

On Liberty and Cruelty: A Reply to Walter Block

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Abstract:

A standard argument for ethical vegetarianism contends that factory farming – the source of nearly all animal products – is morally wrong due to its extreme cruelty, and that it is wrong to buy products produced in an extremely immoral manner. This article defends this argument against objections based on appeal to libertarian political philosophy, the supposed benefit to animals of being raised for food, and nonhuman animals’ supposed lack of rights.

Keywords: vegetarianism, utilitarianism, libertarianism, slavery.

1. Introduction

Every year, human beings raise and slaughter approximately 74 billion animals on factory farms, under conditions of extreme pain and suffering. I contend that this practice is profoundly immoral and therefore that conscientious individuals should refuse to buy the products of this industry. I base my argument on the evil of suffering and the wrongness of paying others to perform grossly immoral acts. My basic argument is as follows.

1. It is wrong to cause a large amount of suffering for the sake of relatively minor benefits for oneself.
2. Factory farming causes a large amount of suffering for the sake of relatively minor benefits for humans.
3. Therefore, factory farming is wrong. (From 1, 2).
4. If doing x is wrong, then paying others to do x is also wrong.
5. Buying products from factory farms is paying others for factory farming.
6. Therefore, buying products from factory farms is wrong. (From 3, 4, 5) [11].

Economist Walter Block has suggested that my defense of ethical vegetarianism rests on a utilitarian philosophy that is incompatible with libertarian political philosophy.¹ He argues, further, that meat consumption is permissible since animals are benefitted by being raised for food and they, unlike humans, have no rights. In this article, I rebut Block’s objections and conclude, again, that buying meat from factory farms is morally unacceptable.

I would like to start by thanking Walter Block for his good-humored reply to me, despite my earlier, merciless refutation of him [2]. In this reply, I will again not be responding to everything Block has said but will try to focus on a few of the more important issues. (We may disagree about what is important.) My reason for doing this can be explained using Block's own words: "One must sometimes put the 'blinders' on, and focus, narrowly, on the issue at hand. To do so in this case, one must ignore irrelevancies, however important they are for other purposes" [p. 68].

There we are in agreement; indeed, I think Block could stand to follow his own advice more often.² Intellectual issues are often difficult, and they often require sustained attention to make progress on. Furthermore, time and attention are limited. Thus, attempting to address every tangential or irrelevant issue that occurs to one, or to one's interlocutor, usually results in making no progress on the central issues.

I took the central issue at hand to be ethical vegetarianism. It appears that Block, however, took the central issue of interest to be whether I, Michael Huemer, am a libertarian.³ He thinks that I am instead a utilitarian. So I shall address myself to three general topics: libertarianism, utilitarianism, and vegetarianism.

2. Libertarianism

Block has raised the issue of whether I am a libertarian. I myself think this an objectively uninteresting question. What mental states are going on in some particular individual's head is of no philosophical or scientific significance. Though Block [p. 67] rightly argues that science is often concerned with categorization, note two things that science is generally *not* concerned with. (i) Science is not normally concerned with the categorization of *specific, individual objects or people*.⁴ For example, you could not publish a paper in a chemistry journal discussing the chemical composition of the stain that was on the floor in Mike Huemer's kitchen on July 3, 2015. (ii) Science is not usually concerned with semantic questions about theories. For example, you could not publish a paper in a physics journal arguing about which physical theories deserve to be called "Newtonian."

Be that as it may, in case someone wants to know whether I am a libertarian and is having difficulty figuring it out, here are some relevant facts. I have published a book defending anarcho-capitalism and rejecting all government authority [3]. I have written articles defending the right to own a gun based on the right of self-defense [4]. I have attacked drug prohibition based on the right of self-ownership [5]. I have defended open immigration based on individual rights against coercion [6]. I have argued that taxation is theft [7]. I have rejected wealth redistribution as a violation of property rights [8]. I have criticized licensing laws and regulation in general [9, §4.3]. I scored 156 out of a possible 160 on Bryan Caplan's "Libertarian Purity Test."⁵ I think Walter Block is probably the only person in the universe who thinks that I'm not a libertarian.

