assures like consideration of interests, it permits the sacrificing of one or some individuals if the gain is high enough. So does Singer (2015: 85). If one assumes that one could make the whole world abide by an ethical code, it would potentially be self-defeating to argue for utilitarianism, as one could risk being used as solely a means for the welfare of others oneself.

Singer does not take the time in his book to argue why utilitarianism is a good model in itself. He seems to assume that the reader can more or less connect to the moral base presented, as is. This, however, is not always the case. Although intuitive to some, it is clearly not obvious to all why they should care about the suffering of animals, the suffering of other people, like consideration of interests, or even consistency of ideas or practice. Singer points out that there is tremendous suffering following, and inconsistency in, the way we treat other animals, but does not tell us satisfactorily *why* we should care. He just seems to assume we *do*, but I fail to find a satisfactory answer to the question: *why should I care?* Or framed differently: *What's in*



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*it for me?* This is what ethical egoism is concerned with. Rational egoist Jan Narveson asked this question when discussing philosopher Regan's philosophy of animal rights (Narveson 1986: 198-199). That an action you could take stands to harm a certain other being cannot explain by itself why you should not perform that action (Narveson 1986: 198-199). Unlike what Singer does in *Animal Liberation*, however, Regan *does* argue for an ethical model and why that is a good one, though without really appealing to self-interest (2004). Now, let's turn to his rights based approach to animal ethics and way of grounding dietary vegetarianism.

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### Tom Regan's rights based approach to animal ethics

Another influential work on animal ethics has been American philosopher Tom Regan's «The Case for Animal Rights», first published in 1983. What I consider the essentials of this view are presented here because Regan's position has some things in common with the individualist egoist position I will present later, in that the important unit is individual. Still, the rights view is very different from egoism, since the rights view is far more egalitarian. Egoism is concerned about the wellbeing of the moral agent himself, while Regan's rights view is concerned about the rights of *each* individual. As we will return to in the next chapter, on ethical egoism, there *are* egoist positions incorporating a concept of rights, such as that of Rand (1964: 108-117). I, however, will not argue from a rights perspective myself. The rights view, however, may serve as a basis for criticizing egoism.

While also drawing the conclusion that moral agents should be vegetarian, Regan disagrees with Singer's ethical model of utilitarianism and takes time to point out the differences between them (Regan 2004: 351, 206-231, 263). While Singer favours preference utilitarianism, Regan takes a rights based approach to animal ethics. We won't go into *detail* on his critique of Singer, but a rough presentation of Regan's own take on animal ethics will hopefully make it apparent how they differ. The main point here is not to settle any debate between the rights view or utilitarianism, just to present the views. I do want to remark, though, that Regan's book is more recent than Singer's and Regan uses much space criticizing utilitarianism and some of this will come forth here. I do, also, personally, lean more in favor of the rights view, but the intention is not to champion it. This thesis will first and foremost advocate for the ethical egoist approach to dietary veganism. In this chapter, however, I want to let three salient views come to the fore, and the preference utilitarian and the rights view approaches are two among these.

### Is utilitarianism really egalitarian and just?

Regan considers utilitarianism *unjust* (2004: 226). This is because it does not guarantee equal treatment of individuals with like preferences or needs, whether in hedonist or preference utilitarian version (Regan 2004: 213-214, 230). Utilitarianism is egalitarian in that everyone's interests are taken into account, but Regan points out that this is only *predistributively* so (2004: 230-231, 233). This means, a moral decision is taken after *considering* the situation of all affected parties, but it allows for thwarting the interest of one or more parties as long as *the result* is optimific – that means that *the aggregated* benefits as result of the decision is higher than it would have been given another decision (Regan 2004: 226, 230-231, 233-239). True, all

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affected individuals are equally considered *prior to* being treated, but this ensures no equal treatment *after* decision being made. Even if affected parties of a decision risk exactly the same loss, say death for instance, utilitarianism could sanction the death of one to avoid the deaths of many, or to avoid even lesser harms as long as their aggregated consequences outweigh the negative which is the death of one or of a few (Regan 2004: 208-211, 226-228). What Singer's preference utilitarianism wins over Bentham's hedonist utilitarianism is to allow for other interests than merely those considered hedonistic to be taken into account, such as the wish to stay alive (Regan 2004: 206-207). However, just because the will to live is taken into account, utilitarianism can deliver no *right* to life and no guarantees of any sort except that the preferences of all be considered (Regan 2004: 219-220, 226). So, depending on what preferences, and the amount of individuals having them, in one case taking a life could be in accordance with utilitarianism, in another it would not.<sup>11</sup>

How do we choose between competing ethical theories?

Regan considers five criteria essential when choosing between competing ethical theories. The best theory is the one which has consistency, adequacy of scope, precision, conformity with our intuitions and simplicity (2004: 148). Conformity with intuitions is a controversial criterion, but Regan uses some space to defend it (2004: 133-140). We cannot go into this discussion here because it falls outside of the scope of the thesis, but let it suffice that Regan does *not* equate intuitions with «unexamined moral convictions», and that he also emphasizes the obvious, that this criterion is but *one out of five* (2004: 133-134). Regan writes that «[it] is to be assumed, that is, that we have conscientiously endeavored to think about our beliefs coolly, rationally, impartially, with conceptual clarity, and with as much relevant information as we can reasonably acquire. The judgments we make *after* [emphasis in original] we have made this effort are not our «gut responses,» nor are they merely expressions of what we *happen* to believe; they are our *considered* beliefs, beliefs we hold when, and only when, we have done our best to be impartial, rational, cool, and so forth» (Regan 2004: 134).

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<sup>11</sup> Regan points out that both hedonist and preference utilitarianism are brands of act utilitarianism, while also rule utilitarianism exists (2004: 250). Rule utilitarianism could advocate rules against killing, for example (Regan 2004: 251). Regan uses some space on rule utilitarianism, though I do not consider it essential to the main argument of the book, neither of use for the purposes of my thesis, and therefore do not present his criticism of rule utilitarianism here (Regan 2004: 250-258).

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### The respect principle, the basic principle in Regan's theory of animal rights

Regan considers what he calls *the respect principle* consistent, having adequate scope and precision and living up to common reflective intuitions (2004: 260). Implied within the respect principle is a rejection of utilitarianism. That is because utilitarianism fails to treat individuals with the respect they are due (Regan 2004: 259), when measured against the principle, which stipulates «a direct duty of justice owed to all those individuals who have inherent value» (Regan 2004: 233). *Inherent value* is a value that an individual has just by existing. It is not the same as the valuable experiences, states or feelings that the individual might *have* or *experience*. Inherent value does not diminish because of the individual being unhappy, because he suffers or because he has had, or is expected to have, a miserable life. Inherent value does also not depend on the individual being useful to others. It is inherent and it is for a lifetime (Regan 2004: 235-239). Those who have it is to be respected. The respect principle is defined as follows:

*We are to treat those individuals who have inherent value in ways that respect their inherent value* (Regan 2004: 248).<sup>12</sup>

Using an individual merely as a means to satisfy the preferences of others is not respectful to the inherent value of this individual, and this is how the rights view differs from utilitarianism, since utilitarianism allows of this if that's what it takes to gain optimistic results after everyone's preferences have been considered (Regan 2004: 248-249, 258-259). This is made clearer by looking at what Regan calls *the harm principle* which is *derived* from *the respect principle*.

### The harm principle

The harm principle proclaims that we fail to treat the individuals due respect rightly if we detract from their welfare, that is if we harm them (Regan 2004: 262).

With welfare, Regan understands having an experiential life that can fare well or ill (2004: 262).

### Subjects-of-a-life, individuals with inherent value

Those who have inherent value are what Regan calls *subjects-of-a-life* (2004: 243). He refers to Schweitzer who considers *being alive* the criterion for having inherent value (Regan 2004:

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<sup>12</sup> Even though this is a short quote, I want to bring special attention to it since it is so fundamental to Regan's rights view.

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241-142). The problem with making the possession of life as such the criterion for inherent value is one of scope. Even potatoes could be said to have a life, but it seems unreasonable to have any direct duty to potatoes, or perhaps even more unreasonable: having a direct duty to cancer cells (Regan 2004: 142). In itself, the criterion of possessing a life being sufficient to declare someone having inherent value due respect seems hard to live by, at least if we think everything alive has an interest in continuing life. It would also be self-defeating as it is impossible to respect both the individual human animal's will to live and the cancer cells attacking the human at the same time. Now, being a *subject-of-a-life* therefore, demands having more than merely a life. It entails having (Regan 2004: 243):

1. «Beliefs and desires»
  2. «Perception»
  3. «Memory»
  4. «A sense of the future, including their own future»<sup>13</sup>
  5. «An emotional life together with feelings of pleasure and pain»
  6. «Preference- and welfare-interests»
  7. «The ability to initiate action in pursuit of their desires and goals»
  8. «A psychophysical identity over time»
  9. «An individual welfare in the sense that their experiential life fares well or ill for them»
- (Regan 2004: 243)

Several non-human animals are subjects-of-a-life. It is, however, a complex issue and empirical question to determine exactly who are subjects-of-a-life and who are not. Still, Regan assumes that *at least* all normal mammals aged one year or more are subjects-of-a-life (2004: xvi, 366). It is possible to find newborn mammals who do not yet qualify, but will qualify later. As an example, say, infants who might not yet be able to initiate action in pursuit of desires, see criterion 7.

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<sup>13</sup> Interestingly, Mark Rowlands, in «Can Animals be Moral?» writes about emotions having intentional content, being themselves future-directed (2015: 15, 34). The ability to experience these emotions might be seen as some kind of moral awareness, as they are other-directed and future-oriented in their essence. At least some animals *seem* to possess such emotions (Rowlands 2015: ix, 3-7, 39). Rowlands thus introduces a third category to supplement the categories of moral agent and moral patient. That is a *moral subject*, which is an individual who is able to act out for moral reasons, but can not be expected to do so consistently (Rowlands 2015: 33, 36, 71, 89). Rowlands defines moral subjects the following way: «Animals can be moral subjects in the sense that they can act on the basis of moral reasons, where these reasons take the form of emotions with identifiable moral content» (2015: 35).

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However, also birds and fish seem to qualify (Regan 2004: xvi). Since it is so hard to know with certainty which animals qualify for being subjects-of-a-life, it is better to be cautious and act as if also nonmammalians are conscious and able to feel pain, unless this can be proved to be false (Regan 2004: xvi, 366).

Human moral patients will also qualify for being subjects-of-a-life. A *moral patient* is an individual unable to engage in moral reasoning to a sufficient extent but still being due moral consideration from others (Regan 2004: 152-154, 193). Often, these will be the human *marginal cases*, say the humans who will never develop the reason or intelligence considered normal or common for human beings.

Regan discusses the different traits of the subject-of-a-life list in his book, as well as the nature of animal awareness and consciousness (2004: 1-102). We do not have the space to go into this here.<sup>14</sup>

The miniride and worse-off principles: When choosing between evils

Regan identifies two further principles derivable from the respect principle, namely *the miniride principle* and *the worse-off principle* (Regan 2004: 305-312, 327-328). Taking a closer look at these principles will help further distinguish Regan's rights view from Singer's preference utilitarian view. The principles apply in circumstances where a right has to be violated because of a situation demanding choice, where non-interference will also violate a right, that is since we also have duties to *protect* rights (Regan 2004: 271-287). Not living up to the duty would violate someone's rights too as rights are not simply *negative*, that means a right stipulating what should *not* be done to an individual. Rights are, however, also claims-against moral agents (Regan 2004: 271-287, 327-328).

Important here is to note that the respect principle demands that all individuals with inherent value are treated with the respect due their inherent value, and a subject-of-a-life could be either a *moral agent*, that is an individual able to engage in moral reasoning and act for moral reasons, or a moral patient (Regan 2004: 279-280). However, only moral agents have moral duties, since a moral patient cannot fulfill a duty. This inability to engage in moral reasoning followed by acting upon it, however, cannot subtract inherent value from the moral patient (Regan 2004:

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<sup>14</sup> For anyone interested in the issue of animal rights, the book is highly recommendable. With its length of 400 pages, though not using space neither on portraying the situation of animals today nor on nutrition, Regan's book is packed with philosophical discussion, leaving it impossible to portray it all here. My focus is on his main argument, though the different components of it is further defended in his book. If something seems extremely unconvincing here, it might be because my summary here fails to do Regan's work justice or that the space here is insufficient.

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283-285). In a situation where several subjects have a claim and it is impossible to live up to all of them, the agent has to *decide* whose claim(s) to respect. Unlike preference or hedonist utilitarianism, the rights view does not allow basing the decision merely on aggregating interests, pains or pleasures of different individuals into a total, as doing so would be to treat the individual merely as a receptacle of preferences or pleasures, and thus be disrespectful, thereby failing to live up to the respect principle. (Regan 2004: 286-287, 302-303). What to do in a situation of crisis where the upholding of everyone's right is impossible, depends on the magnitude of harm done to each individual affected and whether the harms are comparable or not (Regan 2004: 309-310). If the harms are comparable, the *miniride principle applies*. Regan defines the miniride principle the following way:

*Special considerations aside, when we must choose between overriding the rights of many who are innocent or the rights of few who are innocent, and when each affected individual will be harmed in a prima facie comparable way, then we ought to choose to override the rights of the few in preference to overriding the rights of the many* (Regan 2004: 305).

Here, the utilitarian and rights ethicist might agree on what action to take. The difference occurs, however, when the harms done to one or some of the affected individuals are far *greater* than the harms of many others taken together. Even if the pains of the many taken together could be aggregated and clearly be greater in total than the pain of the one, or of the few, the interests of *the individual(s)* risking the greatest harm is what we should prioritize (Regan 2004: 307-312). An example is the claim to life of one affected party measured against the claim of thousands not to suffer a transient, but notable pain. The total of pains or thwarted preferences might be greater if one chooses to rescue the dying individual over preventing the pain of thousands, but in such a case, the rights view still prioritizes saving the life of the one individual. This would be the choice utilitarianism would consider the least optimific, on the other hand. In this case, within the logics of the rights-based ethics, the worse-off principle applies, defined by Regan as follows:

*Special considerations aside, when we must decide to override the rights of the many or the rights of the few who are innocent, and when the harm faced by the few would make them worse-off than any of the many would be if any other option were chosen, then we ought to override the rights of the many* (Regan 2004: 308).

[Vegetarianism is obligatory according to the rights view](#)

When it comes to the implications of this view, Regan discusses the implications for eating animals (2004: 330-353), hunting (2004: 353-359), endangered species (2004: 359-363) and science (2004: 363-394), although he points out that there is an enormous variety of ways humans affect animals not finding place in «The Case for Animal Rights» (2004: 330). Most

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important for our purposes is the issue of vegetarianism. Regan concludes that according to the rights view vegetarianism is *obligatory* (2004: 346). The practice of raising animals for consumption ought to cease (Regan 2004: 346). Regan discusses counter-arguments to this (2004: 330-353), especially from the point of appealing to what he calls *the liberty principle*, another principle derived from the respect principle:

*Provided that all those involved are treated with respect, and assuming that no special considerations obtain, any innocent individual has the right to act to avoid being made worse-off even if doing so harms other innocents* (Regan 2004: 331)

While stopping the practice of raising animals for consumption would force some to change occupation and others to change their diet, and it might seem like they are made worse-off by this change, their complaints based on the liberty principle are invalid, since the meat industry fails to treat most of those involved – those are the non-human animals – with respect (Regan 2004: 343-347). Their continuing their practice is them continuing to disrespect the non-human animals. When it comes to farmers' profits, participating in business gives no guarantee and the consumers are not responsible for anyone's business. The rules of the game of the market economy are such that when starting a business, one must be ready to accept failure as one might lose out in the competition of the market place. The responsibility for the success of an enterprise belongs to the owners of the business. This is also the case for the meat industry. The *consumer* has no duty *to the farmer* to buy her products (Regan 2004: 340-342).

#### Species do not have rights

Although we won't discuss species conservation, Regan makes an important observation that will go along with our ethical egoist model presented later as well. It is quite obvious that species are not individuals, and since it is *individuals* who have rights, *species* have no rights. A «species» is an abstraction, or at best a *group* of individuals, not *an* individual. We'll take a further look at species as an abstraction when dealing with Stirner's philosophy of egoism in the next chapter. Whether an individual belongs to a species with several or few members does not impact on the rights of the individual or what is his due or how a moral agent ought to treat that individual (Regan 2004: 359-361).

#### Summary of the rights view

Individuals having inherent value ought to be treated in ways that respect this value. Subjects-of-a-life possess inherent value. Several nonhuman animals are subjects-of-a-life. This certainly includes mammals aged one or older, but probably also birds and fish, and possibly others. If we subtract from the welfare of a subject-of-a-life, or if we harm such an individual, we are disrespectful and do not comply with the respect principle. Raising nonhuman animals for



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confinement and slaughter in order to become meat products is harmful to them, therefore not respectful of their rights. To avoid disrespecting them in such a way we must become vegetarians.

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### Another appeal to justice: Mark Rowlands' «Animals like Us»

Like Singer and Regan, Rowlands also argues we should become vegetarians or vegans (2002: 111, 177). The wish to eat meat is rather trivial on the part of humans, and giving it up, at worst, amounts to sacrifice some pleasure of taste, while to continue eating it requires animals dying after, often, having lived a life in confinement (Rowlands 2002: 100-112). Rowlands writes that «Pleasures of the palate cannot be weighed against a life worth living. The two things are just not comparable» (2002: 112).

### Punished for who they are

Rowlands' philosophy here relies on two principles working in tandem (2002: 58). Those are *the principles of equality* and *desert*. The first, *the principle of equality*, stipulates that individuals should receive the like consideration in absence of differences that count morally. The second, *the principle of desert*, stipulates that factors outside the individual's control should not impact on the consideration due the individual (Rowlands 2002: 31-38, 48-51, 58). We've already seen, in the section on Singer, that Rowlands makes use of the argument from marginal cases. The argument from marginal cases states that proposed criteria for privileging humans always fail because we find that not all human animals share the criteria, or that non-human animals share them too (Rowlands 2002: 44-47). There is no morally relevant difference between humans and non-human animals (Rowlands 2002: 47). Speciesism will also be found unjust because the animal has no control over his species membership. The animal has not chosen his species membership and should not be punished for being non-human (Rowlands 2002: 53-54). This does not mean we should treat all animals just the same, regardless of their actual differences, just that we take their *particular* interests into account (Rowlands 2002: 55).

### The impartial position

Rowlands borrows two thought experiments John Rawls is famous for, namely that of the original position and the veil of ignorance, although for a different purpose. Rowlands twists the idea somewhat to make it a test for how to treat individuals from other species, into what he calls «the impartial position» where we are to make decisions regardless of properties we have, that we did nothing to have, like species membership (Rowlands 2002: 58-61).<sup>15</sup>

Imagine yourself unborn or not yet present in this world, without knowing anything about who you will become or what properties you will have. You are behind a veil of ignorance, not

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<sup>15</sup> Actually, rational egoist Jan Narveson, himself opposed to animal rights, already suggested extending Rawls' thought experiment to include not knowing one's species membership in an article from 1983, «Animal Rights Revisited» and suggested some advocates for vegetarianism already did so (Narveson 1983: 56).

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knowing any of this. What rules would you want to govern the world? Say you don't know what species you will belong to. You do not know whether you will become a human or a pig animal, for instance. Would you want a world where human animals bred pig animals for confinement, slaughter and consumption, if that pig could be you? If you become a pig raised for slaughter, you lose your freedom and will end your life as soon as you grow to the perfect size for slaughter. Is this a life you would willingly risk having? If so, you are irrational.

If you happen to choose a world where humans do not eat meat, and you are born human, you lose the possible pleasure of eating meat, if you are to like it, that is. Now, what is irrational in the impartial position is immoral and unjust in this world. The practice of raising animals for slaughter for them to become meat products is unjust and immoral (Rowlands 2002: 58-69, 100-123).

### Heard it before?

This thought experiment is reminiscent of the Christian golden rule as well as its Buddhist equivalent. In Christian wording it is found in Matthew 7:12: «So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets». In the Buddhist Dhammapada we find a similar rule in verse 129: «All tremble at violence; all fear death. Putting oneself in the place of another, one should not kill nor cause another to kill» (Dhammapada 129).<sup>16</sup> The principles Rowlands use, and the same goes for Regan and Singer, are not particularly revolutionary, but are central to several concepts of morality. What has not been done to a *considerable* extent, at least in the West, before, is to include non-human animals into it (Singer 2015: 185-212). Increasing choice when it comes to food as well as expanding knowledge of both non-human animals and human animals make the case for taking non-humans into consideration seem correspondingly pressing, that is, if the thinking of Singer, Regan and Rowlands is anywhere near sound.

