

CHAPTER FOUR

An Evaluation of Others' Deliberations

4.1 Introduction

If ethics is a search for rules of behaviour that can be universally endorsed (Jamieson 1990; Daniels 1979; Rawls 1971), the values underpinning my own deliberation on the issues explored in this book must be compared with the values underlying the deliberation of others. By considering the challenges raised by others' views, qualified moral veganism might either be revised or, if it survives critique, be corroborated. Though some scholars who work in animal ethics have defended views that are—to a reasonable degree—similar to my own (e.g. Milligan 2010; Kheel 2008; Adams 1990), many people consume animal products where they have adequate alternatives that, in my view, would reduce negative GHIs. This raises the question whether qualified moral veganism overlooks something of importance—the fact that so many people act in ways that are incompatible with qualified moral veganism provokes the following question in me: Am I missing something?

The ambition of this chapter is twofold. Its first aim is to analyse the deliberations of two widely different groups of people on vegetarianism, veganism, and the killing of animals. By describing the views of others as accurately as I can, I aim to set aside my own thoughts on the matter temporarily—to the extent that doing so is possible—to throw light on where others might be coming from. The second aim of the chapter is to evaluate these views. By doing so, I hope that the reader will be stimulated to reflect upon their own dietary narratives through critical engagement with the views of others. At the same time, I hope that further light will be shed on the question whether the vegan project might stand a chance of gathering support from large numbers of people.

How to cite this book chapter:

Deckers, J 2016 *Animal (De)liberation: Should the Consumption of Animal Products Be Banned?* Pp. 131–157. London: Ubiquity Press. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/bay.e>. License: CC-BY 4.0

4.2 Methodology

The views of two distinct groups of people are being reported and evaluated in this chapter. The groups are distinct as they are situated at opposite ends of the socio-economic spectrum of the current UK population. The first group comprises academic scholars and students, none of whom are specialised in animal ethics. Many of them are paid relatively high wages and/or come from families with relatively high incomes. The second group comprises people who—with the exception of one (a nurse)—lack academic qualifications and live in relatively deprived areas.

The first ('academic') group comprises a small sample of academic scientists and students from Newcastle University, an academic institution situated in the north-east of England. Six scientists who worked in disciplines related to environmental science were recruited to participate in the 'Deliberating the Environment' research project, funded by the Economics and Social Research Council's Science in Society Programme and carried out by me in collaboration with four colleagues (Derek Bell, Mary Brennan, Tim Gray, and Nicola Thompson) at Newcastle University. Twenty-one students were recruited from those who took a module on environmental ethics, and the recruited students included both single and joint honours (second-year) BA students in Philosophical Studies (2003–2004). Both scientists and students agreed to their data being published, and, whilst scientists agreed to being interviewed, students agreed to complete a questionnaire with a range of questions about environmental issues. The questionnaire contained the following questions that were relevant for the purposes of this chapter: 1) 'Are you a vegetarian/vegan? Why/why not?'; and 2) 'Do you think you should be a vegetarian/vegan? Why/why not?' Henceforth, the answers to these questions will be indicated by the numbers 1 and 2 respectively. None of the students were vegans, but three identified themselves as vegetarians at the time of the study.

The scientists participated in a series of deliberative exchanges with six individuals who were part of the second ('non-academic') group and who lived in relatively deprived communities in the Newcastle area. The latter were recruited from the electoral register by being sent a letter asking them to participate in the research project. We defined a deliberative exchange as a one-to-one deliberation or conversation between two persons from different social groups, facilitated by a researcher. All participants consented to interviews—which were carried out in 2003–2004—being recorded and transcribed, and to data being used in publications. Five exchanges were held on the theme of 'animals and biodiversity'. For this exchange theme, non-academics were respectively paired up with academics as follows: Jane and Barry, Henry and Eric, Gail and David, Keith and Alice, and Fiona and Craig. Real names have been replaced by fictitious names to preserve the anonymity of the interviewees; the same fictitious names were used in an article that analyses and evaluates some of

these people's views on genetic engineering (Deckers 2005b). The exchanges were facilitated by a researcher, Nicola Thompson, who asked a range of questions on the theme, including the questions whether the participants ate animal products and why they did or did not do so. None of the participants in these exchanges identified themselves as either being vegetarian or being vegan.

The second ('non-academic') group also includes six slaughterhouse workers who worked in a slaughterhouse in Oldham (Greater Manchester) in 2005, when they were interviewed for a documentary about their jobs that was shown on BBC Two on 4 July 2005 and was produced and directed in 2005 by Brian Hill, from Century Films. Whereas I had no involvement in these interviews, the data provide a great additional resource to stimulate reflection on the vegan project for three reasons. Firstly, unless there is a large discordance between their actions and their thoughts, the views of slaughterhouse workers might be expected to be greatly at odds with the vegan project as slaughterhouse workers engage routinely in actions that the vegan project seeks to prohibit. Secondly, their moral reflection on these actions is unlikely to be suppressed to the same extent as that which has been documented for many other people who may rarely or never be exposed to the concrete realities of slaughterhouses (Adams 1990; Franklin 1999; N. Williams 2008). Thirdly, critical engagement with the views of these workers might help those who are working in this or in other slaughterhouses to deal with the psychological harm that may be caused by their work, both the understanding and the discussion of which have been held to be inadequate (Dillard 2008). In this regard, it is noteworthy that I am not aware of any other study that has critically engaged with the views of the workers interviewed for this film.

The data were categorised using thematic analysis (Bryman 2008, 554–555). Repeated listening to and readings of the interview data revealed that the data could be categorised in a number of themes. The iterative comparison of the views of academic staff, students, and local citizens revealed the following themes in relation to the question of how participants either approved of or rejected the consumption of animal products and the production process:

- Liking the taste of products derived from animals
- Taste trumps thoughts
- Health reasons
- Our bodies have been designed to eat animal products
- Since some animals eat other animals, we should be free to do so too
- Animals have been designed to be eaten
- Animals owe their lives to the fact that we eat them
- Tradition
- Questioning the exploitation of animals

The iterative comparison of the views of the slaughterhouse workers who contributed to the film revealed that their views could not easily be categorised into the same themes. Rather, the following themes emerged:

- Power: being allowed to do something that not many people are allowed to do
- Sincerity: facing up to ‘reality’, in contrast to others
- Fun: making and having fun
- Skill: killing better than others who do not do so properly
- Religion: being justified by Yahweh, God, or Allah

In the following sections I shall discuss how these themes emerged from the data; in addition, poignant statements will be quoted to illustrate the themes and participants’ views will be evaluated.

4.3 Thematic analysis and evaluation of the views of academic staff, students, and Newcastle residents

4.3.1 Liking the taste of products derived from animals

Several participants tried to justify their dietary choices by expressing that they liked the taste of ‘meat’. Some expressed unease about this taste, but added that they liked meat ‘too much to give it up’. A male student, for example, wrote the following:

- ‘I was a vegetarian for 11 years, but gave up because I liked the smell of bacon, and wanted a bacon sandwich.’

