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In the Shadows of Dominion:  
Anthropocentrism and the Continuance of a Culture of Oppression

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A thesis  
presented to  
the faculty of the Department of Liberal Studies  
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree  
Master of Arts in Liberal Studies

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by  
Christopher A. Shields

May 2015

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Keywords: Non-human animals, Anthropocentrism, Oppression, Dominion, Animal ethics,

Factory farming, Racism, Sexism

## ABSTRACT

In the Shadows of Dominion:

Anthropocentrism and the Continuance of a Culture of Oppression

by

Christopher Shields

The oppression of nonhuman animals in Western culture observed in societal institutions and practices such as the factory farm, hunting, and vivisection, exhibits alarming linkages and parallels to some episodes of the oppression of human animals. This work traces the foundations of anthropocentrism in Western philosophy and connects them to the oppressions of racism, sexism, and ethnocentrism. In outlining a uniform theory of oppression detailed through the marginalization, isolation, and exploitation of human and nonhuman animals alike, parallels among the groups emerge as the fused oppression of each exhibits a commonality among them. The analysis conducted within this work highlights the development and sustainment of oppression in the West and illuminates the socio-historical tendencies apparent in the oppression of human and nonhuman animals alike.

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## DEDICATION

For Charlie, Bella, Dobby, and Duke as they have taught me more about the human—animal relationship than any book ever could.

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The development of this work was only possible through the help and guidance of a number of individuals to whom I am forever indebted for giving their time and energy throughout this endeavor. I want specifically to thank my committee members, Dr. Jennifer Pealer and Dr. Allen Coates, for allowing me the freedom to explore topics within my thesis, both inside and outside of their own disciplinary expertises and for offering their encouragement, insight, and guidance along the way. I want to thank my mother, who, through our daily phone calls, listened to countless ideas and readings of the same pages, but never once complained. I also want to thank my best friend and partner Lauren, who not only acted as a buffer for my stress and frustration, but also sacrificed her own needs through the entirety of the process in order that mine could be fulfilled. I must also acknowledge the authors who have been so critical to the development of the ideas within this work: Marjorie Spiegel, Tom Regan, Peter Singer, Carol Adams, and Charles Patterson. Michael Daly's beautiful rendering of the story of Topsy the elephant from the onset of this undertaking gave true meaning to the countless hours of research and writing. Most of all, I want to thank Dr. Marie Tedesco, a kindred spirit on issues of animal suffering and welfare, who not only has offered her tireless guidance in the construction of my thesis, but as a teacher, mentor, and friend has challenged me to be a better student and person over the course of the past two years. Our many conversations, discussions, and debates have been a tremendous source of inspiration and a humbling reminder of how much still remains to be learned. Lastly, I want to acknowledge the ten billion animals that are killed through the process of factory farming each year in the United States alone; that is almost 850 million each month, 30 million each day, and over a million sentient souls every hour. We can

never claim to be an enlightened and free people until this senseless mass murder is stopped and those hidden in the shadows are brought once and for all into the light.

CHAPTER 1  
INTRODUCTION

Here I am! Here I am! Where are you?

-Michael Daly, *Topsy*

The lament of oppressed humans and other animals has echoed across time, rarely heard and even less often acknowledged. Within the immense sphere of human and animal oppression, the life and death of an elephant named Topsy is one example of the repercussions of human dominion. Her story has become ingrained in the history and folklore of American culture, not for how she lived but for the manner in which she died. Ironically, the giant mammal was named after a fictive young slave girl torn from her mother at a very young age, as depicted in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.<sup>1</sup> Much like her namesake, Topsy the elephant came to the United States and lived under the stringency of oppression. She was taken from her mother and home in an Asian jungle, loaded on a ship and brought to America, where she was enslaved by showmen and forced to perform in the Forepaugh Circus for nearly three decades.<sup>2</sup> Her life consisted of continual abuse; she was mercilessly beaten, cut, and burned by her masters. Topsy's rise to historical notoriety began after she killed one of her handlers who had tried to feed the normally docile animal a lit cigarette.<sup>3</sup> The episode would forever bind one of the country's innovative giants, Thomas Edison, with the three-ton animal in a spectacle that would transcend the time.

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<sup>1</sup>Michael Daly, *Topsy: The Startling Story of the Crooked Tail Elephant, P.T. Barnum, and the American Wizard, Thomas Edison* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2013), 16-17.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>3</sup> "Coney Elephant Killed," *The New York Times*, January 5, 1903.



The final act of oppression against the elephant ultimately would be in taking her life, but the means by which it was achieved forever set the story of Topsy within American lore. A January 5, 1903, *New York Times* article titled, “Coney Elephant Killed,” chronicled the elephant’s execution. Over 1,500 spectators arrived at Coney Island to witness Topsy’s death.<sup>4</sup> The means to end the animal’s life consisted of administering her carrots laced with potassium cyanide followed by an electrocution performed by employees of the Thomas Edison Company, there to showcase the power of human innovation.<sup>5</sup> In an excerpt from his book *Topsy*, Michael Daly details the events of the January 4, 1903, public execution of the gentle giant:

Topsy was chained by all four feet to construction pilings so she would be kept in place even if she now decided to move. A noose was looped around her neck and attached to the donkey engine. The wires were dragged over. Topsy immediately complied when she was instructed to raise her right foot for the first death sandal. “Not so vicious,” a reporter remarked aloud. Topsy seemed less a wild animal than a mild one. Another reporter later wrote, “She stood still in the application as quietly as could be asked, obeying all commands of the men even when telling her to get down on her knees.” After the second electrode was fitted on her rear left foot and she was again standing, Topsy did become mildly bothered. She shook off the electrode on her forefoot, but soon it was secured again and there she stood, nearly three decades after being torn from her mother and smuggled into America, where she had traveled tens of thousands of miles in perpetual servitude, endured innumerable beatings, and survived more than a dozen train wrecks. Her big dark eyes with their extravagant elephantine lashes glimmered with what a reporter discerned to be still at her core.<sup>6</sup>

Daly continues,

The camera was running and recorded Topsy again trying to shake off the electrode on her right forefoot. The electrode stayed in place. She set her foot back down and was standing motionless when the 6,600 volts coursed through the wires and the electrician, Thomas, closed the switch at the park. There were flashes and small blue flames and then smoke began to curl up from where copper met foot. Some would describe the smell as that of burning flesh, others that of burning hoof. The pain must have been excruciating

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<sup>4</sup> “Coney Elephant Killed,” *The New York Times*, January 5, 1903.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Daly, 323-325.

and her huge form shook violently. . . The smoke rose up around her flanks and she pitched forward into it, tipping to the right as her right foreleg buckled. The chain on her left leg grew taut with the fall, restraining her even in her last instant, drawing the limb straight out, displaying the electrode at the bottom of the foot. . . The many witnesses to the electrocution concurred that Topsy had died without making a sound. There is no way of knowing if, in those final instants, she had made one of those cries below the level of human hearing, which a scientist of the next millennium would term a contact call and explain as a simple message elephants in the wild send to other elephants across great distances of savannah and jungle. Such a cry would have carried past the gawkers and across the grounds and the beach beyond and out over the sea, fading to an unheard whisper over the waves.

Here I am! Here I am! Where are you?<sup>7</sup>

Less than a quarter century before Topsy's arrival in New York Harbor, alone and afraid, the hushed voices of black slaves still reverberated throughout America's southland. They, too, were forced into servitude, their bodies beaten and abused by their masters, denied the basic rights now afforded to most human beings, and their cries, like those of the broken elephant, were hidden away in the shadows of dominion: "Here I am! Here I am! Where are you?"<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Daly, 323-325.

<sup>8</sup> In his book *Critical Regionalism: Connecting Politics and Culture in the American Landscape* (University of North Carolina Press, 2007), Douglas Reichert Powell details a similar incident regarding the public execution of another female elephant. The elephant's name was Mary and she was hanged to death on a crane in a railroad repair facility in Erwin, Tennessee, just over a decade after the electrocution of Topsy. Mary, who was part of the Sparks Circus during a fall 1916 tour through the South, killed her trainer Walter Eldridge after he struck her on the head after she paused to pick up a watermelon rind on a parade route in Kingsport, Tennessee. Following the trainer's death, an angry crowd, reminiscent of the lynch mobs of the time, demanded that "Murderous Mary" be killed on the spot. Attempts to shoot the large African elephant failed, and the Sparks Circus moved to its next stop in Erwin, the home of the Carolina, Clinchfield, and Ohio Railway repair facility. With equipment capable of exterminating the giant mammal, the town would stand as Mary's final stop. According to Powell, "Surely the value of the spectacle was not lost on Charlie Sparks [circus proprietor], who had the elephants paraded out to the rail yard in between the matinee and the evening performances, whereupon Mary was strung up from the crane on a 7/8" chain." The first attempt resulted in the chain around Mary's neck breaking, and the elephant falling five feet back to the ground. A larger chain was strung around her neck and Mary's giant form was finally hoisted off the ground where she hanged until she died. A crowd of anywhere from several hundred to several thousand witnessed the execution. The event notably shares a linkage to the racially motivated lynchings of blacks in the South and, as Powell points out, some accounts of the event also claim that Mary's two black keepers were hanged alongside of her. See pp. 10-18.

It seems an absurdity that people pursuing fundamental principles of freedom and liberty founded a nation based on discrimination (e.g., racism, sexism, classism, ethnocentrism, anthropocentrism). Yet, the commonality of oppression has stood the test of time, dimming the glow of the shining city upon a hill. Scholarship within the humanities and social sciences has attempted to comprehend the intricacies of oppression, employing both pragmatic and theoretical methods to address the idea as a problem in and of itself and as a response to other social, historical, or philosophical elements that contribute to its existence; however, this is not to say that academia's frequent undertaking of the subject has been exhaustive. Unaddressed complexities in the concepts regarding oppression emerge once examination of the subject is situated in a different perspective. Academic disciplines primarily have centered their discourses on the human as the prominent object of inquiry. In neglecting the oppression of nonhuman animals as a source of comparison to understand fully human oppression, or the oppression of any sentient being for that matter, the potential to create important linkages between the two is limited, and essentially minimizes the scope for new knowledge. This is not to say that animals are absent from academic discourses, rather that certain hesitations exist in comparing the similarities between human and nonhuman animals, especially when they are fused in similar historical circumstances of oppression. This could be a reflection of anthropocentric attitudes that undoubtedly formed and were reinforced in the organization of knowledge sets or also in a tentativeness not only to revisit, but also to compare, animal suffering to certain episodes of human suffering (e.g., American slavery and the Holocaust). The problem that arises when making such comparisons is that episodes of human suffering often seem too sacred to expose, thus maximizing the divide between human and animal. The scholars who pressed the limits between human and animal suffering have contributed immensely to a conceptualization of the

forces involved in human oppression and have extended the boundaries of ethics to those who historically have been excluded from moral consideration. In conceiving the overall emphasis of this work, scholars Peter Singer, Tom Regan, Carol Adams, Dominick LaCapra, Charles Patterson, and Marjorie Spiegel, among others, have influenced profoundly my understanding of oppression and the shared similarities existing in the historical marginalization of certain groups of humans and animals.

In arguably the most prominent work ever written on issues related to animal welfare, Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* in 1975 set in motion a public debate that alerted and informed the general public to the plight of the nonhuman animal. Singer's words, contained in the preface to the first edition of the book, transcend historical eras, ethical systems, and the distinctions between human and nonhuman animals. According to the author,

This book is about the tyranny of human over nonhuman animals. This tyranny has caused and today is still causing an amount of pain and suffering that can only be compared with that which resulted from the centuries of tyranny by white humans over black humans. The struggle against this tyranny is a struggle as important as any of the moral and social issues that have been fought over in recent years.<sup>9</sup>

In situating the significance of animal welfare within a context similar to that of the abolition movement, Singer not only pioneered a linkage deserving of further consideration, he also eroded the limits of the human—animal divide. The research and methodology within this work centers on a related idea of how humans investigate and interpret the circumstances of oppression; what connections can be made and what can be learned when humans discard their anthropocentric ideology and examine the forces of oppression outside of the limits of anthropocentrism. Positioning the scope of my research on American culture from the eighteenth century until the present allows me to make an inquiry into oppressive forces that can

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<sup>9</sup> Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation*, 2nd ed. (New York: New York Review of Books, 1990), i.

be compared across time and among the marginalized groups of human and nonhuman animals. In merging historical incidences of oppression in America by highlighting the objectification and repression of women, the enslavement of black humans, and the subjugation of animals through factory farming, in particular, undeniable similarities surface substantiating the existence of a culture of oppression. This claim is the focus of Chapter Two that details consistent forces conditioning and perpetuating an environment of oppression that transcends historical contexts of American culture and applies equally to the oppressed (human and nonhuman animals). Chapter Three traces the industrialization of slaughter and the capitalist model of the factory farm, where efficiency and profit drive the continuance of slavery, or an, “eternal Treblinka,” in the words of Isaac Bashevis Singer, for the animal victims of unrestrained human dominion. Chapter Four queries the moral status of nonhuman animals by explicating the ideologies of Tom Regan and Peter Singer in determining whether a rights discourse or a utilitarian methodology is best equipped to minimize the divide between human and animal. In referencing slave narratives, contemporary news accounts, and secondary works are important. Among the latter, critical are Spiegel’s *The Dreaded Comparison* and David Brion Davis’s *Inhuman Bondage*. Chapter Five accentuates the parallels within the grasp of dominion through an exploration of slavery as a transhistorical facet of American culture. Chapter Six examines Carol Adams’ work *The Sexual Politics of Meat* in emphasizing the linkages between sexism and speciesism and how both sustain a culture of oppression and contribute to the joint marginalization of animals and women. The final chapter will revisit the human—animal divide by analyzing the approach of posthumanism in acknowledging a resounding mutuality between the two, a likeness engrained in the very essence of what it means to possess life and in the recognition of a shared vulnerability to suffering.

## CHAPTER 2

### TOWARDS A THEORY OF HUMAN AND ANIMAL OPPRESSION

These causes of oppression, rooted in history, remain a profound, indeed determinative, part of the twenty-first century and continue to restrain the development of enlightened thought and ethical social and economic practices.

-David Nibert, *Animal Rights/Human Rights: Entanglements of Oppression and Liberation*

In the summer of 2005, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) launched a multi-city exhibit and online gallery as part of a campaign labeled “Animal Liberation.” The exhibit featured provocative images of American slaves and other groups of oppressed humans alongside an array of similarly depicted animals, a shackled human foot beside that of a shackled hoof, the branding of a slave alongside the branding of cow, and so on. Accompanying the images was the following summary:

What is the common link between all atrocities in our society's past? The African slave trade, the massacre and displacement of Native Americans, the oppression of women, and forced child labor, were the products of a dangerous belief that those with power have the right to abuse those without it. . . The only difference is that yesterday's victims—used and abused because they were 'different' and powerless—are now of other species.<sup>1</sup>

The comparison evident in the exhibit sparked outrage across the country. Shortly after the campaign launched, controversy ensued over what critics presumed to be a racist comparison. The NAACP released a statement in opposition to the exhibit, when spokesman John White said, “PETA operates by getting publicity any way they can. They're comparing chickens to black people.”<sup>2</sup> Mark Potok of the Southern Poverty Law Center called the comparisons “disgusting,”

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<sup>1</sup> William Saletan, “KKK vs. KFC,” *Slate*, accessed April 9, 2014.  
[http://www.slate.com/articles/health\\_and\\_science/human\\_nature/2005/08/kkk\\_vs\\_kfc.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/health_and_science/human_nature/2005/08/kkk_vs_kfc.html)

<sup>2</sup> Stephen Smith, “PETA Evaluates Charges of Racism,” *CBS News*, August 13, 2005.

saying, “Black people in America have had quite enough of being compared to animals without PETA joining in.”<sup>3</sup> Preceding the outrage over the exhibit, PETA previously had apologized over a similar campaign featuring images of the Holocaust alongside those of factory farming. In both instances, the predominant reaction of the news media, the blogosphere, and even scholars, was to demonize the exhibits, calling those who would make such comparisons radical or racist.

It has become abundantly clear in American culture that animal suffering and human suffering are not equivalent and those willing to compare the two could be ostracized, censured, and perhaps even “branded” racist. Should it be accepted, then, that oppression of animals and humans is too dissimilar to compare? Or perhaps the sacralization in episodes of human suffering, such as slavery or the Holocaust, is too profound to be likened to modern circumstances of animal suffering. After all, are they not just animals? Such objection to comparing human and animal suffering is inherently speciesist and not only solidifies an anthropocentric ideology, but also limits human awareness in regard to our own responsibility in prolonging a culture of oppression. Quite a lot can be learned about the homogeneity of oppression across all groups and species by decentering a humanistic viewpoint in investigating oppression. As I will contend in this chapter, through a comparative analysis of episodes of oppression, both human and animal, certain consistencies emerge, enabling the development of a general theory of oppression. The purpose of establishing a theory explaining the historical uniformity of oppression is paramount in the context of this work on the animal victims of human dominion. In showing the similarities, not only between the human and animal victims of oppression, but also in the forces contributing to their victimization, the paradoxes of a recurring

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<sup>3</sup> Smith, “PETA Evaluates Charges of Racism.”

culture of oppression can be challenged, the human—animal divide can be minimized, and perhaps the light of moral consciousness can be extended to the shadows.

With a comparative analysis focusing on women, persons of color, and animals as victims of oppression, my theoretical basis for this chapter centers on a four-phase progression of oppression. The first phase, or the antecedent principle as I will call it, affirms the rise of dominion through principles of capitalism; phase two is the marginalization of the other; phase three is isolation of the marginalized; and phase four is exploitation of the isolated. In developing a theory of oppression, it is imperative to establish the origins of dominion in the West linking human and animal, but also to highlight oppression as procedural by detailing the transition from the establishment of dominion towards the eventuality of episodic oppression. In detailing the uniformity of oppression across boundaries, the occurrence of fundamental elements that contribute to the formation of dominion that leads to a state of oppression materializes. What I am suggesting is that the establishment of dominion must precede a state of oppression. If slavery is understood as one instance of oppression, then dominion of one group over another had to transpire prior to the actuality of enslavement. I refer to this as the antecedent principle of oppression.<sup>4</sup>

Within this theory of oppression, the antecedent principle signifies connectivity among the oppressed groups assessed in this work, in that the oppression of each is only possible through the simultaneous rise of a dominant group. In *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Iris Marion Young defines oppression as an injustice and understands the existence of oppression as a condition of all groups.<sup>5</sup> According to Young, “In its traditional usage, oppression means the

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<sup>4</sup> Dominion in the context of this work will be used interchangeably with the term dominant group. The act of oppression itself, as I will contend, is perpetrated by those who dominate the “other.”

<sup>5</sup> Iris Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2011), Google Play E-book, 52.



exercise of tyranny by a ruling group.”<sup>6</sup> Yet, as Young points out, the meaning of oppression began to shift during the liberal social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Young claims, “In its new usage, oppression designates the disadvantage and injustice some people suffer not because a tyrannical power coerces them, but because of the everyday practices of a well-intentioned liberal society.”<sup>7</sup> This seems to conflict with my contention that for oppression to occur dominion must first be established. However, whether oppression is recognized in the tyrannical sense or from a structural standpoint, both instances reflect dominion, whether this be by a dominant group, by an individual exercising tyranny, or by a dominant discourse of ideas that advocates oppressing some members within a society. The oppression of animals, women, and blacks qualifies as structural oppression, because engrained ideologies of speciesism, sexism, and racism created and upheld dominion over the three groups. The scholarship of Critical Race Theory exemplifies understanding oppression in the structural sense. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic explain,

The movement considers many of the same issues that conventional civil rights and ethnic studies discourses take up, but places them in a broader perspective that includes economics, history, context, group- and self-interest, and even feelings and the unconscious. Unlike traditional civil rights, which embraces incrementalism and step-by-step progress, critical race theory questions the very foundations of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, Enlightenment rationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law.<sup>8</sup>

Young reinforces this idea:

The systemic character of oppression implies that an oppressed group need not have a correlate oppressing group. While structural oppression involves relations among groups, these relations do not always fit the paradigm of conscious and intentional oppression of

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<sup>6</sup> Young, 52.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>8</sup> *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, 2nd edition (New York: New York University Press, 2012), Google Play E-Book, 3.

one group by another. Foucault (*Discipline and Punish*, 1977) suggests that to understand the meaning and operation of power in modern society we must look beyond the model of power as “sovereignty,” a dyadic relation of ruler and subject, and reproducing oppression, but those people are usually simply doing their jobs or living their lives, and do not understand themselves as agents of oppression.<sup>9</sup>

Herein lies the importance of the antecedent principle of oppression, especially in Western society, where a culture of oppression is replicated by the original ideology for which dominion forms, that is, by the establishment of a dominant race, species, religion, or gender.

The establishment of dominion in the West and its continuity in the oppression of animals, women, and blacks derives primarily from an economic need grafted onto a deep-rooted belief system. As Marxist theory contends, social relationships are embedded in economic forms of production. In a capitalist society, these relationships are often based on exploitation, as the ruling class extracts for its benefit the surplus value of another’s labor.<sup>10</sup> In the article “Can Marxism Explain America’s Racism,” Sidney Willhelm writes,

Such treatment of labor is a form of economic exploitation because any value in excess of production costs accrues to business owners rather than to the workers. Upon this fundamental economic principle, a specific form of class system emerges with divergent and incompatible economic imperatives: the upper (or ruling capitalist) class focuses upon production to extract profits from labor; the working (or proletariat) class necessarily copes with working conditions and the scale of pay in the form of wages.<sup>11</sup>

Through the establishment of a ruling class (a dominant group) capitalism has developed and sustained a structural system of oppression on the workers, whether this be from the origins of slavery in America to modern methods of enslavement in the factory farm. Sociological theories on minority groups traditionally have viewed dominant groups within a society as typical or

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<sup>9</sup> Young, 53-54.

