



Why I'm Quitting Red Meat

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Before I start, I'd like to address the elephant in the room. This is mainly an opinion piece, and I by no means expect anyone to quit eating red meat after reading this. On the other hand, there will be facts that are not my opinion and you should interpret them as you will, especially in the later half.

For many reasons, I've been thinking about my relationship to the food I eat, and what it means about my morality, health, and sustainability. One of the interesting things that got me thinking recently was the anime *The Promised Neverland*. ***Minor spoiler warnings from the first 3ish episodes***. *The Promised Neverland* is a horror story told from the perspective of 3 hyper intelligent children living in an orphanage with many others, the twist is that they discover that they are in reality living on a farm for raising and selling children for demons to eat. The show has surpassed my expectations and has interesting moral issues, but what got me thinking was what the exact moral problem was for the kids to be farmed to be eaten from an objective or external perspective. The kids had lived happy and blissfully ignorant lives until they turned twelve and were killed quickly to be eaten later. The main terror of the show does not relate to the way they are farmed, but rather our terror of being eaten and of inescapable death. For all intents and purposes, they were farmed extremely ethically, if our farms were nearly as kind as this one then we would be in a far different situation.

I personally believe that the main solution to our meat consumption is ethical farming. The capitalist system we live in has created an unsustainable system in an attempt to cater to the endless desire for cheaper and more plentiful food. In its attempt for efficiency and profit, it sacrificed the quality of life of the animals. I don't think there is anything intrinsically wrong with killing an animal for consumption. That is the system in which nature has been functioning since its beginning, and domestication is simply another example

of a symbiotic relationship. Through domestication there is an unspoken agreement that is made. I believe that in exchange of a stable life, protection, and reproduction, animals sacrifice their lives for consumption. Without the benefits of domestication, the cow wouldn't be the largest form of terrestrial biomass. When we begin to kill them inhumanely and raise them in cramped and filthy environments, we are violating our side of the agreement. It is important we recognize that animals have a capacity to suffer, but in an utilitarian perspective I believe there is a spectrum difference in the quality of the suffering. This is part of the reason I am quitting red meat in particular compared to chicken and seafood. I think a cow or pig has a greater capacity to suffer in comparison, and they also carry other unavoidable problems.

Another issue with our farming methods is the incredible amount of waste. I think that part of our moral responsibility to animals is that when we kill them for food, we should use them efficiently and entirely. By wasting parts of the meat, we are in a way wasting the value of the animal's life.

An important part of eating meat is the sourcing of it. The following reason is a bit more personal, since I live in a dorm. Since most of my food comes from the cafeterias on campus I have no control over the source of my meat. If I could, I would much rather buy from a local butcher and attempt to buy some unwanted cuts of meat, but sadly that isn't currently possible for me. This means I can't guarantee I'm eating ethically sourced meat and also the quality of meat is very important for health as well. Due to current farming practices, most red meat is high in growth hormones and fat content. Many studies show that eating red meat is detrimental to health in the long run. It can worsen cholesterol levels, cause heart disease, and potentially cause various cancers. It is still important to take into account the health benefits of red meat, like iron content and dense protein. The biggest issue with red meat consumption is that current dietary trends point towards it being a larger portion of diets globally even though it is less sustainable and worse for your health. It is far better to reduce the amount of red meat we eat rather than quit completely.

One of the main reasons I'm quitting red meat is because of the unsustainability of its production. The production of red meat is a surprisingly resources intensive industry, and even more interestingly, animals are over 14% of greenhouse gas emissions globally. Cows and pigs produce methane simply by being alive. By mass producing animals, we are producing massive amounts of methane that is not necessary for our survival. The raising of red

meat is very inefficient, when an animal eats it loses approximately 90% of the energy that is consumed. That means that as secondary consumers we are only eating 1% of the energy initially in the food used to feed animals. If we could reduce the amount of meat we eat, we become drastically more energy

efficient and reduce our environmental impact. There are alternative sources of vegetable protein that are far more sustainable.

Normally I am primarily a proponent of institutional change rather than individual change, but I also believe that there is no value in our beliefs besides our actions. I feel that it is slightly hypocritical to call myself ethically and sustainably minded without being willing to make minor sacrifices. Each of our individual impacts do not have a real effect on the world, but if we work as a collective, we can alter market demands. It is key though, that in our attempts to improve the world, we act as informed consumers. Being actively aware of the source and consequences of what we buy is necessary to act sustainably. We should be aware that we are buying from environmentally friendly and ethical companies. I don't believe everyone should make drastic changes to their diets, but if we all changed to have a more Mediterranean style diet, then we would be taking a step in the right direction. I believe it is a lot easier to convince people to eat 10% less red meat than it is to convince 10% of people to go vegetarian. By reducing the amount of meat we eat and increasing the amount of vegetables and grains, not only are we eating healthier for ourselves, we are also consuming more ethically and sustainably.



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