Such a perspective was also present in the exchange amongst Newcastle citizens and academic staff. Craig, for example, replied as follows to the question why he ate animals: ‘cause it tastes good’. The importance of taste as a barrier towards adopting vegetarian diets has also been found in other studies (Lea and Worsley 2003). In a study that compared vegetarian and non-vegetarian English teenage girls, one comment by a girl echoed what this male student wrote: ‘I’ve tried being vegetarian but I didn’t manage for very long. Just waft a bacon sandwich under my nose and I change my mind’ (Kenyon and Barker 1998, 193).

While I agree that the fact that something tastes good can be a powerful incentive to (want to) eat it, the question must be asked whether it provides a sufficient justification to reject qualified moral veganism. Human flesh might taste good to some people; however, we do not think that someone’s taste for human flesh provides a sufficient justification for killing human beings to satisfy that desire, at least not when humans can live healthily without eating

human flesh. The same applies in relation to the consumption of human beings who die naturally. If my argument in chapter two fails, so that no moral distinction between eating plants and eating nonhuman animals can be made, the argument could be made that, as we should not refrain from eating plants, we should not refrain from eating nonhuman animals either. This argument would seem to hold up for those who remain unconvinced about there being a moral distinction between eating plants and eating nonhuman animals.

However, in view of some other things that participants said, it is difficult to maintain the view that any of them genuinely adopted the view that no moral distinction between eating plants and eating nonhuman animals should be made. In light of this, I find it difficult to understand how mere flavour could provide a moral justification for rejecting qualified moral veganism. Presumably, some people may adopt the view that eating nonhuman animals poses more concerns than eating plants but that the difference is insufficiently great to justify qualified moral veganism. Likewise, it might be argued that the fact that killing animals is a foreseeable consequence of motorised transport is insufficient to undermine the use of such transport. The problem with this view is that the concerns that I have identified in chapters one and two seem much more significant than the experiences that humans gain from eating animals' flesh, particularly where it requires that animals be killed for food. Whereas human beings stand to lose much from forgoing motorised transport, I think that human beings do not forgo any important interests by abstaining from the consumption of animal products in situations where they could eat other things that produce a smaller quantity of those things that I have argued to be negative GHIs.

4.3.2 *Taste trumps thoughts*

Some participants agreed with this argument in theory, yet failed to adopt the philosophy in practice. The clearest accounts on this were provided by two students, who thought that they were wrong not to adopt qualified moral veganism but explained their failure to adopt such a stance by reference to the good taste of animal products. The following two accounts are quotations from the two students, a female and a male student, respectively, in response to the relevant questions (1 and 2):

- '(1) No, was vegetarian once—but chicken is just too good. (2) Try not to think about it when I'm eating—no, we shouldn't eat animals.'
- '(1) No, I don't want to give up milk—dairy cows suffer more than livestock—therefore there's also no point in me giving up meat. (2) Yes, clearly it's wrong to keep an animal just for my own gain.'

I agree with the two students' answers to the second question, apart from the fact that qualified moral veganism does not support the general statement that

‘we shouldn’t eat animals’ if ‘we’ is taken to stand for all human beings. I disagree, however, that these moral perceptions should be trumped by the fact that one likes something or does not want to give something up. In order to continue with their eating habits, it appears that these students had to try to dissociate the product from the production process. Whilst no participants apart from the students thought that they ought to adopt vegetarianism, attempts to dissociate animals from the products that are made from them were made by participants in both groups.

The clearest expression of such dissociation came from Barry, who tried to reconcile consuming and (his aversion towards) killing animals as follows during the deliberative exchange:

- ‘I don’t police the streets of Newcastle ... I pay for a policeman to do it. ... Just so, we have people to slaughter animals, so that we can eat them.’

In sharp contrast, Gail said that she had been a vegetarian, a choice she had made under the influence of the boyfriend she had been dating at the time but also on the basis of the feeling underlying the following rhetorical question:

- ‘I couldn’t [kill animals] so why should I make someone else do it for me?’

In spite of this contrast between Barry and Gail, whereby the former appeared to be much more convinced that it was acceptable to support the actions of others who do things that one would not be comfortable doing oneself, both agreed that this feeling of unease should not undermine their choices to consume animals, with the latter claiming that she ‘love[d] meat’.

The question must be asked, however, whether Barry and Gail were right to support the actions of others by purchasing food items the production of which they were morally concerned about. Barry’s analogy does not seem to be appropriate as it is unlikely that Barry had much choice in deciding whether to pay the police unless he had been prepared to break the law—whereas he would not need to break the law if he wanted to abstain from consuming animal products. Another reason why I doubt its appropriateness relates to the fact that Barry is likely to have lacked enthusiasm for policing the streets of Newcastle himself, but there was no indication that he objected to others doing so. His personal dislike of the idea that policing the streets of Newcastle might be a suitable job for him, therefore, was not based on a moral objection to the streets being policed at all. This contrasts sharply with his dislike of animals being slaughtered for food, which was clearly based on a moral unease with the idea of anyone carrying out such a slaughter. It would have been interesting to challenge Barry on this, for example by asking him whether he would also be happy with the idea of children working in sweatshops so that we can wear the clothes that they make. The sheer fact that it is others who do things that we find morally objectionable cannot therefore be used to dissolve our moral

culpability where we support their doing so. This is clearly so where the goods and services that are provided by others are actively sought out, as is the case in situations where people rely on others to slaughter the animals whom they eat; apart from the two students mentioned earlier, the participant who came closest to expressing such a view was Keith, who expressed that he wished that he could become a vegetarian—adding, upon being asked whether he would have problems with killing animals:

- ‘Yeah I would, no doubt about it ... we do tend to turn a blind eye, you get other people to do it.’

A more ambiguous account was provided by Fiona where she responded to the question whether she had ever killed animals:

- ‘It’s hypocritical really I mean I would eat it, so if there was nobody around to do it for me I [would] probably end up doing it.’

4.3.3 *Health reasons*

It is possible, however, that participants adopted the view that it is not just taste that matters, as many also expressed the view that they included animal products in their diets for health reasons. In that case, participants’ views must not necessarily be understood as a rejection of qualified moral veganism, but only as a reflection of the fact that they perceived that they had to eat animal products in order to remain healthy; they might have agreed that adopting a vegan diet would be ideal, but have thought that—in practice—many people, including themselves, would not manage to remain healthy on such a diet. While the data collected in this study fail to provide convincing evidence for the view that any of our participants supported qualified moral veganism, eight students referred to health reasons to support the consumption of animal products.

Two students (one male and one female) associated abstaining from (some) animal products with feelings of physical weakness, writing (respectively) as follows:

- ‘I’ve tried it for two weeks but I was feeling weak. I believe we are meant to be omnivores.’
- ‘I used to be vegetarian but I got ill and decided that though I hate how animals are treated I would rather eat them than continue being ill.’

