

## Temple Grandin and the Ethics of Humane Slaughter

Temple Grandin is well known both as a representative of autistic people and as an animal scientist. In the latter capacity she has designed a system of humane slaughter that is now widely used across the English-speaking world. In addition, Grandin has authored several bestselling books and over 200 peer-reviewed journal articles. In her writings Grandin frequently takes up the ethical status of animals, and makes arguments to the effect that when animals are killed in her system, the result is ethically superior not only to factory farming, but also to vegetarianism.

In terms of both her industrial impact and her international audience, Grandin is one of the most influential animal scientists and ethicists alive. Yet In spite of Grandin's prominence, moral philosophers have taken little interest in her work. This is surprising given that her slaughter system threatens to decouple a moral concern with animal suffering from the practice of eschewing meat, a link that has become something of an orthodoxy in the animal ethics literature. Grandin's widely-employed system is said to permit "eating meat with an easy conscience," as a newspaper headline puts it. If so then the arrival of the Grandin age raises the possibility that much of the normative literature regarding animals is out of date, as it assumes animal slaughter entails animal suffering—an assumption that Grandin's system potentially renders obsolete.

In this presentation I bring moral philosophy to bear on Grandin's work. I examine both Grandin's slaughter system and one of her justifications for it, a justification which defends humane slaughter within the framework of evolutionary theory. In addition, I examine the view that Grandin's system is the arrangement most in keeping with

the philosophy of Peter Singer, a suggestion that has been put forward by one of Singer's critics. When it comes to Grandin's system itself, I argue that animal ethicists should welcome it as an improvement over traditional slaughter. What they should reject however are Grandin's criticisms of meat-free diets. Neither Grandin's moral arguments nor the remarkable apparatus she has invented call into question the notion that the best way to minimize harm to animals is to stop eating them. Despite Grandin's extraordinary accomplishments at both an ethical and engineering level, her system is best seen as a pragmatic compromise, not as an alternative to meat-free diets at the level of ideal theory.