Why does he think that? As near as I can tell, he thinks it because my book, *Dialogues on Ethical Vegetarianism* [11], fails to endorse or argue from libertarianism. Rather than saying, "Give up meat because libertarianism is true," I say, "Give up meat because it's wrong to inflict great suffering on others for minor benefits for yourself." The latter principle isn't specifically libertarian, so I must not be a libertarian (?).

Need I explain the mistake? (Followers of Ayn Rand, incidentally, sometimes make the same error, when they deny being libertarians.) To be a libertarian is to hold certain political views. If you have libertarian political beliefs, then you're a libertarian. That's it. It is not required that those be *the only beliefs you have*. For instance, if you believe in heliocentric cosmology, that doesn't bar you from being aptly labelled "a libertarian." Even writing a whole book defending such other beliefs doesn't disqualify you; for instance, if Walter Block were to write a book devoted to arguing that Cardi B is the world's greatest artist, he would still be a libertarian.⁶

3. Utilitarianism

Walter Block may also be the only person in the universe who thinks I am a utilitarian (though he also thinks that I endorse animal *rights*; I guess he thinks I am inconsistent?). *Pace* Block, I am not a utilitarian. I know this because I have introspective access to my own beliefs, and they include the belief, “Utilitarianism is false.” Outside observers can know it because I have regularly given ethical and political arguments resting on individual rights, which I understand in the standard, deontological way.⁷

What led Block astray on this matter? It appears that he was misled by my frequent insistence that one should not cause enormous suffering to others for the sake of trivial benefits to oneself. This is certainly something that a utilitarian would agree with. But *so would virtually everyone else*. Block appears to conflate the following two propositions:

- (a) Utilitarians believe that only pleasure and pain matter.
- (b) Only utilitarians believe that pleasure and pain matter.

(a) is true; (b) is false. *Every* moral theory that is taken seriously today holds that pleasure and pain matter and that one should not cause enormous amounts of something bad for trivial reasons. That is not unique to utilitarians. What is distinctive of utilitarians is that they add: *and nothing else matters*. I, however, did not add that.

Here is an analogy. Suppose I hear Block say “Murder is wrong.” “Oh,” I respond, “I didn’t realize that you were a Christian. Christians think that murder is wrong, and *you* think that murder is wrong, so ... you must be a Christian.”

4. Vegetarianism

4.1. Block’s Indifference

Let us now turn to the most important issue, that of ethical vegetarianism. In my earlier reply, I noted that a few years of factory farming probably causes more suffering than all the human suffering in all of history. I noted also that “to react to such a problem with indifference would be a shockingly nihilistic stance” [2, p. 43]. Block responds: “Who says that I react to this fact with indifference? Not I, not I, nor does Huemer quote me to this effect. He cannot, since I never wrote anything of the sort” [p. 68].

This is one of several times that Block complains of being misrepresented. But note three points. First, I did not say that Block reacted with indifference. I cautioned that it would be shockingly nihilistic to do so (so he ought not to do so). Now, this would have been an inapt observation to make unless there was some threat that Block might react or might have reacted with indifference.

But, second, it was in fact perfectly apt, since in his first article in this exchange, Block wrote the following words:

A large corporation underbids a small mom and pop operation. The former earns a miniscule profit [...] while the latter goes bankrupt and suffers grievously [...]. Perhaps this is unethical. I don’t know, *I don’t care*. [12, p. 54; emphasis added]

But, qua libertarians, we are simply not at all interested in what is, or is not, “perfectly alright.” [12, p. 55]

Both remarks appeared in a discussion of my thesis that it is wrong (and not alright) to cause great suffering for the sake of minor benefits (apropos of factory farming). I cited both quotations in my reply, so it is not exactly true to say that I did not quote him to that effect or that he never wrote anything of the sort. These quotes, in the context, suggest that Block does not care about, or is not interested in, the question of what is morally wrong. Of course, if in fact Block *does* care about that question, I will be happy to learn it.