To justify their food choices, students also referred to specific nutrients and food categories which they thought were either present or lacking in particular diets. One female student wrote that ‘some animal protein is necessary’, another simply wrote ‘essential food groups’ on her paper, and a male student wrote that he required ‘quality protein’. Similarly, two students (one female and one male)

thought that vegetarian or vegan diets were very limited and would compromise their health, writing (respectively) as follows:

- ‘I like meat far too much to ever give it up, plus I don’t eat fruit so I’d be severely undernourished if I didn’t [eat meat].’
- ‘You can’t survive on carrots all your life.’

The deliberative exchanges contained similar claims. For example, Barry—who also claimed that vegetarianism was a fad (see further below)—said:

- ‘Every time I eat veg, I always have to go and eat something properly afterwards.’

Keith was more cautious:

- ‘Vegetarians do have quite a bit of difficulty in getting all the other nutrients, don’t they?’

If these participants are correct that it is not possible to remain healthy on vegan diets, it is quite understandable why many people do not commit to adopting such diets. It would seem to be difficult to expect people to commit to adopting a diet that might undermine their health. Accordingly, those who accept either that a taboo on the consumption of animal products would be desirable or that there is a moral distinction between killing animals and killing plants for food might argue that some animals should be allowed to be eaten or—in situations where no animals would be available who had died naturally, accidentally, or mercifully—to be killed for food, even if both actions might be perceived to be necessary wrongs to safeguard the greater good of human health. The likelihood that at least some other animals may not be able to anticipate that they are going to be killed and, *a fortiori*, that some may not feel wronged by humans taking their products—for example eggs and milk—whilst they are alive would seem to provide arguments for using such animals or at least the products derived from them in situations where, by refraining from doing so, humans would undermine their own health. Such an argument would be sound for anyone who accepts that the potential moral loss associated with eating the products from another animal would be less morally significant than the loss that the human animal would incur should they suffer from bad health as a direct consequence of a refusal to eat animal products.

The question must be asked, however, whether these participants were justified in believing that their health would be undermined by the adoption of a vegan diet. In the appendix I shall argue that medical evidence supports the view that carefully chosen vegan diets are adequate for most, if not all, people. Whilst it must be emphasised that such diets should include other things than just ‘carrots’ or ‘fruit’, the view that any animal products should be included

within the 'essential food groups' lacks scientific support. Nevertheless, it must be recognised that an adequate vegan diet may not be within everyone's reach. This might have been the case for Keith, if he lived in an area where the cost, at the point of purchase, of an adequate vegan diet was higher than the cost, at the point of purchase, of an adequate omnivorous or vegetarian diet and if he was not able to afford to adopt the former diet. However, research has shown that the likelihood that it would be more expensive for Keith to adopt an adequate vegan diet might be rather small (Berners-Lee et al. 2012). It must also be considered whether the perception that one might be 'weak' on a vegetarian or vegan diet simply reflects the culture that prevails in many societies. In this culture, eating animals is associated with strength, whereas eating other foods is associated with weakness (Charles and Kerr 1988). To add flesh to this point, I shall mention a comment that I recall was made by a supporter when I scored a goal for my football team a few years ago: 'Not bad for a vegetarian.'

4.3.4 Our bodies have been designed to eat animal products

Some participants associated their choice to eat animal products with particular assumptions about the essence of the human body. Both a male and a female student wrote that it is in 'our nature to eat animals'. Two female students, as well as several participants in the deliberative exchanges, also referred to particular beliefs about our evolutionary history:

- Students: 'We are designed to eat meat'; 'we did not evolve as herbivores, and it is not a bad thing to eat meat.'
- Barry: 'Vegetarianism ... goes against evolution.'
- Eric: 'We've evolved as omnivores.'
- Alice: 'We were evolved to eat meat.'
- Henry (a similar claim was made by Gail): 'We've always been carnivorous, haven't we?'
- Keith: 'We're hunter-gatherers by nature and it's been bred into us for probably millions of years and it's a hard thing to break isn't it?'
- Jane: 'We've always been meat eaters ... so ... [we] ... 've got to eat meat.'

Whilst it is correct that the bodies of many human beings can digest foods that are derived both from plants and from animals, I do not think that this provides a justification for rejecting qualified moral veganism. We could also eat the flesh of humans who had either died naturally or been killed to provide us with their flesh, but the sheer fact that we could do so does not justify the view that 'it is not a bad thing to eat' them, at least in normal situations. With regard to the drinking of milk, there is controversy on the issue whether human bodies are well-adapted to drinking the milk from other animals. Around four billion people are, to various degrees, 'lactose-intolerant' (Campbell and Matthews 2014), a

term that has been claimed to spring from a ‘Western bias’ as such ‘intolerance’ is not an aberration given that many human beings lose the enzyme to digest milk during their childhood (Norris and Messina 2011, 43). However, the fact that many people’s bodies tolerate drinking milk from other animals does not make it a logical necessity that we ought to do so. If human bodies had been designed in such a way that we could not thrive without eating animal foods, the argument could be made that we ought to do so, a conclusion that would follow logically if the assumption that we should not jeopardise our ability to thrive is accepted. However, people who are able to thrive by eating plant foods and are able to access them without much difficulty cannot justify the consumption of animal products by claiming that doing so would be necessary to maintain their health.

4.3.5 Since some animals eat other animals, we should be free to do so too

The female student who said that it is in ‘our nature to eat animals’ added the following words:

- ‘Cats eat mice, why shouldn’t humans eat chickens etc.?’

A similar comment was made by Fiona, who responded as follows to the question why she ate animals:

- ‘Animals eat other animals and we’re a form of animal ... we are omnivorous therefore I don’t see a problem with eating animals although I don’t like to kill them.’

A similar assumption might underlie Craig’s response, which immediately followed that of Fiona’s: ‘it’s just part of life.’ Likewise, Eric expressed the view that ‘we’re part of the animal population.’ The problem with these claims is that it is not clear why the question of how we ought to behave should be based upon what other animals do. Some spiders eat their species members, but this does not provide a justification for the view that we should likewise eat our species members. It is not clear why we should model our behaviour on our perceptions of how some other animals behave.

4.3.6 Animals have been designed to be eaten

Some participants put the emphasis on their perception of what other animals might have been designed for. A male student tried to justify eating animals as follows:

- ‘If we’re not meant to eat animals, why are they made of meat?’

This is not much of a justification as the fact that we can eat something does not imply that we ought to eat it. Apart from the fact that the different body parts that constitute the bodies of animals are reduced here to their use value for humans by using the notion of 'meat', a further objectification might underlie the choice of the words 'made of'. This terminology may suggest that their bodies are manufactured, in a similar way to how complex machines are built from simple components. The assumption that animals should be eaten by humans because they are edible may also underlie Fiona's attempt to justify eating animals by a reference to her belief 'in the food chain', a comment that was made by three students as well. The problem with this argument is that humans are also 'made of meat' that contains valuable nutritional components that can be digested by other humans. In addition, our bodies or remains will one day be consumed by other organisms. Indeed, we are part of the food chain too. However, the argument that we ought to eat humans simply because we are made of the right stuff fails to satisfy logic as well as the standards of acceptability that many people might hold. Therefore, it is not clear why the sheer fact that other animals are constituted of components that we could eat should, *ipso facto*, be a reason for eating them.

