

Feeling Animal Death

Being Host to Ghosts

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Chapter Nineteen

Living in Awareness of Animal Death

Buddhist Experiments in Ethical Sensibility

Justin Fifield

Death is a constant presence in life, but to what extent are we aware of death? In Buddhist traditions, there is an artistic depiction called the Wheel of Life (*bhavacakra*) that represents the cycles of life and death. It is surrounded by a divine figure, the god Māra, who is the personification of death: Death with a capital D (image 19.1).¹ Māra's fanged mouth and clawed hands grasp onto the edges of life, allowing none to escape. Within the circle are images of animals and humans, gods and goddesses, all intertwined in cycles of rebirth: life leading to death and death leading to life. This image is placed at the entrance of Buddhist monasteries as a daily reminder to practitioners that their pursuit of liberation from suffering—*nirvāṇa*—begins with an awareness of death.² The goal of the Buddhist monastic is to slip out of the grasp of Death, to exit the Wheel of Life, but one must be aware of Death's grasping presence in the first place.³ Death must be unmasked.

In this chapter, I take the reader past the Wheel of Life and into the world of the Buddhist monastery to explore the ways that Buddhism can contribute to the movement to eliminate violence against animals. Two decades of research on Buddhist monasticism in ancient and contemporary South Asia have convinced me that it has something valuable to offer and, as I explore shortly, it has transformed the way I feel animal death. But as we enter the Buddhist monastery, we need to think deliberately about how we can learn from Buddhist monasticism. The encounter between the contemporary world and the monastic world represented by the Wheel of Life is one of stark contrasts, and it is not immediately clear how the latter can inform the former. How does such an encounter take place? Religious studies scholar Robert Orsi advises us to see this encounter as an invitation to become open to other modes of being, one that requires a person “to make one's own self-conceptions vulnerable to the radically destabilizing possibilities of genuine encounter with an



Image 19.1. *The Wheel of Life (bhavacakra), surrounded by Māra, Bhutan, Kandukur* Nagarjun, 2014. Creative Commons license 2.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/deed.en>.

unfamiliar way of life” such that “one comes to know something about the other and about oneself through relationship with the other.”²⁴ This encounter resists the binary possibilities of conversion (making the other world one’s own) or foreclosure (rejecting the moral relevance of the other world) in order to “prolong one’s stay” in “the unexpected proximity of two diverse worlds.”²⁵ It is, in other words, an experiment in becoming. In this chapter, I reflect on what I have found to be the unexpected proximity between my world—as a twenty-first-century American scholar—and the world of Buddhist monasticism. It is in the space between the two that I learned to feel animal death.

Let me start at the beginning. Once upon a time, I was a butcher.

My shift started in the evening. The first shift had spent the day cutting the meat in the back room, which, when I arrived, was displayed in neat rows in the clean display cases. My job was to clean up the cutting room, but I was also apprenticing for the day shift, learning the different cuts of meat and the arts of butchering.

As I recall this experience now, I recognize that one of the butchering arts is concealing the presence of death from the consumer. Butchers create “meat”—an object of food like any other—from the flesh of dead bodies.⁶ As a butcher, I was an active, perhaps unwitting, participant in a complex social system that hides the presence of Death. Now, as a scholar, I am working in

the opposite direction, to reveal its presence, much like the Wheel of Life posted at the monastery door. As I continue to tell this story, then, I deliberately use the term “dead bodies” rather than “meat” to bring awareness of animal death to the process of butchering.

At the neighborhood market where I worked in small town Michigan, we received pieces of dead bodies already partially processed. They came tightly wrapped in large plastic bags, chunks of muscle and tendon suspended in blood. These are called names like the *short loin*, the *sirloin*, and the *tenderloin*, names that are distanced and disembodied from legs that once moved, sides that felt the nuzzling of a calf, loins that knew the flush of sexual excitement.

Slitting open the bags, blood spilled everywhere. It collected in pools on the cutting board counters and the tile floor. It soaked into our shoes. It left an indelible mark. But no one minded.

We cut the dead bodies on bandsaws, one for bones, one for boneless. The bandsaw blades made quick work of them, precisely cutting “steaks” and “chops”—more words that obscure—ready for summer parties in the backyard. Death feeding life.

After a day of cutting, pieces of muscle and bone caked the inside of the bandsaw mechanism and blood covered the room. It was my job to clean all of this. Handfuls of shredded flesh into the garbage; pools of blood into the mop bucket. The iron red blood soaked my apron, bits of flesh wedged under my fingernails, the scent of raw meat mixed with the astringent smell of bleach. The sense memories are still there.

At the time, none of these experiences was unpleasant. I played music and enjoyed myself, stopping every so often to help a late night customer with a purchase. I was a purveyor of dead bodies and good at my job. They made me night manager and gave me the keys to the shop. I was rewarded for my active disinterest in animal death. I did not notice Death everywhere around me. Or maybe I was helping Death hide.

My lack of awareness bothers me now. If there is one thing that Buddhist practices emphasize, it is awareness, waking up to the truth that surrounds us. Had countless occasions handling dead bodies in the kitchen inured me to the presence of Death? Was it because I learned to hunt as a child? Or because I constantly saw dead deer and raccoons on the side of the highway? How is it that people become so accustomed to animal death or, what is more, feel good about it?

Many scholars focus on the role of philosophy, religion, and moral justification to explain violent relationships of exploitation between humans and animals. In his book *A Plea for the Animals*, the Buddhist monk Matthieu Ricard explains the myriad ways that people use “all kinds of reasoning” to

“provide ourselves with a host of excuses so that we can continue to kill or enslave animals and at the same time keep our consciences clean.”⁷ There is no doubt that reason plays an important role in both the problem and solution of animal exploitation, and the work of critical philosophers such as Kari Weil and Matthew Calarco has done much to unravel the complex genealogies of metaphysics and epistemology that underpin this violent exploitation.⁸ However, what is sometimes missing in these discussions—and what I want to emphasize throughout this chapter—is the role of perception and the body in processes of exploitation and their possible alleviation. What is the role of *feeling* animal death, not just thinking it?

All cultures socialize humans into certain embodied dispositions toward animals. To give three admittedly oversimplified examples to illustrate my point, in the United States people are generally socialized to fear wild animals, love pets, and find pests disgusting. These embodied dispositions condition actions of killing and the *feelings* involved with killing. A person is disgusted by a cockroach—“a pest”—or is afraid of a wolf—“a wild animal”—and kills it to relieve that feeling. On the other hand, a person euthanizes a dog—“a pet”—and grieves deeply. From this point of view, it seems that philosophy and moral justification are secondary to embodied disposition and response.