Third, although Block's refusal to address the problem of factory farming does not entail that he is indifferent to it, it at least suggests, in this context, that he does not care sufficiently about it. The question of the ethical response to factory farming is vastly more important than the question of whether Mike Huemer counts as a "libertarian," and it is also much more salient in a context in which one is reviewing a book about the ethical response to factory farming. In such a context, it would be decidedly odd for someone who cares about the problem of factory farming to choose to instead focus on whether I am a libertarian. Perhaps more importantly, the refusal to *do anything* regarding the problem of factory farming also evinces an inappropriately low level of concern. (More on this below, §4.3.)

Admittedly, other parts of Block's text suggest that he agrees that we ought to wish for less suffering in the world. That is why I found Block's stance puzzling and seemingly inconsistent. And that is why I did not say that he in fact reacts with indifference, but rather only cautioned that one ought not to do so.

I have written all of this (i.e., §4.1) partly to show why I can't address everything Block says. Block issues dozens of claims and arguments in rapid succession, in which I see many mistakes. In this case, the mistake I am addressing goes by in just 34 words in Block's article, yet my response to it is now approaching 600 words. This is why I cannot address every idea that appears in Block's article.

4.2. *The Libertarian Slavery Advocate*

In his latest piece, Block comes out in favor of slavery, a position that strikes me as somewhat more in tension with libertarianism than ethical vegetarianism is. Context: In response to Block's observation that the particular animals living on farms would not exist if not for the meat industry, I raised the example of humans who are bred to be slaves and who thus would not exist if not for the slavery industry. Block courageously bites this bullet: "Slavery would be justified under these weird conditions. And I don't mean voluntary slavery. I am now talking about the coercive variety that has occurred all too often in human history" [p. 71].

This bold move is slightly marred by the timorous insertion of "weird," meant to suggest that Block's endorsement of slavery would only apply in rare circumstances. Nice try, but I am not letting Block get away with this. This is not some weird alternative universe. In actual United States history, the importation of slaves was prohibited as of January 1, 1808. From that time on, domestic slave traders could only replenish their supplies by breeding existing slaves to produce more slaves. And that is exactly what they did [14]. All the new slaves after that point were people bred from slaves, to be slaves. So let us update Block's admission as follows: on his view, slavery *in the actual U.S. after 1808* was justified.

Block goes on to try to wriggle out of the sheer outrageousness of this position: "But there is a caveat. The alternative is death. ... I claim that from the welfare point of view of Huemer's [*sic*] slaves, they would be better off alive, and enslaved, rather than dead. One 'proof' of this is that we have never had mass suicide on the part of slaves" [p. 71].

Again, I am not letting Block change the scenario or insert conditions to try to make his view seem less bad. The alternative to slavery was not "death." The alternative was to free the existing slaves, then *not create any more*. Which is exactly what America did at the end of the Civil War. Merely potential people who are never created because the slave industry ended are not *dead*. It is not

the case that there are millions of *dead* would-be slaves today, namely, all the people who *would* exist today if slaves had continued to be bred in the U.S. for the last 160 years.

Why is this the correct description of the scenario? Because the scenario is an analogy for Block's argument against vegetarianism. As more people become vegetarians, the meat industry will breed fewer animals to live on factory farms. Block sees this as a problem, since he thinks it better for those animals to exist than not [p. 73]. But the result of breeding fewer (or even no) farm animals is not a scenario in which all the animals who don't get born are dead. It is a scenario in which they are never born. Exactly like the slaves who were not born after the coerced slave-breeding practice ended. (Former slaves, of course, still went on to have children, but these would not be the same children who would have been created by the slave breeders, since there would be different pairings of parents.)

Block goes on to try to explain why slavery is better than "death": "Where there is a will there is a way. Where there is life, there is hope. Life is a very precious commodity. Who knows, a slave rebellion might succeed. Perhaps the evil slave holders will repent their monstrous ways, and engage in manumission. If all the slaves are dead, this cannot occur" [p. 71].