<sup>10</sup> Sidney Willhelm, “Can Marxism Explain America’s Racism,” *Social Problems* 28, no. 2 (December 1980): 98, accessed April 10, 2014. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/800145>

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

“normal” members and minorities as distinct or foreign and have downplayed the significance of structural oppressive agents.<sup>12</sup> Yet, as David Nibert contends in his book *Animal Rights/Human Rights: Entanglements of Oppression and Liberation*, the term minority group should be replaced with a term that is more forthright, “oppressed groups.”<sup>13</sup> According to Nibert, “The term *oppressed group* [italics original] is not only more appropriate and honest but also avoids the human-centered concept of minority groups and helps challenge the prevailing view that human use and mistreatment of other animals lies in the realm of ‘natural affairs.’”<sup>14</sup> While a capitalist mentality has been paramount in the continuance of a culture of oppression, deeply embedded non-economic beliefs and practices also have been prominent in the establishment of dominion and the designation of oppressed groups.

One such belief arising from eighteenth-century Enlightenment thinking and deeply rooted in the ideological positioning of the other, relegated women and persons of color as less than “human” on the basis of their lacking reason or rationality in comparison to white men. It is the idea of inferiority that scholars enforce such as eighteenth-century thinkers David Hume, Voltaire, and Immanuel Kant. Hume wrote in a 1748 essay,

I am apt to suspect the Negroes, and in general all other species of men, to be naturally inferior to the whites. There never was any civilized nation of any other complexion [*sic*] than white. . . . No ingenious manufactures among them, no arts, no sciences. . . . Such a uniform and constant difference could not happen, in so many countries and ages, if nature had not made an original distinction between these breeds of men.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> David Nibert, *Animal Rights/Human Rights: Entanglements of Oppression and Liberation* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002), 5, accessed February 2, 2014. Kindle Electronic Edition.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> David Hume, *Essays: Moral, Political and Literary*, ed. Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1987), 629-630.

Voltaire, in common with Hume, wrote of the inferiority of black humans when he contended in his 1756 essay:

Their eyes are not formed like ours. The black wool on their heads and other parts has no resemblance to our hair; and it may be said that if their understanding is not of a different nature from ours, it is at least greatly inferior. They are not capable of any great application or association of ideas, and seem formed neither for the advantages nor abuses of our philosophy. They are a race peculiar to that part of Africa, the same as elephants and monkeys.”<sup>16</sup>

Likewise, Kant in 1764 substantiated the contentions of Hume and Voltaire: “The Negroes of Africa have received from nature no intelligence that rises above the foolish. The difference between the two races is thus a substantial one: it appears to be just as great in respect to the faculties of the mind as in color. . . . Hume invites anyone to quote a single example of a Negro who has exhibited talents.”<sup>17</sup>

A similar perspective on the inferiority of women prevailed among the “great thinkers of the Enlightenment,” notably Jean Jacques Rousseau and Kant. Rousseau claimed,

The needle and the sword cannot be wielded by the same hands. If I were sovereign, I would permit sewing and the needle trades only to women and to cripples reduced to occupations like theirs. . . . Why are they not satisfied by those made by nature, with those crowds of cowardly men whose heart it has mutilated? The delicate and fearful man is condemned by nature to a sedentary life. He is made to live with women or in their manner. . . . How can men not be ashamed to encroach on those that women do?<sup>18</sup>

Rousseau not only saw women’s position as inferior, he also inscribed in *Èmile (On Education)* that although women possess “quick wit,” they lack creativity, the ability to reason abstractly, or possess genius. Rousseau contended that women’s education should prepare them for

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<sup>16</sup> Voltaire, *The Works of Voltaire*, critique and biography by John Morley, notes by Tobias Smollett, trans. William F. Fleming (New York: E.R. DuMont, 1901), 162.

<sup>17</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*, trans. John T. Goldthwait (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 55.

<sup>18</sup> Jean Jacques Rousseau, *On Education* (1918), quoted in Paul Thomas, “Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Sexist?” *Feminist Studies* 17, no. 2 (Summer, 1991): 195, accessed April 10, 2014. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3178331>

domesticity as a wife or mother.<sup>19</sup> Although Kant's dialogue on women's rationality is sometimes unclear, he posited that women, like men, possessed rationality but often were inhibited from exercising it.<sup>20</sup> Kant contended, "Woman's nature is identified with inclination, and it would appear that in the kingdom of rational beings there are only adult males."<sup>21</sup> Such presumptions held by leading thinkers of the dominant group ultimately instituted and reinforced the patriarchal and paternal nature of Western thought.

The Enlightenment also perpetuated the anthropocentric ideology still prevalent within Western society today. Many scholars contend that racism was born out of the Enlightenment, but that the depreciated status of animals conveyed through Cartesian dialogue set the tone for the Enlightenment.<sup>22</sup> Although Enlightenment thinkers such as Voltaire and Rousseau upgraded the status of animals from the insentient mechanical creatures that Descartes concluded they were to a higher form of life, most Enlightenment thinkers still divided the human from animal, similar to the chasm between white and black and man and woman.

The viewpoints that contributed to the shaping of governments and the founding of academic disciplines and social institutions contributed to the formation of an adverse category

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<sup>19</sup> Thomas, 198.

<sup>20</sup> As I understand, contemporary views on Kant's writings about women's cognitive capacities are often misconstrued by scholars. His position is more of a reflection of his understanding that society has conditioned women's role, rather than that of biological inferiority.

<sup>21</sup> Kant, *Observations on the Feelings of the Beautiful and the Sublime*, 85.

<sup>22</sup> Philosopher and historian Justin Smith, postmodernist Jacques Derrida, postcolonial philosopher Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, cultural historian George Mosse, and leading critical race theorist David Goldberg, among many other late twentieth and early twenty-first century scholars, held the Enlightenment thinkers responsible for the creation of race and therefore point to the era itself as responsible for the birth of racism. In a February 10, 2013, *New York Times* essay, "The Enlightenment's 'Race' Problem, and Ours," Justin Smith writes, "The question for us today is why we have chosen to stick with categories inherited from the 18th century, the century of the so-called Enlightenment, which witnessed the development of the slave trade into the very foundation of the global economy, and at the same time saw racial classifications congeal into pseudo-biological kinds, piggy-backing on the divisions folk science had always made across the natural world of plants and animals. Why, that is, have we chosen to go with Hume and Kant, rather than with the pre-racial conception of humanity espoused by Kraus, or the anti-racial picture that Herder offered in opposition to his contemporaries?" See Justin Smith's *New York Times* article from February 10, 2013 at [http://nytimes.com/2013/02/10/why-has-race-survived/?\\_php=true&\\_type=blogs&ref=opinion&\\_r=0](http://nytimes.com/2013/02/10/why-has-race-survived/?_php=true&_type=blogs&ref=opinion&_r=0)

of “other”, a social construct specified by a position of obscurity and vulnerability. Taking advantage of this vulnerability constitutes, essentially, the origin of oppression. In *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Young divides oppression into five categories, which she terms the five distinct faces of oppression: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence.<sup>23</sup> The theory of oppression that I propose differs from Young’s suggestions on several notable points. First, Young examines oppression only as it relates to humans. She does not explicitly exclude non-human animals, but makes no mention of them as victims of individual acts of tyranny or victims within structural oppression. Second, although Young recognizes different and distinct patterns or occurrences of oppression, she nonetheless finds the cohesiveness in these patterns to be embedded in an overlying system of institutional or structural oppression. Alternatively, I find the cohesiveness of the occurrences of oppression to be procedural, rather than structural. This is not to say that structural oppression is absent but rather that it differs in kind due to a pattern of progression, or in regard to how oppression proceeds from one stage to another.

The theoretical framework of oppression traces the rise of a dominant group in Western society by way of the establishment of dominion (the antecedent principle of oppression). Once dominion is established within a society, what follows in a pattern of oppression are marginalization, isolation, and exploitation. Marginalization, essentially, is the removal of a group to the margins of society that thus creates a category of other. According to Young, marginalization occurs when, “A whole category of people is expelled from useful participation in social life and thus potentially subjected to severe material deprivation and even extermination.”<sup>24</sup> Marginalization effectively lessens the status of a group of humans or even a

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<sup>23</sup> Young, 53.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 65.

group of animals by excluding them from equal benefits to others within a society.<sup>25</sup> In advanced capitalist societies, Young contends that marginality represents two categories of injustice: “First, the provision of welfare itself produces new injustice by depriving those dependent on it of rights and freedoms that others have. Second. . . . marginalization is unjust because it blocks the opportunity to exercise capacities in socially defined and recognized ways.”<sup>26</sup> This is a fundamentally humanistic explanation of marginalization, but it can be applied to non-human animals as well. Relegating non-human animals to a lesser status denies them the ability to exercise their innate capacities, those naturally found characteristics within both human and nonhuman animals, such as a desire for freedom or a preference for pleasure instead of pain. Thus, marginalization arises from the establishment of dominion. Once a dominant group emerges, those outside of the group become marginal. Racism derives from the Enlightenment idea of the superiority of one group (whites) over others (those of color). The superior group dominates the inferior because the latter “lacks” preferred traits found in the former. In this sense, oppression is very much a process, as the rise of the dominant group creates a societal hierarchy that places the dominant group atop.

Although marginalization is indeed a facet of oppression, I suggest that it is an initial phase of oppression. As the white human male assumed dominion through the dissemination and acceptance in the West of Enlightenment ideas of his possession of traits (e.g. reason, control of emotions). Women, persons of color, and animals thus were positioned outside of the social contract, effectively becoming marginal to the white human male and forming the other. Once marginalized, they then could be isolated. Through a set of essential oppressive structures consistent in western culture, isolation proceeds. Isolation of the marginal can take two forms,

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<sup>25</sup> Young, 65.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

physical isolation, as in bodily placement outside or away from concentrated groups of people, and cognitive isolation, which separates the marginalized from the consciousness of society. Marginalizing a group distinguishes the group as different and inferior, while isolation builds barriers to keep the groups in a place of submissiveness. In Young's discussion of structural oppression, isolation can be seen as a contributing factor not only in the continuance and establishment of structural oppression in Western society over time, but also in procedural oppression that eventually leads to exploitation. Isolation confirms the powerlessness of marginalized groups and is the central barrier that preserves classes of other as marginal. According to Young, "The powerless are those who lack authority or power even in this mediated sense, those over whom power is exercised without their exercising it; the powerless are situated so that they must take orders and rarely have the right to give them."<sup>27</sup> Of note in Young's description of powerlessness is her use of the word "situated" that she applies to the idea of a concrete position within society. Young's explanation of powerlessness, as I suggest, in part is based on the establishment of dominion and the creation of the other and emphasized through isolation.

A central feature of isolating a subservient human group is to dehumanize it. In "Dehumanization: An Integrative Review," Nick Haslam defines dehumanization, in part, as a process of moral exclusion that denies individuals identity and community.<sup>28</sup> Denying identity removes the perception of a person as an independent, distinguishable individual with a capacity to make choices.<sup>29</sup> Denying the human and nonhuman animal of community excludes each from

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<sup>27</sup> Young, 68.

<sup>28</sup> *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 10, no. 3 (2006): 253, accessed April 12, 2014. [http://general.utpb.edu/FAC/hughes\\_j/Haslam%20on%20dehumanization.pdf](http://general.utpb.edu/FAC/hughes_j/Haslam%20on%20dehumanization.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*



the moral community or of an “interconnected network of individuals who care for each other.”<sup>30</sup> According to Haslam, “When people are divested of these agentic and communal aspects of humanness they are deindividuated, lose the capacity to evoke compassion and moral emotions, and may be treated as means toward vicious ends.”<sup>31</sup> Dehumanization is an inherently anthropocentric term because in dehumanizing, it is assumed that status is relegated to one less than human or to that of an animal. Dehumanizing essentially means to relegate one to a status of animal. According to Haslam, “A consistent theme in this work is the likening of people to animals. In racist descriptions Africans are compared to apes and sometimes explicitly denied membership of the human species.”<sup>32</sup> As Yehuda Bauer claims, the comparisons to animals through Nazi propaganda in the Holocaust portrayed Jews as: “vermin, rats, or other noxious elements from the insect or animal world.”<sup>33</sup> Women also are dehumanized, but by men, often in regard to their sexuality. According to Haslam,

Dehumanization is commonly discussed in feminist writings on the representation of women in pornography. Pornography is said to dehumanize women by representing them in an objectified fashion, by implication removing women from full moral consideration and legitimating rape and victimization. . . . According to Ortner (1974), women are pan-culturally ‘seen as representing a lower order of being, as being less transcendental of nature than men,’ and femaleness is equated with animality, nature, and childlikeness.<sup>34</sup>

The dehumanization of persons of color and women all share a linkage to the objectification of animals. All are denied status of subject, perhaps by the dominant group (males) focusing on a portion of their bodies or only on their sexuality and, instead, they become objects that then can

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<sup>30</sup> Haslam, 253.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 252.

<sup>33</sup> Yehuda Bauer, “Genocide: Was It the Nazis’ Original Plan?” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 450 (July 1980): 37, accessed April 12, 2014. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1042557>

<sup>34</sup> Haslam, 253.

be exploited for society's gain. Isolation by means of objectification or dehumanization is essentially the barrier that keeps certain groups within a culture of oppression in a place of submissiveness. This assures that the status quo will not be challenged.

Through marginalization and isolation, exploitation as a process of oppression can then proceed. In Western cultures, exploitation often uses capitalism to oppress. According to Young, in respect to Marx's theory of exploitation,

The injustice of capitalist society consists in the fact that some people exercise their capacities under the control, according to the purposes, and for the benefit of other people. Through private ownership of the means of production, and through markets that allocate labor and the ability to buy goods, capitalism systematically transfers the powers of some persons to others, thereby augmenting the power of the latter.<sup>35</sup>

The contention here is that in the capitalist system, the capitalist holds the power to extract benefits from the workers, thereby exploiting them.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, it must be acknowledged that slavery, unequal pay for women, and factory farming are consistent within a capitalist system and all constitute instances of exploitation.

It is also notable that exploitation is an all-encompassing form of oppression that Robert Goodin defines by s-exploitation (situational) and p-exploitation (person).<sup>37</sup> According to Robert Mayer's explanation of Goodin's theory, "All cases of exploitation are instances of situation-exploitation in which agents turn some favorable circumstance in their situation or environment to their advantage."<sup>38</sup> Person-exploitation involves a person or group gaining at the expense of another and the wrongness of p-exploitation is founded on the emphasis of human obligation to

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<sup>35</sup> Young, 60.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 60-62.

<sup>37</sup> Robert Goodin, "Exploiting a Situation and Exploiting a Person," in *Modern Theories of Exploitation*, ed. Andrew Reeve (London: Sage Publications, 1987), 171-178.

<sup>38</sup> Robert Mayer, "A Walzerian Theory of Exploitation," *Polity* 34, no. 3 (Spring 2002): 339, accessed April 12, 2014. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3235395>

others based in part on the vulnerabilities of the exploited person (or in our case a human person or an animal).<sup>39</sup> Mayer writes,

P-exploitation only occurs in exchange relationships or bilateral transactions. . . . The characteristic indicator of an exploitative transaction is disproportionality in the distribution of benefits and burdens: the exploited assume disproportionate burdens for the benefit received, while exploiters gain much at little cost. . . . Those who exploit others take advantage of an initial inequality, which they ought not to do. As a result, the exploited get less than they should from the exchange. Fairness is only achieved when the contending parties are made equal, by eliminating the illegitimate advantages.<sup>40</sup>

A key element of Goodin's theory of exploitation is that people have a moral obligation to protect the vulnerable, but their exploitation of the other acts in opposition to this because, by definition, exploitative acts use the vulnerabilities of others to gain benefits for some.<sup>41</sup> In my theory of oppression, it is the marginalization and isolation of certain humans and animals that establishes these vulnerabilities. Exploitation occurs when people choose to act on these vulnerabilities. The vulnerabilities of animals, women, and persons of color link first and foremost to their places outside of the dominant group. The attribution of a lesser status reinforces the marginal group's place outside of the dominant group and the marginal group's lowered status reinforces their isolation and inferiority. When the dominant exploit the vulnerabilities of the marginal, oppression by means of exploitation is the result.

The dominant group's marginalization and isolation of a group escalates the other's vulnerability, minimizing their power and autonomy. Exploitation stands as the exhibition of power and control of one group over the marginalized and isolated human and animal body. Slavery, factory farming, and pornography all stand as manifestations of control over the oppressed body. The white human male's seizure of power over those outside of the dominant

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<sup>39</sup> Mayer, 339-340.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Goodin, "Exploiting a Situation and Exploiting a Person," 172-173.

group established dominion and led to the marginalization of women, blacks, and animals. Dehumanization and objectification intensify the divide between the dominant and marginal groups and solidifies their isolation as other. Once made vulnerable by the dominant group, persons of color were exploited for their labor through enslavement; women were/are exploited through their subservience in marriage and low wages in the work place; and animals were/are exploited as commodities in factory farming, vivisection, and hunting. The marginalization and isolation of these groups also appropriate them not only for exploitation, but also for violence, a constant element of their exploitation and vulnerability. If the wrongfulness of exploitation is indeed due to the violation of a moral obligation to protect the vulnerable, what is it that the vulnerable all share that warrants such an obligation? Suffering. This suffering will be explored in greater depth through an examination of the industrialization of oppression in the slaughterhouse and factory farm.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE INDUSTRIALIZATION OF MURDER AND THE FACTORY FARM

In relation to them, all people are Nazis: for the animals it is an eternal Treblinka.

- Isaac Bashevis Singer, *The Letter Writer*

Upton Sinclair's 1906 novel *The Jungle* depicts the struggles of a fictional family of Lithuanian workers in Chicago at the turn of the twentieth century. Although Sinclair's intention was to portray the plight of immigrant workers within the American capitalist economy through the point of view of the novel's protagonist Jurgis Rudkus, *The Jungle* offered readers an initial glimpse into the horrors of the slaughterhouse. In one particular scene, Sinclair detailed the automation, efficiency, and cruelty exhibited in the slaughterhouse at the turn of the twentieth-century:

They had chains which they fastened about the leg of the nearest hog, and the other end of the chain they hooked into one of the rings upon the wheel. So, as the wheel turned, a hog was suddenly jerked off his feet and borne aloft. At the same instant the ear was assailed by a most terrifying shriek. . . . The shriek was followed by another, louder and yet more agonizing--for once started upon that journey, the hog never came back; at the top of the wheel he was shunted off upon a trolley and went sailing down the room. And meantime another was swung up, and then another, and another, until there was a double line of them, each dangling by a foot and kicking in frenzy--and squealing. The uproar was appalling, perilous to the ear-drums; one feared there was too much sound for the room to hold--that the walls must give way or the ceiling crack. There were high squeals and low squeals, grunts, and wails of agony; there would come a momentary lull, and then a fresh outburst, louder than ever, surging up to a deafening climax. . . . Meantime, heedless of all these things, the men upon the floor were going about their work. Neither squeals of hogs nor tears of visitors made any difference to them; one by one they hooked up the hogs, and one by one with a swift stroke they slit their throats. There was a long line of hogs, with squeals and life-blood ebbing away together; until at last each started again, and vanished with a splash into a huge vat of boiling water. It was all so very businesslike that one watched it fascinated. It was pork-making by machinery, pork-

making by applied mathematics. And yet somehow the most matter-of-fact person could not help thinking of the hogs; they were so innocent, they came so very trustingly; and they were so very human in their protests--and so perfectly within their rights! They had done nothing to deserve it; and it was adding insult to injury, as the thing was done here, swinging them up in this cold-blooded, impersonal way, without a pretence at apology, without the homage of a tear. Now and then a visitor wept, to be sure; but this slaughtering-machine ran on, visitors or no visitors. It was like some horrible crime committed in a dungeon, all unseen and unheeded, buried out of sight and of memory.<sup>1</sup>

*The Jungle* originally appeared as a series of installments in the socialist newspaper *The Appeal to Reason* and quickly gained notoriety as a large number of readers requested the installments in book form.<sup>2</sup> Fearing repercussions from the powerful meat industry, most publishers shied away from publishing the book. However, New York's Doubleday, Page, and Company decided the potential earnings of the book were worth the risk. According to Charles Patterson in *Eternal Treblinka: Our Treatment of Animals and the Holocaust*, "To protect itself against possible lawsuits, Doubleday sent one of its own editors, Isaac Marcossou, to Chicago to check out the accuracy of Sinclair's descriptions."<sup>3</sup> Marcossou confirmed Sinclair's account, later stating, "I was able to get a Meat Inspector's badge, which gave me access to the secret confines of the meat empire. . . . Day and night I prowled over its foul-smelling domain and I was able to see with my own eyes much that Sinclair had never even heard about."<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps no other western practice has contributed so profoundly to animal suffering and death than the factory farm and slaughterhouse. As outlined by Sinclair in his critique of capitalism, the slaughterhouse stands as a capitalist model for the efficiency and automation of slaughter. The efficiency and automation of murder is central to Charles Patterson's *Eternal*

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<sup>1</sup> Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle*, Literary Touchstone Edition (Clayton, Delaware: Prestwick House, 2005), 40-41.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Patterson, *Eternal Treblinka* (New York: Lantern Books, 2002), 57, accessed May 10, 2014, Google Play E-Book.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

*Treblinka*, wherein he examines the parallels between the atrocities committed against the human victims of the Holocaust and the animal victim of human dominion. Patterson divides his discussion of the comparisons between the Holocaust and modern society's oppression of animals into two major parts. The first half details the establishment of the human as the master species and connects this idea to the Nazi concept of a master race. The second half traces the industrialization of slaughter, both in the system implemented in the Holocaust through the Nazi death camps, as well as in the modern factory farm and slaughterhouse. According to Patterson, "The philosopher Theodor Adorno (1903-69), a German Jew who was forced into exile by the Nazis. . . .wrote, 'Auschwitz begins wherever someone looks at a slaughterhouse and thinks: they're only animals.' If Professor Adorno is right. . .the road to Auschwitz begins at the slaughterhouse."<sup>5</sup>

The history of the slaughterhouse and the twentieth-century development of the factory farm have been interwoven in the progression of American capitalism. Commercial meatpacking began in North America around 1660, with the opening of a warehouse in Springfield, Massachusetts.<sup>6</sup> These early American meatpacking facilities, Patterson contends, "clubbed, stabbed, and hung the pigs upside down to drain."<sup>7</sup> By mid-nineteenth century, pig flesh was the most common "meat" in America and Cincinnati was home to the country's booming pork industry; in 1844 the city had 26 slaughterhouses, just three years later the number had grown to 40.<sup>8</sup> The methods utilized to end the pigs' life consisted of beating them into submission with clubs before slitting their throat.<sup>9</sup> Patterson contends, "The rough way Americans treated farm animals made an impression on new European immigrants. One Dutchman wrote back to his

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<sup>5</sup> Patterson, 52.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 53-54.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

friends in the Netherlands that American farmers had no regard for their animals.”<sup>10</sup> By 1850, the organization of labor became a staple of the meat packaging industry as larger plants began coupling their slaughter and packing operations.<sup>11</sup> From 1850 until the 1860s, another shift occurred as Chicago replaced Cincinnati as the new “slaughter capital of America,” a result of its many railroad lines, as well as the opening of the Union Stock Yards. The Union Stock Yards consisted of 2,300 interlocked livestock pens, making it the largest of its kind in the world.<sup>12</sup> As Patterson details, “By 1886. . .with trains every day unloading hundreds of cars full of western longhorn cattle, sheep, and pigs into the Yards’ vast network of pens. In order to handle the growing volume of livestock transported on rail lines. . .meatpackers introduced the conveyor belt to increase the speed and efficiency of the nation’s first mass-production industry.”<sup>13</sup> Less than a decade before publication of Sinclair’s controversial work on the slaughterhouse, Union Stock Yards during its existence had slaughtered nearly 400 million animals.<sup>14</sup>

Patterson contends that the differences in the practice of the slaughter of animals “between the early 1900s and today mostly have to do with much faster line speeds and a tremendous increase in volume.”<sup>15</sup> In fact, as Patterson writes, “Today, what one activist describes as the ‘cruel, fast, tightly run, profit-driven system of torture and murder in which animals are hardly thought of as living beings. . .kills more animals in a single day than all the slaughterhouses in Sinclair’s day killed in a year.”<sup>16</sup> The fundamental operations of “assembly-line” slaughter today actually are not all that different from the process used 100 years ago.