While the data did not bear this out, but merely hinted at it, some participants might have thought that some Grand Designer had designed things to be that way and that we should play our roles in accordance with the will of that Designer. The problem with this view is that the same argument could be used to justify any behaviour, for example killing other humans in order to eat them. However, someone who took this line of defence to justify homicide would not be excused. The question must be asked why we should exonerate, on the basis of their belief in a much-disputed metaphysical idea about the Chain of Being, those who kill animals for food when they have the opportunity to avoid doing so. With regard to this belief in a Chain of Being, some people might argue that we have much more ground to accept the view that animals are violated unjustifiably when we kill them for food in situations when we could have killed plants instead, at least when this could be done without producing unacceptably large health, social, or ecological costs. Similarly, I do not think that we should prioritise any interest we might have in such a religious conception over our interest in abstaining from the consumption of animal products in general.

4.3.7 *Animals owe their lives to the fact that we eat them*

A female student wrote the following:

- 'Fields wouldn't have cows in if farmers didn't breed them, and farmers wouldn't breed them if we didn't eat them. My father's a farmer and I'm proud to have lived on a farm.'

Another female student expressed a similar view by writing that ‘cattle [are] bred specifically to eat and for milk.’ Eric and David made the same claim in an attempt to justify the butchering of animals. These participants are right that many animals and breeds would not have existed if they had not been bred specifically to provide food for humans. I am not convinced, however, that this provides a justification to continue breeding and killing animals where refraining from doing so would not be associated with significant moral problems. True, many animal breeds might become extinct if humans decided to stop breeding them. This theme was elaborated on by Eric, who claimed that ‘vegans have a slightly strange position’ as he was not sure what they would do with all the animals who have been bred for their products. Presumably, and interestingly, Eric was aware of the fact that many vegans want their dietary stance to be adopted by many humans, which would indeed raise the problem of what should be done with farmed animals, at least if many humans decided to turn to vegan diets relatively quickly. David claimed that, if the view that animals should not be ‘kept’—a view that he attributed to the ‘Animal Liberation Front’—was passed into law, ‘90% of the cows would be dead within the next week, because there’d be no reason for having them any longer.’ A similar concern was introduced by Jane in a different exchange.

In my view, this need not be the inevitable outcome. Should humans stop farming animals, some animals might be able to adopt a feral existence, while many others might need to be looked after by farmers for the rest of their lives. Once there would no longer be an economic incentive to breed animals, it is likely that many farmers would no longer want their animals to reproduce. The question must be asked if this would be a significant loss. Many animals have been bred to acquire some features that humans take interests in, but these features are not always in the animals’ best interests. For example, cows who are classed within the Belgian Blue breed are highly prized for the low fat content and quick development of their musculature, but many need human intervention, frequently by caesarean section, in order to give birth. In light of this problem and of the human health costs associated with the farming of cows, for example its contributions to climate change and to zoonotic and other diseases, I would argue that the extinction of the Belgian Blue should not be regarded as morally problematic.

Neither should the probability that many fields might no longer have cows in them concern us, especially in light of the fact that a huge amount of tree planting would be highly desirable to sequester carbon from the atmosphere and to provide more alternatives to fossil fuels. In addition, if we consider the violent ways in which many animals are treated, I think that it would have been better had the animals not been born in the first place; I would conclude the same thing with regard to human beings who are born in squalid conditions or with regard to the imaginary scenario wherein humans would be born and raised in good conditions but killed before they became aware of the fact that

they were going to be killed, as appears to be the case for many animals who are killed for food by humans. The validity of this analogy hinges on my assumption that breeding human children for human consumption, provided that they are killed before they are able to contemplate what they have been bred for, is not that much different from breeding other animals in order to kill them for human consumption, particularly if the animals in question are closely related to us.

4.3.8 Tradition

Both Jane and a male student wrote that 'we have always eaten meat' to justify their choices to eat animals. While it is unclear why Eric (who said that 'vegans have a slightly strange position') said that he did not 'understand the foundation of veganism' and why Barry said that vegetarianism is a 'fad'—a claim he made twice in quick succession—these claims might be related to the possibility that they thought that the lack of a strong vegan or vegetarian tradition might be deemed morally relevant. Eric also said that he 'couldn't eat dog', a statement that might be influenced by the lack of a recent tradition of eating dogs in the UK, as well as by the habit of speaking about animals in abstract terms—hence the word 'dog' rather than 'dogs'—when their bodies are being considered for human consumption.

A psychological reason might explain why some people refer to historical practices to reject qualified moral veganism. Qualified moral veganism does not imply that it would always be wrong to kill animals in order to eat them, unlike, for example, denying women the right to vote. Many people might find it more difficult to decide on what is right and wrong in relation to practices that are right in some contexts, but not in others. In other words, a practice that may be justified in some situations might be perceived to be not so bad compared to a practice that should not be tolerated under any circumstances. Such a psychological inability to dissociate oneself from particular practices that would have been acceptable for a long time, even in recent history, and that might still be acceptable in particular contexts today, might also account for why Keith made the claim that I cited before:

- 'We're hunter-gatherers by nature and it's been bred into us for probably millions of years and it's a hard thing to break isn't it?'

Keith appears to acknowledge that eating animal products is not a biological necessity, but his attachment to a long cultural tradition as well as his perception that practices that have been regarded as acceptable for a long time cannot be all that bad seem to stand in the way of his wish to adopt vegetarianism. This line of reasoning can also be found in academic work on the subject. Webster (2013, 15), for example, writes that 'it is a fact of life that most of those who

can, will eat food from animals.' Whereas the fact that we are entrenched in our cultures and the fallacy of overgeneralisation might explain why people refer to tradition to explain their practices, the explanation fails to provide a good reason to reject qualified moral veganism. The possibility that an activity that can be right in some situations might be perceived to be better than an activity that is always perceived to be wrong does not provide a good justification for engaging in that activity in situations where it is not right to do so.

A different psychological mechanism might be at work as well: resistance to that which is new. Consuming animal products is so much part of the dominant culture in the UK that any suggestion that it might be problematic is perceived to be a threat to that culture, and to one's identity within it. I mentioned earlier on that Barry expressed that vegetarianism is 'a fad' and that Eric did not understand the 'foundation of veganism'. Barry also appeared to associate vegetarians with extremists, as well as with the Animal Liberation Front; in the same exchange, Jane replied 'they can go ahead and be vegetarians' to the question of what she thought about vegetarianism, having expressed before that 'they're always trying to turn us vegetarian'—whereby the word 'they' lacked identifiable referents. Steiner (2013, 215) has interpreted—correctly in my view—such dissociations as follows: those 'who react in this way seem to be exhibiting a desire to incriminate the vegan messenger for taking some kind of moral high ground, thereby countering an authentic moral appeal with an *ad hominem* dismissal'; he adds that he 'cannot help but wonder whether such a reaction is born of a repressed intimation that the ... consumption of animals is at odds with our cosmic kinship with them'.