Again, I am not letting Block change the scenario. The scenario is that the people are held as slaves for their entire lives. They do not successfully rebel, and their masters do not free them. We have to evaluate the scenario with that stipulated. Why is this the correct version of the scenario? Because, again, the scenario is an analogy for Block's view of the meat industry. There is no chance of the farm animals successfully rebelling, nor is the meat industry ever going to set them free (at least, not as long as people keep eating meat).

Moreover, there is an incoherence in Block's type of argument. One cannot argue in defense of slavery by saying that, as long as we keep holding slaves, there is a chance that we will stop. The possibility that we will stop doing A isn't a reason to do A.

Block continues: "Note that in this section we are straying from deontological libertarianism. We are not discussing rights, here. Rather, we are engaged in a utilitarian analysis. Would animals, human slaves, be better off from a pragmatic point of view, if they did not exist at all" [p. 71].

But note that we are only straying from deontological libertarianism because Block's own views are incompatible with it. Deontological libertarians are against slavery, even if the slaves were bred for the purpose.

Block has one question for me: "My only question of Huemer in this section is, why was this not already fully comprehensible?" [p. 71] In reply, I in fact had no difficulty at all understanding Block's argument. I simply disagreed with it.

4.3. The Other Problems with Block's Argument

Block claims to have addressed all of my arguments.⁸ But in fact he overlooked many of them.⁹ On the particular argument discussed above (§4.2), he missed at least two points. First, he did not address my point that factory farm life is so miserable that it would be better to have no such lives [2, pp. 46-7]. He did not try to offer any evidence that factory farm life is not really that bad.

Second, he overlooked my point that there are other alternatives that he was ignoring – for example, human beings have open to us the alternative of raising animals only in humane conditions, rather than in factory farms [2, p. 46]. Block claims that he opposes suffering yet buys meat (almost all of which comes from factory farms) because this is better for the animals. If this is true, I await his imminent announcement that he has decided henceforth to buy only humane certified animal products.

Here is an analogy. Suppose that Walter's reprobate nephew, Scarface Block, shows up at Walter's house one day with a big bag of money. The following dialogue ensues:

Scarface Block: Hey, check it out, Uncle Walt. I just robbed a bank and got all this loot!

Walter: Why did you do that? Don't you know that's wrong?

- Scarface: Oh, no. You see, when I woke up this morning, I decided that I was going to either rob a bank or murder twelve people today. I'm sure you'll agree that bank robbery is better. So it's permissible!
- Walter: Hmm, I can't see anything wrong with this logic.

What have the Blocks missed? Well, *perhaps* it is justified to harm others if doing so is better than *every* alternative (though even this is not always true). But certainly one can't justify harming others merely by the claim that doing so is better than *some* alternative. One must compare the action to the best alternative.

4.4. On Forfeiting One's Rights

It turns out that I misunderstood the slogan "rights imply responsibilities" as used by Block. It appears that Block intends the phrase to mean that, if one violates others' rights, then one loses one's own rights. This, I guess, leads to a rejection of animal rights via something like this reasoning:

1. If A violates B's rights, then A loses A's own rights.
2. Nonhuman animals do not lose any rights upon attacking other animals.
3. Therefore, those other animals do not have rights not to be attacked.

From (3), one could plausibly infer that animals in general lack rights in general.

The problem with this inference is the completely unqualified first premise. On Block's view, (1) holds regardless of whether A has free will at the time, whether A is aware of what A is doing, or whether A is even capable of understanding morality. Only by saying this can Block claim that principle (1) applies to animals.

This makes the principle extraordinarily implausible. Suppose that a baby, a severely mentally retarded person, or a severely mentally ill person shoots you because he has no idea what a gun is, or because he can't control his own actions. On Block's view, that person now has no rights.