### Summary and critique

The need to take non-human animals into moral consideration has been argued for from different ethical models. We've taken a look at Singer's preference utilitarianism and the rights views of Regan and Rowlands. All consider the implications of their views to be that we should go vegetarian – or vegan. The word «vegan» probably wasn't as well-known at the times when the books referred to here were written, though it is clear that none of these philosophers argue the case of *vegetarianism over veganism*.

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<sup>16</sup> I've made this comparison before, in a blogpost on Rowlands' book (Hansen 2016).

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They point out that going vegetarian or vegan is a minimal, if any, sacrifice for us, but keeping up the institution of animal farming and meat production forces great harm on the non-human animals we compel to live and die for us.

Although Singer, Regan and Rowlands come to the conclusion in different ways, they all agree we should quit eating meat and become vegetarian.

I will not disagree with their conclusions. The problem is *the way of proceeding* to come to the conclusion. It is obvious from merely a glance at any news broadcast that appeals to equality, utility and justice fail to convince a lot of people. This problem is not necessarily one of truth or logic. I simply worry that too many people might simply not really care, even if utilitarianism and the rights view were to be correct. If too many people fail to understand or respect impartial morality, maybe appeals to it is simply futile and therefore little more than academic exercises. But this is more of a suspicion than a conviction or something I want to use space to argue for.

Assuming appeals to impartial morality are valid, it is still all too easy to brush them away because it's not necessarily clear how they are of benefit to the moral agent. The human race has *collectively* won the battles for dominion and is *collectively* the mightiest species, able to put the greatest force behind any wanted action. Today we have a legal system that can penalize and lock up the detectable violators of those *human* rights which have won a place in law, thus minimizing the personal gains from violating the rights of others. Of course, even this changes nothing unless the potential violators know about the punishment they risk, and have sufficient control on impulses to take the risk into account.

If non-human animals have rights to life, these rights are as of now *not* replicated in law, and I would find it incredibly naive to suppose they will be incorporated anytime soon.<sup>17</sup> Since meat eating is a majority enterprise and since farming seems so often to be connected to national identity, there is also no shame or stigma there to psychologically raise the barrier to violation of animal rights. The victims, that is the non-human animals, are even out of sight from most meat eaters. The victims will not shame them if their violators continue, and they will not thank them if they stop.

It is an empirical question how willing people are to follow impartial ethics and respect others. We do not have to go to lengths to document that at least *some* do not respect others, even if we were to accept specieism and anthropocentrism and reserve ethics to human animals. The

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<sup>17</sup> Cage standards are something quite different than right to life

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existence of prisons proves the point. Either the imprisoned are rights violators or they are imprisoned unjustly. In either case, there has been a violation of rights. Where a right has been violated, there is a victim. If people violate rights even when risking and receiving legal reactions for it, then there are probably even more violators of unbacked rights, that is ethical rights that are not recognized in the law.

Now from an egoist standpoint. The problems with the rights view and utilitarianism especially, is that you potentially will lose from adopting the view. If you stand stand to lose, rationally speaking you should look for an alternative. That alternative is *egoism* where you are encouraged to maximize your values, as opposed to playing a game where you either do not have a guarantee of being respected, as with utilitarianism, or where you know others cheat, as in a world where rights are formally recognized but people are, given the rights view, acting imorally nevertheless.

Being vegetarian, Singer, Regan and Rowlands claim, is not a big sacrifice, if any. I am going to agree with them in this. Egoism is not opposed to vegetarianism. It is just opposed to self sacrifice, which is risked to a certain extent with adopting the rights view. That is because respecting the rights of others when they are not backed by law will make you worse off as long as there are people who do not respect *your* rights. The extent to which this is self-detrimental will depend on *how many* will not respect your rights, but you still risk being made worse off. Say someone disrespects your dignity or abuse you emotionally. The law can seldom protect you from this. By being respectful in return to your abuser, you let him take his toll on you without retaliating and without the backing of the legal system. It's hard to see that you will stand to gain from being committed to respect the rights of someone who disrespects yours.

If living in a universe governed by applied utilitarian ethics, you risk becoming a means for satisfying the preferences of others in an insecure world where what is to happen to you will depend on the constantly changing universal circumstances and conditions, and the varying capacities of the other moral agents when it comes to calculating the outcomes of choices and their resulting pleasure/pain balance or preference satisfaction. You'd have to agree with being made worse off if that's what it took to gain the optimific result from the decision. The rights view is *potentially*, and the utilitarian view *certainly*, incongruent with egoism, the ethical model to which we will now turn.

## Chapter 2: Ethical egoism

### Introduction

In this chapter I will present the essentials of ethical egoism necessary to make an egoist case for dietary veganism in chapter 3.

In the previous chapter we took a look at different ethical approaches to the issue of dietary veganism. I claimed that the conclusion that we should be vegetarians or go vegan, was not opposed to ethical egoism. What egoism is opposed to is *sacrifice*, something we'll take a closer look at in this chapter. Ethical egoism states that the moral agent and the beneficiary, that is the one who benefits from an action, should be the same person. What you do should be to your own benefit. What you should not do is to act self-detrimentally. To act self-detrimentally is to sacrifice what is valuable for something less valuable or not valuable at all (Rand 1964: x, 50). The risk of sacrifice is built into utilitarianism and the rights view, precisely because putting oneself first is not part of the theories. These views as presented in the previous chapter are incongruent with egoism, although the concept of rights can be incorporated.

After the criticisms already made, the first section of this chapter will briefly note some other reasons why there is a need for egoism before building up the model.

Unlike in common parlance, egoism is here not used derogatory. Egoist is not understood as a synonym to ruthless, bully, being narcissistic, vain or any other laden word. Egoism is here presented as an ethical model among others, such as utilitarianism or the rights view.

There are several philosophers of ethical egoism. I will not copy one model of egoism, but draw on several thinkers. This chapter will be predominantly influenced by egoists Max Stirner and Ayn Rand. It will also draw a lot of inspiration from Friedrich Nietzsche and ethical individualist David L Norton. These philosophers differ in many ways, but they are all individualist in the sense that they consider the individual more important than groups, gods, family or the state. Their theories seek to help the adherents live better lives themselves. Egoists may disagree on what is good and what is of benefit to the moral agent. An egoist theory should also say something about this. Here I will draw mainly on Rand and Nietzsche, both placing a great emphasis on life itself, Nietzsche on vitality and health (Rand 1964: 17-18, Norton 1976: 81-82).

Stirner criticized the concept of rights (2016: 165, 174-177), while Rand endorsed it (1964: 108-117). We will again go into the question of rights as you can have an egoist model with or

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without it. I will argue from an egoist position rid of a rights concept, and thus move closer to the position of Stirner than that of Rand in this case.

I will argue that individualism, that is seeing yourself and acting as if you are distinct from any group belonging, is tied with egoism. Important here is learning to free oneself from the worship of, and unconditional loyalty to, abstractions, especially in the form of collectives. We will see that a central part of Stirner's philosophy is the opposition to such abstractions which he called *spooks* (2016: 47-49). Rand likewise opposed what she called *collectivism* (1944, 1964). I will argue that speciesism is collectivist.

The chapter is divided into subchapters on central topics to ethical egoism and which will be useful in building our argument for veganism. Unlike the previous chapter on animal ethics the different philosophers are not given separate sections. The aim here is to build up a model. Since I do not replicate completely the models of any of the philosophers I draw on here, it does not seem necessary to present all their points, but mainly what's relevant for the total.

### The need for egoism

Before proceeding we will take a look at the need for egoism. We have already argued that you may not always benefit from the rights view and especially from utilitarianism. However, there are some things to criticize primarily other-regarding morality for in general. Rand frequently negatively mentions the word «altruism», egoism's anithesis (1964: 34, 38-39, 50, 87, 112, 145). I understand altruism to mean morality placing others above yourself. None of the ethical models we've looked at so far does this exclusively. That is, they do not tell us to *always* put others above ourselves no matter what the case, but rather to do so *when* morality demands it. We are also worthy of consideration ourselves, but must sometimes suppress our self-interest for others (Tjønneland and Sagdahl 2015). Total altruism would demand doing this constantly. This has severe problems.

According to Rand, altruism is what demands rulers and subjects, violators and victims (1993: 637). Villain Toohey in Rand's novel «The Fountainhead», bragging of his successful manipulative achievements explains it thus: «It stands to reason that where there's sacrifice, there's someone collecting sacrificial offerings. Where there's service, there's someone being served. The man who speaks to you of sacrifice, speaks of slaves and masters. And intends to be the master» (Rand 1993: 637). You do not tell someone you love to be your slave and to give up his ego. The dichotomy of domination and submission is what the egoist is to step away

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from. This might sound counter-intuitive, but it will be clear soon that Rand's concept of egoism does not entail domination.

The advocates of egoism want *you* and others to be egoists, thus promoting egoism as a *universal* moral code. Ethical egoism is a recommendation for all to shred submissiveness, slave morality and altruism (Stirner 2016: 145). Stirner puts it to the point: «If submissiveness ceased, it would be over with all lordship» (2016: 168).

J.-M. Kuczynski opines that an ethical system must allow for happiness or flourishing (2016). An ethics that does not, or encourages its adherents to give up their happiness, is evil. What's more, it can not fulfill its own aspirations, if the alleged goal is the common good. How can an ethics pretend to encourage the good, when it asks of its adherents to give up their own good for others (Kuczynski 2016)?<sup>18</sup> If *everyone* followed such a code, *no one* would be happy as everyone had given up their good. Pure, universal, altruism doesn't work.

### The basics of egoism

Egoism comes in many varieties. Christopher Toner identifies twenty-four species of egoism depending on how the egoist conceives his welfare, but also by motivation and justification, as well as strategy (2010: 288). We won't go into these here, but just point out that egoism is not just one thing, but comes in several forms. Although the egoist model we'll use here won't follow any presented philosopher completely, perhaps the biggest influence is the egoist model of Rand.

The Russian-American philosopher Ayn Rand (1905-1982) devised what she considered a *complete* philosophical system called Objectivism. Objectivism has its own epistemology, ethics and political view - that is it endorses laissez faire capitalism. The ethics part, Rand deals with in books like «The Virtue of Selfishness» (1964) and «Philosophy: Who needs It?» (1984). Curiously, Rand presented much of her philosophical ideas through novels such as «The Fountainhead» (1993), originally published in 1943, and «Atlas Shrugged», originally from 1957 (Badhwar & Long 2016).

### Being selfish

One gets a good idea of Rand's ethical egoism when one reads the so-called John Galt pledge, originally from her novel «Atlas Shrugged», quote repeated in «For the New Intellectual»: “I swear – by my life and my love of it – that I will never live for the sake of another man, nor ask another man to live for mine» (Rand 1963: 216). One is not to exist for others, but to exist for

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<sup>18</sup> I do not refer to pages here because Kuczynski's book lacks page numbers.



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one's own sake. This is elaborated further in «The Virtue of Selfishness», and put quite to the point in the following quote: «The basic *social* principle of the Objectivist ethics is that just as life is an end in itself, so every living human being is an end in himself, not the means to the ends or the welfare of others – and, therefore, that man must live for his own sake, neither sacrificing himself to others nor sacrificing others to himself. To live for his own sake means that *the achievement of his own happiness is man's highest moral purpose* [italics in original]» (Rand 1964: 30).

Being an egoist is thus not about dominating, but about letting be, and minding one's own business uninterrupted. It is not about being a brute and just following whatever whim one might get (Rand 1964: xi, 14-15). Rand defines a whim as a «desire experienced by a person who does not know and does not care to discover its cause» (1964: 14). In order to be a true Randian egoist one has to do what is *really* in one's own interest, that is to be *rational* as well (Smith 2007: 19-74).

### The ethical egoist versus the opportunist

In her novel «The Fountainhead», Rand presents several characters that could potentially be called egoists from popular opinion (1993). However, only one of them is a truly ideal ethical egoist, measured by the standards of Objectivism.

Peter Keating and Howard Roark are both aspiring architects (Rand 1993: 31, 36-38). Roark gets expelled from architectural studies because he insists on doing things his own way, and puts scorn on the architectural styles currently in fashion. Now, who is he to look down on centuries of style, and the great masters of the past? All the good stuff has already been done, the architects of today can only improve on what's already done, is the response to his attitude (Rand 1993: 20-27).

Roark keeps insisting on following his own style of modern architecture, and struggles to get commissions, being unwilling to compromise (Rand 1993: 26, 129-133, 161-162, 167-170, 195-197). Initially he's working for others, if not for anything else, than to learn, but when he's self-employed he struggles (Rand 1993: 50, 87-89, 102). He builds the kind of houses his customers want, within the limits of their budgets and serving their purpose, but in his own architectural style (Rand 1993: 577-580). Especially, he objects to add unnecessary decoration and details (Rand 1993: 195-197). After several years he starts to get famous as some people begin admiring his creative work (Rand 1993: 324-325, 387, 513).

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Peter Keating is a «good» boy, doing everything he is supposed to, even though he doesn't feel much joy doing it. He follows the stream and popular sentiment. His mother urges him on and convinces him he is talented and destined to great success. She urges him to make the right moves for advancement and promotion, including marrying the right woman and leaving the girl he is really in love with, as she is not worthy of him (Rand 1993: 35-36, 150-158, 233-235). Keating repeatedly begs for reassurance and admiration, and seems deep down to doubt his own talent. On his way to the top he cheats and manipulates. There is one episode where he threatens the aging co-owner of the architectural firm he's employed by, resulting in that person's cardiac failure and death (Rand 1993: 182-185). Upon this, Keating is made new co-owner of the business and has risen to fame (Rand 1993: 186-187). When observed from outside Keating is an ambitious man who seeks to promote his own career, even though he occasionally voices popular opinion with sympathy for the worse off (Rand 1993: 577). However, while Keating is motivated by external opinion (Rand 1993: 256), Roark doesn't care about it. He just wants to build for his own sake. He doesn't care about people, he cares about buildings and his own creativity (Rand 1993: 577-579). Roark harms nobody, but is narrowly focused on his non-social passion. Keating doesn't really care about architecture, but about power and admiration (Rand 1993: 37). He is people-focused, Roark is not. Keating is willing to directly block others and throw them away, so that he will occupy the number one spot. Roark would never do that, but he is no people pleaser. Keating is shallow, vain, a liar, manipulator and has in reality fragile self-esteem, though he enjoys his success. Roark is Keating's bad conscience in that Keating is disturbed by him and his ideals (Rand 1993:192-194). Roark is the hero of the story, being productive, creative and confident. Keating, although being ruthless and sacrificing others, is still an altruist, that is, the opposite of egoist as his motivation originates outside of himself, in winning others' admiration (Rand 1993: 637, 678-679, 696, Smith 2007: 112)

Life itself is what is valuable

The individual does *not* objectively need others' approval for his life to be valuable. Value lies in life itself and threats to life and happiness are evil. Rand writes: «An organism's life is its *standard of value*: that which furthers its life is the *good*, that which threatens it is the *evil* [emphasis in original]» (1964: 17). Without life, there can be no values, as there will be no one to value, or to whom anything is of concern (Rand 1964: 18).

The furthering of one's life is what's good, not *pleasure* in itself. But then, if we are to be selfish, but not follow our whims, then what is to guide our actions? How are we to know what is in our true interest? By following *reason*. Like other animals we *are* born with a pleasure-

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pain mechanism that guide us. What gives us pleasure most often is good, what gives us pain is detrimental and something to be avoided (Rand 1964: 18-19). However, reason is what should be *the guide* to life, not pleasure. Rand is opposed to hedonism (1964: 32-33).<sup>19</sup> Ethical hedonism is defined by Andrew Moore as «the thesis that all and only pleasure has positive non-instrumental importance and all and only pain or displeasure has negative non-instrumental importance» (2013). People can desire all kinds of things, and these things are not of equal value, as some don't further life, but are detrimental to it (Rand 1964: 33). The man who desires to keep the car he has worked to pay for and own is not equal to the man who has not worked, but desires the car which belongs to the first man. Considering these desires equal, leads to moral cannibalism which necessitates a game of winners and losers, that the happiness of one necessitates the injury of another, as Rand understands it (1964: 33-34). We do not need such a situation.

Important to Rand's philosophy is the idea of values and virtues. This she defined the following way: «*Value* is that which one acts to gain and/or keep – *virtue* is the act by which one gains and/or keeps it» (Rand 1964: 27).<sup>20</sup> Certain values and virtues are especially important. If people would be rational and selfish they'd pursue life promoting values like *reason*, *purpose* and *self-esteem*, and develop their corresponding virtues of *rationality*, *productiveness* and *pride*, according to Rand (1964: 27).

### Virtues of rationality, honesty, productiveness and pride

Rand writes the following about rationality: «The virtue of Rationality means the recognition and acceptance of reason as one's only source of knowledge, one's only judge of values and one's only guide to action. It means one's total commitment to a state of full, conscious awareness, to the maintenance of a full mental focus in all issues, in all choices, in all of one's waking hours» (1964: 28). Pertaining to this is also *honesty*, because the opposite is faking reality, and one ought to stay committed to «the fullest perception of reality within one's power»

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<sup>19</sup> According to Moore, ethical hedonism as well as psychological hedonism can be important to ethical egoism (2013). We did see in the last chapter that there are different versions of utilitarianism and that one of them is hedonist. The same goes for egoism, but hedonism as a concept will not play a role in this thesis. Whether the concept of hedonism really stands in opposition to the theories of philosophers such as Rand, Nietzsche, Stirner and Norton, would depend on how broadly pleasure is conceived, but in defining all things good into it, it seems to me we end up with something less specific than what we get in focusing on more narrow goods like rationality, health, self-interest, individuality and vitality, although we end up with more names of values or goods than we would if we understood it all as pleasure.

<sup>20</sup> Smith, in her book «Ayn Rand's Normative Ethics: The Virtuous Egoist» points out that Rand's understanding of virtue differs from how the concept of virtue is normally understood in philosophy (Smith 2007: 49). It is common to understand virtue as a characteristic of a person, not as an act (Smith 2007: 49). Nyeng understands virtues to mean personality traits or permanent attitudes and skills cultivated through habitualization and later through rational control over impulses to act (1999: 63).

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(Rand 1964: 28). Productiveness allows man to adjust the background of his life to himself, and to sustain his life (Rand 1964: 29). Plants absorb nutrients from the soil, animals hunt for food, and humans *produce* food (Rand 1964: 19). Man is a being of self-made soul, therefore he must develop the virtues that make his life worth sustaining. This is *pride*, or moral ambitiousness. One should aim for moral perfection (Rand 1964: 29).

### Love and friendship

To be rationally selfish does *not* mean one should not help or care for others. However, love and friendship are often misunderstood. These are *selfish* values, according to Rand (1964: 51). One cannot love something one is *disinterested* in, and one does not love that which one is interested in because one hates it or fears it. Selfless love is therefore a contradiction in terms (Rand 1964: 51).

One should keep a hierarchy of personal values, and that which one values the most, one prioritizes. This will often be a friend or a lover. To put something above that which is more important, is a sacrifice, therefore not in the actor's interest, therefore altruist and evil, according to Rand (1964: 50-53). And if one prioritizes something that one really and secretly thinks is less important over that which matters, can one really claim that the over-prioritized is loved? Rather, he becomes a victim of faked reality, fooled by the ingenuine acts of the other.

If one *really* loves somebody, one should take good care of that person. Acting in a way that is detrimental to that person shows a lack of integrity, in that the actor is disloyal to his values. Doing good to a person one loves is not altruism or sacrifice, but helping an enemy or a stranger instead of one's friend or lover, is (Rand 1964: 53).

Interestingly, in his essay «Unrugged Individualism: The Selfish Basis of Benevolence», David Kelley anchors the virtue of benevolence in Randian Objectivist egoism (2003). Benevolence «is a positive attitude toward people in general, a desire for their well-being and for peaceful, cooperative relationships with them» (Kelley 2003: 6%).<sup>21</sup> Benevolence can be divided into sub virtues, like civility, sensitivity and generosity, according to Kelley (2003: 55%). Although we won't go into all of these here, we'll just note that one of the reasons why being benevolent benefits ourselves is that others are potentially valuable and have values to offer us in return for our own (Kelley 2003: 41%). We can mutually benefit from a transaction (Kelley 2003: 46%). The others are separate individuals and appreciate being recognized as such (Kelley 2003:

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<sup>21</sup> The page reference here is a percentage symbol since I use a Kindle version of his book that does not use page numbers but percentage symbols. It works quite the same way as page numbers, however, only that a «percentage» on my screen stretches over what appears to be two «pages».