The dominant culture is also strengthened by particular rituals that are used to maintain or strengthen tradition. What is problematic about these rituals for people who reject some aspects of the dominant culture is that they not only socialise people into the ideology of that culture, but also serve to strengthen bonds between members of that culture and weaken bonds with those who are classed as outsiders. In research carried out in the early 1980s about food choices where women who lived in the north of England and who had at least one child were interviewed, it was found that 'the food involved in the Christmas ritual is fundamentally a celebration of the coming together of family members' and that 'self-indulgence rather than self-denial is the order of the day' (Charles and Kerr 1988, 26). The consumption of animal bodies was felt to be particularly important at this time of the year, with one poor woman describing how she saved up for a whole year in order to be able to afford to buy body parts from animals in a special shop: 'We went to Dewhurst's in town. We got everything, it was lovely to have meat you know. We even got steak, so you can tell it was a treat, a real treat ...' (Charles and Kerr 1988, 27). This goes some way towards explaining why the Christmas ritual may be associated with deeply conflicted feelings for those who do not identify with the dominant culture's focus on the consumption of foods derived from animals as important status symbols that serve to establish and reinforce personal and social

identities. In this light, a remark by Gail—who had been a vegetarian in her youth—is telling:

- ‘Christmas dinner was dreadful.’

Whilst I appreciate the fact that ‘old habits die hard’, the perception that something has always been done does not imply that it should be deemed to be either good or bad. Not so long ago, women in the United Kingdom and in many other countries lacked the right to vote. Some who wanted to keep the status quo at the time this was changed referred to tradition as well. However, few people who live now are likely to think that this tradition should have been honoured. The question must be asked why the tradition of eating the bodies of some animals (yet not the flesh of others, for example dogs, who are not eaten in many societies) should be honoured. Many people who lived in the past might have consumed animal products out of nutritional necessity, rather than from the conviction that there is no moral difference between the consumption of animal products and the consumption of other organisms. The fact that many people are able to enjoy adequate nutrition nowadays without consuming animal products, without significant moral costs, undermines the relevance of a ‘traditional’ reason to consume such products.

4.3.9 *Questioning the exploitation of animals*

Whereas none of our interviewees adopted vegetarian or vegan diets, some expressed feelings of unease about the felt need to reconcile particular feelings for animals with the practice of eating them. Alice expressed that people should not be cruel towards animals, and that veganism was ‘very admirable’, but it was not clear whether this perception related to a concern over the exploitation of animals. She added that she did not eat a lot of ‘meat’ and that it would be difficult for her to get a ‘balanced diet’ if she did not do so occasionally; however, she also questioned whether this might just be an ‘excuse’. Having expressed that he ‘love[d] beef’ and that he ‘was brought up on farms’, Henry recounted the story of a cow who had been regarded as a pet by both his father and himself and who had died after choking, saying:

- ‘Cried me eyes out when that cow died ... but fair enough if it was sold at the butcher’s shop the following week ... I would have still had some.’

In the same exchange, Eric, the scientist who said that he did not understand the ‘foundation of veganism’ and ‘couldn’t eat dog’, related Henry’s memory directly to a childhood experience that he went on to recount. After Eric’s father had killed the chicken that Eric’s mother had looked after for months on Christmas Eve, Eric’s mother had refused to eat the chicken. Eric added that he had visited

countries where dogs were eaten and that he had asked the people he was with: 'tell me if we're being served dog cause I don't want to offend anybody but I really can't bring myself to eat it'. Eric also appeared to relate his unease with the words that he added: 'look in that garden, all these kids they're playing with the dogs.' He then went on to generalise this feeling to the consumption of all animals who were considered to be 'pets'.

Whereas I can understand the view that we may have feelings and responsibilities for companion animals that we do not have for other animals, I do not accept the assumption that killing animals who are not regarded as companion animals in order to eat them should be relatively problem-free. In this regard, Eric appeared to be aware of his inconsistency, saying that he would not want to eat 'cat' and 'horses' either, but that he could not see why people who 'eat a sheep or a pig ... shouldn't eat a horse or a dog'. However, the question whether an animal was a companion animal was not the only question that mattered to him; he added that he could not eat animal products from animals who had not been 'looked after properly', providing the example of 'veal':

- 'I couldn't stand the thought of calves being crated ... and in the dark.'

This was contrasted with an example of an animal whom he would eat:

- 'I would much rather eat a pheasant that's had a wild life and been shot.'

The view that killing animals might be associated with cruelty was most prominent in the views expressed by students. A female student who was neither vegetarian nor vegan expressed the view that 'some of the forms of killing animals are cruel'. Three students identified themselves as being vegetarians, and related their choices to adopt vegetarianism to concerns with the killing of animals. Two female students wrote as follows:

- '(1) I am a vegetarian. I don't like the thought of animals being killed for my food. (2) I think it is a personal choice. I don't feel people who eat meat are wrong.'
- '(1) I'm a vegetarian. I have been all my life. I do not agree with the often inhumane way in which they are killed. (2) I think that it is a matter of personal beliefs, but I do think that if you eat meat, it should be free range and well-treated.'

Though the moral concern with killing animals was more prominent amongst students' questionnaire responses, the view that killing animals might be problematic was not entirely absent amongst our interviewees. Jane said that she had once killed a frog while stepping on the animal, which gave her 'the most ghastly feeling', while Henry expressed the view that humans sometimes killed for 'enjoyment' and that that 'should be stopped or cut down a bit'. Fiona said

that she did not have 'a problem with eating animals although [she did not] like to kill them', and David made a very similar claim where he said, in relation to killing animals: 'I would have difficulty [doing it] ... despite being brought up on a farm where we did kill things, I didn't personally but others did'. He also recounted the story of one of the pigs of the farm where he was brought up who was killed on his village green, adding: 'that sticks in my memory very, very clearly'. Whereas he did not find the fact that he ate animals who had been killed (where it might not be ethically required for him to do so for health or other reasons) inconsistent with the fact that he had a problem with killing them, he was keen to point out that others, including his daughter (who was 'extremely carnivorous but would not go ... near an animal being slaughtered') might not be consistent:

- 'What I do find hypocritical is ... people who eat meat ... but then complain when they actually go to a butcher's shop ... about seeing it when it's red.'

At the same time, he expressed the view that many people are prone to this kind of hypocrisy. I quite agree with him here, but I am disappointed that he only recognised its presence in others. Surely, it is wrong to seek the benefits from actions that one considers to be morally wrong.

Much of the literature in what Haynes (2008) refers to as the 'animal welfare science community' has focused on the moral problem of inflicting pain and suffering, where concerns associated with killing *per se* are dissociated from the narrow definition of 'welfare' that is adopted. What the data that I have examined here have in common with one of the reasons why I adopt qualified moral veganism is the view that animals do not usually fare well by being killed, regardless of whether the killing inflicts pain or suffering on them. Therefore, these data question the killing of animals for food in situations where convincing justifications for doing so are lacking. One difference between these views and my view is that I think that the negative value associated with killing animals for food when it is not in the animals' interests should be given much more weight. A further problem that I have specifically with the views of our vegetarian students is that many vegetarian diets are not free from the moral concerns that these students identified: many cows and chickens who are used by vegetarians to provide milk and eggs for them are still being killed once farmers are convinced that it is more cost-effective to replace them, and in many situations male calves and chicks are killed without good justification as well. Even if his view that he could live healthily 'without destroying life' was misguided, one male student might have been aware of this connection, although it is unclear why he did not adopt qualified moral veganism:

- 'I am a vegetarian hoping to become a vegan, because I can have a healthy life without destroying life, and it pains me to see animals exploited.'