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<sup>10</sup> Patterson, 54.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 55-56.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>16</sup> Patterson, 62.



The continuity of assembly-line slaughter, now stretching over more than a century, can be explained through the popularity and resilience of Fordism. Patterson writes, “In his autobiography, *My Life and Work* (1922), Ford revealed that his inspiration for assembly-line production came from a visit he made as a young man to a Chicago slaughterhouse.”<sup>17</sup> Henry Ford’s glimpse into the efficiency of slaughter and dismemberment sparked a monumental change in the American economic system of production. Fordism applied the techniques of the early-twentieth century slaughterhouse to implement a system of mechanized mass production that relied on the foundational principles of standardization and mechanization. According to Heery and Noon,

His [Ford] production system was characterized by several important features: linear work sequencing, an interdependence of tasks, a moving assembly line, the use and refinement of dedicated machinery, and specialized machine tools. . . . Fordism is geared towards mass production, which depends upon mass consumption. Changes in patterns of consumption would therefore require changes in the work organization or else render Fordist production inappropriate.<sup>18</sup>

The Fordist production system sought maximum throughput in factories and depended on the logistics of each factory. According to Jonathan Rees, “While sometimes defined as the productivity of a factory, throughput is actually a measure of the speed and volume of the flow of goods through the production process. . . . Starting in the 1880s, inventors developed new machinery like conveyors and rollers, which made production through a continuous process possible.”<sup>19</sup> The use of the assembly line in the Ford Motor Company’s factories revolutionized the American production system; moreover, its ability to maximize efficiency guaranteed the implementation of Fordism anywhere efficiency was sought.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>18</sup> Edmund Heery and Mike Noon, “Fordism,” *In A Dictionary of Human Resource Management*. 2nd revised edition. Oxford University Press, 2008. Accessed June 10, 2014. <http://www.oxfordreference.com>.

<sup>19</sup> Jonathan Rees, *Industrialization and the Transformation of American Life* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2013), 113.

Although Fordism helped stretch the industrialization of production, it borrowed greatly from production methods established by Frederick Winslow Taylor. In his 1911 book *The Principles of Scientific Management*, Taylor theorized the importance of conserving the strength of the worker by minimizing his/her bodily movement, and thus increasing work efficiency.<sup>20</sup> Rees writes, “Ending that waste of motion, Taylor thought, would obviously benefit management, but also it would create what he called ‘first-class men,’ efficient employees who would then be able to keep more of the benefit of that efficiency for themselves, thereby mitigating the negative effects of industrialization on those workers.”<sup>21</sup> Taylor studied the operations of workers and then broke up their tasks into parts, timing them with a stopwatch in order to measure their efficiency. This allowed him to select the most efficient and organized method of labor.<sup>22</sup> Another emphasis Taylor recommended was to implement “piece rates,” where employees would be paid based on output rather than a consistent wage for the job.<sup>23</sup> Taylor contended that piece work would motivate workers to maximize their output, thus increasing their efficiency. According to Rees, “To determine where the piece rate should be set, he made an arbitrary decision as to how fast a normal worker should be going and then set the piece rate to reflect that.”<sup>24</sup> Rees contends, “The advantage of this system was that if the employees met this standard, employers could lower the piece rate and get workers working even harder to reach the same rate.”<sup>25</sup> This method, known as the speedup, not only pitted workers against one another, by putting greater emphasis on one individual’s production, but it also took

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<sup>20</sup> (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1911), 36.

<sup>21</sup> Rees, 109-110.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>23</sup> Taylor, 36.

<sup>24</sup> Rees, 110-111.

<sup>25</sup> Rees, 111.

knowledge away from the employees productive capabilities and gave it to the employers.<sup>26</sup>

These principles of efficiency helped to define scientific management and Taylor's impact on it was so profound that the process was—and is—often referred to as Taylorism.<sup>27</sup>

Slaughterhouse owners implemented the principles of Fordism and Taylorism to maximize the efficiency of slaughterhouses and to increase their output, and heighten and intensify the industrialization of slaughter. These principles, later adopted by the Nazis, not only were implemented to conquer most of Europe with the construction of an efficient military, but helped lead to the slaughter of millions of Jews in Nazi death camps. As Patterson notes, "Hitler regarded Ford as a comrade-in-arms and kept a life-sized portrait of him on the wall next to his desk in his office at the Nazi party headquarters in Munich."<sup>28</sup> Ford was also the only American to be mentioned in *Mein Kampf*, where Hitler praised his endeavors.<sup>29</sup>

The same techniques used to exterminate millions of humans in the 1930s and 1940s continue to be employed today through similar but perfected and even more efficient techniques in the slaughterhouse. Political artist, animal activist, and author Sue Coe traveled the United States for six years visiting slaughterhouses, where she sketched and described what she had witnessed. She later documented these encounters in her book *Dead Meat*.<sup>30</sup> Patterson details several of Coe's encounters, but none epitomizes the cruelty and suffering within American slaughterhouses more than her recollection of a small family-owned slaughterhouse in Pennsylvania:

She enters the facility shortly before the lunch break: 'We step into a large room, and I look up and see corpses of huge, skinned animals. . . . I definitely do not want to fall in all the blood and intestines,' writes Coe. 'The workers are wearing nonslip boots, yellow

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>28</sup> Patterson, 72-73.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>30</sup> Alexander Cockburn, introduction to *Dead Meat* by Sue Coe (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1995), 28-31.

aprons, and hard hats. It is a scene of controlled, mechanized, chaos. Like most slaughterhouses, ‘this place is dirty—filthy in fact—flies swarm everywhere. The walls, floors, everything, everywhere are covered with blood. The chains are caked with dried blood.’ . . . As she walks onto the kill floor to position herself with her sketchbook in the doorway between where the cows are lined up for slaughter and the kill floor, a loud horn suddenly sounds and the workers disperse for lunch. Coe sees something move to her right, so she edges closer to the knocking pen to get a better look. ‘Inside is a cow. She has not been stunned and has slipped and fallen in the blood. The men have gone to lunch and left her. Time passes. Occasionally she struggles, banging the sides of the steel enclosure with her hooves. . . . Once she raises her head enough to look outside the box, but seeing the hanging corpses she falls back again.’ Coe starts drawing, but when she looks back at the box, she notices that the weight of the cow’s body has forced milk from her udders. As the milk flows in a small stream toward the drainage area, it mixes with blood so they go down the drain together. One of the injured cow’s legs is sticking out of the bottom of the steel enclosure. . . . When the workers return from their lunch break, they tie on their yellow aprons and get back to work. Coe sees a man she hadn’t noticed before come in. He kicks the injured cow hard three or four times to try to get her to stand up, but she can’t. Danny leans over into the box to try to shoot her with his compression stunner, which will drive a five-inch bolt into her brain. When he thinks he has good aim at her head, he fires. . . . He goes over to her, chains one of her legs, and swings her up. She struggles, and her legs kick as she swings upside down. Danny talks to the unstunned ones as he slits their throats, ‘Come on girl, take it easy.’<sup>31</sup>

Coe later wrote of her tour of the slaughterhouses, “This is Dante’s Inferno,’ . . . ‘steam, noise, blood, smell, and speed. Sprinklers wash off meat, giant vacuum-packing machines use heat to seal twenty-two pieces of flesh a minute.’”<sup>32</sup> According to Patterson,

Coe’s reference here to ‘Dante’s Inferno’ brings to mind the reaction of Franz Stangl to the Treblinka death camp when he arrived to take up his duties as commandant. . . . ‘Treblinka that day was the most awful thing I saw during all of the Third Reich’—he buried his face in his hands—‘it was ‘Dante’s Inferno,’ he said through his fingers. ‘It was Dante come to life. When I entered the camp and got out of the car on the square I stepped knee-deep into notes, currency, precious stones, jewelry, clothes. They were everywhere, strewn all over the square. The smell was indescribable; the hundreds, no, the thousands of bodies everywhere, decomposing, putrefying.’<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Sue Coe, *Dead Meat*, quoted in Patterson, *Eternal Treblinka*, 63-65.

<sup>32</sup> Coe, *Dead Meat* (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1995), 118.

<sup>33</sup> Patterson, 68.

The industrialization of slaughter that treats human and non-human animals alike as nothing more than commodities in a system designed for speed and efficiency, links the slaughterhouse and the extermination of billions of non-human animals and the extermination of millions of humans in the Holocaust. Patterson claims that the industrialized slaughter of cattle, pigs, sheep, and other animals “paved the way, at least indirectly, for the final solution.”<sup>34</sup> He writes, “Throughout the history of our ascent to dominance as the master species, our victimization of animals has served as the model and foundation for our victimization of each other.”<sup>35</sup> Many Nazi practices were modeled on the practices in the slaughterhouse. According to Patterson, “It is significant that the Nazis treated their victims like animals before they murdered them. . . .The Nazis forced those whom they were about to murder to get completely undressed and huddle together, something that is not normal behavior for human beings. Nakedness suggests an identity as animals; when combined with crowding, it suggests a herd of cattle or sheep.”<sup>36</sup> Dehumanizing victims made them easy to kill. Two of the most highly industrialized nations of the twentieth century, Germany and the United States, accounted for the slaughter of millions of human and nonhuman animals through the American slaughterhouse and the German gas chambers.<sup>37</sup>

Although the purpose of killing, as well as the identity of the victims differed, both the slaughterhouse and gas chamber share certain qualities. As Patterson contends, the shared operations or methodology of industrialized killing in the slaughterhouse and in Nazi death camps consists of: (1) streamlining the process, (2) the chute/funnel/tube, (3) processing the sick,

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

weak, or injured, and (4) the concept of “humane slaughter.”<sup>38</sup> Streamlining the process refers to the essential elements of speed and efficiency at both American slaughterhouses and Nazi death camps. Patterson elaborates, “At killing centers speed and efficiency are essential for the success of the operation. Just the right mix of deception, intimidation, physical force, and speed is needed to minimize the chance of panic or resistance that will disrupt the process.”<sup>39</sup> Speed is also critical to increase the numbers killed within short periods of time and efficiency suppresses the “operator’s” potential for feeling guilt after the fact, or their concern for the victims during the act.<sup>40</sup> Key elements of streamlining the process, as Patterson claims, make the “acts of mass murder as routine, mechanical, repetitive, and programmed as possible.”<sup>41</sup>

In both killing centers, the chute, funnel, or tube stands as the last passage for the human or animal before death. One example of this mechanism, described by Patterson, can be found at a facility in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, where “the nearly block-long underground passage used to drive livestock from the stockyard to the Morrell meatpacking plant is called the ‘Tunnel of Death.’”<sup>42</sup> Most slaughterhouses use similar passages to reduce panic, maintain order, and keep the process speedy and efficient. Crucial to Patterson’s analysis, at the Nazi death camps Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka, “the tube was the final passage that led to the gas chambers, once inside the tube, death was imminent.”<sup>43</sup>

The sick, weak, or injured “interfere” with the speed and efficiency of the process.<sup>44</sup> As Patterson details,

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<sup>38</sup> Patterson, 108-130.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 108-109.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>43</sup> Patterson, 111.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

Each center has to find ways to deal with those who can't keep up. At Treblinka, after a camp staff member ordered the new arrivals to turn over their luggage and valuables and prepare themselves for the shower. . . .the staff member told the old, the sick, the injured, and mothers with babies to go to the 'infirmary,' where they would receive medical attention. So while guards drove those designated for gassing to the disrobing area, other guards led those destined for the 'infirmary' up the path to the execution pit.<sup>45</sup>

Animals too sick, old, or injured to move quickly through the process are either left behind until workers have time to deal with them or they are cast into the "dead pile."<sup>46</sup> One "bitterly ironic" feature of killing operations, Patterson writes, "is their [operations] *sic* attempt to make killing more humane."<sup>47</sup> Hitler conveyed the need for humane killing policies and believed it to be more humane to kill "defective" children than to let them live.<sup>48</sup> In the United States, the 1958 Humane Slaughter Act, sought to make the slaughter of livestock more humane, stating, "animals whose meat is sold to the federal government or its agencies be rendered 'insensible to pain'. . . .before being shackled, hoisted, thrown, cast, or cut."<sup>49</sup>

The shared qualities of the industrialization of slaughter is emphasized in the title of Patterson's work, taken from the Yiddish writer Isaac Bashevis Singer, who escaped the Holocaust in his native Poland to come to the United States. Treblinka, a Nazi extermination camp located in Poland, claimed more lives during the Holocaust than any other death camp, except Auschwitz.<sup>50</sup> The title derives from Singer's "The Letter Writer," wherein he links the oppression of animals to the Nazi crimes at the Treblinka extermination camp:

In his thoughts, Herman spoke a eulogy for the mouse who had shared a portion of her life with him and who, because of him, had left this earth. "What do they know—all

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 112.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 112-113.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>50</sup> Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (London: Penguin Books, 2001), 143.

these scholars, all these philosophers, all the leaders of the world—about such as you?” They have convinced themselves that man, the worst transgressor of all the species, is the crown of creation. All other creatures were created merely to provide him with food, pelts, to be tormented exterminated. In relation to them, all people are Nazis: for the animals it is an eternal Treblinka.<sup>51</sup>

The eternal Treblinka for animals continues today as the interwoven practices of factory farming and slaughter have increased as the demand for animal flesh rises. Such high demand, coupled with the desire to increase production, led to a notable shift in the American agricultural system in the last half of the twentieth century. This shift was contingent on the disappearance of small and medium-size dairy, cattle, and hog farms, as they were replaced by large scale, highly intensive factory farms.<sup>52</sup> Similar to the industrial shift seen in the slaughterhouse at the turn of the twentieth century, farms became transformed into factories beginning in the 1920s and lasting through the 1970s. As Jim Mason discusses in the introduction to *Animal Factories*,

The reality of a modern animal factory stands in sharp contrast to the farm of our fantasies. . . . Farms like the one of my childhood are rapidly being replaced by animal factories. Animals are reared in huge buildings, crowded in with cages stacked up like so many shipping crates. On the factory farms there are no pastures, no streams, no seasons, not even day and night. Animal-wise herdsmen and milkmaids have been replaced by automated feeders, computers, closed-circuit television, and vacuum pumps. Health and productivity come not from frolics in sunny meadows but from syringes and additive-laced feed.<sup>53</sup>

As Deborah Fitzgerald contended in her book *Every Farm a Factory*, the financial crisis of the 1980s threw the farming industry into crisis and finalized the transition from farm to factory.<sup>54</sup>

Experts offered various explanations for this new farming crisis, but at the time of the financial

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<sup>51</sup> Isaac Bashevis Singer, “The Letter Writer,” in *The Collected Stories of Isaac Bashevis Singer* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1982), 274-275.

<sup>52</sup> Food and Water Watch, “Factory Farm Nation: How America Turned Its Livestock Farms into Factories,” 2010, accessed March 4, 2014. <http://foodandwater.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/FactoryFarmNation-web.pdf> (accessed March 4, 2014), v.

<sup>53</sup> Jim Mason and Peter Singer, *Animal Factories* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1980), xiii.

<sup>54</sup> Deborah Fitzgerald, *Every Farm a Factory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 1.



crisis no one was certain. What could be agreed upon was the similarity the current crisis shared with the farming crash of the 1920s. As Fitzgerald notes, “The approaches at the time missed a fundamental feature of twentieth-century agriculture, and that is the emergence of an industrial logic or ideal in agriculture.”<sup>55</sup> She explains,

Beginning in the 1920s, farmers and their families had to contend with a new set of opportunities and constraints, most of which grew out of the new industrial production systems. These systems, epitomized by the modern mass production factory and industrial boardroom, linked capital, raw materials, transportation networks, communication systems, and newly trained technical experts. Interconnected and often sprawling, these systems of production and consumption functioned like grids into which fit the more identifiable components of industrialization—the tractors, paved roads, bank credit, migrant labor, and commodity markets.<sup>56</sup>

It was this system, Fitzgerald argues, one reflective of industrialization, first in the 1920s and again in the 1980s, that linked farms and farmers in prosperity and crisis. It aligned them with new agents, technologies, and practices.<sup>57</sup> Thus, the transformation of the farm to factory, cannot be linked to one specific time but happened as part of a gradual process of modernization.

Following World War II, leaders in business and agriculture suggested that the struggling agricultural industry was in need of modernization in order to become more profitable and efficient, like the factories that earlier had adopted the principles of Taylor and Ford.<sup>58</sup>

Fitzgerald writes, “Timeliness of operations, large-scale production sites, mechanization, standardization of product, specialization, speed of throughput, routinization of the workforce, and a belief that success was based first and foremost upon a notion of “efficiency”—all these principles were drawn directly from the factories and businesses only recently declared

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 4-5.

<sup>58</sup> Fitzgerald, 5.

successful.”<sup>59</sup> For farmers this meant following a model that by now had been proven successful. Fitzgerald explains, “Henry Ford’s production facilities, for instance, stood as a dramatic example of the efficacy of rational management techniques, which many felt should now be applied to farming. As an International Harvester promotion exhorted [by 1920], ‘Every Farm a Factory.’”<sup>60</sup>

Although the industrialization of slaughterhouses progressed rapidly, the industrialization of the farm constituted more of a gradual process through three prominent eras of industrialization that transformed the local farm from small plots of crops and pastures, to the highly intensive, mechanized, and efficient methods seen today in factory farms. Fitzgerald points to the years following World War I, the decade following World War II, and the 1970s, as the three major eras of industrialization that witnessed the farm undergo its greatest transformations.<sup>61</sup> Leading up to World War I, the success of the modern factory system was evident and Ford’s Highland Park and River Rouge factories stood as the example. As Fitzgerald notes,

Here the various components of modern factory production, of industrialization, came together in dramatic display. This system encompassed not only the physical handling of materials, the moving assembly line, and the mechanization of small tasks, but also the unprecedented managerial interest in workers’ personal lives and the aggressive attempt to mold each worker into a perfect, Americanized cog in the Fordist machine.<sup>62</sup>

As industrialization transformed the operations inside the factory through the applied principles of Taylorism and Fordism, American culture felt the change. Fitzgerald explains, “Taylor and Ford were only the most obvious examples of the sea change occurring in America in the years leading up to World War I. In businesses, schools, homes, government offices,

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 5-9.

<sup>62</sup> Fitzgerald, *Every Farm a Factory*, 27.

factories, cities, and towns, even in the arts, the unmistakable trajectory was from the chaotic to the controlled, from loose to tight, from spontaneous to planned, from curved to straight.”<sup>63</sup>

Although the American agricultural system at first proved resilient to major change, as World War I came to an end very few farms remained untouched by industrialization.<sup>64</sup> According to Fitzgerald, “As the war began to recede from view, it became apparent that the agricultural system was in serious disrepair. No longer could one speak of a few desultory farmers who lacked ability; now even good farmers were caught in the industrial web.”<sup>65</sup> Over the next 50 years the transformation of farm to factory would become complete and it would be the animals who would pay the greatest price for human “advancement.”