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45%). We want to show that we acknowledge that those we deal with are dealing with us by choice (Kelley 2003: 56%). Kelley writes: «When I treat others benevolently, I convey to them that I do not see them as threats or as prey, whose success must come at my expense, but as potential allies from whom I seek opportunities for mutual gain» (2003: 46%). Communicating differently, might yield differently. Although the virtue of benevolence won't be held up as something we must stick to for whatever price, it does make sense that treating another well makes it more likely we'll be treated well in return, creating better chances for mutual gain.

### Never sacrifice

So, what about emergencies and strangers? If not a great threat to oneself, one should help strangers in cases of emergency, however, because one should consider strangers innocent or good until proven otherwise. Others are *potentially* valuable (Rand 1964: 54). However, one cannot proceed from this to the idea that one should live one's *entire life* for the benefit of others. Emergency situations are limited in time, and outside of that, it is important that individuals are free to pursue a direction of their choice, uninterrupted by the misfortunes of others (Rand 1964: 54-55).

It is quite alright to help others, and especially to do something that co-incidentally is cherished by others too. What is not okay is to *sacrifice*, that is to perform those same actions when it is detrimental to yourself or others that you care about.

### Health and vitality

Contrary to Rand, I am not altogether convinced that the virtues of rationality, honesty, productiveness and pride will be those most useful in order to further one's life. The suspicion that these are not the most essential virtues targets *productiveness* the most. If I'd find myself in circumstances where I could get by without productiveness, and find no pleasure in being productive, it's not easy to see how I should benefit from it, say in a future world where all is taken care of by robots or contrary in a sort of tropical paradise where fruit and nuts are readily available without me striving.

Due to lack of space I won't go into a detailed discussion on these virtues, but hope that it seems obvious that virtue of *vitality* and value of *health* are important to further one's life. Health and vitality were central concepts to *Nietzsche's* philosophy.

German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche lived from 1844 to 1900 (Wicks 2017). Nietzsche fiercely attacked «conventional morality», that of Christianity and Judaism, which he claimed had turned man's own instincts against himself. In place of the freedom of animals, they leave

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humanity domesticated. The domestication is done with cruelty, by religions telling humans they are depraved, in that to suppress man's nature, which itself can be brutal, violent measures are needed, so that the lessons of culture not be forgotten (Nietzsche 2013: 46-48, 52-53). When humans are not allowed to venture into the world, to war, adventure, excitement and fun, they suppress themselves and verge war on themselves, resulting in a mental torture chamber of bad conscience (Nietzsche 2013: 21, 46-48, 70-71, 78).

*It was man who, lacking external enemies and opposition, and imprisoned as he was in the oppressive confines and monotony of custom, in his own impatience, frustration and rage, lacerated, persecuted, gnawed, frightened and abused himself; it was this animal which is supposed to be 'tamed', which beat itself against the bars of its cage; it was this being who, homesick for that wilderness of which it had been deprived, was compelled to create, out of its own self, an adventure, a torture-chamber, an unknown and perilous wasteland – it was this fool, this despairing and desperate prisoner, who invented 'bad conscience'. Along with it, however, he introduced that grave, insidious illness from which mankind has not yet recovered, the suffering of man from the affliction called man, as the result of a violent break from his animal past, of being plunged into a new environment and new conditions of existence, of a declaration of war against the old instincts, upon which, up to that time, his power, his job, his formidability rested (Nietzsche 2013: 71).<sup>22</sup>*

From a noble past where qualities such as powerful physical development, superb health, beauty and happiness and – curiously – being loved by the gods, were seen as the good, mankind turned against itself by *inverting morality* (Nietzsche 2013: 21-22). Suddenly, the good were not the strong, but the suffering, needy, sick, weak, poor and lowly people in their place (Nietzsche 2013: 22). This started with Judaism but continued with Christianity (Nietzsche 2013: 22-23).

The values of the weak are not the values to live by. The good life is the life which affirms itself and furthers itself. Activity and vitality are important keywords. Activity is part of happiness, and happiness cannot be dissociated from action. This is contrary to the so-called happiness of the weak, which is rest, peace and quiet; passivity, that is (Nietzsche 2013: 26-27, 32-33). However, it is only typical of the weak and sick to seek revenge against those who are happy and healthy. Morality twisted tells the happy to be ashamed of their happiness, since there is so much misery elsewhere (Nietzsche 2013: 110).

«For too long the world has been a madhouse», Nietzsche writes, and refers to the tendency of humans to seem to want to think of themselves as depraved and unworthy (2013: 79). In God, they have created their antithesis, an ideal they can not aspire to, while diabolizing their origin, which is Nature. The believer says no to himself, while affirming God, the punisher and the

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<sup>22</sup> We notice that Nietzsche generalizes on the conditions of humans and talks about «man» in the abstract, something we will later see that Stirner was opposed to.

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judge, the infinite and changeless, which is the opposite of life (Nietzsche 2013: 79, Norton 1976: 80-81). But why would anyone do that to oneself? Modern men inflict cruelty upon their *animal selves* (Nietzsche 2013: 81). It shouldn't be so. But rebelling against the status quo and the slave morality of old would certainly be met with hostility by the world (Nietzsche 2013: 81). The new people are Supermen of the future to whom adventure, danger and pain have become needs (Nietzsche 2013: 81-82, 2003: 41-43).

Animals search for the conditions in which they can assert the most power possible, and find their full strengths, while at the other hand, abhor obstacles and hindrances to this (Nietzsche 2013: 93). Self-actualization leads to finding the *Übermensch*, the higher man, within. First one must release oneself from the fetters of convention, sentiment, guilt and even reason, or thus Norton interprets Nietzsche (Norton 1976: 79). Life is perpetual and driven by will. Life's principle is will to power, to increase, to perfection (Norton 1976: 81). Health is the good that brings about the ascendant vitality (Norton 1976: 82). The source of value is the autonomous individual (Norton 1976: 92).

A test on whether life is lived as it should is Nietzsche's idea of Eternal Return. Who would want to return over and over again to re-live life exactly as it was forever (Norton 1976: 90, Rowlands 2009: 208-212, Nietzsche 1974: 273-274)? Most would probably dislike the thought of having to re-live everything over and over again, but that is a sign life has not been lived well and to the utmost.

From Nietzsche we take the principle of will to power, or vitality. The good that is to be sought is exactly this. The good life wants more of itself, more life, better life and good health. Most living beings can be assumed to have survival instinct. Survival instinct tells the organism to seek life and preserve it. The process of life strengthening is also life itself, and the good that the egoist is to seek. It does not come about automatically.

Again, what this thesis will build on is not some kind of power that is equated with hierarchical domination, but power as strength and vitality, as health, that which is an objective good for the individual egoist.

### Egoism and the concept of rights

#### Max Stirner's arguments against rights

Ethical egoism may and may not include a concept of rights. Stirner recognizes no rights (2016: 165, 174-177) while Rand considered rights vital to human co-existence (1964: 111). Stirner disliked the concept of rights, just as he disliked other abstractions (2016: 267, 290).

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Max Stirner was a German philosopher who lived from 1806 to 1856. The source to his take on egoism is here his book «The Ego and its Own», first released in 1844 under the German title *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* (Leopold 2015).

Stirner writes the following: «I do not demand any right, therefore I need not recognize any either. What I can get by force I get by force, and what I do not get by force I have no right to, nor do I give myself airs, or consolation, with my imprescriptible right» (2016: 177).

Non-tangible, a right, at least in the ethical sense, does not exist independent of those who respect and uphold the right. A conception in the mind, if no-one recognizes the right, thus no longer being in anyone's mind, then where is it to be located? The rights of others, and potentially of oneself, being abstractions to be respected, limit the freedom of the moral agent. This is because they are adhered to and followed.

Even though the abstraction is internalized, it is still in the truest sense external to the individual self. The moral agent places himself *underneath* the concept and lets the concept or belief dictate his actions. Dictating him from above, the concept is unrelated to him, not his own and not egoist. The concept is a *spook*, and is very similar to something religious, a god. The spook is something one submits to. Other «spooks» that are commonly cherished in this world are reason, rationality and capital letter Man (Stirner 2016: 41-51, 267).

And instrumentally speaking, how useful are rights? Assuming rights did positively exist, and that rights were something we just had, like in the Reganian sense we got acquainted with in the last chapter. Say there is such a thing as inherent value and that those who have it also have rights. What use are those rights if no-one respects them? A right is there only so long as those who could violate it, choose not to. Stirner uses old Sparta as an example, where children could be thrown to animals. What was done, was done. Society didn't care to respect those children, and thus didn't assign them rights (Stirner 2016: 165). Stirner died in 1856 and never got to see the atrocities of Nazi Germany's Holocaust, the Soviet Union's gulag camps or the beheadings of the Islamic State. If there was anything like rights to life, these examples show that even if so, they do not offer much protection when those with power choose not to uphold them.

An egoist can do the same to society, and stop respecting authority (Stirner 2016: 174). At Stirner's time, the concept of rights could ring a bit hollow. Capital punishment or death penalty was still in use (Ledford 1998). Stirner writes bitterly that life was only sacred as long as it didn't belong to an inhuman monster. Such a life could just be extinguished (Stirner 2016: 204). Of course, it can be debated whether the rights view allows for capital punishment. Philosopher



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Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), often credited as founder of the rights view definitely thought so (Kant 2005).<sup>23</sup> We could also argue that no-one can take the right to life away from someone, not even the legal system. If we follow the last line of thought, we could say that the legal system at Stirner's time was immoral and did not truly respect rights. Nevertheless, it might still seem that the concept of rights is a fragile protector at the mercy of those who do not care.

Now let's, for the sake of argument, assume that inherent value and rights are things that are really had. If non-human animals have the right to life then, we see how useless their rights are to them because those who could have respected them, choose not to, or simply fail to *recognize* their rights. This failure to recognize rights or to be just, or to respect, is a «failure» that can also harm the egoist. We see what world this is. So why even play that game?

Yet another problem with *rights*, according to Stirner is that we start focusing on the right itself and not what it is intended to instrumentally bring about, and which is what we really want (2016: 51, 139). One thing one might want, for example, is to speak one's mind, and people have often, throughout history and in different places, tried to stop just that. Often someone is stopped from speaking his mind just in order to protect the beloved fixed ideas and abstractions of others (Stirner 2016: 51). Stirner writes:

*What is it then, that is called a «fixed idea»? An idea that has subjected the man to itself. When you recognize, with regard to such a fixed idea, that it is a folly, you shut its slave up in an asylum. [...] Is not all the stupid chatter of most of our newspapers the babble of fools who suffer from the fixed idea of morality, legality, Christianity, and so forth, and only seem to go about free because the madhouse in which they walk takes in so broad a space? Touch the fixed idea of such a fool, and you will at once have to guard your back against the lunatic's stealthy malice. For these great lunatics are like the little so-called lunatics in this point too – that they assail by stealth him who touches their fixed idea. They first steal his weapon, steal free speech from him, and then they fall upon him with their nails. Every day now lays bare the cowardice and vindictiveness of these maniacs, and the stupid populace hurrahs for their crazy measures. One must read the journals of this period, and must hear the philistines talk, to get the horrible conviction that one is shut in a house with fools (Stirner 2016: 51).*

Reading this, you might believe that Stirner advocated free speech. But, although he certainly would want to say freely what he did, «free speech» is just another alienating *concept*. For what is it that you truly want? It is not *the right* to free speech, but to speak your mind just as you want in order to bring about whatever you want to achieve from that. You want to talk freely without bad consequences to yourself. If censure keeps you from speaking your mind, you want

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<sup>23</sup> I refer here to paragraphs on the death penalty originally in Kant's *The Metaphysics of Morals (Part II The Science of Right)*, excerpts translated by Jeremy Anderson, found online at <http://acad.depauw.edu/~jeremyanderson/old/120s05/120home.html> (retrieved 11th of February 2017)

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to fight that power which is above you in order to be free to do what you want. That is quite different from freedom of speech, which is a *common* right. «Of what use is a freedom to you, indeed, if it brings in nothing?» Stirner asks (2016: 139).

The same thing would go for the right to property. You do not need the *right* to property, you want *property* itself (Stirner 2016: 139). The *right* is just a spook, something external, not relevant to the current situation or your *true* wants. You do not want an abstraction. You want the concrete.

Since rights will soon become fixed ideas and venerated abstractions, they will become non-egoist in the sense that they do not serve your ends, but start restricting you instead. One definition of an egoist in *The Ego and its Own* is the following: «A man who, instead of living to an idea, that is, a spiritual thing, and sacrificing to it his personal advantage, serves the latter» (Stirner 2016: 36). Stirner later writes: «Where does unselfishness begin? Right where an end ceases to be our end and our property, which we, as owners, can dispose of at pleasure; where it begins to inspire, enthuse, fantasize us; in short, where it passes into our stubbornness and becomes our – master» (2016: 63). Fighting for or caring for rights, one quickly becomes absorbed in the idea, that which is not oneself.

But can not rights be highly useful too, and be to our advantage? If some of our most cherished rights *are* backed by the law, like the right to life, would it truly be in our interest to challenge them? Is the freedom won from the lack of their restricting properties worth losing the protection they might bestow on us in a functioning society? Even though non-human animals' right to life is not backed by the legal system, at least in *many* countries the right to life of *human* animals *is* backed by what seems to be at *least* relatively, uncorrupt legal systems. Although I realize I could benefit from *not* thinking about my rights all day, I do not see how they are not predominantly in my self-interest. Rand, to whom we again will turn now, would agree.

[Ayn Rand's arguments for rights](#)

Central to Rand's philosophy is the so-called Non-Agression principle. The Non-Agression principle states that no man may *initiate* physical violence, hereunder murder – of human animals, that is (Rand 1964: 36).

Important here is that initiation of force is non-valuable. The murderer seeks to gain something from killing his victim, or a violator seeks to gain something from the violation of his victim. This victim has something because he has produced it, earned it, gained it or developed it in

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himself. The violator has not, and thus is the lesser of the two. The victim has nothing to gain from the violator who tries to get something from a simple act, that the other may have worked for over time. The victim stands to lose values, and in the case of murder, others stand to lose the value that the victim has been in their lives.

A good society protects the victim of violence and considers violence a crime, so that rational and peaceful co-operation may be the norm between human animals. The proper purpose of a government is to protect the right to life of the individual. If it does not, the government is not of value to the individual, or in other words; a non-value (Rand 1964: 36). Since the rational egoist is to treasure what is objectively valuable, and if the potential value of government is to protect innocent lives, it follows that a government which does not uphold the right to life of innocents is not to be supported according to egoism.

The right to life is related to the non-aggression principle. A moral society or country protects the rights of the individual, the smallest minority there is (Rand 1964: 108-112, 154). Man's political rights do not originate from God or from society, but from his own nature, as a society that uphold the right to life and property is the only society that allows man to function according to his nature. Rights are what makes it possible for humans to exist, as humans depend on their lives and their freedom to work for its sustainment, including the result of their labor: their properties (Rand 1964: 111).

The individual must be allowed to act on his own judgment and follow his own course, since reason is located in the individual mind. Acting on reason is what allows the individual to produce, as opposed to merely following instincts or impulses. Production is the specific human way of furthering life (Rand 1964: 19, 29). For this, reason is necessary, and reason does not function under threat and violence. Threat and violence, because anti-reason, are anti-life and not in your interest, given egoism (Smith 2007: 172). It is in your self-interest to avoid violence.

There are great values to living a social life with other humans such as *knowledge* and *trade*. Pertaining to this is the division of labor, which is more efficient than if one man should make everything himself (Rand 1964: 125).<sup>24</sup> If the state can protect against violence and threat, those

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<sup>24</sup> An interesting question is whether the division of labor and the ever increasing specialization in modern society is good for development of character. The Russian philosopher Nikolay Mikhailovsky warned that specialization in the modern economy reduced the individual to something less than he could be. While the economy became more complex, the individual became less so as his activities became less diverse and manifold (Nistad 2004: 151-154).

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things being antithetical to life, then the state is of value. If not, life in society might not be worthwhile.

Life on a desert island would be preferable to a life in a collectivist, totalitarian society like the Soviet Union or Nazi Germany, as in such societies, the values of human coexistence are destroyed. Totalitarian societies are threats to man's survival, not means for it (Rand 1964: 126). Rand was, however, not just opposed to totalitarian governments, but also to anarchy. Without the state upholding valuable rights such as the right to life, we'd be at risk of becoming victims to those wanting war and murder. Even if everyone was peaceful, we'd still need an arbiter for «honest disagreements among men» (Rand 1964: 131).

#### Egoism without rights

I could be prejudiced in believing that I stand to gain from living in a system that upholds basic rights over an anarchist one. Rand's and Regan's positions seem better suited to create a harmonious world than Stirner's. It would be interesting to follow the route of simply incorporating animal rights into Rand's ethical egoism and see if Rand's and Regan's positions could somehow be combined. Still, there is the question why we stand to gain from respecting rights that are not backed by law.

Rand's way of arguing for rights is flawed in that it falls for the argument from marginal cases. It may well be that the majority of humans further their lives by being productive as opposed to merely hunt or gather fruits and vegetables from nature. It may well be that most humans are rational and that their master tool, reason, necessitates peace and non-cohesion to flourish. It might well be that most humans stand to gain from co-operating with each other. But then there are also exceptions. There are the humans who are born irrational, who will remain so and whose mode of survival will never be, and could not be, to follow reason. Rather they will be at the mercy of other human beings and have to rely on those people's sympathy for others to procure what they need for survival. They depend on our mercy or our bleeding hearts, on our care.

On the other hand, it seems obvious that also non-human animals would do better if they are left alone and not killed.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> I can anticipate a certain contra-argument here. That is that overpopulation may lead to some individual animals starving to death. Protecting their lives from hunting with a right, might not make them «do better», if the alternative to being killed by a human is starvation. Well, at the very least it is obvious that *the* starving animal would live at least a little longer if nobody shot her, and secondly that even though a *population* is struggling, that doesn't mean that a random *individual* is, or would be. In fact one might be shooting an individual who otherwise would have survived the famine. If one already knew with certainty

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Most likely, all readers of this text will be human. None of us would lose a right ourselves from denying the rights to non-human animals, but neither would we by denying rights to those marginal human cases that we will never become.

I do not wish to settle this debate in favor of abolishing *legal* rights. Intuitively I sense that living in a world with some legal constrictions will be preferable to one without. In a world where all were ethical egoists I would still vote for supplementing ethics with laws and having at least a minimum of legal protection. It is, however, not my aim here to convince anyone about this. I do think though, that an ethical egoist argument for veganism would be stronger without the concept of rights. The argument would be simpler without it. Perhaps would it also be more convincing, because we escape the problems with the concept of rights. Therefore I will lean towards Stirner's view for the rest of the thesis. I do emphasize though, that this is in the ethical sphere. Although we'll, for the sake of argument, concur that rights make no sense in the ethical field, that does not mean that we can not have *legal* rights, even be it only because convenient.

Although this is how I conclude the rights debate, I will continue discussing some problems with Rand's way of arguing for rights, not to further strengthen the case against ethical rights, but rather because her view is speciesist. I will argue that speciesism is a version of *collectivism*, just as racism is, something Rand was very opposed to. One reason to eschew speciesism will be that it is collectivist, that is anti-individualist.

#### Collectivism is bad and speciesism is collectivist

Giving an individual special treatment because he is of a certain species, while lacking any relevant criteria, seems to be a form of collectivism, if we use the first part of a Rand definition from 1944: «Collectivism means the subjugation of the individual to a group — whether to a race, class or state does not matter» (Rand 1944). Interestingly, if we maintain that non-human animals can be individuals, Rand seems to reserve individualism for human animals, in what follows: «Collectivism holds that man must be chained to collective action and collective thought for the sake of what is called ``the common good''» (Rand 1944).

Rand did not do any writing on speciesism. The term, however, was coined before her death in 1982. According to Ellefsen, the term «speciesism» was first mentioned in book form by

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that the very individual was about to suffer and die painfully, then we are talking about euthanasia which I understand to mean mercy killing of individuals who will never recover from a painful, probably progressing, condition. Even if we were to accept euthanasia, we can not automatically proceed from there to say that it is also okay to kill *healthy* animals.