A final observation is that the two female vegetarian students felt the need to make a distinction between what they thought to be ethical for themselves and what they thought might be ethical for others to do by contrasting their 'personal' views with the views that others may have. I think that at least three possible interpretations can be offered why students might have decided to cast their opinions in this way. In one interpretation, the addition of the word 'personal' could be perceived to be trivial or superfluous, as all decisions that are made by personal agents are personal. A second interpretation is that the word is added to show respect for the views of others, to signify something like: 'I might perceive something to be wrong, but I appreciate that others have different opinions, and I do not want to state categorically that they are wrong.' In other words, by using this word, students might express agreement with Pyrrhonian moral scepticism or a similar meta-ethical stance. I endorse this type of stance, and I have engaged with it elsewhere (Deckers 2007). A third interpretation is that students thought that their views were ethical, but that they felt uncomfortable about presenting them as ethical views, preferring to cast them merely as matters of taste as would those who adopt a relativist or radical scepticist position.

If ethics, however, can be defined as the search for, and the articulation of, values that can be universalised, this third interpretation is problematic. It is understandable, however, why students might have been inclined to present their positions outwardly as if they were based on a relativist meta-ethical position while they might have inwardly been convinced of Pyrrhonian moral scepticism. By presenting their moral positions as mere matters of taste, they may adopt a strategy that might make it more likely that they will not be belittled or marginalised by the dominant culture, which suppresses those who challenge the continued existence of that culture. This third interpretation may be the one that is correct. It clearly is the correct way to interpret the view of a male contributor to an on-line forum that was analysed in another study (Fox and Ward 2008, 425): 'I never call myself a vegan or vegetarian. I tell people that I have food allergies and I have to eat like this for my health.' This interpretation might also explain why many more people adopt vegetarian diets than adopt a more morally consistent vegan diet (van der Kooi 2010). Only the former are increasingly socially accepted within some countries, for example in the UK; people who adopt vegan diets, by contrast, are marginalised in many countries (McDonald 2000; M. Cole and Morgan 2011).

4.4 Thematic analysis and evaluation of the views of Oldham slaughterhouse workers

I shall now turn to the views of workers in a slaughterhouse in Oldham, who were interviewed about their jobs and their political views for a documentary broadcast in 2005 on BBC Two. My attention is focused in particular on

evaluating their views about killing animals for food. A thematic analysis of their views revealed that they entertained positive perceptions about their jobs by associating the killing of animals with power, sincerity, fun, skill, and religion.

4.4.1 Power: Being allowed to do something that not many people are allowed to do

Arran was a slaughterman, that is, someone who is allowed to kill animals, a position that not all slaughterhouse workers had, but that many aspired to. When Arran was asked about his job, he reminisced about the time when he was taken into the slaughterhouse by his dad; when he saw men with 'blood over their aprons', he thought 'that looks pretty interesting' and wanted to become a slaughterman too. Arran added that, in his job, 'you can get away with murder every day and not get arrested for it'. Patch, however, was a cleaner and said that he would like to be a slaughterman, a position which he identified with being 'the ringmaster'.

While Arran's identity was clearly influenced by the desires to be like his father and to kill others, I do not think that these should trump qualified moral veganism. Many of the animals who were killed by Arran were not destined to be eaten by people whose health might suffer otherwise. Accordingly, it is hard to conceive how Arran might have failed to maximise positive GHIs by refraining to kill animals. Perhaps Arran's choice to work in the slaughterhouse was influenced by the thought that it might have been hard for him to find other work. This may have been so, but I do not think that any negative GHIs that may be associated with being out of work ought to be considered to be so significant that the negative effects produced by the killing of animals in these circumstances ought to be trumped by them. The fact that Arran compared his job with 'murder' is interesting as it suggests that he did perceive a moral similarity between what he did and homicide. If Arran had moral problems with killing human beings—and I assume that he had—the question must therefore be asked why he did not experience similar problems with the killing of other mammals.

Though I would agree that there is a moral distinction between both practices, in line with my commitment to speciesism, I do not think that the difference is sufficiently great to warrant a rejection of qualified moral veganism. When I was young, I was told (at least once) by a fellow pigeon-fancier that I was 'not a man' if I could not bring myself to kill pigeons. As has been documented by many studies (Adams 1990; Sobal 2005; Ruby and Heine 2011), the meaning of what it is to 'be a man' has been associated with the ability to kill other animals and with the permission to eat their bodies in many cultures. This clearly operates here as well. The concept of 'being a man' seemed to be very much tied up with the role of 'slaughterman' amongst workers in the slaughterhouse. Cleaners like Patch, who engaged in tasks that have traditionally been associated

more with the role of women in many societies, aspired to be slaughtermen, and were ordered around and bullied by the slaughtermen who worked in the slaughterhouse. In this respect, it is no coincidence that Patch identified the role of slaughterman with the position of a 'ringmaster' in a circus. Patch might have felt that cleaners like him were being ordered to do things by the ringmaster, suggesting that he identified in some way with circus animals who are taught to obey orders. There is a strong current in Western culture that identifies women more with other animals and that elevates men to a position that is quite separate from, and superior to, the position occupied by women and other animals (Adams 1990). The fact that women may not feel the same pressure to 'be [like] a man' might also account for the fact that studies have shown that women are more likely than men to avoid eating the bodies of animals (Kalof et al. 1999; Wardle et al. 2004; Lea et al. 2006a; DeLeeuw et al. 2007). However, I do not think that the highly questionable positive value associated with occupying any of these identities should trump the positive values underlying qualified moral veganism.

4.4.2 Sincerity: Facing up to 'reality', in contrast to others

In the documentary, Arran added the following words immediately after drawing the aforementioned comparison between killing animals and murder:

- 'It sounds pretty sick but it is not. Some people might think it is pretty sick but they don't think like that when it's on their plate on Sunday.'

With these words, Arran might be expressing that he feels good about the work he is doing, and he might be adopting the view that some other people are inconsistent by valuing his work negatively whilst valuing the products of his work positively. Arran's perception is supported by research that shows that many people hold contradictory beliefs about the ethics of eating animals (Povey et al. 2001; Berndsen and van der Pligt 2005; Macnaghten 2004). Arran resolved this perceived contradiction by contesting the negative value that he perceived other people might associate with his work.

Arran's perception that other people did not value his work was shared by Taylor and Eddy. As Arran, Taylor appeared to be aware of people's inconsistencies, suggesting that people were in denial over the process that led to the product:

- 'People think they are already dead when they come in when you tell them you work in the slaughterhouse.'

