

Meat Without Harm?

George and his sister Selena are competitive athletes. After their game, they go to eat at their favorite restaurant. While they are looking at the menu, they notice a new item—an in-vitro meat burger. Both Selena and George have been vegetarians for most of their lives because they believe that hurting or using animals solely for human gain is unethical. Despite this commonality, they have differing opinions about the in-vitro meat burger.

Cell-cultured meat – also known as in-vitro meat – is a relatively new finding that could drastically change how humans eat. It is made without ever physically hurting an animal, but rather by taking a biopsy of an animal to a lab where they are placed in a bioreactor. There, they are exercised and fed a growth serum, eventually multiplying and creating what is known as cell-cultured meat.

Selena is excited because she thinks she can finally enjoy the benefits of meat while not violating her beliefs, but George is worried. He believes that in-vitro meat is as immoral as eating meat itself and has even more unprecedented consequences.

On one hand, Selena believes that in-vitro meat is the best way to consume meat without many of the moral and physical consequences of actual meat. Because she is an athlete, her diet is very important. Being able to eat meat would provide her with high-quality protein and essential nutrients. Additionally, in-vitro meat can be made to be healthier than real meat. She also believes that in-vitro meat is the best way possible to relieve animals of their pain without affecting the diet of billions of people across the globe.

George, on the other hand, believes that in-vitro meat does not do all the good that it advertises. George's vegetarianism is grounded in a strong rejection of considering animals as and disregarding the fact that they have certain unalienable rights– to live and flourish –in the same way humans do. He believes that by promoting and consuming in-vitro meat, we are only perpetuating the idea that animals are simply a commodity.

1. Discussion Questions: Is in-vitro meat an ethical alternative to meat obtained from animals?
2. Does eating animals involve treating them as a commodity? If so, is George right that eating in-vitro meat also involves commodifying animals?
3. If eating meat at all, including in-vitro meat, is unethical, does Selena being an athlete matter to assessing whether it is permissible for her to eat animal flesh?

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