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Richard D. Ryder in 1970, while Singer's book «Animal Liberation» was released in 1975 (Ellefsen 2013: 97). The term of course took time to get widespread, and my impression is that it is still not as known as say racism, sexism or homophobia. Rand *did*, however, write about *racism*, with much condemnation. In the first chapter we saw that Singer compared speciesism to racism and sexism. We'll assume that there is sense to the comparison, and in order to get a better grip on Rand's views on collectivism, we'll take a further look at what she had to say about racism.

### Racism

In «The Virtue of Selfishness» Rand devotes one chapter to racism (1964: 147-157). She writes:

*Racism is the lowest, most crudely primitive form of collectivism. It is the notion of ascribing moral, social or political significance to a man's genetic lineage – the notion that a man's intellectual and characterological traits are produced and transmitted by his internal body chemistry. Which means, in practice, that a man is to be judged, not by his own character and actions, but by the characters and actions of a collective of ancestors* (Rand 1964: 147).

Minds can not be collective and a thought always originates in *one* mind. Achievements are individual too. A culture is only the total of all the achievements of individuals. One should not take pride in something one didn't do, as one either has achieved something or one has not. A *collectivist* however, takes pride in the achievements of others. Collectivism allows a person to be part of something that is not rightfully his. It was the individual Leo Tolstoy who wrote «War and Peace», not the Russian people. Ascribing virtues to racial origin, according to Rand, is to confess one doesn't know how to acquire virtue, and therefore, probably has failed to gain them oneself (1964: 149).

Collectivism is a quest for the unearned, for automatic self-esteem (Rand 1964: 149). The one who has achieved nothing, can take pride in what others have achieved, by defining himself into a collective group, by joining a tribe. Mocking racists in the South of the US, Rand writes that racism is more prevalent among white trash, than the intellectual betters (1964: 149). For people of limited intelligence, a race is after all not a very demanding group to belong to and take pride in (Rand 1964: 151). Another tenet of racism is, of course, looking down on the other tribes one does not belong to oneself, a thing one can do without achieving much individually (Rand 1964: 149).

The only proper antidote to racism is individualism – to see everyone as an individual with right to his own life (Rand 1964: 150). No group can have rights or privileges that another has not – only the individual holds rights (Rand 1964: 150). Racism, according to Rand, is an irrational and morally contemptible form of collectivism (Rand 1964: 149, 156).

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Speciesism in Rand's egoist philosophy

It was Rand's view that «Man» is to be treated differently because «Man» is the rational animal, capable of reason (1964: 111, Smith 2007: 44-45, 54, 57).

But what do we say about those marginal human cases where the human animals in question are not rational (Singer 2015: 18-19)? And furthermore, what do we say about those human beings who never will and never could become rational or develop the capacity for reason?

Some humans are recently born. They are infants whose brains are not yet developed. Some humans have far developed Alzheimer's disease or have impaired cognitive abilities for other reasons (alz.org). If we say that they should have the right to life, or right to freedom from certain kinds of maltreatment, we cannot ground this in their capacity for *reason*, as they either don't have it, or cannot be relied on to utilize it consistently. Some humans are born with severe, irreparable brain damage and are therefore less capable of reason than say, most crows, who in some cases make tools and seem to have their own languages (Sawyer 2016). Saying humans should have rights *only* because they are human is *speciesism*, special treatment because of belonging to a certain species (Singer 2015: 6).

On the other hand, non-human individuals are treated differently, even killed and eaten by humans where there is no objective need for it, just because they belong to the wrong group, that is just because they *are* nonhuman animals.

It must either be admitted that the exclusive right of *humans* to life is conceded just because we want to, or something must be adjusted in *how* we ground their rights. Other criteria, such as the ability to feel pleasure and pain, are shared with most nonhuman animals, and there might be humans who have these abilities to lesser extent, such as human animals who cannot feel physical pain upon injury, or who have certain mental illnesses which preclude feeling of joy – like depression – or strong feelings altogether – like Schizoid personality disorder might do (Gluck 2016, Rand 1964: 19).

To me – it seems quite obvious, following the argument from marginal cases, that speciesism is a form of collectivism. Rand's point that humans are animals of reason, does not hold for *all* humans. To be fair, Rand was very well aware of, and severely critical of, the fact that many humans do not *behave* rationally (1964: 22-23). Some humans, however, will also lack the *ability* to be rational altogether and has little choice in exerting a potential for rational thought, when this potential simply does not exist. These particular humans are *not* rational animals. The alleged rationality of the human majority does not mystically encompass the irrational minority

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*just because* of them being classified human. Therefore, any special treatment due rational animals because of their rationality, will not be due these particular irrational humans. Just as property rights would be irrelevant to a person with no property, rights due animals of reason would not apply to an animal without reason. It is inconsistent to let irrational individuals freeride on privileges awarded those who are rational, just because of them sharing the group membership of the species. Grounding human rights in a capacity for reason that is not shared by all humans is collectivist because one lets individuals freeride on characteristics of *other* group members, when they themselves do not share these characteristics. What they share is belonging to the same group, or the same collective, not the supposedly important characteristic. Interestingly, Stirner, way ahead of his time, thought a lot about species membership. His fundamental individualism was also impressively non-speciesist.

True individuality

Importantly, Stirner also considered veneration of the species, of Man as a category, a spook, just like he did with the concept of rights (2016: 151).

«Man with the great M is only an ideal, the species only something thought of», writes Stirner (2016: 158).

The emphasis on humanity, *the human religion*, is only an evolution of the spook of Christianity, that to be children of God gave a certain value, according to Stirner (2016: 151-153). Stirner wrote about «liberalism», but I interpret him to use the term more like an equivalent to what we today would call humanism. Anyways, with «liberalism» all humans were included, whereas before those who were *not* children of God, for one or another reason, were excluded (Stirner 2016: 151). This widening out of the moral community had its problems, however.

Deriving value from being a «Man», makes the individual appear as Man, as a species, not as the individual he really is (Stirner 2016: 151-152). Stirner writes: «You see in me not me, the bodily man, but an unreal thing, the spook, a Man» (Stirner 2016: 152).

«The human» as concept can not describe truly what we are (Stirner 2016: 152). The concept of «Man» is merely an essence of what all humans are *considered* to have in common, and to look for this in another actually existing man, is to place the rest of him *below* that concept. Thus, there was something quite like a religion (Stirner 2016: 153). A state-religion for all the humans, excluding only the un-men, those men who are thrown into prison because they do not qualify to be full members of the human society (Stirner 2016: 153-154).



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Appreciating each other for the same characteristics, those of Man, makes us see the same in each other. Instead of seeing different people, we see the concept of Man, thus *homogenizing* the individuals into the mass of the species (Stirner 2016: 155).

The state demands that its citizens are «humans» and do what is expected of them, and also, that its citizens not act in ways detrimental to society – the inviolability of the state and society is to be sacred for the individual, as its laws must be abided by (Stirner 2016: 155-156). Humanism is just yet another spook. A convenient one for co-existence in the state, however. Stirner uses as an example that of Jews and Christians. Philosopher Bruno Bauer had supposed that if just the Jews and Christians would give up their «essences» and put *humanity* above their different religions, then co-existence would be easier (Stirner 2016: 157). This was, however, just reconceptualizing, rewriting of basic constructed identity in order to make the foundation for a new tribe.

Stirner opposed complete democracy, or as he called it – *anthropocracy* (2016: 157). He writes: «People would like to give every man an affluence of all good, merely because he has the title «man.» But I put the accent on me, not on my being man» (Stirner 2016: 157).

Nothing is to be holy to the egoist, nothing above him, so goes for the species (Stirner 2016: 159).

It is sometimes said that the human being is the only species that has its life presented as a task for it (Norton: 1976: 27-28, 1996: 92), something Rand quite endorsed (1964: 20-21). Stirner pointed out just that, but understood this task be a grave mistake and not something we should buy into (2016: 265-266).

No sheep or dog have their essences appearing to them as tasks. They are just satisfied being what they are. That, however, is not to be just another ideal for humans, but the training for any ideal or realizing of truth or essence should be dropped. Dogs are trained to be something else than they would have been if let to themselves, but this is *not for their own sakes*. They are trained to be *companionable to humans* (Stirner 2016: 265-266).

So, then, what if we stopped identifying with the species altogether and put the accent on us being individuals? What if the typical of the species is no longer seen as normative? How much would that change? And especially, what happens if we do not look for the essence of the species in other individuals, but their true individuality? Seeing each other without the prejudice of species, could we find other ways of relating? Could it be that speciesism is also in the way

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of seeing each other for what we truly are, thereby destroying all the possibilities of relating that could otherwise have been?

Stirner was not opposed to relating to others or to caring. Actually, one of the problems with the abstractions, as he saw it, is that they also hide from us what is truly our reality, and alienates us from each other (Stirner 2016: 151). Veneration of generic «Man», «Family» or «People» and obsession with these categories cloud from us the realities of the individuals who embody them. Stirner writes that if he cherishes and loves someone, then it is not for their category, for their higher essences, but «from egoistic pleasure; you yourself with your essence are valuable to me, for your essence is not a higher one, is not higher and more general than you, is unique like you yourself, because it is you» (2016: 49).

This is the view of individuals, a category to which also non-humans can belong, that we will keep for the rest of the thesis.

### [The relationship between egoism and individualism](#)

The concepts of egoism and individualism are related but not similar. You can have an ethical individualist model that is not consistently *egoist*.

David L. Norton's (1930-1995) ethical individualism differs quite from those of Rand, Stirner and Nietzsche in that Norton didn't consider his philosophy egoist and clearly disapproved of the concept of egoism (1976: 43-44). Furthermore, Norton's individualism, in my interpretation, is more about finding one's place *in* society, in that one seeks out one's own mission, direction and vocation. One is to find out how best to realize one's own potential of excellence. The different «destinies» that Norton writes about clearly places the individual in a position within a larger system of people (Norton 1976: 25). Norton writes the following: «Moral individuality is moral irreplaceability; it means that each person is in himself an irreplaceable end in a system of ends» (1976: 281). Norton's understanding of individualism is more in the line of promoting self-knowledge, finding one's talents, so that one does the best one can do. There is clearly a recipient *other* than the actor himself. Thus Norton's philosophy is not egoist, but, being inspired by Greek ancient philosophy, it encourages the individual to get to know himself and develop himself (Norton 1976: 8). One is to live a life with integrity, and to be self-directed (Norton 1976: 8-9, 197-198). The dichotomy of egoism and altruism is altogether false, according to Norton (1995: 7). The individual is to find the good in himself and develop it. However, this is regardless of the *opinions and wishes of others*. The individual is to be autonomous, but this is not the same as egoistic.

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In Norton's ethical individualism everyone is potentially excellent in their own unique way. It's a form of subjectivism, since it says so little of what is *universally* good. Different virtues and capacities can be of use to different people in different settings (Norton 1976: 10-11). The imperative is to live one's life authentically by listening to one's inner daimon. If you live as others tell you, you live inauthentically and falsely as you abdicate from your own life, intending to replicate another's (Norton 1976: 8, 14). Norton writes: «Self-knowledge is the precondition of knowledge of other things, and truth to oneself is the precondition of truthfulness to others. The source of truth and reality in the world is the reality individuals give to their lives by each living the truth that is his own» (Norton 1976: 8). If you live falsely, this life will be a bad one, as it is not yours to live. Still, others should look at you like a potentially unique excellence, who could be behaving responsibly (Norton 1976: 8-11, 157). In a good relation, one tries to help the other achieve his own best potential, and live up to his own values and destiny. One encourages and tries to help the other on. People are worthy of respect even though their potential has not been actualized, because of the value of that very potential which is innate and located in the individual (Norton 1976: 157).

This thesis relies on the validity of the concept of egoism, and will not consider the dichotomy of egoism and altruism false, although Norton's approach may very well be a good one. Norton seems to encourage a kind of open-mindedness and being nonjudgmental when meeting others. Instead of dismissing their current state as a failure, one is to remember that things can still *potentially* be different. Along with what we have already learned from Stirner, I think that this open-mindedness can be of great use to the moral agent who through this may be better equipped to benefit from others in that they are not blindly dismissed on prejudice, something that could deprive the agent of great opportunities.

Nathaniel Branden, who has contributed with some chapters to Ayn Rand's «The Virtue of Selfishness» defined individualism the following way: «As an ethical-psychological concept, individualism holds that man should think and judge independently, valuing nothing higher than the sovereignty of his intellect» (Branden 1964: 158).

I think this will often lead the agent to make decisions different from those considered common in his society, as thinking and judging independently is different from acting on shared convictions, prejudice or custom. Of course, one's own judgment could overlap with those of custom or culture. Also, being egoist will often make one act differently, as one acts on self-interest that may very well cause one to do things out of custom. «Constantly» asking oneself what really benefits oneself, would probably lead to novel ways of acting, too.

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One can argue that there are times when it is not in one's self-interest to be individualist. This is when there is a law against what one would otherwise consider the right thing to do and the punishment for breaking the law is high enough to outweigh the good results one would get from pursuing the action. Judgmental people could also react negatively to something you consider good, even when it is legal, thus injuring you socially and by this perhaps procluding your way to a higher value.

The ethical model we'll rely on here is first and foremost egoist, but we'll assume that it is most often to one's advantage to be individualist and that acting on self-interest often will lead to one also acting individualistically, often deviating from social norms. We'll assume that it is to one's self-advantage to approach others with openness and not with prejudice, as seeing others for what they really are and potentially could be, allows us to profit more from our relations to them.

### Summary

In this chapter we've taken a look at ethical egoism in order to prepare ourselves for making an argument for dietary veganism from an egoist approach.

Egoism is an ethical model stating that you should do what benefits yourself. What benefits yourself is pursuing what is valuable. That which is valuable is not to be traded in for that which is less valuable or not valuable. You are always to increase value. Your every choice may not immediately reap in an award, but what you do should benefit yourself long term.

Giving up something valuable for something that is less, is a sacrifice. This is immoral according to egoism.

What benefits yourself could be many things, but first and foremost you are to further your life and increase your value supply. Important for this is health and vitality. They are supreme values.

Rationality and reason are important for you to determine what is in your interest.

Egoism is closely tied to individualism. You benefit from meeting others as individuals and seeing yourself as an individual, following your own reason and determination. Collectivism, individualism's antagonist concept is relating to oneself as a group member and putting the norms of the group above one's own judgment. Relating to others as collectives rather than individuals is also collectivist. This will often be linked to prejudice. Racism and speciesism are examples of collectivist doctrines and are inconsistent with individualism.

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Now, this is what we will build on when approaching the issue of dietary veganism, to which we will turn in the next chapter. There we will also look on how we relate to non-human animals in general, as this is tied to the question of dietary veganism.

## Chapter 3: The immorality of eating meat

### Introduction

In this chapter, we will look at the egoist case for dietary veganism itself. It will also be discussed whether the moral choice is to give up all animal products or just some. It will be argued that since egoism holds that an action is to benefit the one who performs it, the correct action depends on context and the interests of the moral agent. However, in most cases, it will seem like giving up meat as well as most probably other animal products too, will be the moral choice given egoism. In other words, being vegan benefits yourself and is a better choice than continuing to eat meat. We remember that you are to pursue values and never sacrifice a higher value for a non-value. We remember that health and vitality are important values because they further your life. For most people other individuals are also valuable in that they can be good company. We have assumed subscribing to individualism for the most part benefits yourself over collectivism. We have also abandoned speciesism since speciesism is collectivist and unfounded. In this chapter I will argue that an animal individual who is alive most probably can be of great value to you.

It *is*, however, *possible* that you are unable to bond with nonhuman animals. In that case, it is possible that the living nonhuman animal can not be a value to you. However, I will also argue that a nonvegan diet, and especially one containing meat, is less valuable than a vegan diet, since it seems to be less health promoting. In any case, you continuing to eat meat is you acting self-detrimentally. If living animals could be a value to you, it makes your sacrifice even greater, and thus more immoral. This chapter is divided into two main parts. The first is built up around the value of the living nonhuman animal, the second around the nonvalue of the dead animal.

### 3.1. Value of the living individual

#### Britney and the burning house

We'll start off this with an imagined emergency case to illustrate principles. Instead of the often used lifeboat analogy, where you are on a lifeboat with limited space for saving all involved in an emergency, we will be using a burning house in the place of the sea and strong biceps in the place of lifeboats. Now, let's conjure up a fictitious ideal human animal egoist, who we decide to call Britney. Britney may happen to like one individual – Wallace –but dislike another – Frida. Britney can explain that she dislikes Frida because Frida calls her names and puts out false rumours about her. In one case, those rumours happened to make someone she was particularly interested in turn away from her. She was not able to convince that person that

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Frida was lying. Frida detracts values from Britney's life, and therefore is not valuable to Britney. Britney would be better off without Frida.

Wallace, on the other hand, has been there for Britney regardless of the rumours. He has listened through all her complaints. Wallace has been watching movies with her, gone for walks with her, and has even been there while she was sick and had to be home from work.

Now, let's just jump into the emergency. For reasons we need not go into, Britney, Frida and Wallace happen to visit a burning house. Or, to be somewhat less far out, a house or a shop that isn't already burning, but which starts to do so as soon as Britney, Frida and Wallace happen to be inside of it together. Britney is suddenly a super woman heroine who must choose to save either Frida or Wallace from the fire. She doesn't have time to save both because the house will soon be all fire and then break down. She has strong arm muscles however, and is strong enough to carry one of them out of the house while running. She needs to decide whom to save, and she must do it quick before the house burns down, crumbles to ashes or explodes altogether.

Wallace is a value in Britney's life. He makes her life better. Frida detracts happiness from it. Of course, that could change if she saves her. After the eventual rescue, Frida could suddenly be all grateful. However, Britney knows what malice Frida is capable of, and there is no reason to expect Wallace to stop being her friend if she saves him. Britney needs to act, so she grabs Wallace with her strong arms and runs for safety. Behind her, the house crackles and collapses. The smoke is grasping for the sky while the house burns down with Frida in it. After regaining some strength Britney and Wallace can soon go home – or to a ward being checked for damage from smoke and shock.

Incidentally, Wallace is a pig animal. Some could be appalled by Britney's decision to save Wallace, but she couldn't care less. She knew she made the right decision. Wallace is after all a great value to her, and he is an individual she greatly treasures. One could call it loyalty to one's friends. However, Britney chooses not to. She calls it egoism, and she is not ashamed of it.

Gary L. Francione uses the analogy of the burning house in his book «Introduction to Animal Rights: Your Child or the Dog?» where he points out that it seems to be a common intuition that one would save the child if one had to save either one's child or dog from a burning house.

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However, it might not have been so clear if the dog was familiar to us, and the human not, or if the human was known and happened to be Hitler (Francione 2000: xxii, 161-162).<sup>26</sup>

If Britney were to choose saving Frida over Wallace, even if Frida were not Hitler's reincarnation, it would be acting against her own interests: a *sacrifice*, that is. As said, Frida could change after being the beneficiary of a potential great act of heroism, but she could hardly be expected to move in with Britney or go for walks with her. That means, even if Frida were to change, she could hardly be expected to surpass Wallace as a value in Britney's life. Reflecting further, Britney figures Frida's ill behavior originates from bad traits that probably is quite ingrained in her personality. It would be ill advised to promote such traits by putting the person having them above the individual who did not. Keeping the bad traits of Frida, while sacrificing the good nature of Wallace would make the world a lesser place even if Britney wasn't acquainted with any of them. Britney wants to live in the best world possible and she realizes this world needs to have the best individuals possible in it, so that total value of the world to her be maximized.

Britney sees no value in conflicts or drama obstructing progress and productivity, unless they can lead to something better in the long run for herself, directly or indirectly. Of course, Wallace could also change for the worse in the future, but Britney considers the proof of the here and now more reliable than the future possibilities and in a choice between whether to base her decision on what's known in the now or what could be, she opts for the now.

Britney does not discriminate according to species. What species another individual belongs to is totally irrelevant. What is interesting is whether they are good or bad to *her*, directly or indirectly. If they are non-values, she does not care for them.

Wallace is one of the most important individuals in Britney's life, and she sees no reason why it should not be so. The human animals that she has been told by speciesist collectivists is to be placed above one of her best friends are for the most part of minimal concern to her.