In the 1970s, another era of industrialization took hold in the American agricultural system as modernization and new technological advances allowed for the animal body to be manipulated and standardized, much like the machinery driving Ford’s assembly lines. As Mason and Singer note, “Constant manipulations of animals’ anatomy, physiology, heredity, and environment are required to keep health problems and other costs down so that commodity production can proceed at a profitable level.”<sup>66</sup> The status of these factory animals as commodities was apparent in the trade journals of the time. The March 1978 edition of *National Hog Farmer* instructed, “The breeding sow should be thought of, and treated as, a valuable piece of machinery whose function is to pump out baby pigs like a sausage machine.”<sup>67</sup> One entry in the March 1976 issue of *Farm Journal* in a reference to pigs’ states, “They can still eat—total

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. For additional information on changes in American agriculture that favored large producers, see also Gilbert Fite, “Great Plains Farming: A Century of Change and Adjustment,” *Agricultural History* 51, no. 1 (January 1977): 244-56; Fred Shannon, *The Farmer’s Last Frontier: Agriculture, 1860-1897* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1989); and Paul Conkin, *A Revolution Down on the Farm: The Transformation of American Agriculture since 1929* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2009).

<sup>66</sup> Mason and Singer, 35.

<sup>67</sup> L. J. Taylor, *National Hog Farmer* (March 1978) 6: 27, quoted in Mason and Singer, *Animal Factories*, 35.

darkness has no effect on their appetites.”<sup>68</sup> In January 1976, the *Farm Journal* suggested, “Estrus control will open the doors to factory hog production. Control of female cycles is the missing link to the assembly-line approach.”<sup>69</sup> Yet another entry in *Hog Farm Management* in 1976 read: “Forget the pig is an animal. Treat him just like a machine in a factory. Schedule treatments like you would lubrication. Breeding season like the first step in an assembly line. And marketing like the delivery of finished goods.”<sup>70</sup>

Despite the ongoing shift in the American agricultural system, it was not until 1997 that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) first recognized factory farms. In 1997, through data provided in the Census of Agriculture, the USDA defined factory farms as operations consisting of at least 500 beef cattle, 500 dairy cows, and 1,000 hogs on a single feedlot. For chickens, the criterion was 100,000 egg-laying chickens and 500,000 broiler chickens housed in a single location.<sup>71</sup> During the first decade of the twenty-first century, another trend became evident: livestock numbers within individual factory farms were increasing at alarming rates. An analysis conducted by the Food & Water Watch from 2002 to 2007, found livestock numbers on the largest American factory farms increased by 20 percent; from 1997 to 2007, cows on factory dairy farms doubled in population. In fact, every species of livestock in intensive farming practices increased over the 10-year period.<sup>72</sup> The report by the Food & Water Watch attributes the substantial growth from 1997 to 2007 of the factory farm to three factors:

(1) Misguided farm policy encouraged over-production of commodity crops such as corn and

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<sup>68</sup> Harry Sterkel Jr., “Cut Light and Clamp Down on Tail Biting,” *Farm Journal* (March 1976): 6, quoted in Mason and Singer, *Animal Factories*, 118.

<sup>69</sup> Earl Ainsworth, “Revolution in Livestock Breeding on the Way,” *Farm Journal* (January 1976): 36, quoted in Mason and Singer, *Animal Factories*, 19.

<sup>70</sup> J. Byrnes, “Raising Pigs by the Calendar at Maplewood Farm,” *Hog Farm Management* (September 1976): 30, quoted in Mason and Singer, *Animal Factories*, 1.

<sup>71</sup> Food and Water Watch, v.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

soybeans that artificially depressed the price of livestock feed and created an indirect subsidy to factory farm operations; (2) a lack of interference in the mergers and acquisitions of the largest agribusinesses encouraged other factory farms to grow in order to stay competitive; (3) and loose environmental rules failed to hold factory farms responsible for the pollution that was a product of intensive agricultural practices.<sup>73</sup>

The substantial growth of the factory farm, both in the number of farms and in livestock population, had a profound impact on the environment and individual animal species. A 2009 USDA report found that almost nine billion animals were slaughtered in the United States alone, the vast majority residents of factory farms. The nearly nine billion animals includes: approximately 33 million cattle, one million calves, 114 million hogs, 2.5 million sheep, 8.5 billion chickens, 240 million turkey, and 23 million duck.<sup>74</sup> For the animals, there is usually just one exit from the factory farm, death, whether by disease or malnutrition or by slaughter. Life inside the factory farm is characterized by overcrowding, a lack of natural light, and unsanitary living conditions.<sup>75</sup> The quality of the animal's life is also degraded due to an unnatural diet and by the frequent administering of antibiotics and growth hormones.<sup>76</sup> According to Jim Mason and Peter Singer, "Even if feed is properly formulated, some animals get inadequate diets. At the feed mill, nutrients are added-in amounts according to what the 'average' animal needs. Because of stress or individual differences, some animals need more of an essential nutrient than

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Statistics Board, *Poultry Slaughter Summary*, Pou 2-1 (10), (Washington, D.C.: National Agricultural Statistics Service, 2010), 12, accessed April 2, 2013. <http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/usda/nass/PoulSlauSu//2010s/2010/PoulSlauSu-02-25-2010.pdf>, and U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Statics Board, *Livestock Slaughter Summary*, Mt An 1-2 -1 (10), (Washington, D.C.: National Agricultural Statistics Service, 2010), 3, accessed April 2, 2013. <http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/usda/nass/LiveSlauSu//2010s/2010/LiveSlauSu-04-29-2010.pdf>

<sup>75</sup> Food and Water Watch, 26.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

they get.”<sup>77</sup> Nutritional deficiencies are common and can cause ailments for the animal, such as blindness, organ damage, bone and muscle weakness, deformities, and internal bleeding.<sup>78</sup>

Chickens were the first animals to become commoditized through practices of the factory farm. Singer writes, “The first animal to be removed from the relatively natural conditions of traditional farms and subjected to the full stress of modern intensive farming was the chicken.”<sup>79</sup> The initial step in turning the chicken from animal to commodity was confining the animal indoors. Confinement allows an environment that can be manipulated to encourage faster growth with a minimum of food.<sup>80</sup> Manipulation of lighting alters the chicken's natural disposition. Through different stages of the chicken's life, adjustment of the lights favor certain behaviors or preferable biological responses. When crowding becomes a problem, the lights are constantly dim. According to Singer, “The point of this dim lighting is to reduce the effects of crowding. Toward the end of the eight or nine week life of the chicken, there may be as little as half a square foot of space per chicken.”<sup>81</sup> In such circumstances of overcrowding, without dim lighting, stress will often lead chickens to fight, kill, and eat one another.<sup>82</sup> Another common practice employed by factory farms is de-beaking. The practice essentially is the removal of a portion of the chicken's beak by cutting it off with a blade. This process is intended to remedy cannibalism and for the most part is successful, leaving chickens completely defenseless.<sup>83</sup> While many farmers contend that de-beaking is not painful for the chicken, Singer refutes this contention, notably due to the exceptionally sensitive nerves in the beak.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Mason and Singer, 29.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Singer, *Animal Liberation*, 98.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 99.

<sup>81</sup> Singer, *Animal Liberation*, 99.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

Within the factory farm, pigs endure constant and extremely close confinement. According to Singer, “Common to all [animals] is a need for physical comfort. We have seen that this elementary requirement is denied to hens; and, as we shall see, it is denied to pigs as well.”<sup>85</sup> Both male and female pigs endure the practices of factory farming, a sow’s life is especially harsh. After the sow is inseminated, she is locked in a narrow gestational crate, often no greater than 18 to 24 inches in width, for nearly the entirety of her four-month pregnancy.<sup>86</sup> Her movement is so restricted that she is unable to turn around or walk. According to the Humane Farming Association (HFA), “A common response shown by animals in highly-stressful situations where they have little control over their environment is to perform repetitive movements, called stereotypies.”<sup>87</sup> The repetitive movements of a sow confined include rubbing their snout against the crate creating bloody and painful abscesses.<sup>88</sup> The sow is moved days before she gives birth from the gestational crate to the farrowing crate. According to the HFA,

Against all her natural instincts, she must give birth to piglets, nurse them, eat, sleep, defecate, drink, stand, and lie in the same cramped space. The nursing period is cut drastically short by the premature separation of the piglets from their mother. The sow is immediately re-impregnated – and sent back to an even bleaker existence in the gestation crate. This vicious cycle is repeated over and over again until the sow’s “productivity” wanes, and she is sent to slaughter.<sup>89</sup>

If an American dog was subjected to the same lifestyle of a pig in the factory farming industry, her owner could be charged with the criminal offense of animal abuse. Such factory farming techniques however, is a common practice.

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 119-120.

<sup>86</sup> The Humane Farming Association (HFA), “Inside the Pork Industry,” accessed February 24, 2014. <http://www.hfa.org/porkIndustry.html>

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> The Humane Farming Association (HFA), “Inside the Pork Industry.”

Of all intensive livestock farming practices, the methods of raising baby calves for their flesh stands as a sobering reminder of the cruelty that the human species can inflict on nonhuman animals. The determining factor for the quality of calf flesh is their diet, physique, and age resulting in flesh that is exceptionally tender and much lighter in color than other beef. Calf flesh originated through the slaughter of very young calves, often those still nursing.<sup>90</sup> Modern practices of factory farming produce flesh from calves that are older and larger, thus maximizing profits. According to Singer,

The trick [to getting veal from older and bigger calves] depends on keeping the calf in highly unnatural conditions. If the calf were left to grow up outside, its playful nature would lead it to romp around the fields. Soon it would begin to develop muscles, which would make its flesh tough. At the same time it would eat grass and its flesh would lose the pale color that the flesh of newborn calves has.<sup>91</sup>

The predominant approach of raising calves for the human consumption of their flesh consists of stringent confinement and a strict diet. The calf's removal from his or her mother occurs shortly after birth. The practice of raising calves for veal prescribes their confinement in a small stall where they are chained by the neck, fed a liquid diet, and all of their bedding is removed to prevent the malnourished calves from eating it.<sup>92</sup> Essentially, veal calves live a short life in confinement within a small cramped concrete stall, where the standard veal stall in the U.S. is under two feet wide.<sup>93</sup> Calves remain in this cramped position for almost four months until they are slaughtered. They have a strong desire to suckle, which cannot be satisfied, and they often cry out for their absent mothers.<sup>94</sup> To maintain the pale color of the meat, the calves are fed an

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Singer, *Animal Liberation*, 129-130.

<sup>92</sup> Singer, *Animal Liberation*, 130.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 132.



anemic diet. The practice of raising calves for veal is nearly universal, even though color of the flesh has little effect on the taste.<sup>95</sup>

The exploitation of nonhuman animals through the intensive agricultural practices of factory farming shares an ominous link with the enslavement and forced servitude of persons of color. Likewise, the connection between human and nonhuman animals in the industrialization of slaughter also details the consequences of human dominion. Yet, as a whole, modern society accepts the abhorrent treatment of nonhuman animals, all the while demonizing the past actions of the Nazis or American slaveholders. Such an inconsistent perspective can be explained only by analyzing the moral status of animals in addressing the question of what it is that separates humans from nonhuman animals.

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<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

CHAPTER 4  
THE MORAL STATUS OF ANIMALS

The question is not, Can they reason? Nor, Can they talk? But, Can they suffer?

-Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles  
and Morals of Legislation*

The question of the moral status of the non-human animal long has haunted western philosophy, as similar and reoccurring concepts emerge in exploring this vital question. As philosopher Gary Steiner maintains, two of the critical questions concern the kinship between human and nonhuman animals, as well as the capacities of nonhuman animals. Both of these questions hold a prominent role in the establishment of the moral status of animals throughout the discourse of Western philosophy.<sup>1</sup> This idea of kinship is prominent in the reflections of Pythagoras on the animal other in the sixth century BCE. As Steiner contends, “Pythagoras espoused an ethic of kinship with animals based on the doctrine of metempsychosis or transmigration of souls.”<sup>2</sup> The metempsychosis view incorporates two positions: the first is that the soul can be transcendent, meaning, according to Steiner, that “the capacity to ascend through various embodiments toward ultimate liberation from embodiment.”<sup>3</sup> The second position holds that the soul can move to and from other embodiments.<sup>4</sup> These positions historically have been prominent in Western philosophy in considering the moral status of nonhuman animals, namely, whether or not the soul can move between human and nonhuman animals. If the soul is transcendental between humans and animals, the moral status of both should also be similar.

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<sup>1</sup> Gary Steiner, *Anthropocentrism And Its Discontents: The Moral Status of Animals in the History of Western Philosophy* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005), 223.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

The interpretation of Pythagoras's position on animals, especially his perceived vegetarian habits, has been attributed to both metempsychosis positions. According to Steiner, "Even if transmigration involves only human bodies, it is still important to maintain a vegetarian diet and to be kind to animals because these activities are conducive to the purification of the soul."<sup>5</sup> The idea of kinship, however, is reflective of a much higher ethic toward animals. According to Steiner, "If transmigration is considered to involve animal bodies as well as human bodies, then the ethical stake on the treatment of animals becomes much higher—one could be eating or otherwise mistreating a kindred spirit."<sup>6</sup> Although Pythagoras's true belief on the animal soul is open to interpretation, the idea of kinship is a recurring theme in the history of philosophy and a catalyst in deliberations on the moral status of animals.

Aristotle understands kinship to rely on the capacities of animals, or how close or distant to one another human and nonhuman animals are positioned.<sup>7</sup> In regard to capacities, Aristotle's position might seem inherently speciesist. However, Steiner questions whether this accusation is truly warranted:

In the zoological texts, such as *History of Animals* and *Parts of Animals*, Aristotle attributes to animals a wide array of capabilities and in many instances appears to attribute to them abilities that presumably require belief. In the psychological, metaphysical, and ethical texts, particularly *On the Soul* and the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle offers his explicit denial that animals are capable of rationality and belief, and he attributes to animals what appears to be a much more limited array of capacities. In one of these latter texts Aristotle badly asserts that animals exist entirely for the sake of human beings. This assertion has done much to cement Aristotle's reputation as a hard-line speciesist.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Steiner, 46.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Aristotle, *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

<sup>8</sup> Steiner, 57.

Steiner finds the contrasting viewpoints in Aristotle's position to rest on the focus of each set of texts. In the first, Aristotle takes a naturalist tone wherein he attributes capacities such as wisdom and intelligence to animals; in his latter texts, Steiner contends, he "explores the place of human beings in the cosmos and thus his focus is on humans and the human condition, in particular."<sup>9</sup> Aristotle understands beings within the context of a hierarchy, where the gods resided at the top, followed closely by humans, and then animals and plants. Steiner contends that the basis of this order relies on Aristotle's belief in *eudaimonia* or happiness.<sup>10</sup> Steiner writes, "Aristotle is unequivocal in his commitment to the proposition that the end of human beings is 'happiness,' by which he means not pleasure or material prosperity but rather a complex ideal of moral virtue. . . . Happiness in this sense depends crucially on the capacity for rational contemplation, which makes human beings most like the gods."<sup>11</sup>

The capacities of an animal are paramount in Aristotle's position, but the Stoics take the distinction by capacities a step further. Although Aristotle limits the divide between human and animal in perceiving humans as a "special kind of animal," the Stoics stretch this divide by restricting the capabilities of the animal and drawing further distinctions between the two. Steiner maintains, "They [the Stoics] drastically restrict the scope of animal experience and make fundamental distinctions between even the perceptual capacities of rational and nonrational beings. . . . In this respect, the Stoics take a decisive step beyond Aristotle, who stops short of seeing an overarching teleology in the cosmos as a whole."<sup>12</sup> It is also notable with the later Stoics that the position of the early Stoics takes priority as the idea of divine providence becomes engrained in Stoic thought. Steiner contends that the result was that for the first time in the

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<sup>9</sup> Steiner, 57-58.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 77.

history of Western philosophy, rationality became the signifier for moral superiority of human animals over nonhuman animals.<sup>13</sup> Although there is no single idea that can be attributed to all the Stoic thinkers, the discourse of *oikeiosis*, or a sense of belonging or community, emerges from Stoic thought as a definitive element throughout the course of the movement.<sup>14</sup> Steiner explains, “The doctrine of *oikeiosis* is a doctrine of community with an ‘all or nothing’ approach to the question of community membership: For a given community, a specific set of capacities is necessary and sufficient for community membership, and the nature of those capacities determines the purpose or highest form of action for the community.”<sup>15</sup> The Stoic ideology of community has remained a central theme throughout the history of Western philosophy. In the human community, because the preeminent capacity has become rationality, and thus, nonhuman animals have been excluded. Some humans exclude other humans whom they perceive to lack rationality; people of color, indigenous populations, and women among others, often found [and find] themselves on the outside of human *oikeiosis*.

Although the Stoics established a perspective of the animal as merely instrumental, Plutarch, active toward the end of the Stoic movement, situates the animal in a much different context. His embracing of Platonism led to a vegetarian lifestyle and an original defense of the nonhuman animal. According to Steiner, “For Plutarch, what nature demands of us pertains both to our nature and the nature of the animals that many of us are accustomed to eat: our own spiritual purification demands that we avoid the savagery of meat eating, and the experiential capacities of animals are sufficiently rich that the use of animals for food is a patent injustice

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<sup>13</sup> Steiner, 77.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 88.

against animals.”<sup>16</sup> A defense of animals was a rarity at the time, but when advocated the discourse relied on human integrity, not on a heightened status for the animal self. Plutarch’s position assumed concern for animal welfare because of the animal’s capacities and contradicted the Stoic conception of the animal.<sup>17</sup> Steiner writes, “Implicit in Plutarch’s thinking is a sense of ‘naturalness,’ according to which animals possess a right to live and prosper. This sense of naturalness confers on human beings the entitlement to use animals and the responsibility to respect the intrinsic worth and prerogatives of animals.”<sup>18</sup> Plutarch constructs his case for animals’ heightened moral status based on their “worth” and “natural dignity.”<sup>19</sup> In establishing this standpoint, Plutarch points to animal capacities such as intelligence, virtues, and emotions.<sup>20</sup> Even given Plutarch’s intentions, he is still guilty of anthropocentrism because his claims on the capacities of animals rely on concepts within the human experience.

Some of the early church fathers were influenced by later Stoic philosophers who denied moral status to non-human animals. Saint Augustine, for example, exemplifies early Christian doctrine’s absolute denial of the moral status of animals in categorically arguing that humans “have no moral obligation whatsoever to animals.”<sup>21</sup> Although the Bible offers conflicting views regarding the status of animals or human obligation to them, anthropocentric interpretations of scripture have been the dominant position, as was the case with Saint Augustine and later Saint Thomas Aquinas. However, the “Christian” position on animals that Aquinas and Augustine maintained was not necessarily a reflection of a Hebrew philosophy, but was more influenced by

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<sup>16</sup> Steiner, 93.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 93-94.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 114.

Aristotle and the Stoics.<sup>22</sup> As Steiner notes, Jewish philosophers such as Maimonides rejected the idea that animals existed only for human benefit, a discourse later abandoned by the early church fathers.<sup>23</sup> As Steiner claims, “Writing in the fourth century, Augustine articulates a Christian dualism according to which spiritual beings are fundamentally superior to physical ones.<sup>24</sup> Augustine contends, “Among living things, the sentient are placed above those which do not have sensation: animals above trees, for instance. And, among the sentient, the intelligent are placed above those which do not have intelligence; men for example, are above cattle. And among the intelligent, the immortal, such as the angels, are placed above the mortal, such as men.”<sup>25</sup> Augustine’s hierarchy shares an almost exact similarity to what Aristotle proposed, with the exception that the immortals at the top are named something different. In his position, Saint Thomas Aquinas shares similarities with Aristotle, the Stoics, and Augustine holding a similar viewpoint that animals have been placed here for human use. Of Aquinas’s position, Steiner writes, “The ‘less noble’ creatures exist ‘for the nobler, as those creatures that are less noble than man exist for the sake of man.’ Beings that are ‘more noble’ stand in closer proximity to God, in virtue of their rational capacity for self-determination.”<sup>26</sup> In both the philosophies of Augustine and Aquinas, similar to that of Aristotle, capacities separate humans and animals and constitute animals as less. Most often this lacking capacity is rationality.

Immanuel Kant, too, carries on the philosophical tradition of anthropocentrism through his ethical theory of deontology. Kant contends that for one to constitute a moral obligation or be

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<sup>22</sup>Steiner, 113.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>25</sup> Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, ed. and trans. R.W. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 471.

<sup>26</sup> Steiner, 127.

a recipient of it, they must qualify as a person.<sup>27</sup> On Kant's perspective, Steiner contends, "A person is a being 'whose existence has in itself an absolute worth, something which as an end in itself could be a ground of determinate laws. To be a ground of determinate laws is to be capable of adducing and contemplating the moral law for oneself; it is to be capable of legislating the law of respect and following the law that one has legislated.'"<sup>28</sup> Because the nonhuman animal lack the capabilities to adduce and contemplate moral law, Kant deems them a "thing," that therefore can be used as a means to human desire.<sup>29</sup> Kant's perspective essentially objectified the animal self and confirmed a belief system that appropriated the nonhuman animal as object and the human animal as subject. Although Kant distances himself from a theological discourse, he uses capacities to distinguish and divide humans from animals.

Perhaps no other belief system contributed more to the nonhuman animal's lowered status than the pre-Enlightenment ideology of Cartesian dualism.<sup>30</sup> Dualism holds that the separation between mind and body differentiate humans and animals. Dualism has also been crucial in justifying dominion for some groups of people and excusing the oppression of the other. Cartesian dualism or Descartes' substance dualism is a modern version of the ancient philosophical conceptions of dualism.<sup>31</sup> Substance dualism holds that there are two kinds of substance: physical matter and mind. Howard Robinson explains,

Descartes believed that there were two kinds of substance: matter, of which the essential property is that it is spatially extended; and mind, of which the essential property is that it thinks. . . . Descartes was not an atomist, he was, like the others, a mechanist about the

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<sup>27</sup> Steiner, 167.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Howard Robinson, "Dualism," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Winter 2012) <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2012/entries/dualism/> (accessed June 15, 2014)

<sup>30</sup> Although debate exists among scholars regarding Descartes' placement in the Enlightenment, his rationalist system of philosophy was foundational to Enlightenment thinking and contributed immensely to the advancement of knowledge in the period. See (William Bristow, "Enlightenment," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2011, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2011/entries/enlightenment/>).