This embodied response forms the basis of what I will call *ethical sensibility*: a habitual disposition toward certain forms of action rooted in the body. In turning attention away from reason and toward the body, we need to be careful not to impose a mind-body binary that often conceals and supports an exploitative human-animal binary. In Buddhist traditions, the mind is a sensory organ that senses mental objects, just as the eye senses forms or the nose senses smells. Categories of animals—wild animal, pest, pet—are examples of mental objects sensed by the mind. Sensing mental objects and having an affective reaction—fear, disgust, love—is different from a reasoning process of moral justification. The way we think about animals is directly tied to how we feel about them, which in turn shapes how we act toward them. This is ethical sensibility.

My ethical sensibility as a butcher was shaped by a number of cultural factors: a pervasive cultural promotion of meat eating as desirable (especially for men),⁹ a sense of pride in manual wage labor, and a feeling of belonging to a middle class that demonstrates its status through the conspicuous consumption of meat.¹⁰ Much more could be said about the specific historical and cultural factors that build up ethical sensibilities in different localities, but what I want to emphasize is that my lack of feeling animal death was not a simple absence of feeling. It was a habitual disposition built up over time under the influence of cultural narratives, norms, and institutions.¹¹

That I butchered animals with a clear conscious had little to do with moral reasoning. And that I care about such things now has more to do with my long-term exposure to Buddhist monastic literature and practice than any moral arguments that subsequently appealed to me. I did not change my mind; my embodied disposition was transformed.

So it is to Buddhist monastic practices that I turn to explore how transformations in ethical sensibility can take place. I first examine monastic literature and the ways that literature can dissolve the ontological boundaries between human and nonhuman animals, helping us feel animal death. I carry those insights into an examination of mindfulness meditation on dead bodies, a prominent practice in Buddhist monasticism, but one that hardly ever gets mentioned in the current global popularity of mindfulness. Then, in the final section of this chapter, I return to my body and to chronic illness and try to reconcile the ethical dilemma of sick bodies that depend on death to survive. This leads us back to where we began: to the Wheel of Life and an awareness of the cycles of life and death.

BUDDHIST MONASTIC PRACTICES OF EMBODIED TRANSFORMATION

Many readers will be familiar with Buddhist traditions of compassion and nonviolence and the role they play in ethics. The Dalai Lama, Thich Nhat Hahn, and other prominent Buddhists have been leading advocates of ending violence of all kinds and promoting cultures of peace and tolerance throughout the world.¹² Many Buddhist teachers, such as Chatral Rinpoche (who I discuss shortly), promote a strict vegetarian diet and countless Buddhists throughout Asia engage in practices of freeing animals from captivity. Buddhist teachings serve as a rallying cry and inspiration for millions to commit to ending violence against animals.

Less familiar are monastic practices of embodied transformation that directly target ethical sensibility. Buddhist monasticism is designed to bring about a fundamental change in one's embodied state. This takes place through the deliberate cultivation of perceptual and affective habits that alter the practitioner's relationship to him- or herself and the world. The goal is for ethical action to become habitual embodied response, what is called *śīla* in Sanskrit. *Śīla*, often translated as *morality* or *precept*, is what I describe as ethical sensibility.

Discussions of *śīla* often focus on the Five Precepts (*pañca-śīla*), which are vows of restraint that all observant Buddhists, lay and monastic alike, take on as a regular practice.¹³ Buddhists vow to not kill, steal, lie, engage in sexual

misconduct, or take intoxicating substances. The Five Precepts are a commitment to engage in ethical (*kuśala*) actions and avoid unethical (*akuśala*) actions whenever possible. The precepts are meant to inspire a progressive dedication to an ethical life rather than be seen as strict rules whose transgression will provoke guilt or punishment. As Peter Harvey explains, “Buddhism emphasizes a forward-looking morality of always seeking to do better in the future: taking the precepts as ideals to live up to in an increasingly complete way.”¹⁴ The teachings surrounding vows of restraint often appeal to moral reasoning to motivate compliance. To encourage a commitment against killing animals, for example, teachings emphasize the fact that, within the vast cycle of rebirth, oneself and one’s dearest family members have been and will become animals, so one should have compassion for animals.¹⁵ There are also warnings about the negative consequences (“bad karma”) that will accrue to one who engages in unethical actions.

There are other forms of *śīla*, often restricted to monastic practitioners, that work more directly on embodied transformation. These monastic practices do not function on the same model of restraining intentional action through appeals to moral reason. They aim instead to eliminate the underlying *roots of unethical conduct* (*akuśala-mūla*). Let’s again take up the case of killing an animal. According to the first precept, one should refrain from acts of killing. So an observant Buddhist may choose to refrain from hunting or eating meat because it involves killing. The capacity to kill is still there, but one intentionally restrains that capability.¹⁶ The type of transformation envisioned in monastic practice goes beyond this. It involves the elimination of the very capability to engage in unethical actions, such that there is, essentially, no choice.¹⁷ This takes place through the complete elimination of what are called the *defilements of mind*: greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dveṣa*), and delusion (*moha*). These are the roots of unethical conduct (*akuśala-mūla*) that produce the capability and intention to engage in unethical practices. When these defilements have been eliminated, not only is the intention to commit unethical actions eliminated, but so is the capability. So it is not a choice to follow a rule or progressively live up to an ideal but rather a change in one’s very state of being. One simply does not desire to kill animals or eat meat; there is nothing to restrain. Through this transformation, the disgust and fear reactions mentioned earlier in relation to pests and wild animals that lead to actions of killing are eliminated from the body.¹⁸

Because all humans are fundamentally conditioned by the defilements of mind, social change will never be fully successful without personal change. Nyanaponika Thera, a Buddhist monk well known for popularizing mindfulness meditation in the West, states this point in his classic book *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*:

To a thoughtful mind, more gripping and heart-rending than all the numerous single facts of suffering produced by recent history, is the uncanny and tragic monotony of behavior that prompts mankind [*sic*] to prepare again for a new bout of that ravaging madness called war. The same old mechanism is at work again: the interaction of greed and fear. . . . But men [*sic*] still bungle only with the symptoms of their malady, remaining blind to the source of the illness which is no other than the three strong Roots of Everything Evil (*akuśala-mūla*) pointed out by the Buddha: greed, hatred, and delusion.¹⁹

According to Nyanaponika Thera, human societies will constantly be beset by wars until the true cause of violence is addressed: the defilements of the mind that are the roots of unethical conduct. While rules of restraint—whether we are speaking about personal vows or international conventions—may offer temporary relief from the symptoms, they are not a cure for the disease.

