

Andy Lamey

Duty and the Beast: Should We Eat Meat in the Name of Animal Rights?

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Andy Lamey's book is a critical analysis of 'the new animal debate'. Traditional, or 'the first-wave', views on animal protection address the question of why it is morally wrong to eat meat. Answers tend to concentrate on what kind of beings animals are (sentient and cognitively complex) and how they are treated in the farm industry (cruelly with no hope of alleviation). The new debate, and a position within it that Lamey names 'new omnivorism', seeks for more flexible or even quite reverse moral practices, should animals have moral rights against humans. Accordingly, omnivorism takes seemingly contradictory forms, such as 'burger veganism' that allows eating free-range meat. The combination of food and animal ethics in the book at hand brings about interesting possibilities and positions mirroring the heterogeneity of human diets. Lamey's attitude to new omnivorism is mainly unfavourable.

Instead of discussing normative theories and their fundamental principles, Lamey's focus is on mid-level principles that he considers compatible with several normative ethical theories. Of nine chapters, Chapter 1 and 2 set out the common ideas of animal protection, equal consideration, anti-speciesism and moral individualism, and imply such opinions as 'all else equal, killing a mouse is just as wrong as killing a cow' (p. 61). Chapter 2 analyses conceptions of harming animals and defends a view that killing is intrinsically wrong even if their mental capacities are less sophisticated than human adults' capacities. It contains a very interesting discussion on abortion, infanticide and killing animals in the framework of time-relative interests. Chapter 3 tackles the dilemma of burger veganism as framed by Steven Davis: even if animals have rights, it is better to eat free-range meat from cows and sheep than animal protein in crops and vegetables that involve unintentionally killed animals (mice, rats, birds) in the process of harvesting. Given that all animals are equal, size does not matter, and only second-best options are open to us, an empirical question arises: what involves the least number of individual animal deaths? Many people might find this constellation as odd. Chapter 4 focuses on the doctrine of double effect and it considers the moral differences between intentional and inadvertent (indirect) killing. The ethics of killing is also the topic in Chapter 5. It considers humane slaughter in light of Temple Grandin's view that the method of killing that minimises animal suffering makes omnivorism (more) congruent with the aims of animal protection; Lamey contends that in reality animal slaughter within these guidelines fails to be free from suffering and moreover it is wrong as such because sentient animals have interest in continued existence. Chapter 5 also offers a useful study of the development of Peter Singer's stances on killing animals and human infants.

Chapter 6 explores the concept of primitive self-consciousness. Lamey defines this as an entity's ability to distinguish oneself from others and to conceive oneself through time, in virtue of which one has expectations regarding the future. Lamey asks whether chickens – the largest group of farmed animals – have such a primitive self-consciousness, and he goes through empirical studies on hens that suggest a positive answer, but that this ability is not particularly impressive. Although Lamey reminds the reader that empirical findings are tentative, the moral of the story is clear: eating chicken is indefensible. The theme of Chapter 7 is 'the logic of the larder', a phrase adopted from Henry S. Salt's essay in 1914 stating that it is in the interest of the pig to be eaten, as without this human want the pig would not exist. Lamey critically analyses the (mostly) utilitarian ideas of population ethics involving Singer, Derek Parfit and Jeff McMahan. As a response, Lamey proposes the avoidance view that requires us to avoid such action that brings about 'a bad outcome'. Thus, it is morally a wrong choice to bring into existence such sentient individuals whose life will be miserable, but we may create those with a prospect for happy life; with respect to animal reproduction, '[n]o wrong is done to the animals, as they never exist' (p. 185).

Chapter 8 tackles ideas from plant neurobiology or plant sentience. These ideas could undermine the rationale for avoiding animal food items if it solely rests on the sentience criterion. Lamey, however, plays down the neurobiological challenge by criticising the underpinning behaviourist conception of consciousness, which disregards the phenomenological dimension of consciousness. In the final Chapter 9, Lamey examines what is *in vitro* meat. The traditional idea of meat regards an edible object as meat if its source is a once-living animal; Lamey's view on meat is different, a piece of cultured meat is meat because its substance and function do not differ from animal-sourced meat. However, while it is unethical to eat animal-sourced meat, cultured meat is to be allowed as long as no harm is done to animals. Legally and politically, the issues revolving around the naming and classifying of edible items have been hotly debated (in the EU, for instance). Likewise, if there were to be a so-called meat tax, as some have proposed for climatic reasons, then Lamey might face a problem of finding an appropriate way of distinguishing taxable meat from non-taxable meat. Perhaps could the source of the meat matter under such a regulation, or could the taxation be based on its carbon footprint instead?

It is somewhat unfair to criticise the book in terms of what has been left out. The practical context of Lamey's work is the human diet, but he has not addressed the climatic and ecological dimensions of diets (and the whole food system), despite the intensifying discussion. Moreover, Lamey's approach is individualistic, so much so that a rare reference to the environmental dimensions occurs in the context of environmental fascism.

In overall terms, Lamey's book is a highly sophisticated, yet lucid and innovative, philosophical investigation on how non-human animals ought to be

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treated. Those who appreciate philosophical thought experiments and/or science-informed discussions on ethics will find Lamey's work essential reading.

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