<sup>31</sup> Robinson, "Dualism."



properties of matter. Bodies are machines that work according to their own laws. Except where there are minds interfering with it, matter proceeds deterministically, in its own right. Where there are minds requiring to influence bodies, they must work by 'pulling levers' in a piece of machinery that already has its own laws of operation.<sup>32</sup>

Using the idea of substance dualism, Descartes concluded that while humans possessed both types of matter, the mechanical body as well as the mind to control it, the mind was absent in the nonhuman animal. The perceived absence of the mind in the animal led him to the conclusion that animals were mere matter, only mechanical bodies.

Strachan Donnelley's article on organic existence provides an explanation of human knowledge that essentially led to the factory farm and the overall depreciation of nature due to Cartesian dualism. Donnelley contends that Cartesian assumptions have little viability in differentiating the animal and human. According to Donnelley, "Research centered on organic existence and individuality employs a methodology that merges science and philosophy, pertinent in differentiating animals and human beings, or substantiating whether or not animals should be ethically considered. Almost every ethical perspective is built on the foundation of the individual or self."<sup>33</sup>

Every ethical theory, Donnelley contends, is contingent on individual action and the perspectives that govern those actions. If human obligation to animals is indeed warranted, several aspects of the human and animal need to be understood. The first is that human animals, in common with non-human animals, are individual organisms.<sup>34</sup> According to Donnelley, "To bring together and to elucidate our ethical responsibilities to humans, animals, and animate nature, we need a common philosophic understanding of 'organic individuality:' its nature and

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<sup>32</sup> Robinson, "Dualism."

<sup>33</sup> Strachan Donnelley, "Bioethical Troubles: Animal Individuals and Human Organisms," *The Hastings Center Report* 25, no. 7 (1995): 21. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3528005> (accessed March 25, 2013).

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

ethical significance.”<sup>35</sup> Cartesian dualism provides an interpretation of organic individuality in relation to metaphysics. Descartes’ division of mind and body stood as two self-regulating elements of world reality, thus setting a fixed point that formed a knowledge base contributing to philosophical and scientific thinking alike.<sup>36</sup> In dualism, reality consists of the mind and the body, which is only an extension of the mind.<sup>37</sup> Essentially, dualism contends that animals are just a body, a shell; the individual then implies mind and thought.<sup>38</sup> In this sense, dualism deemphasizes nature and with it nonhuman animals, as well as some humans historically labeled as unevolved or as a species different from white humans. According to Donnelley, “Nature was rendered a mere dynamic, causal, mechanistic, and material affair, ‘mere matter in motion.’”<sup>39</sup> This viewpoint on nature contributed to a major separation of human and animal that created a hierarchy of perspectives, and allowed for the continued marginalization of animals through the justification of their use to satisfy the desires of humans. Obviously, such an outlook remains prevalent in Western culture with the practices of factory farming and vivisection, relatively modern institutions of animal oppression.

Countering the philosophy of Cartesian dualism is the idea of organic individualism, which points to the presence of a connection between an animal’s body and their ontology of existence.<sup>40</sup> Donnelley contends that it is the fragility and finiteness of the living organic form (the body) that constitutes the existence of self, identity, and individuality.<sup>41</sup> This notion is contingent on what humans acknowledge as the state of being.<sup>42</sup> “Being” would seem to imply

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<sup>35</sup> Donnelley, 21.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Donnelley, 23.

action of one who is alive recognizing the life of another, as well as consciousness or self-awareness from one's own ontological perspective.<sup>43</sup> To clarify this idea, when humans see a nonhuman animal, they recognize this state of being within the animal self as a reflection of their own "beingness." According to Donnelley,

We know what it means to be self-concerned or "internally related" to ourselves: to have our own individual being as an insistent practical issue, which must be decided by our own activity in the world (for example, in breathing, eating, seeking shelter, or avoiding enemies). These primordial existential and worldly experiences natively equip us with the experiential means or epistemic arsenal to judge the quick from the dead, the animate from the inanimate.<sup>44</sup>

Organic existence implies a certain criterion, an active merger between body and mind, where self, the organic living, is manifested through the physical body in possession with the inanimate mind; only through a conversion of both, is organic existence possible.<sup>45</sup> Organic existence implies two major ideas that are relevant in an examination of the factory farm. First, it rejects the philosophy of dualism. Although factory farming is a modern embodiment of dualist thought that relegates the animal to status of "thing", animals are not merely mechanical objects to be used as humans wish. The entire concept of organic individuality elevates the presence of animal awareness. When animals suffers through pain or stress, an awareness exists of their circumstances within their self. Organic individuality posits a connection between human and nonhuman animals in both the recognition of the animate in each other and in the shared recognition of finiteness. To understand the extent of suffering initiated by the practice of factory farming and, indeed, to compare it to human suffering aids in better appreciating the suffering of another. Understanding the practices that cause such suffering as well as an ethical

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

standard in regard to animals is necessary. Should humans care about animal suffering because nonhuman animals, like human animals, should be attributed certain rights, or should concern for animal suffering derive simply because animals, too, can suffer?

Philosophers Peter Singer and Tom Regan differ from one another in establishing the moral status of animals. Singer applies a utilitarian ethical theory in his moral consideration of animals, but Tom Regan utilizes rights theory to lessen the moral divide between human and nonhuman animals. In explicating Singer's position, an explanation of the basic assumptions of utilitarian theory is necessary. Jeremy Bentham, the father of utilitarianism, was an early proponent of animal welfare and accepted a consequentialist ethical perspective to confront the moral status of animals. In *An Introduction to Principles of Morals and Legislation*, Bentham discussed his theory of utilitarianism, promoting it as one that valued both humans and animals. His belief that humans have an obligation to consider animal welfare is evidenced in the following passage. According to Bentham,

Other animals, which, on account of their interests having been neglected by the insensibility of the ancient jurists, stand degraded into the class of thing. . . . The day has been, I grieve it to say in many places it is not yet past, in which the greater part of the species, under the denomination of slaves, have been treated. . . . upon the same footing as. . . animals are still. It may one day come to be recognised that the number of the legs, the villosity of the skin, or the termination of the os sacrum are reasons equally insufficient for abandoning a sensitive being to the same fate. What else is it that should trace the insuperable line? Is it the faculty of reason or perhaps the faculty of discourse? But a full-grown horse or dog, is beyond comparison a more rational, as well as a more conversable animal, than an infant of a day or a week or even a month, old. But suppose the case were otherwise, what would it avail? The question is not, Can they reason? nor, Can they talk? but, Can they suffer?<sup>46</sup>

In the above passage, Bentham makes a significant claim regarding the ethical consideration for animals: limited rationality should not exclude animals from ethical consideration. This notable claim relies on the foundation of suffering as the principal criterion for ethical consideration.

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<sup>46</sup> Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles and Morals of Legislation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), 310.

Bentham questions the assertion that only beings of reason are entitled to ethical consideration; his strongest point, however, is that lack of rationality alone should not exclude a being from having moral status, but that, instead, the ability to suffer is of concern. For the utilitarian, pain and pleasure are of equal importance in measuring utility, the foundation of utilitarian ethics. Instances of pleasure are valued positively, contributing to an increase in utility, while instances of pain are valued negatively, subtracting from the net value of an action's consequences. Because nonhuman animals can experience pain and suffering, utilitarianism as Bentham envisioned, extends ethical consideration to nonhuman animals.<sup>47</sup>

Like Bentham, philosopher John Stuart Mill was a prominent contributor to utilitarian theory. In *Utilitarianism*, Mill expands on Bentham's ideas, clarifying utilitarian theory. According to Mill, "The creed which accepts as the foundation of morals 'utility' as the 'greatest-happiness principle' holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain and the privation of pleasure."<sup>48</sup> Utilitarian theory focuses on the consequences of an action, rather than the motivation for it. This means utilitarianism focuses on the product of an action (whether an action produces pleasure or pain). The right (moral) action, then, is the one that produces the greatest amount of happiness and least amount of suffering for the greatest number.

The idea of right action brings up a very important question, one that is central to the consideration of the treatment of animals. If right action produces the greatest happiness and least suffering for the greatest number, does this apply to nonhuman animals or only to people? Although Mill and Bentham differ on several key features of utilitarianism, according to Mark

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<sup>47</sup> Mark Timmons, *Moral Theory: An Introduction* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2002), 128-130.

<sup>48</sup> John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing, 1981), 10-11.

Timmons, “Both accepted the following two claims: Welfare is identical with happiness and happiness is identical with pleasure and the absence of pain.”<sup>49</sup> If a utilitarian were to base ethical decision making on choices that maximize utility, he/she would need to be able to measure pleasure and the absence of pain. For this, Bentham developed what he called felicific calculus, a system to measure specific instances of pleasure and pain. The system calculates utility by evaluating seven features for which pleasure and pain are measured.<sup>50</sup> Bentham’s calculus consisted of intensity, duration, certainty, propinquity, fecundity, purity, and extent. Of his seven features, Bentham put the greatest emphasis on intensity and duration and thus viewed instances of pleasure or pain through the quantity of the intensity and duration of the sensation.<sup>51</sup> Bentham’s felicific calculus could be implemented by using the established quantity-based criteria and assigning a numerical value to instances of pleasure and pain, to thus institute a uniform value-based measurement system. Theoretically, Bentham’s felicific calculus could distinguish actions that promote the highest degree of utility even in situations where an action could affect a great number of people differently.<sup>52</sup> What makes utilitarianism such a good ethical theory in regard to animals and the factory farm is its concept of hedonism, which is the foundation of utilitarian theory. Hedonism prescribes that pleasure, happiness, and welfare are all essentially the same and that pain and suffering negatively affect them. Therefore, utilitarianism promotes actions that maximize pleasure for the greatest number of those who can experience pleasure and minimize pain for those who can experience pain. Bentham’s emphasis on duration and intensity as measurements of pleasure and pain provides strong evidence that utilitarianism is an ethical theory that includes any species that can suffer.

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<sup>49</sup> Mark Timmons, 128-130.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 130-131.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

Expanding on many of the same ideas Bentham developed, Peter Singer provides an even more convincing case for the elevated status of nonhuman animals. Singer contends that animals are not due only ethical consideration, but also equal consideration in interests. Singer's Principle of Equal Consideration of Interests, in essence, stands as a modern form of consequentialism. According to Singer, "The essence of the principle . . . is that we give equal weight in our moral deliberations to the like interests of all those affected by our actions. This means that if only X and Y would be affected by a possible act, and if X stands to lose more than Y stands to gain, it is better not to do the act."<sup>53</sup> Singer's principle gains emphasis when applied to the factory farm, animals, and the human beneficiaries of the practice. Factory farmers raise animals for their flesh, to satisfy consumers' demand for low-cost meat and increased profits for the producer. Animals become victims of factory farming's dependency on space and cost. Animals in the factory farm are forced into confinement for most of their lives in dirty and dark places and consume unnatural food injected with growth hormones to spur exceedingly fast maturation. Concerning Singer's principle, the human gain is consistent with the pleasure of taste from the meat and the cost effectiveness that allows humans to indulge their tastes. The losses for the animals, however, are consistent with a life of suffering and eventual death. In regard for Singer's principle, do animals stand to lose more than humans stand to gain through the practice of factory farming? If animals are indeed worth equal consideration, then their losses definitively outweigh the trivial human gains. The assessment of gains and losses from factory farming become evident when considering the veal calves who live a short life of suffering (losses) in order to satisfy the pleasure of taste (gains) for humans. Singer's principle weighs the interests of both parties and establishes that the losses in this situation outweigh the gains.

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<sup>53</sup> Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), Google Drive e-book, 21.

The validity of Singer's principle lies in his contention that animal interests warrant equal consideration to human interests. To validate this claim, Singer must show that animals are due equal consideration of interests. According to Singer, "If [*sic*] humans are to be regarded as equal only to one another, we need some sense of 'equal' that does not require any actual, descriptive equality of capacities, talents or other qualities."<sup>54</sup> Essentially, Singer's argument is this: If all humans and only humans deserve complete and equal moral status, then there has to be some attribute that all humans and only humans possess. Any attribute that only humans have, some humans lack, and any attribute that all humans possess, most, and at least some, animals possess. An opponent of equal consideration for humans and animals might argue that equal consideration is not warranted because animals cannot reason or possess morals, as do humans. Singer contests this counter claim because some humans cannot reason or some possess few morals. He, like Bentham, points to infants or humans with severe mental defects (e.g., humans in a vegetative state, those afflicted by severe mental illness, or mentally handicapped humans) as examples.<sup>55</sup> In both cases, however, the potential of the human animal remains unacknowledged. What should be said of the potential capacities that the irrational infant will have as he/she matures? In accounting for human potential, Singer highlights the permanently mentally handicapped human as someone who has never, and will never, possess these human specific attributes. According to Singer,

Philosophers who set out to find a characteristic that will distinguish humans from other animals rarely take the course of abandoning these groups of humans by lumping them in with the other animals. It is easy to see why they do not. To take this line without rethinking our attitudes to other animals would entail that we have the right to perform

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<sup>54</sup> "All Animals are Equal," in *Animal Rights and Human Obligations*, ed. Tom Regan and Peter Singer (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1989), Kindle edition, 7.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.



painful experiments on retarded humans for trivial reasons; similarly it would follow that we had the right to rear and kill these humans for food.<sup>56</sup>

What Singer claims is that humans marginalize and use other animals as they see fit, because they see them as inferior due to their assumed lack of reason and rationality; however, they do not hold this same position in regard to humans who lack these same skills. Moreover, Singer further refutes claims against equal consideration on the basis of the possession of traits such as reasoning or moral awareness, because such assertions would allow humans to justify giving higher consideration to certain groups of humans, such as those who are highly intelligent in preference to those of low intelligence.<sup>57</sup>

Regan, who prefers a rights discourse to utilitarianism in positioning the moral status of animals, challenges Singer's Equal Consideration of Interests Principle on the basis of flaws in utilitarian theory. Regan's argument against Singer's principle of equal interests provides a sound examination of Singer's theory and its relationship to factory farming. His counter argument directly attacks the validity of utilitarianism as an ethical theory in considering animals. According to Regan,

It is unclear how, as a utilitarian, he can argue that we have a moral obligation to stop supporting the practice of raising animals intensively (henceforth symbolized as p) because of some statement about the purpose of p. The question the utilitarian must answer is not, (a) what is the purpose of p [factory farming]? It is, (b) All things considered, what are the consequences of p [factory farming], and how do they compare to the value of the consequences that would result if alternatives to p were adopted and supported?<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Singer, "All Animals are Equal," 8.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>58</sup> "Utilitarianism, Vegetarianism and Animal Rights," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 9, no. 4 (Summer 1980): 310. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2265001> (accessed March 30, 2013).

Regan's criticism of Singer's principle contends: First, utilitarianism does not give animals' intrinsic value in and of themselves. Instead, as Regan notes, even if alternatives are adopted replacing-factory farming, animals could still be used for human consumption. An example of this would be "free-range" animals slaughtered for human consumption. Singer must also confront Regan's assertion that despite the principle's grounding in utilitarian thought, it does not follow the approach of consequentialism.<sup>59</sup> As Regan contends, although the purpose (a) of factory farming (p) is substantiated, a utilitarian must account for (b) the consideration of all entities involved as well as the potential consequences of factory farming (p) and how they compare in value to the consequences that would result if alternatives to factory farming (p) were adopted and supported.<sup>60</sup> Arguing from the perspective of a utilitarian, Regan analyzes the consequences that could result if the factory farm was replaced by another practice. According to Regan, "His [Singer's] characterization also leaves out much which, from a utilitarian point of view must be judged to be highly relevant to determining the morality of p."<sup>61</sup> Regan argues, essentially, that Singer fails to account for all the consequences and interests involved in factory farming. According to Regan, "There are, first and most obviously, those who actually raise and sell the animals; but there are many others...whose lives revolve around the success or failure of the animal industry."<sup>62</sup> Regan also acknowledges the family members of workers employed in the industry who would be affected if intensive farming practices were abandoned. Regan writes, "Now, the interests which these persons have in 'business-as-usual,' in raising animals intensively, go well beyond pleasures of taste and are far from trivial."<sup>63</sup> Regan is correct in his assumption that if Singer's principle is justified on the grounds of utilitarianism, then all the

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 310.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 310-311.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Regan, "Utilitarianism, Vegetarianism and Animal Rights," 310-311.

consequences to the action of abandoning factory farming must be considered. But this is only one reason why Regan supports a rights discourse.

Regan's assessment that all consequences must be considered in Singer's principle of equal interests is valid; however, in considering all the consequences, Singer can still maintain his original perspective that his principle would deem factory farming as a wrong action. Regan acknowledges that a utilitarian must investigate fully all the consequences and all entities affected by an action.<sup>64</sup> My response to Regan's criticism of Singer is that he misses a crucial point within Singer's principle. If utilitarianism defines right action as the one that produces the greatest amount of happiness and least amount of suffering for the greatest number, Singer's principle is still satisfactory as an argument against factory farming. Regan's assessment that Singer does not consider all the consequences of ending factory farming for all the humans involved does not matter. When examining the figures presented earlier in this chapter, in 2009 alone, nine billion animals in the United States endured some degree of suffering before being slaughtered for human consumption and 98 percent were products of factory farms.<sup>65</sup> Based on Singer's principle, even if every single American suffers negative effects by ending factory farming, the number would still pale in comparison to the substantial number of animals who suffer and are killed every year in the factory farm and slaughterhouse. Given the emphasis on utility as a significant component of utilitarian theory, Singer's principle works well, both as a theory for the ethical consideration of animals and as a valid utilitarian argument.

In regard to factory farming and other instances of episodic animal oppression, there are many more animals who stand to lose than humans stand to gain, even with every American human being considered. But what if one applies Singer's principle of equal consideration of

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 311.

<sup>65</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture, 3, 12.

interests outside of factory farming to, for example, vivisection, that is, medical experimentation on animals? Vivisection is still an oppressive practice, yet in considering future generations of humans who might benefit from a medical breakthrough, based, at least in part, on animal experimentation and suffering, under Singer's principle vivisection could be morally justified. It is for circumstances such as this that Regan prefers a rights discourse regarding the treatment of animals. Although Singer maintains a direct duty view, a position that asserts humans have at least some direct duties to animals, it falls short of giving them rights.<sup>66</sup>

In *The Case for Animal Rights*, Regan offers his argument on the superiority of a rights discourse over other ethical approaches in elevating the moral status of animals. Regan's principal claim is that animals as moral agents possess certain basic moral rights.<sup>67</sup> According to Regan,

To say that these individuals possess certain rights independently of anyone's voluntary acts, either their own or those of others, and independently of the position they happen to occupy in any given institutional arrangement; these rights are universal—that is, they are possessed by all relevantly similar individuals. . . all who possess these rights possess them equally. . . The principal basic moral right possessed by all moral agents and patients is the right to respectful treatment. . . All moral agents and patients must always be treated in ways that are consistent with the recognition of their equal possession of value of this kind.<sup>68</sup>

Regan's position predicates the moral status of animals on a basis similar to that of humans. Both possess certain basic rights that protect them against the violation of these rights by others. This means that violation of rights cannot be morally justified and is, indeed, a morally wrong action. Regan's position also establishes that moral agents who possess these basic rights are inherently valuable, meaning that moral agents who share this value "must always be treated in

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<sup>66</sup> Tom Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 202.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 327.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

ways that are consistent with the recognition of their equal possession of value of this kind.”<sup>69</sup> This differs from Singer’s position in that his principle of equal consideration of interests, consistent with utilitarian theory, affords animals intrinsic value founded on the pleasure principle. The problem Regan has with this claim is that with their value deriving from the pleasure principle, animals have no value in and of themselves.<sup>70</sup> This is problematic because certain circumstances might negate the utility of pleasure and promote pain and suffering in favor of higher order pleasures.<sup>71</sup> Some cases of vivisection that benefit human animals could morally justify the suffering of nonhuman animals.

Rights discourse, however, is not without its own contradictions. The most glaring problem the animal rights position must confront is that it is guilty of the problems it attempts to remedy. One such difficulty is that rights discourse is inherently speciesist even though it claims not to be so. The reason for this contradiction rests on the extension of rights. Should rights be extended to what is considered lower ordered animals, such as mice? To insects? To amoebas? At some point, a line has to be drawn, favoring some species over others. There is obviously a significant degree of difference between primates and insects, but without differentiating between the two, how can rights discourse effectively value one species over the other? Unlike Singer, who uses the existence of pain and suffering as the catalyst to extend his principle of equal consideration of interests, Regan and other rights-based philosophers must draw an imaginary line within the animal kingdom separating species who are attributed rights and those

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<sup>69</sup> Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights*, 327.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 328.