Imagine we lived in an absolute authoritarian state and the consumption of animals was completely banned. By itself, this would do little to eliminate the desire to eat meat. Ricard cites a study of Australians in which 73 percent of respondents stated that, regardless of any moral arguments, they would continue to eat meat because they liked to eat it.²⁰ History provides ample examples of the failures of blanket prohibitions on desired goods to eliminate the demand for those goods, such as alcohol, drugs, and sex. While they can certainly be a part of the solution, prohibitions and restraint do nothing to address desire, and desire is powerful.

To eliminate the killing and consumption of animals, there needs to be a fundamental change in bodily desire. Arguments based on ethical thought and ideology will only persuade some and truly transform even fewer. Ricard quotes Martin Gibert, a French philosopher and promoter of vegetarianism, as stating that he has become a vegan due to moral arguments, but nevertheless, he says, “I like meat. . . . I also like the feel of leather and fur.”²¹ Moral persuasion is a good first step but hardly a solution because most people cannot or do not want to restrain their desires. This disconnect between external adherence to a norm and internal disposition is why monasticism was invented in the first place. Monasticism aims not simply to convince the reasoning mind but to change the desiring body.

Is it possible to imagine such a transformation on a wide scale, one large enough to shift entire societies from consuming meat and animal products? Social change does not come easily and structural factors above and beyond individual effort certainly play a crucial role in determining its success or failure. All I can say is that desire has a history and that history shows that desires do change over time. Capitalist markets create desires where there were none. Concerted social action against desires, such as against smoking cigarettes, has proven effective, at least partially. Can we change societal

desires for eating meat and animal products? We can if we recognize that these desires are not inevitable and that they have a history, even if they are rooted in our bodies. Indeed, it is precisely their rootedness in the body that makes transformations in ethical sensibility so important.

EXPANDING AWARENESS OF ANIMAL DEATH

One way to bring about this bodily change is through the deliberate cultivation of specific affective and emotional states. Two mechanisms by which this can take place are literature and meditation. I will take each in turn. Literature and poetry are forms of language that elicit emotional reactions that affect a person's relationship to the world. Martha Nussbaum, in her book *Love's Knowledge*, states,

Emotions, unlike many of our beliefs, are not taught to us directly through propositional claims about the world, either abstract or concrete. They are taught, above all, through stories. Stories express their structure and teach us their dynamics. These stories are constructed by others and, then, taught and learned. But once internalized, they shape the way life feels and looks.²²

By working on the emotions, literature offers a mechanism to shape feeling and cultivate an ethical sensibility.

In the Sanskrit literary traditions of South Asia, the emotional response elicited by a piece of literature is called *rasa*.²³ There are several types of *rasa*. Love poetry, for instance, is meant to elicit a romantic or erotic mood (*śṛṅgāra-rasa*). Other moods are the comic, the fearful, the terrible, and the disgusting. Monastic traditions use literature and its capability to “shape the way life feels” by cultivating embodied dispositions that tend toward the elimination of greed, hatred, and delusion. Take, for instance, depictions of hell. The following passages are from a Sanskrit Buddhist text called the *Mahāvastu* that describes the tortures inflicted on those reborn in hell.²⁴

In the hell known as Sañjīva, beings are hung upside down by their feet and flayed with axes and knives.

...

[In the hell known as Kālasūtra,] billows of blinding smoke are all around, acrid, burning and terrifying. The smoke pierces through skin, flesh, sinew and bone, and penetrates down to the very marrow. The body becomes numb and exhausted. . . . Afflicted in this way, beings there suffer agonies beyond measure.

...

[In the hell known as Saṅghāta,] mountains rise up into the air and beings there pass underneath. When many thousands of beings are under the mountain, it falls down upon them, crushing them like sugar-cane, and their blood flows in streams. They are rendered down to their bones, their flesh removed, but held together by their sinews. Afflicted in this way, beings there suffer agonies [beyond measure].

...

For five hundred years these beings, nothing but heaps of bones, are burned in blazing pots of molten iron and crushed by red-hot flaming pestles of iron. Afflicted in this way, beings there suffer agonies [beyond measure].

...

[In the hell known as Tapana,] beings are impaled and roasted over fire, some on one-pronged spits, others on two-pronged spits, others on multipronged spits. When one side has been roasted, the other side is exposed to the fire. . . . Afflicted in this way, beings there suffer agonies beyond measure.²⁵

These lines describe, in graphic language, different areas of hell and their tortures. The bodies of the inhabitants of hell experience unremitting pain and suffering. Their bodies are mutilated, crushed, burned, and reduced to bone, and they continuously feel intense agonies.

Hell is one of the destinations of rebirth depicted in the Wheel of Life. Poetic descriptions like this are meant to bring the practitioner to an awareness of this destination, but in a way that is combined with an emotional mood of salutary fear and horror. The descriptions bring sharp awareness of bodily pain and suffering. All of this is designed to induce an ethical transformation. At the end of each description, Maudgalyāyana, the monk narrating these scenes, implores his audience to “find out the truth, realize it, wake up to it, wake up to it fully and completely, do what is right, do what is pure, and commit no evil deeds in this world!”²⁶ In this exhortation, there is a close connection between waking up to the truth—the truth of Death, the cycles of rebirth, and the pervasiveness of bodily suffering—and cultivating an ethical subjectivity that pursues ethical conduct (*kuśala*) and a pure life (*brahmacarya*). The latter stands for that (monastic) form of life that is bereft of the defilements. More than a cognitive realization about how the world works, engaging with this type of poetry has the power to “shape the way life feels and looks.”

The ethical transformation intended in the *Mahāvastu* is explicitly the elimination of violence against living creatures. All the hellish tortures are punishments meted out to those who engage in such violence. This demonstrates the cosmic mechanism of karmic retribution: as you reap, so shall you

sow. The first torture—in which the body of the sufferer is hung upside down and flayed—is punishment for those who slaughter and butcher animals in the same manner. The second is punishment for those who smoke out the dens of animals, such as snakes and rats, to kill them. The third is punishment for those who crush worms by digging the earth or crush lice and fleas that live on their bodies. The fourth is punishment for those who kill and mutilate living creatures with daggers, bludgeons, and other cruel instruments. The last is punishment for those who impale sheep on a spit for roasting.

The importance for us, in the contemporary world, of these hellish scenes is not to appropriate a moral universe in which certain actions in this world are punished by tortures in hell. It is, as I quoted from Orsi in the introduction, “to make one’s own self-conceptions vulnerable to the radically destabilizing possibilities of genuine encounter with an unfamiliar way of life.”²⁷ I intentionally wrote my recollections as a butcher in graphic language to mimic the literary effect of the *Mahāvastu* in an attempt to unmask the presence of Death that lies hidden within “cuts of meat.” Can we, in the words of the *Mahāvastu*, wake up to a truth that is normally obscured from us? How would that take place?

