

From the Editor

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The current issue has four articles and seven book reviews. The first article is by Paul B. Thompson. In “Food Aid and the Famine Relief Argument (Brief Return),” Thompson revisits the problems of agricultural development and world hunger and the debate between Hardin and Singer about famine relief. This debate has been resuscitated by recent publications (Pogge and Horton 2008; Singer 2009). Rather than renewing the debate, Thompson argues that we should recognize two important points. (1) Since food needs invoke a genuine moral response more compelling than arguments used to rationalize a duty to bring aid, “the argument for feeding hungry people cannot be generalized into a paradigm for development ethics without distortions that undercut the morally valid elements in Singer’s original argument.” (2) Food aid and famine relief are still important priorities for international agencies, such as the World Food Program, so it is still a central issue for both agricultural and development ethics, though one that is distinct from our duties to address conditions of “chronic poverty and underdevelopment.” Thompson goes on to argue that “a program of food aid pure and simple cannot be justified except in so far as the situation is an emergency. The reason is that providing an endless supply of food and nothing else lacks the specifically developmental rationale that is required for a program to qualify as development assistance.” Thompson cites David Crocker’s theory of development ethics as noteworthy “for its emphasis on respect for and cultivation of agency among those being assisted. While helping to meet acute food needs may be consistent with this view, Crocker makes it clear that malnutrition and persistent hunger are most frequently the result of institutional failures that can only be addressed within the context of genuine development, (Crocker 2008, pp. 255–269).”

In the second article (“Death is a Welfare Issue”), James W. Yeats argues against the view that death is not a welfare issue. “Welfare issues are issues that refer to

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evaluations concerning an animal's interests. This includes evaluations that refer only to comparisons between the presence and absence of states, including positive states." Death is a welfare issue when it precludes the presence of positive states.

The third article is by Oscar Horta. In "What is speciesism," Horta seeks to clarify the conceptual framework for deciding the issue of the moral considerability of nonhuman animals. To do this, he starts "by defining speciesism as the unjustified disadvantageous consideration or treatment of those who are not classified as belonging to a certain species" and he then goes on to clarify "some common misunderstandings concerning what this means." First of all, while there may be different arguments used to support speciesism, there is still only one kind of speciesism. Then the author goes on to argue that while anthropocentrism is a speciesist position, it is conceptually distinct from both speciesism and misothery, and it can be refuted by recognizing the fallacy that it commits and the two arguments that it falls prey to.

In the last article ("Food law, Ethics, and Food Safety Regulation: Roles, Justifications, and Expected Limits"), Daniel Sperling discusses "the roles, justifications, and limits of ethics of food safety as part of public health ethics" and he goes on to argue "for the development of this timely and emergent field of ethics." To do this, Sperling divides the article into three parts. The first part provides an introduction to the topic of public health ethics and then describes the role that ethics should play in the varies levels of food safety. In the second part. Sperling examines the different models used to describes the function of food regulation. He identifies three models, and then, in the last part of the article, describes the relationship between these models and then assesses the role of food safety ethics, its effects and its limits. "The exact role that ethics will play in safeguarding food safety will depend on the centrality and effect of public health law, the satisfactory function of public institutions, public movements and policies, and the extent to which law promotes each of these levels in analyzing food risks."