Taylor also contrasted his willingness to work in the slaughterhouse with his perception that none of the children who attend private schools would want to

work in the slaughterhouse. Interestingly, this disdain for a particular class of people was shared by a scientist who—paradoxically—belonged to that class (at least provided that being educated to postgraduate level and climbing to the rank of academic professor are sufficient conditions to belong to that class), who claimed that vegetarianism was ‘a fad ... a middle class thing’.

My view, by contrast, is to think that those who value slaughterhouse work negatively are right to do so, but that they are wrong to value the products of the slaughterhouse positively, at least in situations when humans could eat other foods at a smaller moral cost. The inconsistency perceived by slaughterhouse workers in the general discourse of others is not absent from academic work either. Webster (2013, 213, 221, 15, 145), for example, has spoken positively of ‘vegans’ as showing ‘respect in the most profound form’ and has spoken of the abattoir as ‘the most brutalizing environment’, but at the same time he has endorsed the consumption of animal products in many situations and has written that ‘it is a fact of life that most of those who can, will eat food from animals’ and that ‘it is certain that consumption of pig meat will increase’.

4.4.3 *Fun: Making and having fun*

Whilst he was filmed standing alongside a cow who had been killed seconds before, Arran said the following words:

- ‘Oh my God, somebody killed Daisy.’

Once again, Arran might be expressing a certain discontent with the perceptions of those who like to think of cows as bucolic animals, the iconic images of cows that are fostered in much of the children’s literature. He might think that people with such perceptions fail to face up to the reality that they support in their eating practices. Arran might also think that there is something problematic about killing cows in particular situations, as suggested by the words ‘oh my God’. At the same time, the abstract image of ‘Daisy the cow’ might help Arran to cope better with the concrete reality of his work. The practice of making fun of those who live with inconsistencies might be another coping mechanism: the thought that he has managed to resolve something that he perceives others not to have managed to resolve might give Arran a temporary release from having to live with the uncertainty of the morality of what he does.

A similar strategy might underlie the statements he made whilst slitting the throat of a sheep (‘This is the fun part.’) and whilst standing next to a pig who was suffering a heart attack whilst coming off a lorry (‘poor little bastard’). Arran’s word combination in the latter case shows both empathic association and dissociation. His choice of words suggests the feeling of some compassion towards the animal, but it is also interesting to note that he might associate the pig with the opposite of what he might aspire to be, or of how he might wish to

be perceived by others: rich, big, and not a bastard. Whilst he might not have made a conscious decision to do so, Arran's words may also distance him from the pig by portraying the pig as something else than what the pig really was, as the pig may not have been poor, nor little, nor a bastard.

A similar coping strategy might be adopted by Eddy when he pronounces the words 'happy birthday' whilst killing a cow. It is unlikely that it was the cow's birthday, and, even if it was, it is unlikely that Eddy would have known it was. Eddy might have said these words to provide himself with a temporary release from the negative emotions he associated with what he was doing at that particular time. Through conjuring up images of birthday parties in his head, Eddy might have learned to associate positive feelings with some of the activities that he might have felt to be problematic, thus hoping that somehow, through association, those activities would turn out to be more positive than they in fact are.

Some workers also seemed to make a game out of stunning sheep, with one person saying 'didn't even see it coming' whilst he firmly planted over a sheep's head a metallic device through which he released an electric charge. Having played football most of my life, I know how pleasurable it can be to outmanoeuvre others through the use of a bit of skill—which I do not possess in great quantities—and in that sense I can appreciate that some people might obtain pleasure out of being able to catch sheep by surprise. People have also been reported to enjoy other practices that involve the killing of animals, including fox hunting (Marvin 2005). What I do not share, however, is the view that the mere production of such feelings should be allowed to trump the positive value associated with allowing the animals to be. More generally, I do not think that making fun of animals or having fun whilst killing them are sufficient reasons to reject qualified moral veganism.

4.4.4 Skill: Killing better than others, who do not do so properly

The role that is played by tradition in maintaining and consolidating certain practices was mentioned earlier on. I also mentioned that not all the slaughterhouse workers interviewed in the documentary were allowed to be slaughtermen. In order to become a slaughterman, it was necessary to show sufficient skill in the art of killing, but it was also necessary for workers to learn by heart what was presented as the 'slaughterman's motto', which is also known as the 'slaughterman's creed':

'Thine is the task of blood.
Discharge thy task with mercy.
Let thy victim feel no pain.
Let sudden blow bring death;
Such death as thou thyself would ask for.'

While I acknowledge that there are morally distinct ways in which animals can be killed, I question whether the perception that the killing might have been done properly should be sufficient to reject qualified moral veganism. The use of the words 'thine', 'thy', 'thou', and 'thysself' is significant here. It might help slaughtermen to convince themselves that what they do is right: by being able to recite a formulaic sentence that repeats archaic words, they might feel supported in their practices from the conviction that they are participating in a tradition, perhaps even in some kind of religion, that binds different slaughtermen together, both across space and across time. However, the felt need to adopt this ritual chant, which includes the disputed claim that 'no pain' might be felt if things are done properly, suggests that it might function as an attempt to ameliorate a practice that is perceived to be quite problematic.

Though one of the functions of the motto might be to unite slaughtermen, it did not remove all perceptions of difference between them. Arran was aware of the fact that some people might perceive him to be cruel, yet he defended himself against this charge by claiming that the Jewish slaughtermen were cruel as they used different slaughtering methods. The charge was reversed by Danny, a kosher slaughterman, who claimed that non-Jewish slaughtermen had to learn to slaughter animals 'in a humane way'. While it is beyond my expertise to decide which method of slaughter might be the best, nothing seems to me to be 'humane' about slaughtering animals merely for the purpose of their being eaten by people who could eat healthy alternatives without increasing negative GHIs. By criticising the methods that are used by others, slaughtermen might try to forget the problematic methods that they use themselves to kill animals, as well as the fact that they slaughter animals at all.

4.4.5 Religion: Being justified by Yahweh/God/Allah

This distinction between kosher and other methods to kill animals takes me to the role played by religion. The slaughterhouse included workers representing the three monotheistic religions that are dominant in British society today, namely Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. However, the interviews hardly brought out Christian influences.

The Christian tradition might underlie a claim that was made by Arran, where he said the following:

- 'If you look carefully you can see their souls escape through the door, that's why we've got that hole there.'

It was fairly clear that Arran was mocking—while he was aware of the idea, he did not seem to use the Christian idea that something of the animal might resurrect to a new life after death as a justification for his practices. Both a Jewish slaughterman (Danny) and a Muslim slaughterman (Mohammed), however,

tried to justify what they did by a reference to religion. They referred to their religions when they made the following claims:

- Danny: ‘Human beings are on a higher level, a higher plane compared to animals.’
- Mohammed: ‘If all veins in the neck are cut, it is, by the name of Allah, 100% halal.’