The process of ethical transformation envisioned here is one in which daily violence against animals is starkly revealed and felt by the human audience. The felt reaction is not one of compassion. Compassion is asymmetrical. When a human feels compassion toward a suffering animal, they are in the position of an observer over the observed, a being who does not feel pain watching one who does. This plays into the common narrative that animals are helpless victims that require salvation at the hands of powerful humans. Although compassion toward animals is laudable, it reproduces inequalities of power between animals and humans that are the very conditions of animal enslavement. The binaries of observer-observed, active-passive reify the ontological boundaries between human and nonhuman animals. The animal becomes an object of pity and the human can choose, or not, to extend their hand in help. In effect, compassion preserves the ability of humans to choose no.

What literature like the *Mahāvastu* can accomplish is an exercise in exchanging one’s own body with the body of an animal and feeling the violence that is inflicted on that body *as one’s own body*. By traveling along a literary landscape of suffering—and the sympathetic juxtaposition of tortured human and animal bodies—the reader is exposed to the reality of violence against animals and made to feel, imaginatively, the pain and terror of animal death in a mood of horror. This imaginative exchange of bodies, if done habitually, cultivates an ethical relationship between human and nonhuman bodies that dissolves the ontological distinctions between them.²⁸ The fluid creaturely feeling that develops forms the basis for an internalized ethical disposition

toward nonviolence that does not depend on a power difference between humans and animals and does not have to wait for the human to develop a faculty of compassion.²⁹ The same horror that one would feel at one's own head being crushed, or crushing the head of a human child or a beloved pet, one feels toward crushing a mosquito.

MEDITATION ON DEAD BODIES

The imaginative practices outlined earlier can be productively combined with the observation of dead animals in real life. Monastics not only imagine dead and dying bodies but also meditate upon actual dead bodies. This is a powerful form of ethical cultivation that leads to the elimination of desire. Khantipālo, a Theravāda Buddhist monk and author, describes an encounter with a dead human body:

It is a salutary lesson, if one gets the chance, to go to an autopsy and watch the doctors and nurses pulling a body to pieces. One's eyes are not prepared for this sight even if one has watched a butcher chopping up meat. And one's nose can well be assaulted too by the overpowering stench of decay if the corpse is just a few days old. To see this is to experience for oneself some Dhamma: how the body is just conditioned and decaying bits and pieces. "As this body is, so that body was; as that body is, so this body will be."³⁰

The metaphorical allusion to butchering animals again juxtaposes human and animal mutilation. The graphic language is no doubt intentional: "pulling a body to pieces," "overpowering stench of decay." The scene of an autopsy is construed here as something horrifying, an "assault" to the senses. But as with the scenes of hell examined earlier, witnessing the scene of bodily death and butchering is salutary; it allows one to "experience for oneself some Dhamma." The Pali word *dhamma* (Sanskrit *dharma*) signifies the Buddha's teachings about the truth of reality. It is, as before, an unmasking of Death combined with an emotional mood that forms an ethical sensibility. Really seeing a dead body, not only with the eyes but with the full awareness of being embodied oneself, is a shocking experience.³¹ It is bitter medicine to counteract what Khantipālo calls the "disease" of desire.³²

Meditation on dead bodies is part of one of the most popular Buddhist practices in the world today: mindfulness meditation. A substantial section of the seminal *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (the *locus classicus* for mindfulness meditation) is devoted to meditation on dead bodies.³³ The basic practice is for the practitioner to sit in front of the dead body and bring present moment awareness to it. The practitioner compares his or her own body to the dead body

with the thought: “This body is of the same nature, it will become like that, it is not exempt from that fate.”³⁴ This same line (translated differently) is given at the end of the block quote from Khantipālo above: “As this body is, so that body was; as that body is, so this body will be.” This awareness—that all bodies share in common the fact of being in the grip of Death—is what provides the transformational force of this practice.

The identification between the dead body and the meditator’s body dissolves the ontological boundary between the living and the dead. This moves us in the direction of understanding meditation as a form of feeling death as a presence in one’s own body. The realization of nondifference between the living and the dead is facilitated by recognition of bodily similarity. The dead body is *like* the meditator’s body. This raises a crucial question when extending these practices to animal bodies: Is such an identification possible when meditating on the body of a dead animal? That is, can the sight of dead animal bodies produce the same effect of unmasking Death and eliminating desire?

In Buddhaghosa’s *Visuddhimagga*—an authoritative manual for monastic practice written in fifth-century Sri Lanka but still very much current today—there are ten types of dead bodies to take as meditation objects: the bloated, the livid, the festering, the cut up, the gnawed, the scattered, the hacked and scattered, the bleeding, the worm infested, and the skeleton.³⁵ The only mention of animal bodies is under worm infested. There Buddhaghosa says that any worm-infested body will work as a meditation object, “whether the body is that of a dog, a jackal, a human being, an ox, a buffalo, an elephant, a horse, a python, or what you will.”³⁶ So the use of animal bodies in this type of meditation is not only possible but authorized by one of the most important texts in the Theravāda monastic tradition.

Nevertheless, the paucity of examples of meditating on dead animals in monastic literature raises an important point about perception and recognition. As argued earlier, the way in which dead bodies are perceived as certain types of bodies (pest versus pet, for example) is the basis upon which humans act ethically (or not) toward them. Take the following situation: I see a body on the street, crushed by a car, oozing blood and guts. What is my reaction? An answer cannot be given until the question is answered: “What kind of body?” If it is a human body (“us”), there is one reaction.³⁷ If it is an animal body (“them”), there is another. If it is the body of a pet dog (“ours”), a third reaction. In all cases, the ethical response to the dead body depends on its recognition as a certain type of body and that type’s relation to the human.

In the case of the “human” and the “pet,” there is a felt sense of tragedy and loss in the recognition of the dead body. “One of us,” “one of ours” has been killed. The body will be taken off the street and given appropriate care. Not so for the animal body. The two robins smashed on the street of my daily

jogging route are still there weeks later. The dead squirrel in the grass is left to the vagaries of neighborhood scavengers. Occasionally a resident will post on my neighborhood Facebook group that a dead animal body needs to be “thrown away.” Animal bodies are a nuisance; they are trash.³⁸ Did I pick up these bodies and grieve their death? Did I intervene in these acts of casual violence? No, I did not. I am again confronted with my own habituation to animal death and lack of feeling, an experience that Matthew Calarco helpfully addresses in chapter 6 of this collection, where he offers suggestions to encounter “roadkill” animals anew. In my own limitations, I am again reminded, to paraphrase the monk Maudgalyāyana from the *Mahāvastu*, that I need to wake up to the presence of Death.