Block even adds another counterexample to his own view: suppose a sleepwalker kills someone while sleepwalking and unaware of what he is doing. On Block's view, the sleepwalker could be justly punished for first degree murder [p. 72]. Block tries to soften this by adding, "at the very least after the first such foray." I am again obliged to call Block on his attempt to modify the example to cover up the absurdity of his position. On Block's principle (1), the sleepwalker is guilty the *first* time, not merely the second time, he kills in his sleep. That is what Block has to say, since he does not recognize any constraints on culpability.

This is not a plausible view. The standard, plausible view is that A becomes liable to punishment to the extent that A *culpably* violates B's rights, and that there are different degrees of culpability. People sometimes lack free will or lack the ability to understand their actions, in which case they are not responsible for their actions and they continue to have rights. The same may be true of nonhuman animals.

Block goes on: "If these predatory animals really had rights not to be killed by humans, they would not pick on other chickens, zebras and deer. But they do engage in these acts. Ergo, they do not have rights" [p. 71].

Imagine that an advanced alien species arrives on Earth. The aliens shortly set to debating whether it is permissible to kill humans for sport. Among them is an economist named Alien Block, who lands in New Orleans to have a conversation with the renowned human rights expert, Walter Block ...

Alien Block: Hey there, human. Just FYI, my buddies and I are shortly about to start torturing humans and chopping them up for fun, unless someone can give us a good reason not to. So far we can't think of any.

Walter: Uh, well, I think that would violate our rights.

Alien: No, that doesn't work. If humans really had rights to not be killed by aliens, they would not pick on other humans. But they do engage in these acts. Ergo, they do not have rights.

Walter: Oh, okay, that makes sense. Carry on then.

Alien Block's factual assessment is correct – humans have been torturing, enslaving, raping, and murdering each other throughout history. So what is Alien Block's mistake?

I see two ways of reading Alien Block's argument. First reading: If humans had rights, then humans would surely know that they had these rights, in which case they would respect these rights, and so they would never attack each other. Since they sometimes do attack each other, we can conclude that they have no rights. If this is what Alien Block means, he errs by confusing the *existence* of rights with their *recognition* by people, as well as by assuming that people would always behave ethically.

Second reading: When humans pick on other humans, they forfeit their rights. Since rights "go by species," it is not only the specific aggressors who lose their rights but the entire species. So the whole human species has lost its rights, if they ever had any. If this is what Alien Block means, he errs by assuming that rights accrue to species rather than individuals.

Walter Block's argument in the actual world has two parallel readings, with the same errors, depending on how we read it. Either Block is falsely assuming that animals would have the ability to recognize rights and would in fact always behave ethically, or he is falsely assuming that rights accrue to species rather than individuals.

4.5. Speciesism

This brings us to Block's "defense" of speciesism.¹⁰ By this, I mean his view that rights accrue to species rather than individuals: once one person claims rights for himself, that somehow gives rights to the entire *species*, not just that individual. When asked to explain or justify this, Block pleads that "we all have to start somewhere" [p. 69]. Granted, we all have to start somewhere, but most of us decide to start somewhere that seems obviously true, or at least plausible, rather than somewhere arbitrary and implausible.

Block has another argument to justify his assumption: "[I]t would be an act of murder to kill a baby, or a sleeping person, or a mentally handicapped individual, none of whom can petition for their rights. Only if rights are accorded to all members of a species are we logically entitled to arrive at any such conclusion" [p. 69].

Vegetarians often accuse meat-eaters of just inventing rationalizations. Here, Block makes explicit that that is what he is doing. There is no explanation for why rights should accrue to species; that's just what you have to say to rationalize Block's claims that (i) rights are produced by petitioning or "homesteading," yet (ii) somehow babies and mentally disabled humans have rights, yet (iii) nonhuman animals don't. There was no reason for assuming (i) or (iii) to begin with, so there is no reason to embrace increasingly implausible rationalizations for those assumptions either.

As the previous section hinted, the assumption that rights accrue to species would seem also to suggest that rights *forfeiture* should occur at the species level – in which case, all humans have lost their rights. Again, Block might simply claim that acquisition and forfeiture work differently (but only for humans; animals, apparently, forfeit rights at the species level) as an ultimate, inexplicable fact, but this would be an ad hoc rationalization.