Most individuals do not play a major direct role in her life, as there are so many billions of them in the world. Even if she wanted to, she'd be unable to meet them. Thus they are of lesser concern, as their actions don't affect her directly. However, their flourishing might affect her indirectly in that their operating to the best of their capacities will result in them being more

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<sup>26</sup> Francione suggests it might also be right to help an unknown non-human animal – he uses a chimpanzee and a dog as examples – over an unknown human animal, if one knew that the human animal would have short time left to live after surviving, while the non-human animal was perfectly healthy (2000: 161-162).



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productive or successful, contributing to the well-functioning of the world as such, of which she is a part. Still, the wellbeing of the unknown individuals will probably impact less upon her than the wellbeing of those she *does* know. They are not of *direct* value to her, although they *potentially* could be. However, she would be behaving in a detrimental way towards herself were she to favour an unknown over a known individual who even contributes to her own wellbeing in a substantial way.

What could be argued here is that a human animal's potential contribution to her is so much higher than a non-human animal's contribution, based on those abilities that some humans are capable of having, such as inventing great things that will be of use to oneself, or being a good conversation partner, performing a service or being a sexual partner. I think it is fair to assume that it would be quite a stretch to expect these things from non-human animals.

But then there are also *vices*, that is bad character traits negatively affecting self or others, that most non-humans cannot be expected to have, as well as abilities that human animals for the most part lack. While there is a potential for what by most would probably be seen as good, or valuable, available to some or even a majority of humans, thus putting them in another category than most or even all non-humans, depending on the «virtue» in mind, the non-human animals who would lack the virtue potential of some or most human animals, would also lack certain potentials for vice. Engaging with the non-human animal will therefore implicate engaging with an individual who guarantees never to display that vice or bad action. One obvious is lying or any kind of abuse that necessitates human language, like emotional abuse by verbal bullying: the conscious or subconscious attempt by one human to curtail another's self esteem or drag down the other with words. Rowlands writes that the human animal is the animal that manufacture weakness (2009: 103). Nature is brutal, but humans are exceptional in that they may not only exploit the weak, but they may also *create* the weak (Rowlands 2009: 103-104). Humans are apes, creatures that Rowlands, perhaps misanthropically, writes the following about: «The schemes and the lies of an ape are its attempt to make apes that are stronger than it weaker than it. The ape in us is always alive to the possibility of engineering weakness in other apes. It is always watching for an opportunity to practise evil» (Rowlands 2009: 104). While we may protest that this is to take an exaggeratedly grim view of ape nature, and of course that ape individuals differ from one another, it is certain that some «evils» humans may fall prey to, are only, as far as we know, possible at the hands – or mouths – of other humans. So if one tries to argue that human animal potential is greater than nonhuman animal potential, hopefully not

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forgetting about marginal cases, it should be noted that if there is potential for greater, or simply different, good, there is also potential for greater, or simply different, evil.

Then there are also human goods that may be wanted at times but unwanted at other times. Conversation and the ability to understand and communicate in a human language, could be either a good thing or a bad thing depending on what one seeks from an encounter with another individual. There could be times when verbal communication is not wanted, for example when one wants to sit down in silence together with someone without it feeling awkward. Also, as we've seen above, the quality of conversation, and the intentions behind verbal utterings may vary, some of which may perhaps never be desirable to us.

The potentials for good, bad and context relative traits and actions in or from human and nonhuman animals is a big topic, and I won't go as deep into it here as the subject deserves. Although now tapping into the dichotomy between human and nonhuman animals, the point is that some of what is potentially valuable in nonhuman animals is precisely that which is not human, that which is different from ourselves, what we don't already have, what we could never be, that which could never be us.

### Seeing nonhuman animals as individuals

Are we able to meet non-human animals as individuals and see beyond the essentialized species concepts we've made? Could encounters with non-human animals be different if we change our expectations? Indeed, American psychology and sociology professor Melanie Joy writes that we *have* deindividualized at least the animals we eat (2011: 119). Most people probably think of, say, pigs raised for meat, not as individuals, but abstractions or a group (Joy 2011: 119). If we started looking for the individual characteristics in other animals, we might come upon abilities, or if you wish – virtues and vices – that vary from individual to individual, within and without one single species. According to Joy, both countless numbers of her students as well as meat cutter and meat eater interviewees in her own research, have stated they felt unable to consume a particular animal upon getting to know that «food» animal as an individual (2011: 119). So – the behavior changed after meeting the animal in a way that made it emotionally hard to eat him.

Some good things to be gained from non-human animals could be companionship on walks or longer trips, companionship in the house, on activities like watching TV, body contact or aesthetic value. Another value could be *novelty* in that the non-human animal might be so different from the human as to be amusing. Seeing the same and relating the same to everyone

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could be tiring, repetitive and monotonous, depending on one's ability to appreciate difference. With *difference* comes something new entirely and therefore there could perfectly well be qualities in *inter-species relations* that only with difficulty could be replicated on *intra-species level*, that is *within* species.

It is often repeated as nauseam how important humans are for each other, but the importance of non-human individuals to human individuals is seldom stressed as much. Throughout thousands of years of human existence, relations have been close also with non-human animals although they have been relations based on human utility. Now, lots of people lack relations with nonhuman animals altogether. Martha C. Nussbaum, however, writes about relationships across species, and how they can be something *good*. The lack of such relationships can constitute a *deprivation* the deprived individual is unaware of (Nussbaum 2007: 386). If we no longer *need* to relate to animals as milk machines or future food or clothing, the road could be clear for *new ways of relating*.

Looking for what people find unique in their encounters with individuals from other species would be very interesting, and maybe a start for thinking about this afresh.

It is possible that some will find this approach somewhat reminiscent of «ethics of closeness» and the positions associated with philosophers Emmanuel Levinas and Knud Ejler Løgstrup (Nyeng 1999: 109). Their approach to ethics warns against abstract principles, but want to anchor ethics in the concrete meeting between a subject and his other, perceiving the other as a mystery, and a person who we stand responsible for given our interrelatedness (Nyeng 1999: 109-121). The «other» is unique and compels you in his being so different from yourself (Nyeng 1999: 111-112). Although it may be argued that this position is less abstract and perhaps less collectivist than say, utilitarianism, as it speaks of the other as a unique individual, it is other-related and altruist in that it, according to Nyeng, posits egoism as a moral failure and considers realization of one's *social* lifeform pertinent (1999: 119). It can be that the way this model counsels relating to others serves one better than the adherence to suprapersonal principles or prejudiced collectivism. The reason why you, perhaps, should relate to others appreciating their uniqueness differ, however. In egoism this is because it potentially benefits yourself, in ethics of closeness it is because of your responsibility for the other (Nyeng 1999: 121). While assuming responsibility for others is not an egoist primary, but an optional choice, you can still appreciate the uniqueness of others and be consistent with egoism because of the value the others constitute *to yourself*.

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I will now proceed to provide some examples from literature of relations between humans and nonhumans where it is clear that the humans cherish the other animal individual. One of these examples is fictitious and two of them examples of relations from real life.

Gail Wynand and the alley cat

One of the characters, Gail Wynand, in Rand's «the Fountainhead», says the following about the good qualities of a cat he used to «have»:

*I had a kitten once. The damn thing attached itself to me – a flea-bitten little beast from the gutter, just fur, mud and bones – followed me home, I fed it and kicked it out, but the next day there it was again, and finally I kept it. I was seventeen then, working for the Gazette, just learning to work in the special way I had to learn for life. I could take it all right, but not all of it. There were times when it was pretty bad. Evenings, usually. Once I wanted to kill myself. Not anger – anger made me work harder. Not fear. But disgust, Howard. The kind of disgust that made it seem as if the whole world were under water and the water stood still, water that had backed up out of the sewers and ate into everything, even the sky, even my brain. And then I looked at that kitten. And I thought that it didn't know the things I loathed, it could never know. It was clean – clean in the absolute sense, because it had no capacity to conceive of the world's ugliness. I can't tell you what relief there was in trying to imagine the state of consciousness inside that little brain, trying to share it, a living consciousness, but clean and free. I would lie down on the floor and put my face on that cat's belly, and hear the beast purring. And then I would feel better.... There, Howard. I've called called your office a rotting wharf and yourself an alley cat. That's my way of paying homage (Rand 1993: 544).*

Of course, even if relating to non-human animals in non-prejudicial ways and with an eye to how they can enrich our lives, there is still a risk of great *asymmetry* in the relations. Remember that according to ethical egoism, if you don't find anything of value in another individual, there is no reason you should waste your time on him.

That said, we remember Rand's points that a relation need not be constituted of master and slave, or winner and loser (1993: 637). Both constituents of a relation can profit simultaneously. One example of an inter-species encounter where both seem to profit is when a human individual gives food to one or several duck individuals. The duck individual gets food easily, when he otherwise most probably would have had to use more time to obtain it. The human individual could be entertained by the encounter with the duck as it could be of interest to see how confident the duck would seem in the encounter, as well as being able to study the different creature closer than would probably be possible without feeding him. Unlike in the meat industry, the duck is left to pursue his activities at own will after feeding and has not lost neither freedom nor will he lose his life as a result of the relation. One problem could be if the food given is not easily digested or even toxic to the duck, like some foods that are safe for human animals could be unsafe for some non-human animals, like the sugar alcohol sweetener xylitol

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which is safe to eat for human animals but toxic to dogs (Jason 2015). Of course, the chances for mutual benefit thus increases if there is knowledge and good intention for the other. If now one asks why you, according to ethical egoism could care about the other, it is because the other is potentially a value and the world is better for you if that value is kept. The closer you are to that other and the more he means to you, the bigger the loss if he was lost.

Some of the other already common relations between human and non-human animals *could* in some cases be to mutual advantage, such as that of keeping companion animals. Being companions is one way of relating that could be more meaningful than that between a human eater and the dead nonhuman he is eating.

Nils Uddenberg and the occupant cat

Many humans have had the companionship of one or several cats. Therefore, the possibility of relating to a cat individual as a companion is not altogether novel or unknown. In his book «Mannen og katten – en kjærlighetshistorie», retired psychiatrist Nils Uddenberg writes about how a young cat convinced him and his wife to take her into their home in Lund, Sweden, despite him never intending to have a pet or companion animal (2014)<sup>27</sup>. In his younger days, Uddenberg had even used performed scientific experiments on cats (2014: 13).

The cat first showed up on a gate outside their bedroom window one morning in a cold October (Uddenberg 2014: 8-9). Understanding that the cat had taken up residency in a basket in their outside shed, the couple decided to at least replace the gardening tools in the basket with a towel, as well as giving her food (Uddenberg 2014: 8-10). Even though they went away more than one time to their city apartment in Stockholm, they found the cat still remaining upon returning to Lund (Uddenberg 2014: 9-10). After deciding to share some responsibility for her with their daughter, the couple decided the occupant could stay, although initially they still kept her in the shed (Uddenberg 2014: 14-15). The cat might perhaps, or perhaps not, have grown attached to Uddenberg and his wife, but at the very least *they* had gotten attached to her (2014: 14-15). Not wanting her to have numerous kids, they soon decided to have her sterilized (Uddenberg 2014: 32-33). The night before the operation, the cat was allowed inside their house, and after that, even allowed to sleep in their beds (Uddenberg 2014: 32-38). A few days after the operation, the cat seemed depressed and her mood was contagious. Her companion humans became sad when observing her. Likewise, the mood improved in all three simultaneously when the cat brightened up again (Uddenberg 2014: 42-43).

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<sup>27</sup> I would translate the title to «The man and the cat: A love story»

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When the cat is away for several days, Uddenberg misses her and worries about where she is, and whether she will return (2014: 47-56). Upon her return he reflects on her right to autonomy:

*Jeg vil ikke ha en katt som ikke blir hos oss frivillig: Foretrekker hun å bli hos oss, så gjør hun det, trives hun ikke, så kommer hun til å forsvinne. Hennes liv må være hennes valg, det eneste vi kan gjøre, er å være vennlige mot henne og på den måten vise at vi vil beholde henne. Det lyder så fornuftig, men som så ofte er det ikke fornuften som gjelder. Jeg har vanskelig for å la være å kontrollere, å ikke forsikre meg om at hun er i nærheten (Uddenberg 2014: 56).*

I translate:

*I do not want a cat who does not stay voluntarily. If she prefers to stay with us, she will, if she doesn't, she'll leave. Her life must be how she wants it to be. The only thing we can do is to be kind to her. That's the way we can show her that we want to keep her. That sounds very reasonable, but like so often is the case, reason's not in charge. I find it difficult not to be controlling, not to reassure myself she is somewhere nearby.*

Reflecting upon the inner life of animals, Uddenberg, inspired by Montaigne, finds that one of the reasons why it is so exciting to be around nonhuman animals is precisely that we do not understand them fully. Humans are not omniscient and can not understand other animals merely by comparing them to ourselves (Uddenberg 2014: 64). However, we do not, neither between humans, nor between humans and other animals, need to understand each other fully (Uddenberg 2014: 67). Uddenberg also reflects upon the growing popularity of cats as pets. Maybe this growing popularity has something to with us living in an age where independence, freedom and individualism are important values. Cats seem to abhor showing themselves as dependent on their humans (Uddenberg 2014: 126-127). Contrasting cats to dogs, Uddenberg points out that dogs seem neurotic in them wanting to be appreciated by their owners all the time (2014: 127). Who wants to be tame and subservient?<sup>28</sup> However, at the end of the book Uddenberg states that the cat and her companions have *mutually* tamed each other. They have changed and adapted to each other (Uddenberg 2014: 147).

[Steve, Derek and Esther, the wonder pig](#)

That some human grow attached to cats or dogs may not be that surprising to the reader. But what about pigs?

Partners Steve Jenkins and Derek Walter soon found their lives changed when Steve, behind Derek's back, decided to take in a baby pig (Crane, Jenkins and Walter 2016). Already having two cats and two dogs, Esther became the fifth non-human family member in the household (Crane, Jenkins and Walter 2016: 2, 6). It all started when Steve one day received a Facebook

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<sup>28</sup> Now, I think it would be unfair to assume all dogs are the same or by necessity subservient or dependent. After all, they descended from the wolves.

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message from an old friend, Amanda, explaining that she had gotten herself a mini pig, but had realized she did not have the capacity to care for her. Perhaps Steve was interested (Crane, Jenkins and Walter 2016: 8-11)? So he was, and eventually Derek accepted the new family member too (Crane, Jenkins and Walter 2016: 19-27). They were to discover that Esther, however, was not a mini pig after all. Their new pet was a common commercial pig who eventually ended up weighing 650 pounds, which equal about 295 kilograms (Crane, Jenkins and Walter 2016: 191, Healthy Weight Forum). The one who first realized Esther probably was no mini pig was the veterinarian, observing her tail. It had been cut, as we learned in the «Ethical arguments for vegetarianism and veganism» chapter is a common practice in the pig meat food industry (Crane, Jenkins and Walter 2016: 32-33).

This gigantic animal turned out to have her ways of challenging them too. Esther tended to make a mess in the house, and it was also challenging to «potty train» her or even find a good potty arrangement that didn't cause urine and excrements to go all over the floor (Crane, Jenkins and Walter 2016: 57-72). One day, after Steve and Derek had been away for a few days, they came home finding the house «a pit. Litter box shavings were spread *everywhere*. Every inch of the house smelled like urine. Scratch that: not smelled, more like *reeked*, like with an unbelievable, make-your-eyes-water stink. It was a disaster» (Crane, Jenkins and Walter 2016: 66). For a while Steve and Derek thought the situation couldn't carry on and that they needed to get rid of Esther, whereupon they ended up crying on the floor «with all the animals crowded around us» (Crane, Jenkins and Walter 2016: 70). They realized, however, that it would be emotionally impossible to let go of her, so they needed to come up with a solution that worked (Crane, Jenkins and Walter 2016: 70-71). That ended up with them taking Esther out every twenty minutes and giving her rewards every time she peed outside. Being clever, however, she soon understood the deal and started faking it so that she would have more treats (Crane, Jenkins and Walter 2016: 71-72). Eventually, though, she understood *and* accepted the deal, even after them dropping the reward plan (Crane, Jenkins and Walter 2016: 72).

Esther was a playful, affectionate and fascinating individual, however (Crane, Jenkins and Walter 2016: 40). «She was unique», the authors of the book write (Crane, Jenkins and Walter 2016: 40).

Esther also helped change Steve and Derek's lifestyle. Until they got to know Esther, they had been meat eaters, also eating pigs (Crane, Jenkins and Walter 2016: 46-56, 101). Even after getting Esther, however, they kept eating meat for a while without making the connection

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(Crane, Jenkins and Walter 2016: 46). That happened, though, one evening Derek was making bacon. Here I will quote at length, because the passage is so telling:

*And suddenly something switched in my [Steve's] brain.*

*I recalled our vet specifically referring to Esther as a «commercial» pig, meaning her intended lot in life was to be food. That's the only purpose for a commercial pig. They don't pull sleds through the Yukon or carriages through the park. They become pork chops and ham hocks and link sausages and...*

*... yeah.*

*I heard the bacon crackling on the stove. The unmistakable scent wafted toward me. That smell, so wonderful to me (and let's be honest, to all carnivores) for my whole life up to that point suddenly smelled like something awful.*

*Like death.* (Crane, Jenkins and Walter 2016: 46-47).

Just like it felt wrong to eat a dog, now it felt wrong to eat a pig, because they couldn't eat Esther (Crane, Jenkins and Walter 2016: 48-49). Esther was not in the «food category», but in the pet or the family member category, and along with her, pigs as a species switched category (Crane, Jenkins and Walter 2016: 48-49). Gradually they stopped eating animals altogether and opted for a vegan lifestyle (Crane, Jenkins and Walter 2016: 46-56, 101).

After opening a Facebook page for Esther, she quickly became a non-human celebrity with thousands of followers (Crane, Jenkins and Walter 2016: 92-99). Eighty days after the launch of the page, she even had 100,000 followers (Crane, Jenkins and Walter 2016: 133). Realizing that their house was too small and also knowing it was technically illegal to keep a hooved pet in their area, the crime of which increasingly was likely to be discovered due to Esther's fame, Steve and Derek started to look for a farm they could turn into an animal sanctuary (Crane, Jenkins and Walter 2016: 91, 97, 137-156). Eventually they found one which would be perfect, except that it was too expensive. Through crowdfunding and Esther already being famous, they still managed to collect the necessary amount of money to buy the ideal place (Crane, Jenkins and Walter 2016: 149-156). This was turned into an animal sanctuary, where, at the closing of the book, thirty-three new animals had been given a home, in addition to the five they already had (Crane, Jenkins and Walter 2016: 192).

Getting to know Esther as an individual, Steve and Derek changed their views on pigs, and later on other «farm» animals too. Through their Facebook page and Esther's fame, also others changed their views on pigs and quit eating pig meat or nonhuman animals altogether (Crane, Jenkins and Walter 2016: 100, 108-111).

An average Norwegian human animal will eat 28 pigs in a lifetime (Visjø 2015). If one would have been able to relate to those pigs the same way Steve and Derek related to Esther, that is



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28 potential friends who ended up as food instead. Of course, it would be highly unrealistic to take all pigs from the meat industry and into pet ownership. However, the individuals raised for slaughter and meat *could* have served another function, that of being companions.

Disgust is what people seem to feel when thinking of eating dog and cat meat, which is taboo in most Western countries (Joy 2011: 11-12). There is probably no specific reason why cat and dog meat *couldn't* be eaten, nutrition-wise, in place of other kinds of meat. In fact, it *is* eaten in parts of Asia, often to the great outrage of Westerners. This seems like quite a hypocrisy in that they are perfectly willing to eat individuals from other species of animals, but this may have its reasons. They *know* that a dog or cat can be treated and understood almost like part of family, with a name and a role in the household. They would also fear and feel disgust by the thought of someone eating their own dog, their Fido. Because of their disgust and concern for their own, they support laws against cruelty against, and random murder of, dogs and cats. I think it reasonable to assume that pigs would have the same status if eating pig meat was not customary and someone suddenly started doing it. Luck saved Esther from becoming one or several meat products. However, most pigs are nameless and hidden away in farming facilities. What make us treat them so different from dogs and cats? It seems to be the purpose we have assigned to their species or their collective. The abstraction we've assigned them to blocks our empathy for them. The Fidos, to many people, are all dogs, while the pigs are nameless. Same goes for the sheep, the cows and the chicken, especially.

These animals could be assigned other roles than those of being one or several pieces of food on our plates, depending on how we choose to relate to them and perceive them. Depending on ourselves and what we value, these other roles could be way more valuable than those of the food products the animals are turned into.