Normative barriers between “us” and “them” condition ethical sensibility or lack thereof. For change to take place, the boundaries between human and animal must be broken down. This is something that animal studies and other forms of critical theory have acknowledged and worked toward for decades. My suggestion is that meditation on dead bodies does this work of dissolving and reworking ontologies and normative boundaries. What if we saw a dead animal on the street and, instead of ignoring it or considering it a nuisance, took it up as an object of meditation, thinking to oneself, in Khantipālo’s words, “As this body is, so that body was; as that body is, so this body will be.” Would I then grieve, as I grieve the loss of human life?

Mindfulness meditation is now a widespread and popular practice. Although it is often used to further capitalist and self-serving ends, in Buddhist traditions it is aimed at eliminating desire.³⁹ It can still be put to that use through bringing awareness and feeling to animal death. This suggests a practice whereby the meat aisle of the grocery store could become as shocking as the autopsy theater. The ubiquity of animal death could itself provide the means by which desire, and thereby violence against animals, is eliminated. We just have to learn to see bodies differently.

FEELING ANIMAL DEATH IN A SICK BODY

My encounter with Buddhist traditions over many years made me see bodies differently, and it led to many changes in my life. I started to eat and prefer a vegetarian diet, and I attempted to change the practices in my life that contributed to violence against animals, such as capturing and releasing insects I found in my house rather than killing them, and learning to share space with them. I wondered why I ever felt the need to kill them in the first place.

My progress and ethical commitments were challenged several years ago when I was diagnosed with a series of chronic illnesses, most seriously Type

I diabetes. My chronic illness required that I substantially change my diet and eating habits. Still, I kept trying to eat a vegetarian and then vegan diet. That changed when I was diagnosed with celiac disease, a gluten allergy that again required me to change my diet. At the time, I was trying to eat a strictly vegan diet. But I was getting increasingly sicker and weaker. Eventually, I began eating meat and dairy again, and I got better. This series of events led me to a renewed reflection on the body and its relationship to the world. Through my contact with the chronic illness community, I learned that many people with chronic illness must consume meat, dairy, or other animal products to stay alive. This drew my attention to the specter of ableism in debates surrounding vegetarianism and veganism. Ableism is the lack of awareness of or discrimination against people with disabilities. In ethical discussions of vegetarianism/veganism, there is often the presumption of an able body, one capable of sustaining life without the consumption or use of animal products. What happens when that capability is taken out of the equation, when some bodies lack the ability to make a choice about what to eat or what medicines to consume? Does this threaten to unravel all the arguments about ethical sensibility I have made thus far?

Type 1 diabetes is caused by the inability of the pancreas to make insulin, a hormone that is needed to process sugars in the blood. Before the discovery of insulin, “diabetes was uniformly fatal within weeks to months after its diagnosis.”⁴⁰ Although treatable, it is a terminal illness in the sense that without daily injections of insulin a person with Type 1 diabetes will die. The research that led to the discovery of insulin—research that resulted in several Nobel Prizes—involved brutal experimentation on dogs whose pancreases were removed and who were observed as they died.⁴¹ For five decades, from the 1920s to 1978, all insulin used to treat diabetic patients was harvested from the pancreases of slaughtered animals, predominantly pigs and cattle, and animal-derived insulin remains on the market today. In 1978, Eli Lilly developed Humulin, a form of biosynthetic human insulin produced by *E. coli* bacteria. Although the majority of insulin taken today is no longer produced by mammalian bodies with sympathetic faces, exploitable nonhuman bodies—in the form of bacteria—still make the product that keeps diabetics alive.⁴² Drugs used to keep other chronically ill bodies alive also involve violent experimentation on animals or, at the very least, support companies that are actively involved in such practices. In short, my life and the lives of other chronically ill people depend on the exploitation and death of animals. Where does this leave the chronically ill body? How do I reconcile the story I have told thus far in this chapter—that coming to feel animal death can lead to an ethical sensibility that renders one incapable of violence—with the structural need for violence in order for some bodies to remain alive? In my pursuit of

this question, I again turned to Buddhist monasticism with an open mind, hoping I might come to see things differently.

The monastic community is also an ableist community. To engage in monastic practice requires a healthy body and the chronically ill and disabled are barred from ordination.⁴³ In the previous section, I discussed meditation on dead bodies in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, the canonical text that teaches mindfulness meditation. I argued that mindful meditation on dead animal bodies could lead to an ethical sensibility of reduced desire and nonviolence. In the contemporary world, mindfulness meditation is being taught to everyone, including the chronically ill.⁴⁴ However, that is not true of mindfulness meditation historically.⁴⁵ Prior to the twentieth century, mindfulness meditation was only practiced by an elite minority of monastics. In the Theravāda commentary to the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, the author asks rhetorically why the Buddha restricted this teaching to a select group of monastics. This is an important hermeneutical consideration. If mindfulness meditation is, as the teaching states, the sole way to enlightenment, then why didn't the Buddha teach everyone? The commentator answers that those select monks were healthy and able: "The inhabitants of the Kuru country . . . by reason of their country being blessed with a perfect climate, and through their enjoyment of other comfortable conditions, were always healthy in body and in mind. They, happy with healthy minds and bodies, and having the power of knowledge, were capable of receiving deep teachings."⁴⁶ The commentator then explains what the sentence "With a perfect climate . . . comfortable conditions" means: "This includes such items as wholesome food and drink essential for maintaining mind and body unimpaired."⁴⁷ "Healthy," "capable," "unimpaired"—these words show an ableist norm. The key point is that the ability to engage in meditation requires a healthy mind-body, and a healthy mind-body requires the consumption of certain types of food and drink.

Does this include meat? There are different answers to this question. For many it does not. Chatral Rinpoche, a Tibetan Buddhist monk who is well known for his dedication to vegetarianism, states, "From my experience, not eating meat has many benefits. I'm eighty-eight and ever since I stopped eating meat, I haven't had any major sickness."⁴⁸ He continues, "many other renowned adepts have condemned meat as a poisonous food."⁴⁹ Again, this comment demonstrates an implicit ableist norm. Chatral Rinpoche and other adepts do not need meat to stay healthy and can therefore choose to *not* eat meat. He goes even further in another comment, stating, "even if death should follow from engaging in the Dharma practice of abstaining from meat . . . then it is worth it."⁵⁰ Chatral Rinpoche does back off from this hardline position elsewhere, stating that if death were to result from a restrictive diet,

then this would be a form of suicide and a waste of a precious human life.⁵¹ However, the force of the prior stance still stands.

