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Section: 18

REGARDING ANIMAL WELFARE AND FACTORY FARMING, TO WHAT EXTENT IS CONSUMING ANIMALS AS SOURCES OF FOOD ETHICALLY JUSTIFIABLE?

Eating is an integral part of human life. However, that may not give people the freedom to eat what they want because the two primary food sources, animals and plants, are alive; therefore, they should have rights to a certain extent. Considering that animals exhibit a more developed nervous system and complex behaviors than plants, there may be more concern about how far people can extend animal rights. Some can think that the lives of the animals should be sacred as human life because of their complex behaviors and nervous system; therefore, they may think that consuming animals as sources of food may not be ethically justifiable. However, consuming animals as sources of food is ethically justifiable because animals have limited consciousness; humans have to feed an enormous population; factory farming with improved conditions can offer animals a short but continuously happy life.

One of the reasons why consuming animals as sources of food is ethically justifiable is that the consciousness of animals has a limit. Some people believe that animals may have thinking ability, and animals can interact with others based on their instincts and thoughts. To indicate this, Montaigne states, "In one kind of barking of a dog the horse knows there is anger, of another sort of bark he is not afraid" (83). Besides, Montaigne states further that people can communicate with their pets in several ways and respond accordingly (84). Montaigne's examples are reasonable because animals may appear to behave according to the context of the interaction. However, these arguments fail to consider that animals cannot surpass a specific limit when communicating and that communication cannot be maintained for a long time. For example, the horse can understand the feelings of the dog, but it may not think that why the dog has particular feelings, and therefore, it may not ask the dog the reasons for his particular feelings. On the other hand, people who may have insufficient organs to communicate can explain their thoughts beyond their simple feelings (Descartes 14-15). Descartes's claim is valid because disabled people may try to find ways to communicate with others, such as blind people's use of the Braille alphabet and deaf people's body language use. These efforts may be because of their interest in transmitting ideas. However, the insufficient efforts of animals to engage in transmitting ideas may show that they donot have an interest; therefore, they may not have thoughts. Apart from the inability of animals to think, they may not have complex emotions, which can cause them to suffer. As McMahan criticizes benign carnivorism, he illustrates that animals lack some dimensions of perception such as creativity, achievement, knowledge, deep personal relations, and aesthetic appreciation (1). He also points out that these lacking may result in animals not perceiving the future (2). McMahan's claims are reasonable because the animals have no desire to have a good grade from exams or ambition to have a better life in the future and so on. They perceive only the present time and feel simple feelings such as fear and joy. Hence, since animals may not have thoughts and complex emotions, the limit of perception of animals may protect them from mental suffering when consuming animals as a food source; therefore, consuming animals as a food source is ethically justifiable.

Another reason why consuming animals as sources of food is ethically justifiable is the demand for food to nourish the massive human population. Some people think that the energy gained by eating animals is much less than the energy people gain by eating the same amount of plants as animals; therefore, they may believe in the possibility to feed the entire human population with plants. Although the core of this claim is valid, it suffers from a flaw in its application because most of the animals raised in the fields otherwise might not be used for plant production. As Adegbola discusses eliminating hunger, he states that consuming animals as a food source enables people to use 57% of the world's land that may not be used for plant production (3). Adegbola's claim is reasonable because most animals may graze in places such as mountain tops and dense forests that otherwise would be hard to convert to fields. As Archer criticizes the vegetarian diet, he explains that almost all of Australia's meat consumption comes from animals grazing in unsuitable pastures for agriculture (979). Archer's example clearly shows the need to eat animals because otherwise, to compensate for not eating animals, people would need to convert unsuitable pastures to the fields, resulting in the loss of the habitat of these animals. This converting process may also affect many small animals that live in the soil. As Archer criticizes the wheat production stages, he stated that "The acts of ploughing and harvesting kill small mammals, snakes, lizards and other animals in vast numbers. As well, grain storage requires the poisoning of millions of mice every year" (980). Archer's example shows that consuming plants instead of animals may only change the size of dying animals. On the other hand, eating animals can save many small animals living in the fields because animals may provide organic fertilizers to the farmers; therefore, the farmer's need for chemicals may decrease. Organic fertilizers donot poison small animals while increasing the productivity of the fields. Thus, people can get the amount of plants needed to feed society by building fewer fields, which means not touching the habitats of most animals. While Adegbola clarifies the benefits of organic fertilizer, he states that "Livestock manure provides organic fertilizer for over 50% most of the world's croplands ..." (3). Adegbola's claim is substantial because it may show that the animals living in more than half the world's fields may be protected by animals raised for food. Thus, consuming animals is ethically justified because of needing for animals to feed the human population.

Another significant reason why consuming animals as sources of food is ethically justifiable is factory farming with good conditions can offer animals short but happier life than they would be in nature. As stated earlier, animal consumption as a food source is necessary to feed the human population. However, animals raised for food should have certain rights, which can be defined as benign carnivorism. As McMahan criticizes benign carnivorism, he defines it as an approach in which animals are raised in good conditions and killed painlessly (1). Although McMahan's approach to benign carnivorism is unfavorable, benign carnivorism may be the most appropriate way to eat animals while making the eating animals ethical. Therefore, people should concentrate on animal rights and define the meaning of good conditions. As stated earlier, animals may not have complex emotions that they suffer from. For example, the animals may not suffer from knowing that they may be killed in the future. Additionally, they may not know their life may be shorter than those of their wild kindred. As Singer criticizes the misunderstanding of equality, he states that it is meaningless to talk of men's abortion rights (2). Considering his claim and that animal may have no thoughts and expectations for the future, animals are less likely to suffer from captivity or want to live with their wild kindred. Therefore, animals may not necessarily have a right to live longer or freely. However, animals should have all the physical rights that people have. This is because animals feel the pain in the same intensity and length that human feels (Singer 17). Therefore, people should pay attention to the emotional well-being of animals. Furthermore, since the animals only perceive basic emotions such as fear or happiness, having continuous happiness resulting from good conditions can make them lead a more enjoyable life. Thus, benign carnivorism should be an ethical way of consuming animals as a food source.

In conclusion, eating animals is ethically justifiable because of the limited understanding of animals, the needing to feed an enormous human population, and the possibility of animals living a happier life in factory farming with improved conditions. Firstly, animals may have only basic emotions such as anger and anxiety, and they may not have complex thoughts as humans have. Secondly, the human population cannot be feed only by plants due to places not suitable for agriculture and animal production's effect on increasing the efficiency of plant production; therefore, to feed humans, people need to eat animals. Finally, animals may not have mental rights such as freedom or long life if they are physically well-behaved. Considering the necessity of eating meat, instead of discussing the ethics of eating meat, people should try to find new food sources other than plants and animals, such as artificial meats. As Nobis illustrates, there are no specific laws to protect factory animals (10). Therefore, until people find a new food source, they have to ensure that benign carnivorism principles are applied in full strictness with new laws that protect the physical well-being of animals.

**Self Evaluation:**

Task Requirements: 2

Argument: 5

Support: 4

Language: 5

Readability: 3

Formatting: 2

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