First half conclusion

Given egoism and the individualist outlook, an individual who is not human can be more valuable to you personally than a human individual. If you were to sacrifice the animal, say a pig, in an emergency situation for a human being you did not value, you would be hurting yourself. You would put the dictates of speciesist collectivism above your self-interest. This would be immoral according to egoism. If the human individual was most precious to you personally, this would be the one to prioritize, but what mattered was what was valuable to you, and what furthered your life. All this regardless of the species memberships of the individuals in question.

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Which way of relating to nonhumans is most valuable and useful to you? In the examples we looked at, human individuals saw valuable traits in non-human animals, like innocence, purity, independence, individuality, uniqueness and company. It is possible that some humans could never establish a connection like that of Wynand, Uddenberg, Jenkins and Walter had with a non-human animal. To humans incapable of relating to nonhumans, converting the animal individual into meat would probably not constitute a loss, since they did not have something they valued to begin with. If you value living animals, however, and the values they constitute is dependent on them being alive, these are lost when they die. If you do not value living animal individuals, their annihilation is no loss to you. However, consuming meat or animal products would still be a sacrifice if doing so leaves you worse off than if you abstained. If the living animals are a value to you, and the products brought about by their death is not, your sacrifice in supporting an industry converting living individuals into bad food is greater. After looking at the value of the living individual, we will now turn to look at the second half of the argument: the nonvalue of the dead animal.

### Chapter 3.2. The nonvalue of the dead animal

In the second part of this chapter, we will focus on how the dead animal is not of any value. That is, eating meat or animal products is not beneficial for you. Much of the chapter will rely on nutrition. I would like to note that the field of nutrition is very much vibrant. If the vegan diet continues to gain popularity, it is to be expected that there will be more research into it. From this, both more positive and negative could be found, than what we know today. Important to note is also that a vegan diet can be either healthy or unhealthy depending on *what* non-animal food a person is eating. Nutrition is an extremely complex issue. Whatever we think is among the healthier options today may be considered otherwise tomorrow. My aim here is to highlight some research that makes it seem *probable* that meat and other animal products are unhealthy to eat, and that a non-meat diet is a better choice. If meat is really detrimental, then, given our ethical model of egoism that says you are to further your life and that health is very important in that matter, it follows that you should avoid animal products.

### Why healthy diet is a value

According to egoism, you should do what furthers your own life and interests. You do this by increasing value, pursuing what is valuable and keeping what you already have as long as it can not be traded for something yet more valuable. Good health is a value as it furthers your life and keeps you alive. Good health increases your options so your range of choice is wider, leaving you yet more ways to increase value. According to Felding and Hansen, dietitian and doctor, referring to a 2016 study by Song W et al, only 10-30 % of all cancers are due to genetical causes, the rest to external causes and lifestyle (Felding and Hansen 2016: 22). Also illnesses such as stroke, coronary heart disease and type 2 diabetes can for the most part be prevented by having a healthy lifestyle, wherein diet plays a big part (Felding and Hansen 2016: 22-26). A healthy diet is a value. If a vegetarian or vegan diet is a healthy diet, then adopting such a diet is a gain.

### Vegan and vegetarian diets are safe and healthy

Vegan and vegetarian diets are considered to be safe and healthy. Like any diet, variety is important, as well as getting all essential macro and micro nutrients. According to the Norwegian Directorate of Health, a vegetarian diet is sufficient, nutrition-wise. It is appropriate for all phases of life, including pregnancy, infancy and youth. It is also appropriate for athletes. A vegetarian diet is associated with a lower risk of obesity, diabetes, cancer and heart-related diseases (Helsedirektoratet 2015).

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### Seventh day Adventists studies

Seventh day Adventists often do not eat meat as prophet Ellen White warned against it. Her influential text, «Flesh as Food» seems first to have been published as a chapter in the 1897 book «Healthful living». In warning against meat eating, White relied both on health arguments and concern for animals. «The moral evils of a flesh diet are not less marked than are the physical ills. Flesh food is injurious to health, and whatever affects the body has a corresponding effect on the mind and the soul. Think of the cruelty to animals that meat eating involves, and its effect on those who inflict and those who behold it», White wrote (1897). The large number of vegetarian Adventists have helped facilitate research on vegetarianism and health, leading to the famous Adventist studies. Adventists have a much higher life expectancy than the general American population, surpassing them with as much as 7 years (Smith 2013). Note that abstaining from alcohol is also common, as well as leading an active lifestyle, thus many things contribute to the great health profile of this group. Interestingly, vegan Adventists do even better than *vegetarians* when it comes to avoiding obesity, hightened blood pressure, type 2 diabetes and deaths from cardiovascular disease (Felding and Hansen 2016: 205).

### Nutrients and supplements

There is no problem getting all essential nutrients as a vegan, although one would need to take vitamin B12 supplements (Singer 2015: 182, Helsedirektoratet 2015). Being vegetarian or pescetarian, that is eating fish, but not meat from land animals, no supplements are *necessary*, given that the diet is otherwise properly varied.

If living far north, however, vitamin D supplements are of great use in winter as the biggest share of vitamin D is produced by the body upon exposure to UV rays from the sun. This is unavaible in winter if the sun stands low on the sky or doesn't show at all (Felding and Hansen 2016: 217-218). Food is a minor source of vitamin D, although fish eaters will get some from oily fish. There is also some vitamin D in egg yolks (Ulveseth 2015, Felding and Hansen 2016: 188). There can also be vitamin D in mushrooms and algae, such as chlorella and spirulina, as well as supplemented food, among which the most common is plant-based milk, based on things like soy, oat, almond or rice (Boston University Medical Center 2013, Yaneff 2016).

It should be noted that the practice of eating fish has something for it that meat eating has not. A diet that includes fish but excludes meat from terrestrial animals is called *pescetarian*. A pescetarian diet actually reduces the risk of developing *colorectal cancers* even more than vegetarian or vegan diets. However, all groups perform better than meat eaters (Davies 2015).

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On the con side of eating fish, some fish contain unhealthy levels of toxins such as dioxins, PCB and heavy metals (Felding and Hansen 2016: 197-199).<sup>29</sup>

Fish also contains useful nutrients such as vitamin B12, vitamin D, iodine and selenium (Felding and Hansen 2016: 194). One of the most well-known nutrients of fish is omega 3 fatty acids. However, vegetarian foods such as walnuts, chia seeds, hemp seeds and flax seeds contain plenty of omega 3. There are, however, different types of omega 3 fatty acids. The one found in nuts and seeds is called ALA. Although ALA has benefits of its own, it is not similar to the marine fatty acids EPA and DHA, though a small amount of ALA is converted by the body to the other versions (Felding and Hansen 2016: 152-153, 200-201). Until recently there were no vegan supplements of the omega 3 oils EPA and DHA, associated with better memory, mental functioning and heart health. Now that these are found in algae, extracted and sold as supplements due to higher demand and better technology, these nutrients can be supplemented while on a vegan diet (Felding and Hansen 2016: 318). The same goes for vitamin D.

While vegans earlier had to make do with vitamin D2 supplements, now there are vitamin D3 supplements available with the vitamin extracted from lichen (Watson 2012). Unlike the B vitamins, where all the different B vitamins have unique properties, D2 and D3 supplementations are variants of the exact same vitamin, not serving different purposes, although vitamin D3 perhaps is better utilized than D2. This means that theoretically you could rely on one of them while skipping the other. Some research seemed to conclude that vitamin D2 and vitamin D3 supplements were equally efficient as long as they were provided daily (Tripkovic et al 2012), while vitamin D3 supplementation may be more reliable overall (Houghton and Vieth 2006, Daniells 2011). Now, vitamin D3 is also available to vegans.<sup>30</sup>

I assume vegan supplements of important nutrients such as vitamin D3 and omega fatty acids EPA and DHA is of great benefit, potentially improving the overall quality of vegetarian diets further. Both vegetarianism and veganism give higher life expectancy than the carnivorous diet containing meat according to a study from 2014 summarizing findings from three cohorts of Adventists (Le and Sabaté 2014). Here veganism compared favorably also to vegetarianism, protecting further from obesity, type-2 diabetes, cardiovascular mortality and hypertension

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<sup>29</sup> A 1999 meta study coming findings from 5 studies, found that pescetarians and vegetarians had lower mortality from ischemic heart disease than both meat eaters *and* vegans. Although vegans had higher mortality from ischemic heart disease than pescetarians and vegetarians, it's important to note that there were few vegans in the study, possibly not being representative (Key et al 1999)

<sup>30</sup> I have earlier been blogging about the difference between vitamin D2 and vitamin D3 on my blog Veganicolai (Hansen 2013)

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when compared to vegetarian diets allowing for dairy and egg consumption. This study found higher benefits for men than women in following a vegetarian or vegan diet, in that all-cause mortality is reduced. On the con side, for veganism, it found that vegans were more likely to develop urinary tract cancer (Le and Sabaté 2014).

Unless special circumstances or conditions apply, there is no reason why meat cannot be dispensed with altogether from the diet. As meat consumption is associated with lower life-expectancy and certain illnesses which veganism, vegetarianism and pescetarianism are not, eating meat is *non-valuable* when it comes to health. This is of course as long as there are alternatives available that can provide the same essential nutrients that are found in meat. In modern economies there *are* such alternatives.

When it comes to protein, such alternatives include beans, lentils and peas (Felding and Hansen 2016: 146-147). These are collectively called *legumes*. Additionally are nuts, seeds, pseudo-grains like buckwheat, quinoa and amaranth, wholemeal grains, mushrooms and algae good sources of protein (Petre, SELFNutritionData). Also, vegetables and fruit contain *small* amounts of protein. True, not all of even the high protein vegetables contain big amounts of *all* essential amino acids, that which proteins are made up from – the amino acid make-up or mix can vary from protein source to protein source – but as long as one relies on several sources of protein and eat sufficient amounts, one gets all essential amino acids (Felding and Hansen 2016: 172-174). According to Felding and Hansen, the general daily protein need is found by multiplying your weight, in kilograms, with 0,75 (2016: 172). Your protein needs may increase if exercising much, and so does calorie needs, which simply means you'll have to eat more food.

### Taste

As to the question of taste, it is unlikely that the pleasure from eating meat is so great that it can't be replicated by any vegetarian or vegan food, or that the tastiest vegetarian food is so much less tasty than a meat based meal (Moen 2015: 02:51-03:13). Even if so, there is a lot happening when it comes to vegetarian substitute products and as the number of vegetarians, and thus demand, increase we can expect this to continue. The future of vegetarian cooking looks promising.

Though giving up meat, and its taste with it, might seem like a loss, even if a small one, many find that perception of taste changes after a while on a new diet. I can attest to this myself, having tried different versions of meatless diets, as well as a low carb diet several years ago.

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What just weeks before might have been a great treat, will no longer be missed once it's expelled from your habit. What was treat becomes trash once the taste buds get used to new food and forgets the old, while the mind remembers why you gave up the old food habits in the first place. However, this might seem hard to believe before it is tried.

People who have already changed their diet, find themselves having to appeal to trust. You will see, once you go vegan, or vegetarian, or pescetarian, that it is no sacrifice taste wise and health wise. You will still enjoy your food. Communicating that «you have to try it, before you understand it» creates an asymmetry, where the one being encouraged is told to just follow the other into what for him is an unknown, and to doubt his own intuition. However, the claim that the palate will change has more to say for it. Felding and Hansen writes that the taste buds will quickly adapt themselves to prefer a natural taste to that of sugary or fatty foods, after switching to a plant based whole food diet (2016: 68).

In chapter 3.1 we discussed how the way we utilize animals from different species differently from each other seem somewhat random. Why do Westerners eat pigs, but not dogs? According to Joy, what food one likes is connected to what food one is *supposed* to like. All cultures have food they consider normal and food they consider taboo, or disgusting. This culture shapes what one thinks of as appetizing. Cultures, however, differ quite a lot from each other and people from different places may be appalled by the food choices of people from yet other places. A lot of Westerners would probably feel disgust at the thought of eating deep-fried tarantula, like in Cambodia. Joy considers the symbolism of food, reinforced by tradition, most responsible for our food preferences (2011: 16-17). Once one changes perception of the food, one's appetite will change. Different images comes to mind when mentioning different words. Like, when one says beef, one will think of food, but when one thinks of dogs, one will think of individuals. If the image of a cow came to mind each time one looked at a beef steak, one would perhaps have less appetite for the steak. Indeed, a lot of people find meat products where there is no trace of the animal they once stemmed from more appetizing than whole animals or body parts easily identified as just that (Joy 2011: 12-16).

Rowlands, whom we met in the chapter on animal ethics and who is vegetarian, would disagree that taste changes following change of diet. He confesses he still dreams of rump steaks «and of those heady days when pork ribs would be merrily crackling on the barbecue» (Rowlands 2002: 112). However, also he points out that vegetarianism and palatable food are not incompatible and that the loss of tasting meat is a rather small one compared to the other issues at stake, which is the life and freedom of the animals (Rowlands 2002: 112).

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### Health or taste?

According to egoism what you should do is what benefits yourself and what furthers your life. This is not the same as, neither the opposite of, seeking pleasure. While pleasure and joy can be indicators that some things are good, sometimes our inherited capacities for feeling pleasure and joy can be deceiving, as when it comes to mindless consumption of meat, sugar, alcohol or addictive or harmful drugs. Still, it seems obvious that pleasure is a value since it gives enjoyment to life, thereby enriching it. However, choosing pleasure over health where the source of pleasure is antagonistic to health can possibly deprive you of future pleasures, thereby minimizing value in the long run. Since meat eating is associated with lower life expectancy, it can also deprive you of future pleasures.

Important when it comes to pleasure is also plant based diets' sexual merits. Plant based diets can possibly protect men against impotency since the risk of atherosclerosis is lessened, also in the penis. Impotent men are often assumed being heart patients by doctors until disproved by further testing (Felding and Hansen 2016: 103). A 1999 study also found that vegan men have higher testosterone levels, by 13 %, than both meat eaters and vegetarians (Allen, Appleby, Davey and Key 2000). The same study found lower IGF-1, insulin-like growth factor, levels in the vegan group. Vegans differed markedly from both carnists and vegetarians. High levels of IGF-1 is associated with higher risk for developing prostate cancer, and the lower IGF-1 levels in vegan men may therefore explain why vegan men are at lower risk for developing this type of cancer. A vegan diet is low in, and can possibly, depending on what vegan food items one chooses to eat, contain no, saturated fatty acids, high consumption of which leads to low sperm cell concentration (Felding and Hansen 2016: 150).

### Complicating issues

However, there are complicating factors health wise. What if the person has numerable allergies that makes it more difficult for him to avoid meat? Say a person has an allergy towards soy products and nuts which are often two important sources of protein in the vegan diet. Although these products are not indispensable – he can still eat other legumes and pseudo grains like buckwheat, quinoa and amaranth – he is still at a disadvantage compared to *those who do not have* these allergies. Of course, he is *even if* he weren't to become vegan. However, say this is an individual who has not been vegan previously but is thinking about becoming one. His eating options are restricted as is, because of his allergies, and while others can enjoy vegan foods based on soy, which are actually quite common, he can not. Since several vegan dishes and vegan meat analogues are soy or nut based, he will not have those options of eating. His



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*disadvantages* of choosing to go vegan are greater than for those who do not have allergies. This might result in it being more difficult for him to find food and to dine out. Of course, according to individualism and egoism he is not to care about people's reactions in the sense that he puts others' judgments above his own, but nevertheless he will be perceived as difficult by those who have not gone vegan and do not have allergies. However, if veganism is what is best for him in itself, he should insist on it, regardless of what others think, as long as they do not have some tool of sanction that will detract value from him.

If veganism continues to gain popularity one might expect the vegan section of menus to grow thus to leave more choice even for those with allergies, and thereby make it easier. Still, there are challenges for those who decide to go vegan in today's society, at least in Norway, when it comes to choice and availability of food. In some cases, as those of having severe allergies or other illnesses, the challenges and trouble could, possibly, be so great as to make veganism a *significant sacrifice*, because of all the hassle it would cause in the actor's life. Thus, if this is the case, going vegan would be disadvantageous to herself. According to ethical egoism she should not go vegan then.

However, she could choose to be *vegetarian* and eat dairy products and/or eggs. These are protein sources too and would allow for greater choice both at the store, when visiting others and when dining out. Or she could be *pescetarian* and eat fish as well. For most people to whom full-fledged veganism would pose difficulties, allowing *some* animal ingredients would lessen the practical challenges considerably.

Along with allergies and illnesses, other cases where a meatless diet becomes disadvantageous could be living in remote places where food supply is limited, living in isolated and repressive countries where choice is limited because of that, or when traveling in such a place or in the legendary example of being stranded on a desert island along with a few other animal individuals and the choice was to eat one or more of them or starve to death. Of course, ethical egoism would ask the egoist to prioritize himself first and eat one of the other individuals, preferably the one easiest to kill, or the one of least value to the moral agent himself.

One of the great advantages of ethical egoism is that advice given others *from* this basis intuitively seems kinder to the one given advice. When giving someone advice from this basis, we would not advise this person to disadvantage himself or to hurt himself with something unhealthy. The disadvantage of egoism is that we cannot give *universal* advice valid for all,

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except from the ground principles, because we aren't omniscient and do not know all that is at stake for all other individuals.

Second half conclusion

For *most* people it would be sacrifice of health to choose a meat based diet over a meatless one. We can quite safely, then, from an egoist perspective, advice someone to give up meat as continuing to eat it is a sacrifice, therefore immoral according to egoism. Some benefits are greater with veganism than diets which allow for some animal products. However, for some people, the impracticability of avoiding all animal products could be so great as to become disadvantageous, as in the case with people having severe and many allergies. The advise to optimize health can be given to all, but how this is done will vary somewhat from individual to individual. Generally, though, a varied and healthy vegan diet is preferable to a meat based one.

Taste wise, choice and availability of vegetarian and vegan food is increasing. «Tasty» and «vegan» are not mutually exclusive labels. One's palate changes with one's habit and after having followed a new diet for some time, many will no longer miss the old, and will instead cherish the food stuffs they eat at present.

## Conclusion

To many human individuals, living nonhuman animals are values because they can contribute to their lives through their company or merely by existing. Some of the qualities we can cherish is exactly the nonhumans being so different from ourselves. We can also find qualities like innocence, company, independence and uniqueness. If these are qualities that depend on the animal being alive, they are lost when the animal dies. The death of such an animal is a loss if we appreciated those qualities, that is if they were valuable to us. Some human beings may never be able to relate to nonhuman animals in a meaningful way. They may not lose anything of value when the animal dies, since the value depends on what the animal means to *them*.

Health is a value in that it promotes your life, allowing you to pursue even more of what is valuable in other fields. Meat is unhealthy in the sense that it is associated with lower life expectancy. Veganism is associated with lower rates of obesity, and also lower rates of hightened blood pressure, type 2 diabetes and deaths from cardiovascular disease. People are different, and because of potential personal difficulties or living in places where vegan food is difficult to come by, going vegan might not be as easy for everyone. Then, considering other diets without meat, such as a vegetarian or pescetarian diet, might also pose a health gain when compared to eating meat. If meat is detrimental to health, choosing a meat-based diet is a sacrifice compared to a diet without meat.

If living animals are valuable, then the sacrifice involved in eating meat is even greater. The meat industry is a negative value converter, converting value to nonvalue. This is not something to support as it is not in your interest.

Given egoism, you should, most probably, go vegan as this is a way of furthering your life. Not doing so could be a sacrifice, thus immoral according to egoism.

## Chapter 4: Potential criticisms

### Introduction

In this chapter I will try to foresee some potential criticisms to what I have laid fore in the preceding chapters. This can hardly be exhaustive and is limited by the imagination of the master student, space and time. Potential criticisms are presented briefly, then answered or discussed. We will look at a potential criticism from the rights view, namely that egoism is unjust. We will shortly discuss the problems with this kind of egoism's subjectivity, that is, since it leaves so much open, how would it interpreted by a sociopath without empathy or impulse control, for example? Then we'll take a look at a word that's been used much here, namely «individual». If capital letter Man is an abstraction, then doesn't «the animal individual», or an imagined captial letter Individual, fall into the same category? And what about the general differences that we *do* perceive between species? Shouldn't they matter at all? Should we just overlook them? Then I'll revisit the subjectivity problem somewhat. Doesn't what's in someone's interest change accordiing to circumstance and time? Is ethical egoism unstable and hence a bad theory? Then over to the vegan diet. What if it isn't that healthy after all? Here I will look into three issues, namely the risk of developing vitamin B12 deficiency, the claims that soy products, often figuring heavily in meatless diets, can cause cancer or low testosterone levels and lastly the low creatine levels found in vegetarians and vegans. I'll discuss the issue of hunting. That is, say we accept that meat is unhealthy and nonvaluable in itself, couldn't the procuring of it, say in the form of hunting, still have value? Lastly, what if the issue of eating meat has less to do with ethics than with identity and who we really *are*? Maybe we are simply born natural meat eaters and natural plant eaters?