Within the monastic community and other communities dedicated to vegetarian and vegan diets, there is a norming of the healthy body as not only desirable but also ethical. Purity in food consumption and control of diet are highly valued and sometimes enforced through shaming, both on one's own body and the bodies of others. Sickness, especially if it leads to nonvegan or nonvegetarian diets, is construed as a moral failing. Longtime vegan advocates Carol Adams, Patti Breitman, and Ginny Messina reflect on this dilemma in their book *Even Vegans Die*:

People come to veganism for many different reasons. But regardless of those reasons, many end up with a misguided faith in the ability of a vegan diet to keep them healthy. Too often, vegans view illness, and especially terminal illness, as a personal failure. We feel shame about falling ill ourselves, and may participate in blame when other vegans become sick. . . . Some vegans get cancer and diabetes. Some vegans have heart attacks. When we fail to recognize this, we risk alienating people from our vegan community. We miss the opportunity to provide care and support.⁵²

The vegan community and the monastic community envisioned by Chatral Rinpoche seem to have in common the norming of the ethical body as one that doesn't consume animal products and doesn't get sick. The connection between a vegetarian/vegan diet and health is such a key part of identity that the unhealthy body risks falling outside the bounds of the ethical community, all the more so when the consumption of animal products is necessary to keep it alive. The chronically ill are thus placed in a double bind: to stay alive many need to consume products that cause or contribute to animal death, and their lack of a healthy body threatens to marginalize them within vegetarian/vegan communities. Again I return to the question (perhaps I always will): Where does this leave the sick body?

Monastics, like all humans, get sick and become chronically ill. The Dalai Lama, head of the dGelugs pa monastic order of Tibetan Buddhism, is a prominent example.⁵³ He has hepatitis B and his doctors insist that he eat meat regularly to maintain his health. He stated the following in a 2010 interview:

20 months I remained strict vegetarian. At that time I took advice from some of my Indian friends about the substitutes of meat. Lot of milk, cream and . . . then in '67 I developed gall bladder, hepatitis. So my whole body became yellow. So at that time I become like living Buddha. Whole body yellow. Nails also yellow. It remained I think for about 3 weeks. So Tibetan physician, as well as allopathic physician advised me to take meat. So back to original diet.⁵⁴

Although the Dalai Lama states that he returned to his “original diet,” there has been a change in the way meat is perceived. Whether or not to eat meat is no longer a free choice. Meat is now medicine taken to stay alive.

Ideally, a monastic does not choose what they eat in the first place. They beg for food and eat whatever is placed in their bowl. But when it comes to medicine, a monastic may consume certain foods intentionally and even ask for them in order to become or stay healthy. In the Buddhist monastic code, which records all the rules that monks and nuns must follow in their daily lives, there is a long section on allowable medicines. Because these monastic codes developed well before the pharmaceutical revolution of modern times, most of these medicines are what modern societies would categorize as food items. Five basic medicines are allowed as a baseline: clarified butter, fresh butter, oil, honey, and molasses.⁵⁵ Butter and honey are animal products that require the exploitation of animal bodies. They are also foods that taste good and that may be the object of desire. The rendering of these foods as medicine—taken to maintain the life of the body rather than because they taste good—is one way in which their consumption can become compatible with practices that counteract desire.⁵⁶

The monastic code allows other medicines that require the outright killing of animals, a situation that is normally forbidden. Tallows—a substance derived from animal fat—can be used as medicine.⁵⁷ Five animals—bear, fish, alligator, pig, and donkey—are specified as allowable sources of tallow, but the commentary then explains that tallow from any creature is allowable as medicine, except from humans.⁵⁸ The prohibition of human tallow is one example of a pervasive distinction made in the medicine section of the monastic code between human bodies and animal bodies. In one story, a sick monk receives medicinal broth made from human flesh and the Buddha explicitly disallows the consumption of human flesh as medicine. Animal bodies are killable and exploitable for medicinal purposes; human bodies are not. In the case of “nonhuman afflictions”—such as possession by a malignant spirit—the monastic code even allows the consumption of raw flesh and blood procured intentionally and directly from a butcher.⁵⁹ There are a few more examples, but these suffice to show the attitude toward consuming animal bodies and products in the monastic code: the sick are allowed these foods as forms of medicine to enable them to maintain the capacity to be monastics and engage in practice. And here we see the ethical tension: to engage in practices that will lead to a reduction in animal death, such as mindfulness meditation, one must sometimes exploit and consume animals. A strict prohibitory rule cannot adequately govern these situations. One must proceed with an ethical sensibility that can respond skillfully to variable bodies to prevent exclusion and alienation.

The perception of food as medicine entails a fundamental shift in one's disposition toward the consumption of animal products. One does not consume these products because one desires them but rather only to maintain the health of the mind-body. I do not desire insulin, but I need insulin to stay healthy and I recognize that the manufacture of insulin contributes to violence against animals. The question of meat is more complicated, and it is still unclear to me how to adjudicate this question. When is "need" a real need? The Dalai Lama's doctors tell him he "needs" to eat meat, and I have had conversations with chronically ill people who likewise make this claim. Could these people substitute plant-based meats in their diets, much like I can potentially switch to fully synthetic insulins that are just now coming to market? Will technology render these ethical dilemmas obsolete? I do not have answers to those questions, but I do know that an awareness of meat as medicine can shift one's bodily disposition toward it in a way that does not necessarily contradict my earlier arguments about eliminating the desire to consume meat.

In my conversations with chronically ill people who need to eat meat—many of whom are former vegetarians/vegans—I was told that their consumption of meat is done only when necessary and in limited quantities, much like one would take a specific dosage of medicine. They also take pains to ensure that the meat is produced as humanely as possible, and some carry out small rituals to acknowledge the loss of animal life.⁶⁰ In this there is a keen awareness of animal death and its role in supporting human life. Unlike the casual shopper at the meat market, the presence of Death is clear.

In my own journey of ethical transformation within a sick body, I am still struggling to find a diet that works. I still eat meat and dairy because it is easier to maintain my weight and energy and face the demands of ever-increasing productivity in a capitalist society. What my experience with chronic illness and Buddhist monasticism has taught me is to be humble but also hopeful. Change is hard but not impossible. I can see Death now, I know its tricks and how desires move me to fall, often willingly, into its grasp. When I buy animal products at the store, I can feel Death in a way that was totally absent when I was a purveyor of those products at the local meat market. That is certainly no consolation to the millions of animals who were violently exploited and killed as I typed out this chapter in my comfortable apartment, and the millions more who will be dead by the time you read it. So I am still trapped. I am still not fully awake.