With regard to the Christian reference, I do not adopt the view that any Christian would make a good case for homicide should they try to justify that practice by reference to their belief in the resurrection. While the killing of another animal might not be morally on a par with homicide, I do not think that killing animals in general can be justified merely by reference to a belief in the resurrection. Neither do I accept Danny’s view that humans ‘are on a higher level’ than ‘animals’. Though I agree with the view that humans should be given more moral significance than other animals, this view does not imply that we ‘are on a higher level’ than ‘animals’, as we are animals. Perhaps it can be said that many human beings are capable of reaching a level of self-awareness that no other animals are capable of reaching, but I write these words with some hesitation. Human beings certainly do not operate at a ‘higher level’ in every respect; bats, for example, are most definitely better at echolocation. More importantly, I do not think that the belief that human beings should be granted special moral significance justifies a rejection of qualified moral veganism. Rather, I adopt the view that human moral agents must cultivate an interest in not eating animals and an interest in not killing animals for food that should normally be prioritised over any interest we may have in not killing plants for food. A deep analysis of the data reported here suggests that many people agree on this at least where it concerns the theoretical interest in not killing animals for food, even if they might not follow this through consistently in their eating and working practices.

In this light, it must be questioned whether any moral weight should be given to the belief that a certain practice might be justifiable on the basis of a belief in some greater being, for example Yahweh, God, or Allah. Imagine that I adopted a belief in the ‘X’ religion, a religion which justified the killing of human children for human consumption—the X religion might say, for example, that we should accept children as gifts from the deity of the X religion, some of which children we should consume whilst expressing our gratitude to the great Giver. Few people would adopt the view that we should tolerate such practices out of respect for the views of those who adopt the X religion. The question must be asked, therefore, how much moral weight we should give to those who justify the killing of animals for food in the name of their belief in some greater being. Gorringer (2011), for example, has tried to justify his practice of killing sheep for food through the Christian conviction that sheep are ‘gifts’. For my part, the belief that we violate an animal’s right to life unjustifiably when we kill that

animal, where this is not carried out to serve the best interests of the animal concerned or to safeguard really important human interests that could not be protected otherwise, should trump any belief, religious or otherwise, that it might be acceptable to kill that animal. Conceiving of animals as 'gifts' seems nothing other than a gross distortion of reality: animals do not give themselves up to be consumed by human beings, and their bodies are, therefore, not to be considered as 'gifts'.

Incidentally, if we bear in mind that the scriptures that are held sacred by the three religions concerned were written a long time ago, it should not surprise us that they contain texts that support the killing of animals for food. Then, life may have been a struggle for a significant proportion of the human population. Now, life is a doddle for many of us. Indeed, it was not until relatively recently that many people gained the opportunity to remain healthy on diets that did not include animal products, largely because of the advantages of mechanised agriculture and modern storage technologies. Even so, it is worth pointing out, for those who adopt the view that the answers that were provided by the authors of these texts in response to issues that they struggled with at the time ought to determine which answers we ought to give to (remotely) similar issues today, that the Hebrew texts that are cherished by all three religions do not justify the eating of animal products in any straightforward manner. The final editor of the Book of Genesis, for example, may have struggled with the issue before the book was treated as a text that should no longer be changed, as the deity only gives fruits and vegetables for human consumption in Genesis 1.19 and Genesis 3.18, whereas the consumption of animals is only presented as being granted divine approval after the flood has taken place, in Genesis 9.3. Some might argue that this single mention is sufficient, but this seems to me to be a very lazy way out. Regrettably, it appears to be a popular option amongst many Christians in the USA (DeLeeuw et al. 2007). Some religious people, however, may not wish to dispute that we should cause as little harm as possible and that, in many situations, we cause more harm by eating animals than by eating plants. If those who are inspired by these religious texts really do want to stick to a literal reading, I would recommend that they read Ecclesiastes 7.21, which recommends that we 'do not pay attention to everything folk say'; religion should therefore not necessarily be an obstacle to qualified moral veganism.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I analysed and evaluated the views of some academic scientists and some students from Newcastle University and of some men who worked in a slaughterhouse in Oldham on vegetarianism, veganism, and the killing of animals for human food. The identities of most of these people seem to be constituted at least in part by the adoption of certain beliefs that serve to dissociate people from other animals. In addition, the identities of slaughterhouse

workers appear to be constructed partly by a range of associations and dis-associations with the views and roles of others. Earlier research has also claimed that people's attitudes and actions are strongly affected by the roles that people have in society (S. Knight et al. 2009), yet I believe that it would be wrong to claim that these slaughterhouse workers, as well as other participants in these studies, had values that differed radically from the values held by many others, including by those who support qualified moral veganism; much of the evidence reveals some common ground.

Even if the data are less clear about the consumption of animal products *per se*, many people seem to agree that, in many situations, there is something that is morally problematic about killing animals in order to eat them. However, the positive value of allowing animals to be is suppressed by many other values, for example by the positive value that is attributed to the thought that killing animals or eating animal products are necessary either to build or to strengthen one's identity; in my view, this is where things go wrong. More generally, I believe that we ought to cultivate an interest in abstaining from the consumption of animal products and grant this interest such moral weight as to adopt qualified moral veganism. Of all the other interests that we may bring to bear on the issue, that interest which is rooted in our fear of death, or 'thanatophobia', might be the most fundamental. Whereas qualified moral veganism does not deny that it may be necessary to kill animals for food in some situations, it would be wrong for us to think that we might be able to ward off or transcend our mortality by killing and consuming other animals, or—as has been put eloquently by Christman (2008, 313)—by 'follow[ing] the path of Gilgamesh in relying upon the lifeblood of animals to protect us from the whims of the cosmos'. Those who remain unconvinced may nevertheless be inspired by this beautiful poem, written by Jane Legge (1969, 59), and quoted by Cora Diamond (1978, 472–473):

Learning to be a Dutiful Carnivore

Dogs and cats and goats and cows,
 Ducks and chickens, sheep and sows
 Woven into tales for tots,
 Pictured on their walls and pots.
 Time for dinner! Come and eat
 All your lovely, juicy meat.
 One day ham from Percy Porker
 (In the comics he's a corker),
 Then the breast from Mrs Cluck
 Or the wing from Donald Duck.
 Liver next from Clara Cow
 (No, it doesn't hurt her now).
 Yes, that leg's from Peter Rabbit

Chew it well; make that a habit.
 Eat the creatures killed for sale,
 But never pull the pussy's tail.
 Eat the flesh from 'filthy hogs'
 But never be unkind to dogs.
 Grow up into double-think-
 Kiss the hamster; skin the mink.
 Never think of slaughter, dear,
 That's why animals are here.
 They only come on earth to die,
 So eat your meat, and don't ask why.

I am not convinced that the views expressed in samples of two different socio-economic groups in contemporary British society undermine qualified moral veganism, and I conclude that this position stands firm in light of the various problems that beset other positions. Many people appear to have significant concerns with the infliction of pain, suffering, and death upon animals in order to eat the products that we can derive from their bodies. Though the questions that were asked in the empirical studies that have been analysed in this chapter did not ask specifically whether people also had concerns about eating animals who either had died naturally or had been killed accidentally or mercifully, no enthusiasm for eating the bodies of these animals could be identified. Further research is needed to discuss qualified moral veganism explicitly and with more diverse groups of people—in this way, it may become clear whether I have ignored something of great moral importance that would result in my rejection of this position.