### Criticism 1: Egoism is unjust

Perhaps you remember from chapter 1 that philosopher Tom Regan criticized utilitarianism for being unjust (2004: 226). Even if everyone's interests have to be taken into account given *utilitarianism*, like individuals with like preferences or needs are not necessarily treated equally (Regan 2004: 213-214, 230). Utilitarianism counsels making the decision that allows for optimific results, which could lead one to thwart the interests of an individual that in another situation would have had his interests respected, if the other variables of the situation were different. The same problem goes for egoism, since you make decisions out of self-interest and what benefits you could be different from one situation to another, thus treating individuals differently depending on context.

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This criticism would come from *the rights view*. However, if we accept ethical egoism, the importance of justice is contingent on its benefit to the ethical agent, and not important unless valuable to him.

On the other hand, were we to accept the rights view, things would look very different. Say if we assume rights exist objectively, and that someone could have a right even if there was no one to recognize or respect it. If egoism blinds the adherent to the existence of rights, it could lead to her violating the rights of others, thus causing her to violate objective morality.

As mentioned earlier in the thesis, it is possible to construct an ethical egoist model incorporating the rights concept. Rights would then have to be argued for from self-interest. I suspect, though I will not go deep into this here, that such an egoist model could come closer to Regan's rights view, but never overlap it totally. The problem is that everyone is different, and some would profit by advocating rights only for a narrow group to which oneself belongs. Others might profit from including more, such as non-human animals and unproductive humans, because of emotional ties to individuals in these categories, or for other reasons. It could be that different individuals profit differently from different rights, and while for some, incorporating one individual into the rights scheme would be a gain, while it would be another's loss. For the animal lover it would be a gain to have pigs protected by rights, for the pig farmer it might be a loss, at least in short range perspective. We saw that Rand envisaged a rights concept that is grounded in egoism and, allegedly, human nature (1964: 108-117). The problem with it was that not all humans shared that alleged nature, that is: we are not all rational or equipped with the same capacity for reason. Her anthropocentric view would be considered unjust when measured against Regan's rights view.<sup>31</sup>

The version of egoism I've laid fore here, could definitely cause someone to be unjust in the sense of treating individuals differently, maybe more so than an egoism incorporating a rights concept.

The problem with the egoist being unjust, is a problem identified through viewing the issue with a rights view lens. Likewise an egoist could accuse a person advocating the rights view of being at risk to advice others to act self-detrimentally and not to their own advantage. How kind is it to give such advice?

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<sup>31</sup> For more on Rand's rights concept, see «Egoism and the concept of rights» in chapter 2, and for Regan's view on rights, see «Tom Regan's rights based approach to animal ethics» in chapter 1.

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We won't settle the potential rights view/egoism controversy here. It seems to me simply that given ethical egoism, justice plays second fiddle to self interest. Given the rights view, however, self interest plays second fiddle to the rights concept and to justice.

Criticism 2: What if a person lacks empathy and rationality, but still puts himself first?

You've always thought egoism was a very bad thing, but may now be willing to consider that a consistent ethical egoist may act quite well and better than some who do not care about morality. You're still not too sure about this, though. The model presented here, although positing one should do what is really in one's interest, leaves too much up to chance. In fact, utilitarianism was criticized for this in the summary and critique part of the first chapter. If people are very different from each other in personality, psychology and perhaps even biological make-up, how are we to predict how others will interpret ethical egoism and calculate what is in their self-interest? How does this moral code look to a sociopath, for example?

Sociopathy, or antisocial personality disorder, is a mental disorder, leaving its sufferers without conscience and feelings of guilt and shame. *Some* traits the sociopath *may* possess, however, are impulsivity and failure to plan ahead as well as consistent irresponsibility and disregard for the safety of herself and others (Stout 2006: 1, 6). A sociopath may be directly sadistic as well, but not necessarily (Stout 2006: 5, 9, 120). As sociopaths frequently suffer from extreme boredom, the urge for excitement can be quite strong (Stout 2006: 186). If what excites them is inflicting pain on others, emotionally or physically, they may have difficulty controlling themselves. Many sociopaths are also cruel to nonhuman animals (Griffiths 2014, Stout 2006: 37-39). How will they assess their own interests? Will they be able to see the value and possibility of relating harmoniously, with mutual gain, with human and/or nonhuman animals? If so, how strong will the appreciation of this be compared to other interests they may have?

However, some of their preferences will be incongruent with ethical egoism, thus according to the model must be overruled by reason. A sociopath not able to put aside her disregard for safety or rationally pursue life goals truly in her interest, will fail to live up to the demands of ethical egoism. Egoism is about furthering your life and pursuing values. What does not further life, neither now, nor in the long run, is antithetical to the model. Ruthlessness and rudeness is usually not beneficial to oneself, as one causes others to despise oneself, with whatever bad consequences that may bring about. Breaking laws can have one end up punished by the legal system. Being rude to others even though without breaking laws make these others less likely to co-operate and more prone to respond with the same means as we are using (Stout 2006:

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185). Sociopathy makes it difficult for the sufferer to do what is truly in his interest, with the consequence of about 20 percent of the US prison inmates being sociopaths (Stout 2006: 82). According to Stout, however, some of history's worst dictators were sociopaths, like Caligula, Hitler and Pol Pot (Stout 2006: 183-185). They achieved great political power, but ended their lives tragically, being killed or committing suicide. Sociopathy unchecked is no winning recipe.

It is to be expected that sociopaths will struggle to follow the dictates of egoism consistently, and perhaps the same goes for certain other psychological disorders such as Narcissistic Personality Disorder (Martens 2010). But because of impulsivity, sociopaths will also have difficulties following the dictates of ethical models like the rights approach or utilitarianism. The issue is clearly complex, but ethical egoism is not the only model failing to provide good guidance to people struggling with empathy and/or rationality.

[Criticism 3: Isn't the animal individual an abstraction?](#)

Say we agree that an individual pig can constitute a value alive which he could not constitute when dead, say for example that of being good company. There are, nevertheless, many pigs on this earth, and even if we were to care for a companion pig, we would still not meet the majority of pigs in person. Realistically, there is little chance a random pig raised for slaughter would ever come to be our companion, that is *even* if we were to have a companion pig already. You could have «the companion value» of the one pig and still enjoy eating *another* pig. They are not the same pig, but different individuals. The good you can get from a companion isn't diminished from eating another. Psychologically, it can very well be that this is difficult, but isn't that just because we've created an abstract, a concept of pigs collectively being companions rather than food? If we could somehow overrule that and use some individuals for one good and others for other goods, wouldn't that optimize our total gain? There is a limit to how many nonhuman animals we can befriend, and there is a limit to how many living nonhuman animals could possibly directly contribute to our life and wellbeing. When this limit has been reached, why shouldn't we use the animals in other ways, as for example food? Knowing about slaughter, confinement and potential violence, may disturb us slightly, thus being value detracting, but chances are it won't affect us that much. Philosopher Michael Slote, for one, states that empathy decreases when spatial distance increases (2007: 21-22). What we actually *see* arouses empathy in another way than what we merely *know* about (Slote 2007: 23-25). Nothing forces us to *look* at a slaughter process or see animals in pain. We can choose to look away and enjoy the company of some animals, while we eat others.

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This we could of course do, but the same line of reasoning goes for violence towards human beings. It is perhaps true that the humans currently or potentially oppressed could contribute better to the wellbeing of the world, and thus indirectly to ourselves, if only marginally, if they were allowed to live in conditions where they would flourish. Their positive contribution to ourselves unless we actually do know these actual humans in person is, however, minimal. Just because humans generally have good and useful properties, doesn't mean these *actual* humans would mean anything to us or affect our lives in any way. Them being oppressed or hurt in an awful dictatorship in another country is of no concern to us. If they are made slaves and make cheap products we can buy, there is no reason why we shouldn't benefit from that. They are not us, not people we know, neither do we see them. The discomfort we could feel from seeing them in pain, is a discomfort we can choose not to experience by looking away. So why shouldn't we support such an industry?

These are examples why ethical egoism could do well with a supporting theory of rights or social contract. With social contract I mean that a community agrees on certain guidelines of conduct that will make co-existence beneficial to all agreeing parts (Nyeng 1999: 85). However, the reasons to agree on at least a few rules of common conduct is that we could ourselves become enslaved or oppressed, and we want to avoid that. We also want to avoid seeing those we care about being enslaved, oppressed or hurt. This can be done by establishing laws that protect individuals from violence. It is true that we would never ourselves become pigs or chicken – unless we believe in reincarnation – but since we could care for one, the same way we could care about marginal human cases who could not have their voice heard when making a contract, since they wouldn't understand the idea, we want to protect their lives. Supplementing ethical egoism with legal rights or a social contract is not incongruent as long as the reason for this can be anchored in the self-interest of the parties, surpassing possible alternatives. This is not to say that we'd end up with an *ethical model* similar to the rights view of Regan, which I think we wouldn't, but we'd make up for some of the risks of egoism to protect ourselves and those we care about, creating a legal construct others could also stand to benefit from.

Furthermore, violence to nonhuman animals often leads to violence to humans later on (Peeples 2015). This was an argument for being kind to animals that philosophers like Aquinas, Hume and Kant voiced (Singer 2015: 202-203, 244). It is possible we could establish a more peaceful society benefiting all if we got rid of slaughters and the confinement of nonhuman animals.



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As is, the support of the industry converting individuals to anonymous meat products is a support of an authoritarian institution annihilating individuals. We can ask ourselves if this practice isn't as good a monument to collectivism and despotism as could ever have been. It is a practice with masters and slaves, an institution of dominance and unvoluntary sacrifice. How does this affect our psychology? If collectivism is a way of thinking that potentially damages the individual, and if speciesism is collectivist, it seems not the best thing to support a speciesist enterprise, it contributing to spreading a way of seeing the individual as a dispensable commodity. If we want to live in a world respecting individuality and variety, it doesn't seem like a practice to support.

As is, even were it correct that the animal individual is an abstraction and that we can benefit from some individuals in one way – alive, even when we let others die, this is still overruled by meat not being a value. If meat is detrimental to health, and there are healthier alternatives that are vegan, we would not act in our own interest by choosing to eat the dead animal instead of what was life furthering.

[Criticism 4: There are group-level differences between human and nonhuman animal individuals that must have implications for moral treatment of these](#)

Say we look at those human beings whom we would consider moral agents, that is individuals able to reflect upon and act for moral reasons. This group of individuals have a different capacity for individuality than those who are not in this group. This is because they are able to direct themselves and envision a course that is future-directed. They can have an ideal and realize this ideal (Scruton 2000). Nonhuman animal individuals may rightly differ from each other by having distinguishing thoughts, desires or character, but this seems to be by chance (Scruton 2000).<sup>32</sup> What constitutes a moral agent simply makes this person a different kind of individual than what constitutes a moral patient or an individual who cannot be assumed to have moral agency.

It is very possible that this view could somehow speak against taking nonhuman animals into consideration in specific variations of ethical individualism, such as, say, that of David Norton, see chapter 2 on egoism, where individuality to a large extent is noted by a person actively seeking out and finding his specific place within civilization as unique *in relation to* others. It

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<sup>32</sup> In the article I refer to, Scruton argues against animal *rights*, not ethical egoism or individualism (2000). I just assume his point that one can arrive at an individuality, a personality in different ways, could be raised against an egoist/individualist approach to animal ethics too.

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doesn't matter much in view of the model that's laid out here, though. If the moral agent, given egoism, values another individual it matters not if the other individual has reached his specific individuality or character because of planning or from wanting to do so, or if he has done so by chance.

If the way a personality has been created, can somehow predict the future course of the individual, it might slightly matter how this has been done. That is, say, if the chance aspect makes it less likely that the individual will retain his good traits. However, being able to strive towards becoming a certain person is also no guarantee that the individual will retain his good traits. He could become brainwashed by some ideal that is not at all good, strive towards *that*, achieve it and become a worse person than he originally was, thus less valuable to the other moral agent. There have been many detrimental visions and ideals throughout history, like those of the Nazi or Soviet ideologies. Having the *ability* to pursue an ideal doesn't make anyone more valuable to another in itself, although the *consequences* or *actualization* of that may make the individual better *or* worse.

Criticism 5: Ethical egoism is unstable and hence it is a bad moral theory

In an article named «Rational Egoism and Animal Rights» Dale Jamieson criticizes rational egoist Narveson's dismissal of animal rights, whereupon Jamieson deems ethical egoism a bad moral theory (1981: 171). If morality and a rule of law is agreed to among egoists based on their rational interests, then calculating that their interests in having their rights protected are greater than their interests in violating the could-be rights of others, morality is prone to change over time, thus making egoism unstable as an ethical theory (Jamieson 1981: 168-171). We could – this is funnily prophetic, thinking about the topic of my thesis – even end up in a future where the egoists considered it not in their interest to keep using higher animals as food source. This could however be because there are too many humans on the planet, and them continuing to use higher animals for food is quite simply not sustainable anymore (Jamieson 1981: 171). It will be in their interest to agree to stop eating them. Then Jamieson takes this very far and imagines that it could be necessary to keep the population down so that women would be pressured to take abortions (1981: 171). Because of this resulting in many aborted fetuses, and given that it was no longer rational to eat animals, people could start eating human fetuses. Next there could be factory farms with human mothers actually carrying forth infants who are then slaughtered (Jamieson 1981: 171).

The problem with this argument is first of all that it seems more targeted at contractarianism, rational individuals coming together to agree on what laws should govern conduct since this is

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in their own interest (Nyeng 1999: 85), than at an egoism like that which has been presented in my thesis here. As already mentioned, contractarianism can very well supplement, and be congruent with, the kind of egoism presented here, as long as it benefits ourselves to subscribe to the social contract. That said, what you choose to do *when ungoverned* and *unrestricted* by law, is another question than what laws you would deem in your interest to govern society. What you choose to do as an individual and what laws you advocate for may or may not overlap. In the case of dietary veganism, you may choose to go vegan since it is in your self-interest to do so. This is what I've argued for here. Whether you should try to legalize meat eating or farming is another question that it is outside the scope of the thesis to go into, though surely an interesting topic.

I do believe that ethical egoism is stronger when supplemented with *legal* rights or social contract, and I do buy into the case for social contract or legal rights, but pointing out that what society chooses to do with nonhuman animals and human fetuses is open to change with differing circumstances, is not a critique that is automatically transferrable to the egoist model I've presented here, as I chose to leave out the concept of *ethical* rights and have also chosen not to discuss *legal* rights in depth.

However, I also think it is true that what is judged, correctly or incorrectly, to be in a moral agent's self-interest is prone to change with differing circumstances. I think that is exactly that which has happened the last decades. The value of a vegan diet seems much higher now than it did decades ago. Why? This is because a bigger selection of food, new food items and new knowledge in nutrition changes the picture from what it was when all we have in store now was not there, and when we simply did not know better. As is, I do believe that circumstances will change in a way that makes it yet even more sensible to be animal friendly. In not too much time there may even be lab grown meat, genetically identical to animal meat, but without the kill, on the market. Then, people not happy with the taste of all vegan and vegetarian substitute foods released hitherto, won't even have the taste factor to complain about. Unless lab grown meat is made more healthy than the one that's on the market today though, it will probably still be in the interests of moral agents not to consume it. Lab-grown meat could probably be made healthier than the «conventional» version, though. (Zaraska 2016) If healthy enough it would be morally permissible to eat this kind of meat.

It *does* seem that egoism is unstable in the sense that its advice will change according to circumstances and what options you have before you. But then again, physically and realistically speaking, you *can* only choose from the options that are available to you, there are

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no other possible choices – this is a fact we can't get away from regardless of what ethical theory we deem the best. With a wider selection of options, or a narrower, in the future, the most value maximizing act could be another than it would today.

The same criticism would also work against utilitarianism and pure altruism too, that they are unstable and their advice would change according to what options are available.

I do think that this criticism has something for it, though. If we look at an ethics of rights more like the one of Tom Regan, see chapter 1, it seems like a world in which everyone respected this ethics would be more predictable and «safe» in the sense that no-one *would be* used solely as a means for another, but it does seem like this way of arguing is actually consequentialist in that it appeals to consequences over principles. What I just stated was that respecting each other's rights would yield the better consequences. For whom? For myself? For all? The lines between the models get blurry.

Criticism 6: What if veganism is found unhealthy and meat healthy?

This criticism is related to the preceding, that the resulting advice from consulting ethical egoism will vary according to circumstances. What if future research will be less positive towards dietary veganism and indeed more positive towards meat? What if the tables turn and it seems the most healthy to eat meat, whether it is just a little or if it is a lot?

Of course, this will be a devastating blow to my argument here. If this is unequivocally so, then for some it surely would be right, given egoism, to eat meat. That is, if the value of the living animal does not outweigh the value of the dead animal, that is it being used for food, and if you cannot have both. It is also not necessarily a question of either/or. The balance could be that veganism and meat eating could appear just as healthy, or good and bad in different ways. The less clear cut, the harder the decision for the ethical egoist, but also less important, as what you choose matter less the more even the outcomes of decisions.

However, we can take a look at some potentially negative aspects of a vegan diet, that is the potential risk of vitamin B12 deficiency, the soy myth – that soy products may cause cancer or low testosterone levels in men – and problems surrounding low creatine levels in vegetarians and vegans. The problems presented here are quite small in comparison with the problems associated with diets high in animal products.

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### 6.1 B12 deficiency

Vitamin B12 is a vitamin that can not be made by the body itself and whose dietary sources are animal products like meat, fish, eggs and dairy products. Obviously, the less you eat of these, the less vitamin B12 you are getting. If you are vegan, and thereby consume no animal products, your intake of vitamin B12 would most probably be zero, if some vegan products were not fortified with vitamin B12 or you took supplements. Vitamin B12 is not produced by animals, however, but by bacteria. This is also why you could be getting some vitamin B12 by chance from contaminated fruits and vegetables, but this would be very unreliable sources and even if you got some vitamin B12 from these, it would be very little because of high hygiene and usage of preservatives (Norsk Helseinformatikk 2016, Felding and Hansen 2016: 216-217).

Vitamin B12 deficiency may take a long time to develop if our «storage» of it is well-stocked initially, that is before deprivation of it starts, due to diet or medical conditions. Blood serum concentrations of vitamin B12 may decrease very gradually. Once one is vitamin B12 deficient, the condition may at first be without symptoms but may present itself as anemia, nerve damage, troubles with balance and walking and/or psychiatric symptoms. It may trigger the onset of dementia in the elderly (Norsk Helseinformatikk 2016, Felding and Hansen 2016: 216-217).

In Norway the authorities recommend a daily intake of 2 micrograms of vitamin B12 for males and females alike from ages 10 and older (Helsedirektoratet 2014). According to Felding and Hansen, there is research showing that 4-7 micrograms daily is more optimal (2016: 217). It is difficult to take dangerously much vitamin B12 as it is a water soluble vitamin and excess will be excreted when urinating (Felding and Hansen 2016: 217, Norsk Helseinformatikk 2016). If you are already deficient in vitamin B12, then, according to Norsk Helseinformatikk, you will need to supplement with as much as 1000 micrograms daily in order to recover (2016). Important is that there *can* also be nondietary causes for vitamin B12 deficiency, for example related to *malabsorption* caused by other medical conditions (Norsk Helseinformatikk 2016). This means that even if you do have sufficient dietary vitamin B12 intake, or if you supplement, you could still develop vitamin B12 deficiency for other reasons. If you suspect vitamin B12 deficiency you might want to request a blood test with your doctor.

Now, one British 2010 science article looking at data from the EPIC-Oxford study, compared B12 and B9 vitamin status between 689 men: 232 vegans, 231 vegetarians and 226 omnivores (Allen et al 2010). Dramatically, 52 % of vegans were considered vitamin B12 deficient (Allen

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et al 2010). Among the vegetarians, who performed much better, 7 % were deficient. Only *one* omnivore was. On the other hand, vegetarians had higher vitamin B9 intake than omnivores, and vegans even higher than the vegetarians, not surprisingly since this is found in high amounts in certain vegetables, grains and fruit (Lande 2015). Only two omnivores were outright deficient in vitamin B9, however. No vegetarians or vegans were (Allen et al 2010).

