

## On Vegetarianism(s) and Food Choices

“The symbolism of meat-eating is never neutral. To himself, the meat-eater seems to be eating life. To the vegetarian, he seems to be eating death. There is a kind of gestalt-shift between the two positions...” (Midgley)

### Steven Davis, “The Least Harm Principle May Require that Humans Consume a Diet...of...Large Herbivores”

- What is the argument here, following Regan’s **least harm principle**? Can you see any different alternatives (see **freeganism**...) other than the ones he mentions (local agriculture, larger herbivores, ‘everyone hunt’)
- This article is a good example of heavily debatable statistics—how does he get his numbers?
- Does the question of **intentionality** matter? (i.e., intended vs. unintended/incidental deaths—246)

### James Rachels, “The Basic Argument for Vegetarianism”

- What is the “basic argument” according to Rachels? (two steps, on 260)
- Quoting Scully’s *Dominion* on pigs and the *Omnivore’s Dilemma* on ‘steer No. 534’, in a “premodern city”
- “it is natural for people to resist arguments that require them to do things they don’t want to do” (how much does this account for opposition to reform, do you think?) Also, “if all of your friends are eating meat, you are unlikely to be moved by a mere argument.” (Pollan, Anthony Bourdain, and others also mention the specifically social aspects of eating, and how being a vegetarian (etc.) can often remove you from important forms of social community).
- “Eating shrimp may turn out to be acceptable” from an animal welfare perspective—are there others?

### Kathryn Paxton George, “A Paradox of Ethical Vegetarianism: Unfairness to Women and Children”

- George is saying that Regan/Singer’s ethical requirements “unfairly penalize people who live in certain kinds of economic and environmental circumstances,” because they are “nutritionally vulnerable....All current arguments for ethical vegetarianism treat such nutritional vulnerability as an *exception* rather than as a norm. But, the very fact that the majority is regarded as a mere exception suggests that the ideal is skewed to favor a group in power.”
  - The risk is of a creating “*a moral underclass*...physiologically disbarred from doing the right thing because they are not the right *kind* of thing.”
- “All risks for vegans in the US can be overcome with a well-planned and well-supplemented diet” (277), but this can be a challenging task...
- Also, “fortification and food processing requires a complex industrialized food system...all of these aspects of our food system have environmental consequences”
- “The best course seems to be a middle ground such as semivegetarianism with moderate continued food fortification and preservation.” “We do [, however,] have duties not to overconsume”

### David Nibert, “The Promotion of ‘Meat’ and its Consequences”

- Why is Nibert putting quotes around everything in this piece?
- On the ecological and human costs of agribusiness, **demographic** shifts, and the ongoing “**livestock revolution**”.
  - What are the range of environmental harms that are complicit in industrial “meat” production?
- What is the **Green Revolution** Nibert describes (and derides) – and what are the effects on the international agricultural market of the skyrocketing demand for feed grain? (184)
- The case of Guatemala