What I have come to see starkly is the violence inherent in everyday existence. That is, the fact that *life is suffering*, the first Noble Truth of the Buddha's teachings. Maintenance of one's own body—whether sick or healthy, abled or disabled—will always involve violence toward the bodies of others. Ethics is never a free and unencumbered choice. My hair, my skin, my

gut—these are the habitats of countless living creatures. I kill them every day. Death and violence are inescapable. We are all trapped in the Wheel of Life. There are only more or less skillful ways to live, not perfect ones.⁶¹

We may not be able to eliminate violence in the near term, but through skillful living in awareness of Death we can reduce it. There is an important concept in the ethics of care called *harm reduction*. Harm reduction is an ethical stance that seeks to reduce the social, psychological, and physical harms associated with negative behaviors without stigmatizing or criminalizing those behaviors. It is often associated with public policies toward drug use and users. If the consumption of animal products is, as I argued here, akin to an addiction (a strong desire firmly rooted in the body), then we should approach it with an ethics of harm reduction. This means skillfully helping ourselves and others to move away from animal products using a diverse set of tools, from literature to meditation, with an attitude of care. Buddhist monastic practices have helped me develop an ethical sensibility of care and harm reduction. They can help us to wake up to the daily presence of violence, to perceive the manifold roles of Death in the social world, and to be mindful of one's own role in that violence. Buddhist practices are not utopian; they do not seek to redeem the world. But they can teach us how to live more skillfully within it, responding to situations with an ethical sensibility rooted in feeling animal death.

NOTES

1. Māra is traditionally gendered male, but in this chapter I chose to use “it” pronouns. Māra appears both as an anthropomorphized figure and in abstract, conceptual form, as those factors of existence that trap humans in the cycle of rebirth. See T. Ling, *Buddhism and the Mythology of Evil: A Study in Theravāda Buddhism* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1962) and Michael David Nichols, “Malleable Mara: Buddhism’s ‘Evil One’ in Conversation and Contestation with Vedic Religion, Brahmanism, and Hinduism” (PhD dissertation, Northwestern University, 2010).

2. For the history and development of the Wheel of Life, see Stephen F. Teiser, *Reinventing the Wheel: Paintings of Rebirth in Medieval Buddhist Temples* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006).

3. The figures outside the Wheel of Life (on the upper right and left) are awakened Buddhas, helping those inside the cycle of rebirth to find their way out.

4. Robert Anthony Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 198, 202.

5. Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth*, 202.

6. Philosopher Michael Marder explores the cultural construction of “meat” in “Meat without Flesh,” in *The Future of Meat without Animals*, ed. Brianne Donaldson and Christopher Carter (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2016), 101–10.

7. Matthieu Ricard, *A Plea for the Animals*, trans. Sherab Chödzin Kohn (Boulder, CO: Shambala, 2016), 93.

8. Kari Weil, *Thinking Animals: Why Animal Studies Now?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012); Matthew Calarco, *Zoographies: The Question of the Animal from Heidegger to Derrida* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

9. See Carol J. Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015).

10. The connection among class, race, and the consumption of meat is explored in Julia Feliz Brueck, *Veganism in an Oppressive World: A Vegans-of-Color Community Project* (Sanctuary Publishers, 2017) and A. Breeze Harper, *Sistah Vegan: Black Female Vegans Speak on Food, Identity, Health, and Society* (New York: Lantern Books, 2010). The global dimensions of the meat industry are the subject of Tony Weis, *The Ecological Hoofprint: The Global Burden of Industrial Livestock* (New York: Zed Books, 2014).

11. I have in mind here the theory of subject formation—termed “subjection”—proposed by Judith Butler, following Foucault and Bourdieu, that sees subjectivity as the product of a complex interplay of social and cultural forces (what Foucault calls discursive regimes) that cannot be reduced to reason or ideology and that play a key role in materializing the body with a certain set of desires and orientations toward the world. See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

12. The Dalai Lama was the recipient of the 1989 Noble Peace Prize for his promotion of nonviolence to end global conflicts, including in his native Tibet. Thich Nhat Hahn was nominated for the Noble Peace Prize in 1967 by Martin Luther King Jr. for his tireless advocacy for peace during the Vietnam War. Both continue to be active voices for peace and nonviolence up to the present day.

13. For an accessible, detailed discussion of the five precepts, along with references to further reading, see Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History, and Practices*, second edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

14. Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism*, 270.

15. Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism*, 266. See also, as a preeminent example of a primary text that uses the fact of rebirth as a form of moral persuasion, Śāntideva’s *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, trans. Kate Crosby and Andrew Skilton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

16. Harvey notes that “most lay Buddhists have been prepared to break the first precept in self-defense, though, and many have helped defend the community” (*An Introduction to Buddhism*, 272).

17. The role of choice in discussions and theories of ethics is complex, and this chapter only begins to touch on the deeper philosophical issues. For a particularly insightful discussion of how ethics can be the elimination of choice, see Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *Getting It Right: Language, Literature, and Ethics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

18. Disgust and fear are primary manifestations of hatred, which produces an aversion response in the mind-body that often leads to actions of killing.

19. Nyanaponika Thera, *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation* (York Beach, ME: Weiser Books, 2014), 3–4.

20. Ricard, *A Plea for the Animals*, 270.

21. Ricard, *A Plea for the Animals*, 270.

22. Martha C. Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 287.

23. The *rasas* are first discussed at length in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, a Sanskrit treatise on dramaturgy, in relation to staging a successful play. There they are discussed as the feeling evoked by the actors, not the feelings felt by the audience. See Adya Rangacharya, *The Nāṭyaśāstra: English Translation with Critical Notes* (New Delhi: Munishiram Manoharlal Publishers, 2010). *Rasa* becomes a key concept in philosophical discussions of religion and religious practice in Kashmir from the eighth to the twelfth centuries, culminating in the classic treatment of *rasa* as a form of religious feeling in Abhinavagupta's *Dhvanyāloka Locana*, a commentary on an earlier work by Ānandavardhana. There *rasa* is the mood to be felt by the audience/reader of poetry, and some of those moods—especially *śānta rasa* or “the mood of quiescence”—were thought to have soteriological efficacy. See Daniel Henry Holmes Ingalls, Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson, and M. V. Patwardhan, *The Dhvanyāloka of Ānandavardhana with the Locana of Abhinavagupta*, Harvard Oriental Series; 49 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).

24. Hell is not an afterlife in the Christian sense. It is a separate realm into which one can be reborn, just as one could be reborn as a human or animal or god. Rather than an *afterlife*, it is just a possible next life.