4.6. Homesteading

In my last reply, I pointed out that Block's theory of homesteading rights seems inconsistent: he claims that when an individual claims self-ownership rights for himself, that grants self-ownership rights to all members of that individual's species. Yet when an individual claims a plot of land for himself, that only gives *that individual* a property right in the land; it doesn't grant any rights at all to the rest of the species.

Block's explanation: There are two differences between land and self-ownership rights. First, self-ownership rights are prior to land rights (you must own yourself before you can come to own land). Second, land rights are alienable (you can sell your land), but some people think that self-ownership is inalienable (you can't sell yourself into slavery). That's the entire explanation. By the way, in citing the second difference, Block neglects to mention that *he himself* thinks that you *can* legitimately sell yourself into slavery.¹¹ So in *his* view, there *isn't* actually that second difference.

Be that as it may, the main thing to point out is that neither of these alleged differences on its face appears at all relevant, nor does Block attempt to explain how they would be relevant. In other words, say Block is right: in order to acquire land, you have to first own yourself. So what? How does that even on its face seem to suggest that self-ownership would depend on species membership but land ownership depend on your individual actions?

Resolving a tension in your theory can't be this easy. It can't be enough to say, "Well, I thought of *some difference* between those two cases (nevermind whether it's a relevant difference)." If that were enough, Block could have just said, "Well, self-ownership is different from land ownership because the former applies to a *self*, whereas the latter applies to a piece of *land*." Applying that strategy, any tension in any theory is instantly resolved.

5. Avoiding Dogmatism

I want to conclude with some methodological remarks about how to avoid dogmatism, which is perhaps the most serious and pervasive intellectual problem. A dogmatic person refuses to reconsider his controversial opinions no matter what evidence or arguments appear. We should all agree that dogmatism is a vice to be avoided. We should all agree that controversial ethical opinions are among the beliefs concerning which we should be open to counterarguments. Therefore, one should not deploy argumentative strategies that enable one to maintain one's starting position *come what may*. That is what Block and many meat-eaters do.¹² They start from the absolute axiom, "it's fine for me to continue what I'm doing," then adjust the rest of their belief system in whatever way they have to to maintain that fixed point.

What argumentative strategies do I have in mind?

- i. *Biting the bullet*. When someone locates an absurd implication of your view, you can always simply embrace the implication. For instance, if someone finds that your view implies that slavery is acceptable, you can say, "That's right, slavery is fine."
- ii. *The appeal to foundations*. When asked to explain or justify some seemingly odd or arbitrary assumption of yours, you can always declare, "That's an ultimate starting point."
- iii. *Rationalization*. When asked why you believe A, you can cite some theoretical principle B, then say you believe B because it's the best explanation for why A is true. If someone comes up with a counter-example to B, just modify the principle ad hoc to exclude that example and justify the modification by saying that the modified principle explains A while avoiding the counterexample. E.g., humans have rights and animals don't, because (in part) rights accrue to species, which we should believe because that helps us explain why humans have rights and animals don't.

Notice that these strategies are general tools of dogmatism: *Any belief can be maintained in the face of any evidence*, as long as you're prepared to deploy these strategies whenever necessary.

For an illustration, let us imagine that Walter Block travels back in time to talk with one more member of his extended family, his great grandfather, the slave owner Jefferson Block ...

Jefferson Block: It's fine to enslave black people.

Walter Block: Wow, really? Why is that?

Jefferson: Because black people have lower average IQ's than white people. IQ determines rights.

Walter: But that would imply that you can enslave low-IQ white people too.

Jefferson: No, you see, it's the average IQ of one's *race* that matters, not the IQ of the particular individual.

Walter: Why on Earth would that matter?

Jefferson: You have to start from somewhere. This is the best explanation of the self-evident fact that it's fine to enslave blacks but not whites.