This highlights one very important point: A *deficient* diet may be dangerous, thus a non-value according to our ethical theory here. A vegan diet will be deficient *unless supplemented* with vitamin B12. A *healthy* vegan diet is not complete without the B12 supplement. At least in Norway, this is usually a very cheap supplement. It is potentially self-detrimental, hence immoral according to egoism, to not take this supplement if you follow a vegan diet, which in other aspects, as we've seen, has a lot to say for it, and is potentially a great value.

### 6.2 The soy myth

Soy beans and products made from it are popular among vegetarians and vegans. Several meat substitute products are made from soy. It is common to hear or come across accusations that soy products may cause cancer or lower testosterone in men. The background for this is that soy contains lots of so-called phyto-estrogens, chemicals that *resemble* the human female hormone estrogen (Felding and Hansen 2016: 148, 150). According to Felding and Hansen, these accusations are simply myths (2016: 148-150). While it is true that phyto-estrogens resemble human estrogen, they are not similar, and in fact may even contribute to *lower* estrogen levels in the body. There have also been studies showing that soy consumption lowers the death risk by breast cancer and also makes it less likely to return after treatment (Felding and Hansen 2016: 149).<sup>33</sup>

### 6.3 Low creatine levels

Vegans and vegetarians have lower *creatine* intake than meat eaters, and will usually have much lower creatine levels in their body (Novakovich 2013). Creatine is a non-essential amino acid that the body can synthesize from amino acids glycine, methionine and arginine, requiring enzymes L-arginine:glycine amidinotransferase, methionine adenosyltransferase and guanidinoacetate methyltransferase (Brosnan, Brosnan & da Silva 2011). While creatine is a non-essential amino acid, meaning that you do not *have to* ingest it, creatine is mostly found in

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<sup>33</sup> While we did see in chapter 3.2 that there has been research showing that vegan men tend to have higher testosterone levels than non-vegans, Felding and Hansen refers to research showing that soy consumption does not impact neither testosterone nor estrogen levels in men (2016: 150).

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animal foods, especially in steak (Sjösten 2016). Non-meat eaters, unless supplementing, rely almost exclusively on their own bodies to synthesize creatine, receiving extremely little from food, thereby ending up with lower levels than meat eaters (Brosnan, Brosnan & da Silva 2011, Sjösten 2016). Creatine is often used as a dietary supplement by bodybuilders and fitness enthusiasts to increase muscle gains as well as overall performance (Robson 2017, Bates, Digney, McEwan & Rae 2003: 2147). Research shows that people who do not eat meat benefit even further from creatine supplementation than meat eaters do, and that creatine supplementation may also be good for cognition and mental health (Sjösten 2016). A 2003 research tested the effect on mental performance on 45 young adults, who were vegan or vegetarian, of taking 5 g of creatine daily for six weeks (Bates, Digney, McEwan & Rae 2003). They found a significant positive effect on both intelligence and working memory (Bates, Digney, McEwan & Rae 2003).

Vegetarians and vegans may consider supplementing with creatine, especially if exercising rigorously. Creatine supplements are usually synthetic and vegan (Sjösten 2016). The fact that plant food contains low to no creatine seems to be a downside to meatless diets. However, this seems to be a rather small issue when compared to the advantages with healthy plant based diets, like decreased risk for cancer, cardiovascular problems, obesity and diabetes type 2 (Felding and Hansen 2016: 205). Also, the creatine problem is easily rectified by taking a cheap supplement.

### Criticism 7: What if hunting has value, even if we assume eating the meat itself is unhealthy?

Could it be that the procuring of meat, or meat production, has a value independent of the meat itself? I suspect having farm animals can feel valuable, even if they are later slaughtered. Instead of farming, here we'll take a closer look at hunting, another way of procuring meat, which could be an activity that is experienced as something valuable by those who perform it. Hunting would seem to go well with our model's emphasis on vitality and strength. So, how valuable is it? Nietzsche wrote:

*The knightly-aristocratic values rest upon a powerful physical development, a richness and even superabundance of health, together with what is necessary for maintaining life, on war, adventure, the chase, the dance, the tourney – on everything, in fact, which involves strong, free and joyous action (Nietzsche 2013: 21).*

First of all, what is gained from any process should ideally be of higher value than what could otherwise be done and the energy lost through the process.

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Hunting could be seen as an enjoyable activity and an activity of leisure. The hunter could go for a beautiful hike in the nature with his rifle and possibly come over a bird or game to shoot. After the kill(s), she can return to home and cook his dinner from it. Maybe she enjoys the feelings of power and self-sufficiency. Maybe she likes cooking as well, and maybe that process is even more enjoyable when she has procured her own food – of course, she *could* also have been picking mushrooms, berries or vegetables, or she could have grown them on a farm, and still be proud of what had been procured.

However, it is also thinkable that she is not fond of the process and would rather want to do other things. The 30 hour long obligatory course and registration required for getting a license to hold weapons required in Norway, might not be worth paying for if the activity it allows for is not enjoyable enough or necessary (Politiet 2016, Brønnøysundregistrene 2017). A person might also not like the physical toil it takes to go hunting. If not owning a gun, or if going for some animal that actually might pose a challenge, she might risk getting injured herself.

Obviously, in the case of killing *humans* today and also *some* nonhuman animals today, at least in Norway, she risks prison penalty or having to pay a fine, depending on *species* and/or/on occasion. Killing pets could result in months in prison. Three years imprisonment is the legal maximum which is never really given (Honningsøy and Roalsø 2016, NOAH – for dyrs rettigheter 2014). There could also be penalties if hunting outside of season or if killing individuals from *species* that are protected. Of course, killing anyone from these groups imposes potential legal consequences that hardly could be weighed up for from the possible gains of the process.

However, in other cases sometimes the state or municipality even pays for the kill with money collected from citizens' taxes (WWF-Norge 2016). Then there is economic gain from it too.

A person might, however, not like to kill and feel considerable discomfort in doing it. One might argue that this sentiment stems from beliefs, ideas or ideals like reverence for life itself that are taught, perhaps originating in religion. If not of benefit, they may cloud the judgment of the moral agent. Another possibility is that this is inborn and natural or that it stems from virtues of the person. However, being egoist does not mean being malevolent or sadist. It means doing *what benefits oneself*. Hunting for meat is not a necessity today and a modern human could very well flourish without doing so, as she with more ease could obtain her food in other ways, like going to a shop and pay for it, or grow vegetables in her garden or have animals at a farm.



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That is, in today's society hunting is for those especially interested. Even when hunters are paid a small reward from municipalities or others, this is probably not of such amounts that the hunter will grow rich from it. However, in 2016, Lyngen municipality in North Norway, together with interest organization «Lyngen sau og geit» promised 20.000 NOK for killing *one* lynx (Thuen 2016). This amount of money equals as of 9th of November 2016, 2315.11 EUR (DNB 2016). I assume this high amount of money is the exception rather than the norm. Most people, who are of course not hunting that lynx, would probably gain more from removing such tax funded rewards and reduce the tax they would have to pay, if only a little. The chances you are not among those who hunted that lynx is quite high.

The time used hunting could probably generate more income if spent at whatever office job instead, thus allowing the moral agent to buy even more meat at the store. Hunting today, for most people, is a hobby, probably cherished for excitement, the feeling of power or self-sufficiency. The physical movement in nature, especially mountains, will strengthen the body of the hunter and be to her advantage. However, as said, hunting today could not be called a *necessity*, and its qualities, like exercise, adrenaline and so-forth, could probably be found in other activities, thus being good *substitutes* for the hunting.

If broken down to its different advantages, we find that hunting is not *unique* in any way, in that its advantages are only available from this activity and no other. The obtaining of meat, of course, could be done by animal farming or buying from the butcher's or the store. Food-wise and energy-wise the hunter might, or might not, spend more energy on the hunting, in terms of calories, than is provided from the meat itself, depending on size and number of prey(s). Involved is an element of luck. A lot of times, if the goal is procuring meat for consumption it will be more efficient to do any other paid job and then pay for the meat later on. Zoologist Desmond Morris in his well-known book «The Naked Ape: A Zoologist's Study of the Human Animal», originally from 1967, interestingly writes that 'going to work' has actually become a compensation for hunting in modern society (1999: 188). However, the work must be of a certain character to replicate hunting. Repetitive and predictable work, at least in the 60's, associated with lower classes, lacked the elements of challenge, risk and luck important to the hunting male (Morris 1999: 190). If this is what needs be fulfilled, it seems to me that many activities, especially sportive, could substitute for actual hunting. Doing something else fulfilling the same needs is then not a loss. If one feels for the animal and does not really want to kill, then the abandonment of hunting, provided it is substituted with another activity, is not a loss, but a gain.

Criticism 8: Whether you eat meat or not is morally irrelevant because it has more to do with who you are than what you do

What if meat eating is not a moral issue? What if humans are divided into two or more camps, that is humans who *are* herbivores, or vegans, and humans who *are* omnivores, that is they have a mixed diet, or even carnivores, or meat eaters? That is; what if diet is a reflection of who we *are*, not just something we practice? Could it be that writing and discussing the ethics of meat eating is just to talk about ourselves and who we *are*? This suspicion is somehow inspired by Nietzsche who tends to view morality as instrumental, as a way to justify yourself (1990: 110). He wrote that: «moralities too are only a *sign-language of the emotions*» (Nietzsche 1990: 110). Although I have acknowledged that the issue of meat eating may be different according to who you *are* – that is whether you have the ability to bond with non-human animals or not, and whether you have allergies or other conditions that could make the benefits of a vegan diet less for you – moving the issue from morality to identity is to take this a step further. Of course, we cannot go into depth on this issue here, but it could be for someone else to explore.

So the hypothesis would be: *The natural omnivores do not, and can not, understand vegans or the could-be vegans because of their inborn nature.* Say, for the sake of argument that some humans are «meant to be» meat eaters, and some are not. Vegans and animal advocates present what to us seem to be rational and good arguments and fail to see the sense in the meat eaters' responses. Could it be that this is somewhat an analogue to conservatives preaching the supremacy of heterosexuality to homosexuals, to whom it makes no sense to *be* heterosexual, because we *are* not and could not find any pleasure in intimacy with the opposite sex? Could it be that the «born omnivores» do not understand what vegans are saying? If so, for what reason? Is it because the desire to eat meat is so strong and that the vegans and could-be vegans do not understand this? Is it because they simply do not see the value in living animals and do not feel anything when an animal dies? Are some born natural hunters, and feel excitement from hunting animals, in a way that born herbivores do not? Is this because of biology and genetical make-up, or is it psychological? I am not altogether convinced there is something in this, but there are some things to say for it.

Populations where people have had a predominantly vegetarian diet for a long time have more people with a gene allele that make them more efficient at processing omega 3- and 6 fatty

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acids, useful for people following a vegetarian diet (Ramanujan 2016). An opposite version of this gene is found among the Inuit populations who have a marine diet (Ramanujan 2016).

Also, it turns out that how a human perceives the smell of (male) pork meat is genetically determined, with some people carrying genes that make them feel the smell of it as more intense and unpleasant than those without (Goodman 2012). Apparently, the smell in the nose is more important for how we perceive a meal than the taste on our tongues, as seen when we have flu and find food tasteless. This is not because the taste buds on the tongue are somewhat reduced, but our capacity to smell is (Goodman 2012, Morris 1999: 193-194). Dislike of the smell of food is important to how we perceive the food. If some people dislike the smell of certain, or all meats, it wouldn't be too surprising if they had a higher chance of becoming vegetarian or vegan.

Zoologist Morris points out that the urge to eat and the urge to kill prey are partially independent of each other, and the human and ape species have, as a group, been through different phases of diet (1999: 187). The tendency for human males to form all-male gangs may be inherited from the hunting phase, where human males hunted in packs (Morris 1999: 187-188). We did already in criticism 7 note that hunting today could be substituted to some extent by modern work or other activities (Morris 1999: 190-191). Many humans could actually be equipped with an urge to kill prey (Morris 1999: 190). The urge to kill and perform physical violence is of course suppressed by civilization, but is somehow made up for by symbolic victories in gambling and work (Morris 1999: 190). Staged hunting, killing and torture of animals has historically been used as entertainment up through the ages in Europe (Morris 1999: 191). Some humans clearly find some pleasure in this, while others are appalled by it. What this leads me to think is that the subjugation of nonhuman animals, also when it comes to using them as food, may have to do with something else than nourishment and food. This would perhaps be a drive or a disposition that makes it hard or impossible for some to see nonhuman animals as individuals on par with humans or oneself. That is, something *in* them relegates nonhuman animals to the prey category, while this tendency may be nonexistent in others, because of how we are born and what we are.

While this is far from conclusive, future research may find more evidence that our tendencies to be vegan or meat eaters are genetically or psychologically fuelled. Maybe the strength of these tendencies could be so strong that we could make a plausible case for them having to do

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with what we *are* maybe even more than what we *do*. Judging by what is presented here, I don't see that there is enough evidence for it, though, as of yet. However, if some people are unable to see nonhuman animals as moral patients, that is as individuals worthy of moral consideration, and this inability has to do with who they are, are they at fault? And then; would they be if they were unable to see *human* animals as moral patients? Are they even moral agents, or is their ability to act for moral reasons and engage in moral reasoning impaired to a too high extent for them to be in that category? That is: could they even be held accountable? And if not, would the categories of moral agents and moral patients even continue to be useful?

Given *egoism*, they must act in their own self-interest. What is in their interest depends to a certain extent on who they are. But when it comes to eating meat or not, or following a vegan diet or not, the answer would still depend on what furthers their lives the most. If they are unable to see what that is, they may be acting with good *intentions* for themselves, doing what they *believe* is best, but still making mistakes and thus failing to live up to egoist morality, not out of ill will, but out of ignorance.

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### Conclusion

In this chapter we've been through some potential criticisms of the egoist case for dietary veganism. None of them have been destructive, although some could prove to be so in the future. Especially dangerous to the egoist case for dietary veganism is of course if it were found that eating meat was healthier than abstaining from it. The argument against abstractions is also potentially strong. If you are to increase your total value supply and you can assign different roles to different individuals, even when some of them resemble each other, then it is perfectly possible that this is what maximizes personal gain. Still, there is a question to how psychologically healthy such a splitting is, that is having one pig as friend, another on your plate, having one human as your husband, another as your slave.

There can be many more criticisms than have been anticipated here. Some could argue against egoism as a model, some against veganism as a diet, some against the egoist case for veganism and my assertion that dietary veganism can be argued for from an egoist standpoint.

## Final conclusion

We started out by looking at what kind of thesis this was to be, namely a thesis that was going to establish an ethical egoist case for dietary veganism. This thesis in applied ethics was to rely on literature. So we were set for looking at examples of what had been done with the issue before.

In the first chapter we took a look at Singer's preference utilitarian approach to animal ethics in general and vegetarianism in particular. According to this theory what should matter when making a moral decision is that the preferences of as many involved as possible are satisfied. Nonhuman animals have preferences and should therefore be taken into account. As is, the meat industry isn't there to satisfy their preferences, but in many cases leads to suffering. To stop this, we should stop supporting the animal food industry with our money, that is we should stop buying animal products. Regan had another approach. He grounded the concern for animals in their rights. They have rights because they have inherent value, and we ought to respect that value. We do not respect that value by killing them. Rowlands argued that it is unjust to make someone suffer for things that are out of their control, such as species membership. Eating a pig, when that is unnecessary for any vital concern of ours, is not justified by stating that the pig is not human. In order to justify such treatment of the pig it is necessary to find a morally relevant reason for it, something that often or always fails as the alleged fault of the pig will often be shared by some humans. This is called the argument from marginal cases, an argument that can also be used against ethical egoists who claim humans' species belonging to be a reason for them to be treated better. Singer, Regan and Rowlands have made very valuable contributions to animal ethics. However, their approaches are vulnerable to the egoist who misses the relevance to his life. What would it benefit a human moral agent to care about nonhuman animals, whether they suffer or not and whether they live or die?

To answer that, the next step was to build up an egoist ethical model. Here we looked at different philosophers such as Rand, Stirner and Nietzsche. The basics are that you ought to do what benefits yourself. What to do is to pursue values and try to build up your value supply as much as possible. Values are those things that enrich and further your life. What you can value will to a certain extent depend upon your own biology and psychology, but for many people company and relationships will be important. Rationality and reason are important to assess what are good things to pursue. Health and vitality are important to stay alive and enjoy the life one is living. To assess all these things one is to rely on one's own judgment and mind, not that of prejudice, convention or others, although these may very well be right. Concurring with them

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should only happen after applying reason and consciously agree that in the particular case, convention is not to be defied. Seeing the value of other individuals is made easier by seeing them without prejudice and not as essentialized collectives. Meeting an individual from another species, one meets her with an open mind to investigate how best to relate to this individual.

Next followed a chapter on how to create an egoist case for dietary veganism or any diet rid of meat. The way that was done was through arguing that a living nonhuman individual can be valuable in ways that necessitate that individual being alive. Killing him annihilates the value. On the other hand, meat is a nonvalue because it does not further life, given that you have healthier vegan options available to you. To choose the dead animal over the living then is irrational and self detrimental, hence immoral according to egoism.

Then we looked at some potential criticisms. Here, I think the most potentially devastating would be if the nonhuman individual is showed to be without value to the moral agent who follows ethical egoism, or if it were so that a diet containing meat was healthier and more life promoting than a vegan one. If the living nonhuman animal has no value, but the dead animal has, then the argument would be turned on its head and it would follow that given ethical egoism, we should continue to eat animals.

I do not think that is the case. It is more likely that we could also just end up with less clear alternatives. That is, for example, if you *could* see the value of the nonhuman animal, but you *don't*, and if eating meat and being vegan were *equally* good options nutritionally, as well as equally good in any other aspect. Then it would seem like, given egoism, going vegan was optional and amoral, that is just a matter of preference and outside the sphere of morality.

This brings us to an interesting scenario. Say that we do acknowledge that animal farming cause suffering to animals, and thwart their interests as well as deprive them of the freedom to act on impulses and instincts, as they in most cases are confined. But say that we also ascribe to a moral theory that tells us that whether we support it or not is merely optional and a matter of preference. It is hard to discuss subjective preferences. Therefore, you are now left to answer the question for yourself. What do you prefer?

### Weaknesses

Apart from the potential criticisms mentioned in chapter 4, there could be many other. Additionally, I think the version of egoism I have laid fore here suffers from a vagueness. This is especially the case with the term *values*. How can values be measured against each other and what should determine what is the highest value? This could have been discussed and a system

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or procedure of such determination could have been presented. Also, the case would have been stronger if the potential value of the living animal individual could be made even more probable, say if supported with more evidence or research. The egoist approach to dietary veganism is vulnerable to new insights into nutrition if these were to show that veganism is less healthy than it seems here, this to a higher extent than the other approaches mentioned in the first chapter, because they do not demand of an action that it needs to present a gain for the actor.

### Further research

Some suggestions to what could be done in the future is to find yet other approaches to animal ethics and dietary veganism, potentially avoiding the weaknesses we've mentioned with utilitarianism, the rights approach as well as egoism.

Also, more research into nonhuman animal individuality would be of interest, as well as human-nonhuman relations, and relations between individuals from different nonhuman species as well. This is important when it comes to how we relate to nonhuman individuals

In this thesis, I've used some space on pigs, and it'd be interesting to see empirical research on how humans' perceptions of pigs change when they adopt pigs as «pets» or companion animals, and if this commonly spill over to change perception of other so-called farm animals as well. We've seen here, in the example of Esther, the wonder pig, and her human companions Steve and Derek, that it can happen. It'd be interesting to see, on a larger scale, how common this is. If it be near or close to universal, that would seem to give weight to my claim that much of how we relate to animals is rooted in prejudice and ignorance, rather than self-interest. That is, if our perception of the nonhuman *does* change, when we get to know him.

For the same reasons it is interesting to know more about nonhuman morality and regulations of behavior among individuals of nonhuman species. I doubt that morality is a human construct, although the discussion of it and thorough thinking about it, could be. And perhaps is not.

It'd also be interesting to see cases for environmental protection grounded in egoism as perhaps it could appeal to more people, and also shed new light on the issues. Also, it'd be interesting to develop an egoist case for animal *rights*, if possible, that is grounding concern for nonhuman animals in an ethical egoist model incorporating a rights concept, as opposed to what I've done here, shredding a concept of rights.

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