<sup>71</sup> For a Utilitarian, such as Mill, higher order pleasures can only be obtained by higher order beings (i.e., human animals).

who are not. Is this not the same methodology grounded within anthropocentric ideology, which draws an imaginary line dividing the status of humans and other animals?<sup>72</sup>

In his book *History and Its Limits: Human, Animal, Violence*, Dominick LaCapra questions the human—animal divide and in doing so, the shortcomings of rights discourse. In his call for a new paradigm that departs from anthropocentrism, LaCapra points out the inadequacies of attributing rights to certain groups, but not to others. Rights discourse is understood as a fundamental claim where sovereignty has no bearing or is indeed outside of sovereignty.<sup>73</sup> So, if nonhuman animals are attributed certain rights or claims, they are outside of human dominion and, therefore, their rights should not be infringed upon. Yet, as LaCapra specifies, rights discourse has its limits. According to the author,

Whatever the strategic necessity of an appeal to rights in the current context of law and ethical debate, the limitations of ‘rights discourse’ suggest that one rethink the entire issue and displace the notion of rights in the direction of competing claims, in good part to take distance from predictable, conventional expectations, such as the requirement of a mutual implication or even a strict reciprocity of right and duty or obligation that prompts the question—often the rhetorical question—of whether a dog or a cat can have obligations to counterbalance putative ‘rights’.<sup>74</sup>

LaCapra details a significant conundrum of rights discourse, that of mutuality. Rights essentially can be honored or reciprocated by some beings who are attributed rights, but others beings, including some humans and animals, cannot recognize these rights or cannot share in an obligation to respect them. How can a certain set of rights transcend species, ability, age, and so on, yet be applied to each and all mutually if an obligation to maintain these rights does not exist

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<sup>72</sup> The flaw of rights discourse is due to the priority it places on the agent of moral consideration, which forces a speciesist ideology because there remains no other signifier for ethical consideration. Singer’s principle of interests, however, emphasizes a signifier of moral consideration due to the theory’s grounding in utilitarianism and the emphasis utilitarianism places on pleasure and pain. This signifier is at the core of Bentham’s words: “The question is not, Can they reason? nor, Can they talk? but, Can they suffer?”

<sup>73</sup> (New York: Cornell University Press, 2009), 152.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

in all entities? The lack of mutuality limits rights discourse and makes applying rights, especially to those who may not possess obligation, a convoluted, if not impossible, endeavor. Such glaring errors in rights discourse confound the problem of the human—animal divide and although Singer's Principle of Equal Consideration of Interests is not without its own problems, reliance on a shared vulnerability (that is, suffering) unites human and animal at the core of being.

## CHAPTER 5

### HUMAN SLAVERY, ANIMAL SLAVERY: A NECESSARY COMPARISON

We had very bad eatin'. Bread, meat, water. And they fed it to us in a trough, jes' like the hogs. . . . And the flo' in ouah cabin was dirt, and at night we'd jes' take a blanket and lay down on the flo'. The dog was supe'ior to us; they would take him in the house.

-Richard Toler, *American Slave Narratives*

More than three decades before Topsy's arrival in America and prior to her becoming property of Adam Forepaugh's circus, another showman attempting to establish footing in the business, purchased his first act, but it was not an elephant or any other non-human animal for that matter, but instead a former Kentucky slave woman, too old and feeble to be of benefit to her master. Years of hardships had rendered her body useless and broken, but her price was affordable.<sup>1</sup> Unable to pay the hefty cost and upkeep of an elephant, the nearly penniless entrepreneur would have to settle for the old slave woman. She would come to be known as Joice Heth, the fabricated 161-year-old nurse of George Washington.<sup>2</sup> The young entrepreneur who staged the exhibit and claimed ownership over the woman was P.T. Barnum, one of America's first and most famous showman. According to Michael Daly, "Barnum began by exhibiting her in New York, describing himself as 'proprietor of the negress' even though slavery had been abolished in that state seven years before."<sup>3</sup> Similar to the circus elephants of the day, Heth would not receive any of the profits earned, despite Barnum raking in \$1,500 a week from the exhibit.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Daly, *Topsy*, 34.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*



Attendance would eventually drop as public fascination dwindled. But Barnum devised a scheme to regain the former luster of Heth. According to Daly,

Barnum provided an early example of his particular genius when he planted a letter in a Boston newspaper signed only “A visitor” stating that the exhibit was “a humbug,” but the truth was “vastly more interesting.” “The fact is, Jocie Heth is not a human being,” the letter went on. “What purports to be remarkably old woman, is simply a curiously constructed automaton, made up of whalebone, India-rubber, and numerous springs that are ingeniously put together, and made to move at the slightest touch according to the will of the operator.”<sup>5</sup>

Barnum’s ploy was a success as visitors again poured in to witness the spectacle. When Heth finally died, having earned Barnum his original investment back several times over, he again sought one last opportunity to squeeze more profit out of her. Daly writes, “He announced a public autopsy and 1,500 people paid fifty cents each to squeeze in the City Saloon in Manhattan and watch prominent surgeon Dr. David Rogers dissect her. Rogers determined that she had not been much more than eighty, or half the age advertised.”<sup>6</sup> The woman’s true identity would never be known. Did she have a family? Anyone who would have missed her or grieved her death? In the end, she probably lived as she had died, spectacularly obscure, absent of any true identity and hidden away in a nation that viewed her and others of her likeness as nothing more than property. She might have been Barnum’s first victim, but she would not be his last. As the show grew and Barnum was able to afford and acquire his own performing animals, assuredly many met a fate similar to that of the slave woman: a lifelong inferior status, a destitute existence, and an abundance of suffering within the grasp of dominion.

American culture, forging an association between black humans and nonhuman animals, has been entangled in an epidemic of racism and speciesism throughout its history. However unpopular the comparison, these linkages cannot be undone, as the oppression of each has been

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<sup>5</sup> Daly, *Topsy*, 36.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

shared through several pivotal features: the constructed belief that distinguishes both black persons and non-human animals as marginal, the procedural course oppression follows, and the analogous details within episodic oppression that victimizes both the nonhuman and human animal alike. Chapter Two suggested a theory of oppression for the first two aspects of comparison in the oppression of animals, persons of color, and women, but this chapter will account for the explicit similarities in the oppression of some groups of humans and the continued oppression of animals. With an emphasis on Marjorie Spiegel's work *The Dreaded Comparison* and David Brion Davis's book *Inhuman Bondage*, this chapter traces the similarities between human and animal oppression, specifically, the enslavement and oppression of blacks by connecting their oppression to that of nonhuman animals.

Spiegel opens *The Dreaded Comparison* with a historical explanation for the oppression of blacks and establishes that the justifications used today for oppressing nonhuman animals are similar to those used to defend the enslavement of blacks for centuries. Spiegel acknowledges that most people today accept that the enslavement of black humans was wrong, but in retrospect to animals concludes, "We cannot maintain that oppression is fine for some simply because they are not like us."<sup>7</sup> Spiegel transitions from the historical foundations of oppression to the parallels between human and animal slavery.

For this chapter, it is paramount to provide an encompassing definition of slavery and its link to New World slavery practices. The concept of slavery, as it is understood today, is associated with the bondage or forced servitude of humans. Scholarship on slavery in North America centers on enslavement of black persons (and to some extent, that of Native Americans)

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<sup>7</sup> Marjorie Spiegel, *The Dreaded Comparison: Human and Animal Slavery* (New York: Mirror Books/The Institute for the Development of Earth Awareness, 1996), 19.

from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries, with an emphasis on slavery in the American South. But slavery overall escapes an easy definition, as its meaning has varied across societies and time, and the institution historically takes many different meanings. As Stanley Engerman notes in his article, “Slavery at Different Times and Places,” “Slavery has been one of the most ubiquitous of human institutions, and has existed in many places. It has been present in societies dominated by all major religions and ideologies, and had legally lasted in some places into the second half of the twentieth century-if not more informally in places until the present day.”<sup>8</sup>

If slavery can be defined, Engerman says three issues must be addressed. First, as already alluded to, slavery is not unique to any one group, place, or time.<sup>9</sup> Second, Engerman writes, “Slavery, when it existed, should not be examined in isolation from other institutions and happenings at that or other times. Thus it is important to trace the various linkages of slavery with the nonslave aspects of different societies.”<sup>10</sup> And last, it must be acknowledged that the lines between slavery and what is thought as legitimate labor and social systems have become blurred.<sup>11</sup> According to Engerman, “Any specific definition of slavery has legal, cultural, political, and economic aspects.”<sup>12</sup> Engerman contends slavery is also used as a metaphor, which further complicates the definition. If the meaning of slavery constitutes all episodes of oppression, then all instances of non-slavery could be seen as freedom, but this only convolutes what it means to be free and neglects all the variable states between slavery and freedom.

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<sup>8</sup> *The American Historical Review* 105, no. 2 (April 2000): 480, accessed March 24, 2014.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1571463>

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

In grasping the similarities and distinctions of slavery in his book *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World*, David Brion Davis iterates that the modern conception of slavery may lie in its premodern foundations. Davis examines the Tupinamba, an aboriginal tribe residing off the coast of Brazil at first European contact. Davis contends, “We find that the Tupinamba, like many primitive slaveholding peoples, had no economic need for slave labor. Food was abundant as a result of the hunting done by males and the gathering as well as slash-and-burn planting and harvesting done by women.”<sup>13</sup> Yet, the Tupinamba who were often at war with neighboring tribes, enslaved their captives for a period of time, before murdering and eating them as part of a ritual.<sup>14</sup> Davis notes that for hunting-and-gathering peoples, taking captives in war was not unusual; however, the male captives were almost always immediately killed and the female captives were either killed or assimilated into the tribe.<sup>15</sup>

But the practice of holding slaves for the Tupinamba did serve a purpose. As Davis notes,

As the foreign slaves lived and worked with their captors, they were constantly required to humble themselves and show respect to their conquerors. Thus the function of slavery, as in many societies, was to make the Tupinamba feel honored, superior, or almost godlike and they defined themselves as “nonslaves.” It was only in ancient Greece and Rome that “nonslave” began to mean “free” in our individualistic sense.

The Tupinamba, prior to executing and consuming their slaves, first humiliated them, condemned their tribes, and entered into a game where they allowed them to escape, only to recapture them.<sup>16</sup> The entirety of this ritual serves as a profound instance of the past converging with the present. Davis elaborates,

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<sup>13</sup> Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, 48.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

It is crucial to realize that such slaves were being treated essentially as animals, a fact symbolized by their ritualistic slaughter and the final cannibal feast. This behavior dramatizes the point that, wholly apart from later economic functions, slaves from the very beginning were perceived as dehumanized humans—humans deprived of precisely those traits and faculties that are prerequisites for human dignity, respect, and honor.<sup>17</sup>

The Tupinamba share fascinating linkages to American slaveholders as they not only seem to embrace the idea of dominion, but also recognize it and seek ways to exhibit it. Davis draws further linkages between the practices of the Tupinamba and the American lynching of blacks. According to Davis, “That modern Americans have not been so far removed from the Tupinamba in a moral or even ritualistic sense can be seen in the enthusiasm for lynching former slaves and their descendants a century ago.”<sup>18</sup> The lynch mobs might not have eaten their victims as the Tupinamba did, Davis points out, but southern whites gathered body parts from the victim as souvenirs.<sup>19</sup> One such example occurred in Paris, Texas, in 1893, when ten thousand whites gathered to lynch Henry Smith, a former slave accused of raping and murdering a young white girl in an act perpetrated, “in the mad wantonness of gorilla ferocity.”<sup>20</sup> Davis describes the scene,

High on a platform, so the men, women, and children could see the torture of Smith, the father and brother of the dead girl applied white-hot irons to Smith’s bare feet and tongue before burning out his eyes. One observer recalled, “a cry that echoed over the prairie like the wail of a wild animal”. . . .After the platform had been soaked with oil and set ablaze. . . .people raked the ashes to acquire “nigger” buttons, bones, and teeth as relics. As with the Tupinamba, we find ritual sacrifice, consecrated by fire, designed to purge society of the ultimate domestic enemy.<sup>21</sup>

Even though the purification by fire in Tupinamba slavery and in southern lynching practices share similarities, another link to these episodes of oppression can be observed in the modern

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<sup>17</sup> Davis, 49.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 49-50.

slavery of animals in the factory farm, where after dismemberment, animal flesh is burned to purify the segmented parts for consumption.

The burning and dismemberment as part of lynching practices detailed in newspaper articles published as recent as the twentieth century transpired less than four decades after the 1865 abolition of slavery by the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. One such account recorded in the *Chicago Record-Herald* on May 23, 1902, details the capture and murder of African-American Dudley Morgan in Lansing, Texas, the day prior. According to the report, after being accused of assaulting the wife of a section foreman, a mob of 4,000 seized Morgan from police custody and dragged him to the outskirts of town. Mob members bound him with rope, tortured him with burning pine timbers driven into his eyes, and then burned him alive.<sup>22</sup> The report states, “As the fire died down relic hunters started their search for souvenirs. Parts of the skull and body were carried away. The men who captured Morgan were then held above the heads of the mob while their pictures were taken.”<sup>23</sup> In another account, a black couple from Doddsville, Mississippi, Luther Holbert and his wife, accused of murder, while on the run were captured by a mob. Their capture concluded a four-day chase involving 200 men and two packs of bloodhounds.<sup>24</sup> According to an eyewitness report in the *Vicksburg Evening Post* on February 8, 1904,

When the two Negroes were captured, they were tied to trees and while the funeral pyres were being prepared, they were forced to hold out their hands while one finger at a time was chopped off. The fingers were distributed as souvenirs. The ears of the murderers were cut off. Holbert was beaten severely, his skull was fractured and one of his eyes, knocked out with a stick, hung by a shred from the socket. Some of the mob used a large corkscrew to bore into the flesh of the man and woman. It was applied to their arms, legs

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<sup>22</sup> “Negro Tortured to Death by Mob of 4,000,” *Chicago Record-Herald*, May 23, 1902.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> “Negro and Wife Burned,” *New York Press Wire Report*, February 8, 1904.

and body, then pulled out, the spirals tearing out big pieces of raw quivering flesh every time it was withdrawn.<sup>25</sup>

According to statistics provided by the archives at Tuskegee Institute, from 1882 until 1964, 3,445 lynchings of blacks took place in the United States.<sup>26</sup> In the period from 1891 until 1901, over 100 blacks were lynched in every year, except for two.<sup>27</sup> These numbers reveal an alarming number of lynchings taking place during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Even though these reports provide two examples of a common southern practice of lynching blacks even after the abolition of slavery, this savage ritual perhaps shares an indirect linkage with the slavery practices of the Tupinamba. However, the taking of dismembered body parts as trophies is also a reoccurring tradition in hunting. It is a common practice in deer hunting to dismember the dead buck so that the head may be taken for mounting. As Spiegel notes, "It is not surprising that in the highly stylized hunts of the British upper classes, which have remained virtually unchanged for centuries, one finds close parallels to the hunting of slaves in the Southern United States."<sup>28</sup> These parallels are evidence of the reinforcement of dominion and continue to be recognized in the training and use of dogs to hunt both human and animal prey, and the dismemberment of the captured body, and the keeping of segments as trophies.<sup>29</sup> The slavery practices of the Tupinamba, more than anything else, established not out of necessity, but for the expression of their dominance. The profitability of both human and

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<sup>25</sup> "Lynched Negro and Wife Were First Mutilated," *Vicksburg Evening Post*, February 8, 1904.

<sup>26</sup> University of Missouri-Kansas City. "Lynchings: By Year and Race," accessed May 2, 2014. <http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/shipp/lynchingyear.html>

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Spiegel, 62.

<sup>29</sup> Spiegel notes that up until the mid-nineteenth century, some men actually made a profession of training and using "nigger dogs" who were taught to hate Negroes in their pursuit of runaway slaves. It is also relevant to note that bloodhounds were also utilized in tracking the Holberts. A linkage is also evident between the "hunt" of humans and animals in American culture and the release and recapture of slaves in Tupinamba culture.

animal slavery in America undoubtedly influenced its establishment in the New World and the continuance of the practice, but a desire for power and control cannot be dismissed as factors in the presence and persistence of both human and animal slavery.

The model for human slavery in New World societies also shares foundational associations with the domestication of animals.<sup>30</sup> Davis claims, “Slavery may well have been modeled on the domestication of animals, especially livestock and beasts of burden (i.e., ‘chattel,’ from the medieval Latin *capitale* [and Latin *capitalis*], which was the root for both ‘cattle’ and ‘capital’).”<sup>31</sup> In solidifying the association between the domestication of animals and development of human slavery, Davis acknowledges one definitive element that both share, that is, both human slaves and animals are assumed to be property. Harvard sociologist Orlando Patterson dismisses this claim, in defining slavery as, “the permanent, violent domination of natively alienated and generally dishonored persons.”<sup>32</sup> In his review of Patterson’s book *Slavery and Social Death*, V.P. Franklin writes, Patterson’s “definition is significant both for what it includes and does not include as part of the cultural baggage of the enslaved.”<sup>33</sup> One such exclusion, as Franklin notes, is the reference to slaves as property. According to Franklin, “Patterson. . . believes that ‘to define slavery only as the treatment of human beings as property fails as a definition, since it does not really specify any distinct category of persons.’”<sup>34</sup> Patterson’s exclusion of proprietary claims in defining slavery is reasonable, yet one can also object to his definition. If he is going to limit slavery to only those instances concerning “persons,” he must be able to define personhood. Davis seems to imply in linking human slavery

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<sup>30</sup> Davis, 50.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 13.

<sup>33</sup> V.P. Franklin, “A Review of *Slavery and Social Death* by Orlando Patterson,” *The Journal of Negro History* 68, no. 2 (Spring 1983): 212, accessed April 4, 2014. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2717724>

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.



to animal domestication that personhood cannot be used as an identifier of slavery because the institution of slavery itself essentially dehumanizes the human. The credibility of Patterson's definition of slavery, which excludes any mention of a relegated status to property, rests on an absent definition of personhood. Davis constructs a similar objection when he states, "I would modify Patterson's view of slavery in two ways. . . .I would restore the crucial element of chattel property. . . .The key to this relationship, as I have suggested, lies in the 'animalization' or 'bestialization' of slaves."<sup>35</sup> Although Davis's claim reiterates the devalued status of animals, the linkages between human and animal slavery are undeniable.

The relegation of the human slave to the status of animal predominated in America before, during, and even after the height of slavery in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As Spiegel notes, "Because society's opinion of animals was so low, racist authors and anti-abolitionists propagandized against blacks by comparing them to negative stereotypes of non-human animals."<sup>36</sup> Spiegel points to several animal names such as monkey, ape, fox, buck, and coon that were historically used to demean blacks.<sup>37</sup> Frequently-used stereotypes of black people within American literature have relied on the stereotypes of animals. According to Spiegel, "Reality was blindly ignored by these authors as they churned out banalities of savage apes and lewd, promiscuous beasts. . . .Some authors, such as H.R. Helper in his book *Nojuque* (1867), set up "black" and "beastly" as exact synonyms.<sup>38</sup> Criticism of these comparisons, while warranted, might have dispelled some of the negative connotations associated with blacks, but also reinforced the antagonistic perspectives toward animals.<sup>39</sup> Spiegel continues, "So 'beastly' are animals considered, that to be like one implies the worst, that you are bad. It would logically

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<sup>35</sup> Davis, 51.

<sup>36</sup> Spiegel, 33.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>39</sup> Spiegel, 37.

follow that a person who is unlike an animal must by definition be good.”<sup>40</sup> The attribution of animal qualities to black persons, however, served a purpose even more than deemphasizing their human qualities; it also upheld the idea that black persons, like animals, were uncivilized and wild and therefore needed, and perhaps even desired, a master for guidance. This suggestion is at the core of Davis’s contention that New World slavery was molded after the domestication of animals in ancient times.

Although the first historically-documented existence of slavery comes out of Mesopotamia around 2000 B.C.E. in Sumerian society, the domestication of animals coincided with an agricultural shift from hunting-and-gathering communities to agricultural societies some six thousand years earlier.<sup>41</sup> Although dogs had been domesticated for nearly two thousand years prior to other animal species, Davis writes,

It was only with the Neolithic Revolution (some ten thousand years ago) that sheep, cattle, pigs, horses, goats, and other social animals were domesticated, consequently undergoing an evolutionary process called neoteny, or progressive juvenilization. In other words, the domesticated animals became more submissive than their wild counterparts, less fearful of strangers, and less aggressive. Far from being fortuitous, these changes in biology and behavior were closely geared to human needs in farming. To control such beasts, humans not only branded them but devised collars, chains, prods, and whips and also castrated and subjected certain animals to specific breeding patterns.<sup>42</sup>

The mechanisms for control developed along a similar timeline as animal domestication also were implemented later for the control of humans in various forms of slavery systems, including New World slavery. Used against humans and animals both, the whip stood as an object commanding compliance and a metaphor separating the superior from the subordinate and the oppressor from the oppressed.