25. Author's translation. For the original Sanskrit, see Émile Senart, ed., *Le Mahāvastu; Texte Sanscrit Publié Pour La Première Fois et Accompagné d'introductions et d'un Commentaire Par É. Senart*, volume 1 (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1882), 11–25. For an alternative English translation, see J. J. Jones, trans., *The Mahavastu*, volume 1 (London: Luzac and Company, 1949), 10–18.

26. *tasmāi jñātavyaṃ prāptavyaṃ boddhavyaṃ abhisamboddhavyaṃ kartavyaṃ kuśalaṃ kartavyaṃ brahmacaryaṃ na ca vā loke kiñcit pāpaṃ karma karaṇīyaṃ ti vademi*. Senart, *Le Mahāvastu*, 8.

27. Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth*, 202.

28. The imaginative practice of exchanging oneself with another is most famously treated by the monk Śāntideva in his *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. Śāntideva only considers other humans, but the practice could, as I argue here, be extended to nonhuman bodies. See Kate Crosby and Andrew Skilton, trans., *The Bodhisattvacharyāvatāra* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

29. Martha Nussbaum has forcefully made an argument for an approach toward the ethical treatment of animals and the disabled that does not place them in a subordinated position—as a recipient of compassion and charity—as a condition for their equitable treatment. See Martha C. Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006).

30. Bhikkhu Khantipālo, *Bag of Bones: A Miscellany on the Body* (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1980), 71.

31. In Pali and Sanskrit, the term *samvega* is often used to describe this experience; it means “existential shock.”

32. Khantipālo, *Bag of Bones*, 5, 8.

33. For a recent translation, see Bhikkhu Bodhi, trans., *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Dīgha Nikāya* (Boston: Wisdom, 1995), 335–50.

34. Bodhi, *The Long Discourses of the Buddha*, 338.

35. Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, trans., *The Path of Purification: Visuddhimagga* (Seattle, WA: BPE Pariyatti Editions, 1999), 173.

36. Ñāṇamoli, *The Path of Purification*, 185.

37. I bracket here the very important issue of which human bodies are included in the category of “us.” One could go further with this analysis and begin to break down how within the category of “human,” some humans are killable and some are not. For instance, in societies like America founded upon white supremacy, white bodies are “one of us,” whereas black, trans, queer, gay, disabled, etc. bodies are not valued; they are considered killable and their losses are not mourned.

38. The same point can be made about homeless bodies and bodies of people of color, which are also construed as a nuisance and require state intervention to “throw them away” into so-called correctional facilities or other segregated and policed spaces.

39. David L. McMahan, “How Meditation Works: Theorizing the Role of Cultural Context in Buddhist Contemplative Practices,” in *Meditation, Buddhism, and Science*, ed. David L. McMahan and Erik Braun (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 21–46.

40. Kenneth S. Polonsky, “The Past 200 Years in Diabetes,” *The New England Journal of Medicine* 367 (2012): 1332.

41. Celeste C. Quianzon and Issam Cheikh, “History of Insulin,” *Journal of Community Hospital Internal Medicine Perspectives* 2, no. 2 (January 1, 2012): 18701; Louis Rosenfeld, “Insulin: Discovery and Controversy,” *Clinical Chemistry* 48, no. 12 (December 1, 2002): 2270–88.

42. Bacteria are not considered to be “animals” by biologists because they lack a cellular nucleus. It may sound strange to some readers to even state that bacteria have a “body” that can be “exploited.” This reaction is precisely what I’m trying to bring to awareness in this chapter and denaturalize.

43. For some discussion of this in the context of critical theory, see Bee Scherer, “Buddhism and Disability: Toward a Socially Engaged Buddhist ‘Theology’ of Bodily Inclusiveness,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Universities* 9, no. 1 (2016): 26–35.

44. The foremost proponent of mindfulness meditation for the chronically ill is Jon Kabat-Zinn, but there is now a small cottage industry of producing such books. See Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness*, revised edition (New York: Bantam Books, 2013).

45. For a brief but comprehensive genealogy of mindfulness meditation, see Erik Braun and David McMahan, “Introduction—From Colonialism to Brainscans: Mod-

ern Transformations of Buddhist Meditation,” in *Meditation, Buddhism, and Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017). Braun’s more detailed study is Erik Braun, *The Birth of Insight: Meditation, Modern Buddhism, and the Burmese Monk Ledi Sayadaw* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

46. Soma Thera, *The Way of Mindfulness: The Satipatthana Sutta and Its Commentary*, BCBS ed. (Access to Insight, 2013), 35.

47. Thera, *The Way of Mindfulness*, 36.

48. Chatral Rinpoche, *Compassionate Action*, ed. Zach Larson (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 2007), 26.

49. Chatral Rinpoche, *Compassionate Action*, 35.

50. Chatral Rinpoche, *Compassionate Action*, 35.

51. Chatral Rinpoche, *Compassionate Action*, 27–28.

52. Carol J. Adams, Patti Breitman, and Virginia Messina, *Even Vegans Die: A Practical Guide to Caregiving, Acceptance, and Protecting Your Legacy of Compassion* (New York: Lantern Books, 2017), xv.

53. The dGelugs pa monastic order—the spelling is often simplified to Gelug pa—is one of several monastic orders that form Tibetan Buddhism. (The term “Tibetan” here primarily designates the language of the canonical texts, rather than the geographical location of these orders. The land mass that corresponds to the signifier “Tibet” has changed dramatically over the centuries.) The Dalai Lama is the head of Gelug pa monastic order and, historically, was the temporal leader of the kingdom of Tibet. He resigned the latter post on May 14, 2011. Chatral Rinpoche is a member of another monastic lineage, the Nyingma. To learn more about these lineages, see John Powers, *Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 2007), 355–496.

54. Dalai Lama, interview with Barkha Dhutt, *NDTV*, July 4, 2010, <https://www.dalailama.com/messages/transcripts-and-interviews/barkha-dutt-interview-part1>.

55. Isaline B. Horner, trans., *The Book of the Discipline*, volume 4: *Mahāvagga* (London: Luzac, 1962), 269–70.

56. This loophole can and is abused in order for monastics to eat these food items when they actually desire them.

57. Horner, *The Book of Discipline*, 270–71.

58. Horner, *The Book of Discipline*, 271 fn. 1.

59. Horner, *The Book of Discipline*, 274.

60. The people I spoke to in writing this chapter were white, middle-class Americans who had the means to make the choice to eat humanely sourced meat. Others do not have this luxury.

61. This is why escape from existence—known as *nirvāṇa*—is the only ultimate solution from the Buddhist perspective.

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