Jefferson is being dogmatic. There is no way Jefferson Block will ever admit that he is wrong; he'll just make whatever arbitrary claims he has to in order to maintain that it's fine to enslave blacks.

Alternately, he might have responded to Walter's second comment as follows:

Jefferson: Yep, it's fine to enslave low-IQ white people.

Or, even more simply, he might have responded to Walter's first question as follows:

Jefferson: That's just an ultimate, foundational principle. You have to start somewhere.

And then there is no way of reasoning with him.

Granted, we cannot say that one should *never* use any of the above strategies. After all, some things are in fact foundational. If someone asks me why $2=2$, I am not inclined to offer any justification or explanation; I would likely say that that is simply a fundamental, ground-level axiom. Also, some counter-intuitive claims are actually true and justified. For instance, most people find the correct solution to the Monty Hall problem counter-intuitive, but it can be demonstrated from the laws of probability. So those are examples where strategies (ii) and (i), respectively, are appropriate.

Nevertheless, they are usually not appropriate. Because these strategies are such easy tools of dogmatism, one should be very wary of them. One should think very hard before declaring that something that one's interlocutor rejects is a foundational, inexplicable, ultimate starting point. Typically, ultimate starting points are extremely obvious and non-controversial propositions, such as " $2=2$ " and "murder is wrong." Bearing in mind such examples, you should ask yourself, when you're tempted to claim an ultimate starting point, "Do I really find this self-evident, or do I just not want to question my assumptions?" Likewise, one should reflect carefully and honestly before biting the bullet on some counter-intuitive consequence. Bearing in mind that the usual cases where we should embrace counter-intuitive conclusions are ones with very clear and almost indisputable evidence, or even mathematical proofs, one should ask oneself honestly, "Has this really been sufficiently established, or am I just being dogmatic?"

Bearing all this in mind, I find it hard to believe that any reasonable, open-minded person would really conclude that "rights accrue to species, not individuals" or "humans but not animals have rights" is self-evident.

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Notes

1. See Block [1], responding to my [2]; unless otherwise specified, all references to Block herein are to [1].
2. See p. 66, where he defends the appropriateness of his raising tangents about insider trading, my use of the word “them,” U.S.-China trade policy, etc.
3. Note, however, that for reasons that will emerge below (§4.1), I now hesitate to ascribe any beliefs to Block – for any claim that I might ascribe to him, there is a good chance that he will insist he never said anything of the kind and has no idea why I would think that.
4. Unless it is an extremely important individual object, such as the Earth.
5. See [10]. I declined to answer two questions about the Federal Reserve.
6. Cardi B is a popular singer of questionable merit. Her artistic merit is unrelated to libertarianism.
7. See [4], [5], [6], [8], [9]. For an explanation of my understanding of rights, see [9, §2.4]. For my objections to utilitarianism, see [13].
8. “I have been very thorough in my response to Heumer [*sic*]. I replied to each and every point he made in this essay of his” [p. 74].
9. Some additional points that Block did not address in his latest reply: Block’s attempted refutations of expected utility calculations are confused [2, p. 45]; humans’ behavior is probably worse than animals’ [2, p. 47]; I did not advance hedonism, nor did I reject rights [2, pp. 47-8]; the fact that experts aren’t infallible doesn’t mean you shouldn’t listen to them (unless *you’re* infallible) [2, p. 48]; factory farming is obviously wrong [2, pp. 48-9]; most of Block’s arguments are misdirection [2, p. 49]; Block is confused about masochism, pain, and suffering [2, p. 50n2]. (Note that I don’t count merely saying something about the section that an argument appeared in as responding to the argument.) There are other cases in which Block sort of responds to an objection, but only with a bare denial or a repetition

of the point the objection was directed at. I am not upbraiding Block for failing to address everything, though. I don't address everything either, but at least I don't claim to.

10. I use scare quotes because Block's discussion [pp. 69-70] is more assertion than argument; I am not sure to what extent this qualifies as a defense.

11. Block, p.c.

12. See also the case of Bryan Caplan, discussed in [15].