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Davis, 52-53.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

The power of the whip and the violence it perpetrated against slaves are paramount in the slave narrative of Mary Reynolds. Reynolds, a former slave, was over 100 years old at the time of her Works Progress Administration (WPA) interview in the 1930s. She was raised on the Kilpatrick plantation in Black River, Louisiana. In her interview, Reynolds details observing frequent whippings and the use of the stocks as punishment for running away or disobeying the master or overseer's orders. As Reynolds recounts,

Slavery was the worst days was ever seed in the world. They was things past tellin', but I got the scars on my old body to show to this day. I seed worse than what happened to me. I seed them put the men and women in the stock with they hands screwed down through holes in the board and they feets tied together and they naked behinds to the world. Solomon the the [*sic*] overseer beat them with a big whip and massa look on. The niggers better not stop in the fields when they hear them yellin'. They cut the flesh most to the bones and some they was when they taken them out of stock and put them on the beds, they never got up again.<sup>43</sup>

The overseer on the plantation and the one who administered the whippings was Solomon. He was feared by the slaves more than the master of the plantation Dr. Kilpatrick.<sup>44</sup> According to Reynolds, "We was scart of Solomon and his whip, though, and he didn't like frolickin."<sup>45</sup> She speaks of one memory regarding his cruel nature, saying, "We'd set on the floor and pray with our heads down low and sing low, but if Solomon heard he'd come and beat on the wall with the stock of his whip. He'd say, 'I'll come in there and tear the hide off you backs."<sup>46</sup> Speaking later about the despised overseer, Reynolds said, "I know that Solomon is burnin' in hell today, and it pleasures me to know it."<sup>47</sup> Throughout her time as a slave, Reynolds had a close bond with Sara, the daughter of Dr. Kilpatrick. The girls were very close

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<sup>43</sup> American Slave Narratives: An Online Anthology, "Mary Reynolds," American Studies Hypertexts at the University of Virginia, accessed April 14, 2014. <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/wpa/toler1.html>

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> American Slave Narratives: An Online Anthology, "Mary Reynolds."

in age and following the death of Sara's mother while Sara was still an infant, she was given to Mary's mother to nurse alongside of her own daughter. The most traumatic event of Mary's enslavement occurred away from the Kilpatrick plantation, after she and a slave boy named Turner were hired out as wage hands to a man she called Kidd. After Turner ran off, according to Mary, "Old man Kidd say I knowed bout it, and he tied my wrists together and stripped me. He hanged me by the wrists from a limb on a tree and spraddled my legs around the trunk and tied my feet together. Then he beat me. He beat me worser than I ever been beat before and I faints dead away."<sup>48</sup> Her injuries from the incident were so severe that when she returned home, Dr. Kilpatrick determined that although she would survive, she would never be able to have children.<sup>49</sup> For Mary and other slaves, the pain and suffering inflicted by the beatings certainly were merciless, but the humiliation from the act produced more than just physical pain and scars:

We prays for the end of Trib'lation and the end of beatin's and for shoes that fit our feet. We prayed that us niggers could have all we wanted to eat and special for fresh meat. Some the old ones say we have to bear all, cause that all we can do. Some say they was glad to the time they's dead, cause they'd rather rot in the ground than have the beatin's. What I hated most was when they'd beat me and I didn't know what they beat me for, and I hated they strippin' me naked as the day I was born.<sup>50</sup>

The acts of violence committed by a master or overseer against humans and animals have been a consistent feature throughout the institution of slavery. The depravity of such excessive violence exhibits not only a priority for compliance to those with power, but the desire to express one's dominion or power over another, whether the victim be a human or nonhuman animal. These violent acts as expressions of power are not only limited to slavery, but also often commence in any relationship between the dominant and the submissive.

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

In examining the linkage between the domestication of animals and the enslavement of humans, Aristotle's concept of the "natural slave" displays a perspective engrained in the justification of enslaving humans and animals. In *Politics*, Aristotle maintains that as with the male and female, there are those who cannot exist without each other and such is the case with a natural ruler and subject, in order that both may be preserved. Aristotle writes, "For that which can foresee by the exercise of mind is by nature intended to be lord and master, and that which can with its body give effect to such foresight is a subject, and by nature a slave; hence master and slave have the same interest."<sup>51</sup> Aristotle contends that nature distinguishes certain men as masters and others as slaves and due to this natural order, it is in the best interest and therefore just for some human beings to be enslaved by others.

Likewise, Aristotle compares the idea of the natural slave to that of the domesticated animal. He writes, "The same holds good of animals in relation to men; for tame animals have a better nature than wild, and all tame animals are better off when they are ruled by man; for then they are preserved."<sup>52</sup> By "preserved," he means not only that nonhuman animals and some humans are destined for enslavement, but also that it is in their best interest to be enslaved because slavery ensures their survival. He continues,

Where then there is such a difference as that between soul and body, or between men and animals, the lower sort are by nature slaves, and it is better for them as for all inferiors that they should be under the rule of a master. For he who can be, and therefore is, another's and he who participates in rational principle enough to apprehend, but not to have, such a principle, is a slave by nature. Whereas the lower animals cannot even apprehend a principle; they obey their instincts. And indeed the use made of slaves and of tame animals is not very different; for both with their bodies minister to the needs of life.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (Kitchener, Ontario: Batoche Books, 1999), I:II.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, I:V

<sup>53</sup> Aristotle, I:V.

Before elaborating on a shared model of domestication and slavery, for the purpose of this work it must be acknowledged that Aristotle claims not only that animals and “natural slaves” need a master, but also that women do as well. Aristotle writes, “Again, the male is by nature superior, and the female inferior; and the one rules, and the other is ruled; this principle, of necessity, extends to all mankind.”<sup>54</sup> His most significant claim regarding the inferiority of women as natural slaves was that their best interest is served by having a master.

Davis pointedly refers to Aristotle’s idea of the “natural slave,” when he claims that human slavery, at least to some degree, was modeled after animal domestication. The best evidence for this in New World slave practices is that a sort of neoteny (a genetic change in the slave, similar to the genetic change from wild animal to domesticated animal) was the goal for many slaveholders.<sup>55</sup> Davis finds another linkage between the domestication of animals and slavery through the process of domestication; likewise, the human slaves coming to America were no longer free and autonomous individuals, but property under the control of another person. Once considered property, both the slave and the animal became an instrument or extension of their master.<sup>56</sup> Like any other instrument that can be utilized in accordance with its owner’s wishes, both human and animal slaves become extensions of their master.

No symbol solidifies the linkages between human and animal slavery more than the image of the slave ship. According to Spiegel, “Only about fifteen million of some thirty or forty million black Africans survived the ordeal of capture and transport to become slaves in the Western Hemisphere.”<sup>57</sup> Many lost their lives on a cargo ship on their journey to America in what came to be known as the “Middle Passage.”

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Davis, 53.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Spiegel, 52.

In perhaps the most comprehensive work ever compiled on the Atlantic Slave Trade, Hugh Thomas establishes 1440 to 1870 as the time period for the slave trade.<sup>58</sup> According to Thomas, “The Atlantic Slave Trade was, for much of its long life, a governmental enterprise in countries concerned. . . . The main trading nations also created privileged companies concerned to carry slaves from Africa to the New World.”<sup>59</sup> The majority of slaves arriving in the New World were transported through the “Middle Passage” as part of the triangular trade. Thomas writes,

The typical slave voyage is assumed to have been triangular. That geometric figure is supposed to have been emblematic of its special character. But there were many exceptions, such as the journeys made directly between Brazil and Angola. There were also numerous direct voyages between the English North American colonies and Africa in the late eighteenth century, and similar journeys later still between Cuba and Africa. . . . Still, the classic journey, probably responsible for three-quarters of all voyages, was one which began in Europe, picked up slaves in Africa in exchange for European manufacturers, carried the slaves to the Americas, and then returned to Europe with certain tropical American goods which slaves would probably have helped harvest.<sup>60</sup>

The slave ship epitomized the voyage through the Middle Passage and the extreme suffering and death by the captive passengers within its walls position this vessel of oppression alongside the slaughterhouse and Nazi gas chamber. The Reverend Robert Walsh, in an 1829 account, describes the conditions of a slave ship after its voyage to the Americas. According to his account, the ship had departed from the coast of Africa carrying 336 males and 226 females onboard, the trek lasted seventeen days during which time fifty-five had been thrown overboard.<sup>61</sup> The slaves were positioned beneath the deck, under grated hatchways. According

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<sup>58</sup> Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade: The Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade: 1440 to 1870* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013), Kindle.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> PBS, “Aboard a Slave Ship: An Account by the Rev. Robert Walsh 1829,” accessed April 2, 2014. <http://www-tc.pbs.org/wnet/historyofus/web05/features/source/docs/C04.pdf>

to Walsh's account, "The space was so low that they sat between each other's legs and stowed so close together that there was no possibility of their lying down or at all changing their position. . . they were all branded like sheep with the owners' marks of different forms."<sup>62</sup> On their condition upon arrival, Walsh writes, "Some, however, hung down their heads in apparently hopeless dejection; some were greatly emaciated, and some, particularly children, seemed dying."<sup>63</sup> Walsh writes about the conditions, calling the heat and odor below deck, "so offensive that it was quite impossible to enter them, even had there been room."<sup>64</sup> But of all the deplorable elements of what Walsh witnessed, he writes, "the circumstance which struck us most forcibly was how it was possible for such a number of human beings to exist, packed up and wedged together as tight as they could cram."<sup>65</sup> Walsh details that the slaves were separated into two compartments: 226 women shared a space of 288 square feet and 336 men fit into a space of 800 square feet.<sup>66</sup> When the grates were opened, Walsh writes, "It is impossible to conceive the effect of this eruption—517 fellow creatures of all ages and sexes, some children, some adults, some old men and women, all in a state of total nudity, scrambling out together to taste the luxury of a little fresh air and water."<sup>67</sup> The degree of suffering Walsh had witnessed was never more apparent than when water was finally brought on board for the enslaved passengers.

According to his account,

After enjoying for a short time the unusual luxury of air, some water was brought; it was then that the extent of their sufferings was exposed in a fearful manner. They all rushed like maniacs towards it. No entreaties or threats or blows could restrain them; they shrieked and struggled and fought with one another for a drop of this precious liquid, as if they grew rabid at the sight of it. . . . I was informed by my friends, who had passed so

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.



long a time on the coast of Africa and visited so many ships, that this was one of the best they had seen.<sup>68</sup>

The images of such tremendous suffering depicted in Walsh's account might seem inconceivable today, but such conditions are still very much a part of present-day American society. The difference now is that the victim has changed. According to Spiegel, "Today it is common to call such a ship a 'cattle boat', just as Jews and others were transported to concentration camps in what have been frequently referred to as 'cattle cars.'"<sup>69</sup> The reason for this is that within the factory farming industry, animals are enduring very similar conditions, including cramped and confined living spaces, unnatural and unsanitary environments, transportation in overcrowded vehicles, and travel of sometimes great distances in extreme temperatures. Like the black human slaves in America, whom white society deemed of such a lowly status that they could be designated as property, nonhuman animals continue to occupy a similar lowly position. These sentient beings are entrenched in a cruel and unjust system of oppression and violence that in its extremity can ~~only~~ be compared in American history and culture only to the institution of human slavery. The comparisons between the two are not just relevant, but necessary, as an ominous reminder of the tyrannical realities of human dominion.

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<sup>68</sup> PBS, "Aboard a Slave Ship."

<sup>69</sup> Spiegel, 55.

## CHAPTER 6

### THE SEXUAL POLITICS OF MEAT: A FUSED OPPRESSION

Ultimately women, who often find themselves in muted dialogue with the dominant culture, become the source for insights in the oppression of animals.

-Carol Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*

During meetings held between abolitionist newspaper editor Horace Greeley and early feminists Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucy Stone, Amelia Bloomer, and Susan B. Anthony, the group toasted “Women’s Rights and vegetarianism.”<sup>1</sup> Although early American feminism and abolitionism historically were interwoven, scholars often refuse (or fail) to include animals rights—or animal welfare—in the discourse of abolitionism and feminism. In fact, animal rights and traditional humanistic social justice are often oppositional, especially in marginal human groups attempting to escape the connotations of being non-rational or of occupying a lowly status similar to that of animals. However, as I have contended throughout this work, there are profound linkages among the oppression of animals, black humans, and women in Western culture. Moreover, the oppression of one group is often contingent on the oppression of the other.

In her monumental work *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, Carol Adams develops a feminist-vegetarian critical theory that fuses the oppression of women with the oppression of animals by focusing on societal mechanisms used to justify and disguise a long history of speciesism and sexism within the patriarchal West. Adams centers the objectification of women and animals in a modern context, by exploring the linkages among the marginalization, isolation, and exploitation of animals and of women; she notes their linkage within a patriarchal culture that

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<sup>1</sup> Steven Wise, *Drawing the Line: Science and the Case for Animal Rights* (Cambridge: Perseus Publishing, 2002), 17.

promotes the consumption of dead animal flesh. Two points of significance are Adams's discussion of the absent referent, which is a fixture of oppressive language, and the idea of dismemberment, both contributors to the oppressive property of isolation outlined in Chapter 2.

The concept of the absent referent recognizes that language can promote the dominant culture's ideology or belief system through making the true meaning of a term absent by replacing it with something different altogether.<sup>2</sup> According to Adams, "Our concern is with the objectification of consumption through language, so that meat's true meaning is cast out. Behind every meat meal is an absence, the death of the animal whose place the meat takes. With the word 'meat' the truth about this death is absent."<sup>3</sup> The absent referent upholds the oppression of animals, women, and persons of color. The linkages among these groups occur because of their places outside of the dominant culture Where their subordination (or oppression) becomes manifest by the language of the white male patriarchy. Within a patriarchal society, Adams contends, "language is male-centered and human-oriented."<sup>4</sup> According to the author, "When we use the adjective 'male,' . . . we all assume that it is referring solely to human males. Besides the human oriented notions that accompany our use of words such as male and female, we use the word 'animal' as though it did not refer to human beings, as though we too are not animals."<sup>5</sup>

Further, patriarchal language elevates the pronoun "he" above "she" and objectifies the animal as "it." The male pronoun is dominant over the female pronoun in that "he" can be used interchangeably and specifically in the place of "she," but labeling the animal as "it," lowers his/her status to that of an object.<sup>6</sup> What this means is that "he" is the major power, "she" is a minor power, but "it" is powerless. And as Adams mentions, "it" refers to the inanimate, or

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<sup>2</sup> Carol Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (New York: Continuum, 2010), 92.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Adams, 93.

simply, that which is not alive.<sup>7</sup> The status of both female humans and non-human animals falls below that of male humans, with animals at the lowest level in a hierarchy of species and gender as evidenced by human language. Adams sees the structure of human language and the treatment of animals as interchangeable and consistent in their oppressive tendencies. According to Adams,

Our culture generally accepts animals' oppression and finds nothing ethically or politically disturbing about the exploitation of animals for the benefit of people. Hence our language is structured to convey this acceptance. We live in a culture that has institutionalized the oppression of animals on at least two levels: in the formal structures such as slaughterhouses, meat markets, zoos, laboratories, and circuses, and through our language.<sup>8</sup>

A racial linkage also characterizes the language of oppression. Many animal caretakers refer to themselves as masters or owners of the animals with whom they share a life. Adams acknowledges that engaging in this type of language links to the practice of human slavery.<sup>9</sup> However, in reference to the previous chapter, if human slavery was indeed modeled after animal domestication, than the use of the word master, in common with use of the whip or prod, more than likely originated first with the animal.

In a patriarchal society, language fuses the oppressions of those with lesser statuses within the dominant culture.<sup>10</sup> This union in turn implicitly links women with animals and each to any group outside the dominant culture reflected in the language of oppression. Although language may reflect a fused oppression between women and animals, patriarchal language also can be used to refer to anyone outside the dominant culture. One example of this is the usage of the term "bitch," specifically when referring directly to a female human. Patriarchal culture has

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

adopted the term as language used to reflect oppression, but also the bastardization of “bitch” reflects poorly on the animal. “Bitch” always carries with it a very negative connotation, regardless of the context in which it is used. Similarly, the term “beast” or “beastly” often refer to indigenous populations and people of color assumed to be less than human, or animalistic. Given the history of the word’s usage, referring to humans or animals as “beast” represents diminishing of both their statuses. In both word usages (“bitch” and “beast”), humans presume the lesser status of animals, but the oppression of animals, too, can be indicated by their taking on the “inferior status” of women.<sup>11</sup> Animals take the “inferior status” of women when labeled the minor power of “she.” Adams claims that animals who are being hunted are often referred to as she, a minor power and vanquished power, because “she” is about to be killed by the hunter.<sup>12</sup> She expounds on this idea in discussing the work of French linguist André Joly,

As Joly points out, “sportsmen will often speak of a hare and a fish as she.” He continues: “In fact, she has acquired a very special function in Modern English: it is expressly used to refer to an animal regarded as a minor power...Sportsmen, whalers, fisherman are in special relation to the animal. Whatever its size or strength, it is regarded as a potential prey, a power that has to be destroyed—for sport or food—hence a dominated power.” She represents not only a minor power, but a vanquished power, a soon-to-be-killed powerless animal. Male animals become symbolically female, representing the violated victim of male violence.<sup>13</sup>

A fused oppression emphasizes circumstances where language is reflective of the oppression of women by associating them with the inferior status of animals or the oppressed status of animals reflects the use of language that associates them with lowly status of women. But perhaps the greatest power implemented through humans’ use of oppressive language and the absent referent is the ability of words to mask the truth. In reiterating Adams’s discussion of

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<sup>11</sup> Adams, 102.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 102-103.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

the term “meat,” what is true is being masked, hidden by language. The power of masking the truth through language stands as a tool to isolate the marginal and keep them in a position of submissiveness. Language has the power to oppress, control, and mask the truth, but it also has the ability to liberate. As Adams discusses, language also bestows the power to name.

According to the author, “Vegetarians reform inadequate language by coining new words.

Through new naming, vegetarians apply principles that demand that the existing relationship between human beings and the other animals be changed.”<sup>14</sup> The naming of vegetarian signaled a monumental moment in a historical fight against the killing of animals.<sup>15</sup> What naming can really provide is the correction of language by unmasking the truth, in relinquishing the absent referent.

Although utilizing language to obscure the consumption of dead animal flesh, dismemberment of the animal body also helps hide the truth of what humans consume. The dismemberment of the animal body reinforces, or rather encourages, the use of an absent referent. According to Adams,

After being butchered, fragmented body parts are often renamed to obscure the fact that these were once animals. After death, cows become roast beef, steak, hamburger; pigs become pork, bacon, sausage. Since objects are possessions they cannot have possessions; thus, we say “leg of lamb” not a “lamb’s leg,” “chicken wings” not a “chicken’s wings.”<sup>16</sup>

Adams alludes to an interesting idea, especially in connecting the shared oppression between women and animals. The most notable aspect of dismemberment or fragmentation is that the process further objectifies animals and allows language to mask the dismembered parts by further removing the identity of the animal, but dismemberment like language, also exemplifies a

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<sup>14</sup> Adams, 110.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 74.

fused oppression with women. How is it, then, that women share in this fused oppression? In the literal sense, violence against women fuses this connection. As Adams discusses, women who are raped often express feeling like a piece of meat during the encounter.<sup>17</sup> Dismembered animals become objectified to meet the desires of humans through consumption, thus reinforcing human dominion over the nonhuman animal. Moreover, rape deems woman a sexual object, which, in turn, reinforces the domination of man. Dismemberment changes the animal from that which is living and breathing to segmented objects (e.g., loin, rib, chuck, round). Women, too, are fragmented through a metaphorical sexual dismembering (the epitome of male domination) with an objectified fragmentation of their bodies.<sup>18</sup> As the cleaver is to the dismemberment of an animal, the camera is to the dismembering of the female body. This is true in regard to pornography where the camera, like the cleaver, fragments the body and replaces the status of a living human-with a sexual object, with the camera metaphorically dismembering the woman into body parts of sexual desire.<sup>19</sup>

If dismemberment can be understood as a tool of oppression by isolating marginalized humans and animals, then a similar linkage can be found in the dismemberment of the African slave family unit. At slave auctions, mothers and fathers were separated from their children, husbands from their wives, and siblings from each other. In his autobiography *Twelve Years a Slave*, Solomon Northup recounts the ordeal of one mother, Eliza, being separated from her children after mother and children were all sold to different masters. The first of her children sold was her young son Randall. Northup writes, “All the time the trade was going on, Eliza was crying aloud, and wringing her hands. She besought the man not to buy him, unless he also bought herself and Emily. She promised, in that case, to be the most faithful slave that ever

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<sup>17</sup> Adams, 74.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 87.

lived.”<sup>20</sup> Her pleas would be of no avail as her son was sold. When the exchange was finalized, “Eliza ran to him; embraced him passionately; kissed him again and again; told him to remember her— all the while her tears falling in the boy's face like rain.”<sup>21</sup> After a few days had passed, Eliza and her young daughter Emily were separated next. Northup recounts the tragic event, writing,

It would be a relief if I could consistently pass over in silence the scene that now ensued. It recalls memories more mournful and affecting than any language can portray. I have seen mothers kissing for the last time the faces of their dead offspring; I have seen them looking down into the grave, as the earth fell with a dull sound upon their coffins, hiding them from their eyes forever; but never have I seen such an exhibition of intense, unmeasured, and unbounded grief, as when Eliza was parted from her child. She broke from her place in the line of women, and rushing down where Emily was standing, caught her in her arms. The child, sensible of some impending danger, instinctively fastened her hands around her mother's neck, and nestled her little head upon her bosom. Freeman sternly ordered her to be quiet, but she did not heed him. He caught her by the arm and pulled her rudely, but she only clung the closer to the child. Then, with a volley of great oaths, he struck her such a heartless blow, that she staggered backward, and was like to fall. . . .”Mercy, mercy, master!” she cried, falling on her knees. “Please, master, buy Emily. I can never work any if she is taken from me: I will die.” When Eliza heard Freeman's determination not to part with Emily, she became absolutely frantic. . . .“I will not go without her. They shall not take her from me,” she fairly shrieked, her shrieks commingling with the loud and angry voice of Freeman, commanding her to be silent. . . .finally, Freeman, out of patience, tore Emily from her mother by main force, the two clinging to each other with all their might. . . .“Don't leave me, mama—don't leave me,” screamed the child, as its mother was pushed harshly forward; “Don't leave me—come back, mama,” she still cried, stretching forth her little arms imploringly. But she cried in vain. Out of the door and into the street we were quickly hurried. Still we could hear her calling to her mother, “Come back—don't leave me—come back, mama,” until her infant voice grew faint and still more faint, and gradually died away as distance intervened, and finally was wholly lost.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Solomon Northup, *Twelve Years A Slave*, (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1997), 81.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 81-82

<sup>22</sup> Solomon Northup, 85-88.



Although the family unit for slaves empowered them through providing a sense of solidarity, love, and kinship, the fracture of the slave family was a form of dismemberment. By severing the familial bonds of slaves, masters kept them in a marginal, powerless, and inferior position. The dismemberment of the slave family also holds emphasis for slave women, in that as mothers, little else could reduce them to a state of such incredible powerlessness as separating them from their children, and thus dismembering them from their roles as mothers.

Adams's discussion of the "texts of meat" provides another linkage between the oppression of women and animals. The texts of meat stand as a cultural text that members of society adhere to due to the recognizable message "meat" conveys in a patriarchal society.<sup>23</sup> According to Adams, "The texts of meat which we assimilate into our lives include the expectation that people should eat animals and that meat is good for you."<sup>24</sup> The endurance of the texts of meat is reflective in society's attitudes, propagated through imagery and conditioned through what is accepted as normal, whether this be the enslavement of blacks, the oppression of women, or the eating of animal flesh. The cultural text of meat is also gendered, perceived in the relationship between meat and virility.<sup>25</sup> This relationship has been so engrained in the West that it has become a part of the American cultural DNA. Members of society are indoctrinated in the texts of meat from birth and the vast majority sees meat as a part of the American identity and a prominent aspect of their way of life. For most western humans, this explains their reluctance to give up flesh eating or to form an oppositional opinion regarding the status of animals. For women residing in a patriarchal society, opposition to the texts of meat is not only an opposition to meat eating, but also opposition to the dominant culture. It could be the case that the vegetarianism of writers represents opposition to the dominant culture and thus literary critics are

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<sup>23</sup> Adams, 26.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 48-49.

prone to ignore such opposition According to Adams, “Why is the vegetarian aspect to a writer or her work often ignored by literary critics? I struck upon the idea of the texts of meat to answer these questions. By speaking of the texts of meat we situate the production of meat’s meaning within a political-cultural context. None of us chooses the meanings that constitute the texts of meat, we adhere to them.”<sup>26</sup>

Although Adams contends that flesh eating fuses the oppression of women and animals, men, and even many women, remain enmeshed in the texts of meat. As proponents of equal status of all humans, feminists, by all accounts, should be opposed to flesh eating and the texts of meat, yet most are not. If women are to rise to the status of men, perhaps they see similar eating habits as an elevation within the patriarchal hierarchy. Yet, as Adams offers in her feminist-vegetarian critical theory, feminism and vegetarianism/veganism go hand in hand as a consequence of the fused oppressions of animals and women in patriarchal societies.

To explicate the fused oppression of women, blacks, and animals in American culture, the parallels drawn in instances of violence against women and, consequently, in man’s desire to dominate nature, should be highlighted as significant features in a non-discriminatory culture of oppression. According to Carolyn Merchant in her work *Earthcare: Women and the Environment*, “We must reexamine the formation of a world view and a science that, by reconceptualizing reality as a machine rather than a living organism, sanctioned the domination of both nature and women.”<sup>27</sup> Merchant contends that nature was fashioned by Western scholars as female through two-historical perspectives. In the first perspective, nature appears as mother, relating to “a kindly beneficent female who provided for the needs of mankind in an ordered,

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<sup>26</sup> Adams, 26.

<sup>27</sup> Carolyn Merchant, *Earthcare: Women and the Environment* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 76.

planned universe.”<sup>28</sup> This interpretation conveys the familiar usage of “Mother Nature.” The second idea constitutes an opposing perspective, in that nature is wild, chaotic, violent, and uncontrollable.<sup>29</sup> Both perspectives of nature, however, are associated as female. The metaphor of nature as a kind and nurturing mother, according to Merchant, “gradually vanished as a dominant image as the Scientific Revolution proceeded to mechanize and to rationalize the world view.”<sup>30</sup> The perception of nature as wild and uncontrollable rationalized white men’s domination of nature, and with it, women, blacks, indigenous peoples, animals, all assumed to be wild and needing someone to control them.<sup>31</sup>

The association between women and nature ultimately link to the powerlessness of women and animals within the dominant white, patriarchal culture. As Josephine Donovan contends “The anomalous and the powerless include women and animals, both of whose subjectivities and realities are erased or converted into manipulable objects—‘the material of subjugation’—at the mercy of the rationalist manipulator, whose self-worth is established by the fact that he thus subdues his environment.”<sup>32</sup> As “the material of subjugation” within capitalist societies, women’s production is devalued. Donovan explains, “Their labor has prepared material for immediate use by the household rather than for use as a commodity for exchange or for monetary payment.”<sup>33</sup> Capitalism has essentially objectified women, as it has black humans and animals. As with nonhuman animals and slaves, such objectification has led to women’s susceptibility to violence, their historical domesticity (being confined to the home to keep house and raise children), and their place outside of the dominant group. The early American feminists

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 77

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Josephine Donovan, “Animal Rights and Feminist Theory,” *Signs* 15, no. 2 (Winter 1990): 362, accessed March 12, 2014. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3174490>

<sup>33</sup> Donovan, 362.

had it right in toasting women's rights and vegetarianism, wherein they recognized a connection between the two that has remained for well over a century. Because women share their oppression in many regards with that of animals, as was the case in the push for abolition, it seems women will once again carry the torch towards animal liberation.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION: HUMANS, ANIMALS, AND SHARING THE SHADOW

We require now to extend the great principles of liberty, equality and fraternity over the lives of animals. Let animal slavery join human slavery in the graveyard of the past.

-Norm Phelps, *Changing the Game: Why the Battle for Animal Liberation Is So Hard and How We Can Win It*

In 1990, Smithfield Foods began construction on a 973,000 square-foot slaughterhouse in Bladen County, North Carolina, in a small town known as Tar Heel. Ten years later the site stands as the final stop for 38,000 pigs every day and nine million each year. In his book *An American Trilogy*, Steven Wise traces the history of oppression at a small site that originally was the home of Native Americans until they were driven off by white settlers. Later, the site was occupied by a large slave plantation. Today, the location is home to a large Smithfield slaughterhouse and factory pig farm.<sup>1</sup> Wise writes, “Today we acknowledge that our genocide of Native Americans was wrong. . . .we agree that we were wrong to enslave millions of blacks and to mistreat them after they became free. Today global climate change and other catastrophes we continue to cause are leading us to a new understanding of how to act toward all of God’s creation—including the pigs of Bladen County.”<sup>2</sup> If the history of a little town in North Carolina can teach us anything, it is that within the shadows of dominion have resided human and nonhuman animals alike.

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<sup>1</sup> Steven Wise, *An American Trilogy: Death, Slavery, and Dominion on the Banks of the Cape Fear River* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2009), 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

A central focus of this work has been on examining the human—animal divide and the ideologies that have contributed to anthropocentric beliefs and attitudes. Anthropocentrism has been engrained in the history of Western philosophy, effectively relegating nonhuman animals to a footnote in the discourse of the human experience and upholding the divide between that which is called human and that which is called animal. The anthropocentric quality of Western thought has been interwoven in the fabric of Western society and remains a prominent component in justifying the exploitation, oppression, and enslavement of animals through societal customs and institutions such as the factory farm, hunting, and vivisection.

The ideas about community (kinship) and capacities encourage anthropocentrism, but they are also vital in establishing an ethic for treatment of animals. Because humans analyze the moral status of animals based on their own conception of the human self, anthropocentrism seems inherent to the animal rights/welfare discourse. Postmodern conceptions of the animal have confronted anthropocentrism but postmodernists continue to be guilty of a similar anthropocentric habit. In *Anthropocentrism and Its Discontents*, Steiner writes,

The confrontation between the liberal humanist and Romantic conceptions of animals poses a central problem for contemporary environmental ethics: The tension between human self-assertion and the sense that we are part of a larger cosmic whole seems irreducible; and yet as long as this tension remains unresolved, the moral status of animals will remain critically problematic. . . . The confrontation between the liberal and Romantic conceptions reflects a profound ambivalence between two seemingly incommensurable ways of conceiving of value: one that makes human valuations the source of all value, and another according to which value has a cosmic source that transcends human experience.<sup>3</sup>

The conflict between human morality and the conception of the nonhuman animal forces anthropocentrism, even if moral theory focuses on inclusion, rather than exclusion, of the nonhuman animal. It seems that the anthropocentric tendencies of moral theory are a limit of

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<sup>3</sup> Steiner, *Anthropocentrism and Its Discontents*, 202.

Western philosophy that cannot be remedied. Although postmodern thinkers such as Derrida attempted to establish a kinship between human and nonhuman animals on the basis of a shared environment, all animals interpret their environment differently.<sup>4</sup> Heidegger contends that nonhuman animals are limited in what they can do within their environment or at least limited in comparison to humans. He writes, “They are limited by language and limited by their lack of richness in comparison to humans in how they can perceive their environment.”<sup>5</sup> But how can humans know that animals cannot perceive their environment as do humans? Assuming that humans could know, it is an anthropocentric assumption supposing to know what life is like for nonhuman animals. According to Steiner, “Beyond acknowledging that animals possess their own kind of subjectivity, we may ultimately never be in a position to answer Thomas Nagel’s question ‘What is it like to be a bat?’ One might even say that ‘we cannot really image [sic] what [the animal’s] world looks like without reverting to anthropocentrism,’ and that ‘this is our poverty.’”<sup>6</sup>

Posthumanism stands as a discourse that moves beyond humanism and thus minimizes the divide between human and nonhuman animals. Posthumanism essentially decenters the-human animal.<sup>7</sup> In *What is Posthumanism?* Cary Wolfe defines its meaning by linking it with postmodernism. As Wolfe states,

My sense of posthumanism is thus analogous to Jean-Francois Lyotard’s paradoxical rendering of the postmodern: it comes both before and after humanism: before in the sense that it names the embodiment and embeddedness of the human being in not just its biological but also its technological world, the prosthetic coevolution of the human animal with the technicity of tools and external archival mechanisms (such as language

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<sup>4</sup> Steiner, 209.

<sup>5</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 288-289.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Nagel, “What Is It like to Be a Bat?” *Mortal Questions*, 165-180 (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1979), quoted in Steiner, *Anthropocentrism and Its Discontents*, 213.

<sup>7</sup> Cary Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), xv.

and culture). . . . But it comes after in the sense that posthumanism names a historical moment in which the decentering of the human by its imbrication in technical, medical, informatic, and economic networks is increasingly impossible to ignore, a historical development that points toward the necessity of new theoretical paradigms, a new model of thought that comes after the cultural repressions and fantasies, the philosophical protocols and evasions, of humanism as a historically specific phenomenon.<sup>8</sup>

If a humanist discourse contributed to anthropocentric, sexist, and racist ideologies, posthumanism transcends the distinctions that allowed the formation of these ideologies. For the nonhuman animal, posthumanism develops a starting point that should drive humans' ethical response to animals, mainly, the shared presence of being, mortality, and finitude.<sup>9</sup>

In developing a posthumanist response to the question of the animal, Derrida's *The Animal That Therefore I Am* reflects on the question of the animal in several contexts, notably, the animal in philosophy, in history, and most prominently, within the human or the human within the animal. The title *The Animal That Therefore I Am* reflects not only Derrida's belief about the animal—human divide, but also his belief about the absurdity of separating humans and animals while categorizing all nonhuman animal species as the same. The title reflects the ambiguity within the word “animal.” According to Derrida, “Back to the question of what I do when ‘I am’ or ‘I follow’. . . if I am following this suite then, I move from ‘the ends of man,’ that is the confines of man, to ‘the crossing of borders’ between man and animal.”<sup>10</sup> In his title, Derrida acknowledges the linkage of the human animal to the nonhuman animal and expounds on it in discussing an encounter with his cat. Derrida wrote, “I often ask myself. . . who I am—and who I am (following) at the moment when, caught naked, in silence, by the gaze of an

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<sup>8</sup> Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?* xv-xvi.

<sup>9</sup> Cary Wolfe, “Flesh and Finitude: Thinking Animals in (Post) Humanist Philosophy.” *SubStance* 37, no. 3 (2008): 8, accessed May 1, 2014. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25195184>

<sup>10</sup> *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, edited by Marie-Louise Mallet and translated by David Wills (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), accessed April 20, 2014. Google Play E-book, 16-17.



animal, for example, the eyes of a cat, I have trouble . . . overcoming my embarrassment.”<sup>11</sup>

This encounter led him to question the subjects of his shame, the humanity and animality within himself, and the animal that lies behind the gaze. He asks, “Ashamed of what and naked before whom?”<sup>12</sup> Through this discussion Derrida sets in motion the overall focus of his work, how the animal—human distinction is drawn.

Throughout his work, Derrida often utilizes the phrase, “that which we call animal.” This phrasing is purposeful and is understood in his emphasis on the low status of the nonhuman animal in Western philosophical discourse. Derrida is critical of Cartesian ideology and other ontological perspectives that relegate the animal to a mechanical form. However, he is also critical of rights discourse, which seeks, he contends, “homogenous continuity between what calls itself man and what he calls the animal.”<sup>13</sup> Of the human-animal divide, Derrida emphasized that a difference does exist: “To suppose that I, or anyone else for that matter, could ignore the rupture, indeed that abyss, would mean first of all blinding oneself to such contrary evidence.” In regard to the Cartesian and Kantian discourse, Derrida responds,

Their discourses are sound and profound, but everything in them goes on as if they themselves had never been looked at, and especially not naked, by an animal that addressed them. At least everything goes on as though this troubling experience had not been theoretically registered, supposing that it had been experienced at all, at the precise moment when they made of the animal a theorem, something seen and not seeing.<sup>14</sup>

Both philosophical approaches place humans in what Derrida perceives as a privileged position.

Although one approach determines that humans have qualities that animals do not (such as language or reason) and that therefore make humans superior to nonhumans, the oppositional

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<sup>11</sup> Derrida, 17-18.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 31-33.

position negates the distinctiveness of each animal species (whether that be human animals, primates, felines, insects, etc.) by seeking one trait that all or most share, such as the ability to experience pleasure or pain. For Derrida, each species is unique and both dominant positions that is, the Cartesian/Kantian and the rights position in philosophy discount this uniqueness. This, Derrida contends is a limit of Western philosophy as it applies to the human and nonhuman animal.

As Derrida explores the perceived distinctions between that which we call human and that which we call animal, he examines Jacques Lacan's claim that language acts as the single-most differentiating factor between the two. Notably, Lacan contends that animals can only react, not respond, to stimuli.<sup>15</sup> According to Derrida, "Lacan claims to be relying on what he blithely calls the 'animal kingdom' in order to critique the current notion of 'language as a sign' as opposed to 'human languages.'" When bees appear to 'respond' to a 'message,' they do not respond but react; they merely obey a fixed program, whereas the human subject responds to the other, to the question from or of the other."<sup>16</sup> Derrida relates this position to Cartesianism in the sense that the "Cartesian animal like its descendants, would remain incapable of responding to true questioning. For it lacks the power of real questions."<sup>17</sup> He does not refute these linked positions, but instead understands them as limits that need to be deconstructed. Derrida utilizes Lacan's example of bees and their perceived lack of responsiveness and contends that human language, similar to that of the bee, seeks a response from another. According to Derrida, "For the function of language is not to inform but to evoke."<sup>18</sup> Derrida understands the similarity through the intention of responses because language is composed of signs. Yet, Lacan

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<sup>15</sup> Derrida, 177-179.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 126-127.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 179-180.

differentiates between signs in human language and coding in animals, contending that coding is fixed while signs in human language results from human interaction.<sup>19</sup> Derrida explains, “What he (Lacan) attributes to signs that, ‘in a language’ understood as belonging to the human order, ‘take on their value from their relations to each other’ and so on, and not just from the ‘fixed correlation’ between signs and reality, can and must be accorded to any code, animal or human.”<sup>20</sup> For Derrida, language is meant to incite a response and both human and animal “language” incite a response. A human who has ever spent any time with cats or dogs would have to agree that whether by their gazes or other mannerisms, their intention is often to incite a response.

Lacan’s idea on reaction and response relate to a similar concept he proposes about the subject and the other and how both relate to language. Lacan claims that one differentiating factor between human animals and nonhuman animals is that humans can lie. Derrida explicates Lacan’s position: “Why do you tell me that you are going to X in order to have me believe you are going to Y, whereas you are indeed going to X?”<sup>21</sup> It is through this analogy posed by Lacan that Derrida explicates Lacan’s position on animals: “According to Lacan it is that type of lie, that deceit, and that pretense in the second degree of which the animal would be incapable, whereas the ‘subject of the signifier,’ within the human order, would possess such a power and, better still, would emerge as subject, instituting itself and coming to itself as subject by virtue of this power. . . a power that is conscious of deceiving by pretending to pretend.”<sup>22</sup> Although Derrida does not necessarily refute this claim, he contends that Lacan, in common with those philosophers who came before him, adheres to a position that holds what an animal lacks is a

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<sup>19</sup> Derrida, 179-180.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

lacking in and of itself, instead of something reflective of the human—animal divide. The animal's lack of an ability to pretend to pretend is not the animal's lack of this ability, but what Lacan's subject lacks. It is what the human lacks that gives him/her dominion over animals.<sup>23</sup>

Derrida explains,

The animal does not know evil, lying, deceit. What it lacks is precisely the lack by virtue of which the human becomes subject of the signifier, subject subjected to the signifier. But to be subject of the signifier is also to be a subjecting subject, a subject as *master*, an active and deciding subject of the signifier, having in any case sufficient mastery to be capable of pretending to pretend and hence being able to put into effect one's power to destroy the trace. This *mastery* is the superiority of man over the animot.<sup>24</sup>

Derrida contends that the problem becomes the human. What gives him/her the authority to evoke the idea that an animal is without something, when humans cannot be sure that other humans possess it? It is this assumption, one that claims to know what is behind the gaze of a cat, for example, which has led to the historical conception of the animal as lacking.<sup>25</sup> Likewise, it is through such arrogance that animals have been subjected to such harsh realities as factory farming.

Several themes prevail in Derrida's *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, but the entirety of the work centers on the binary division between human and animals and how philosophers and other scholars have interpreted these distinctions. Through his "limitrophy," Derrida coins the term "animot" as a substitute for the term animal. Marie-Louise Mallet's foreword to the work expresses Derrida's concern for the violence perpetrated against animals and his inception and

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<sup>23</sup> Derrida, 180.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 187-188.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

use of animot to underline the “extreme diversity of animals that ‘the animal’ erases, and which, when written, makes it plain that this word ‘the animal’ is precisely only a word.”<sup>26</sup>

Steiner, in common with Derrida, questions, “How are we to realize a sense of belonging together with animals in the whole of nature, without committing the Jacobin excesses of a romanticism that sacrifices the individual for the (supposed) good of the whole?”<sup>27</sup> It seems that this choice of belonging (or not) with animals in the whole of nature would call for the abandonment of moral theory altogether or at least the development of a theory that would attribute to humans and animals an equal moral value. Even in developing a new theory, would humans not be guilty of interpreting the nonhuman animal experience from what they value in an ethical obligation to animals?

Steiner maintains that “If we abandon theory, we are forced to rely too much on intuitions that are susceptible to subjective viewpoints and acculturation.”<sup>28</sup> But with each ethical approach another problem arises for the nonhuman animal: “The rights approach privileges those beings most capable of asserting their own rights. Utilitarianism makes the pleasures and pains of more sentient beings count more in the social calculus. And appeals to kinship threaten to place creatures such as oysters, which lack even a central nervous system and hence the capacity for any cognition or sentience, on a moral par with human beings.”<sup>29</sup> Steiner’s solution is an approach that confirms the unique qualities of human animals but does not give humanity an “absolute priority” over nonhuman animals.<sup>30</sup> The merger of anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric ethics results when approaches seek to resolve the difficulties of the human—animal divide while maintaining the significance of capacities and kinship. According to

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<sup>26</sup> Marie-Louise Mallet, Foreword to *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, by Jacques Derrida, 9-10.

<sup>27</sup> Steiner, 222.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 223.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 225.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

Steiner, “A balance or harmony between the liberal and holistic approaches on the side of ethics corresponds to the harmony between capacities and kinship approaches that I propose on the side of ethology. The two sides of this project are linked by the endeavor to do justice to animals without losing sight of those qualities that are distinctively human.”<sup>31</sup> As Steiner contends,

They (nonhuman animals) can fare well or ill, regardless of whether they are ‘subjectively aware’ of their fortunes, and regardless of how much their awareness resembles our own. In this respect, invertebrates such as bees are like many other creatures, from dogs and cats to apes and monkeys to human beings. It is here that the capacities and kinship views meet: Capacities are not confined to capacities for subjective awareness but include capacities for growth and flourishing. Beings with either of these sorts of capacities have a fundamental kinship with human beings. On the basis of this complementary conception of capacities and kinship, the doctrine of belonging (*oikeiosis*) could be reconceived so as to constitute a sphere of kinship among all beings that struggle for life and well-being.<sup>32</sup>

Yet, the oppression of nonhuman animals continues today to such an extent that it can be appreciated only through a comparison to the most extreme historical episodes of human suffering. These appraisals are not only necessary in recognizing the abhorrent practices that continue today against the oppressed, but also are paramount in abandoning the trans-historical conception of the animal as significantly inferior to human animals. If we, as humans, can progress past our-purely anthropocentric perspectives, maybe then our shared struggles for life, the finiteness of the human and animal body, and the vulnerability that lies at the very core of every being will abide as the greatest unifying trait between that which we call human and that which we call animal.

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<sup>31</sup> Steiner, 230.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 250.

## AFTERWORD

Having been raised in the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains in East Tennessee, the culture and environment of the area profoundly shaped my actions, interests, and beliefs from a young age. My parents, holding deep ties to the region, were products of a similar cultural text that they passed to their children. For me this meant a Christian indoctrination, an ideology of what is right and wrong, normal and abnormal. This cultural text encouraged conformity to southern Christian culture while disparaging difference, and it elevated my father over my mother, my white neighbors over my black ones, and of course humans over animals.

Ever since I was old enough to hold a fishing rod or squeeze the trigger of a shotgun, my father brought me with him to fish and hunt. I remember killing my first dove and skinning my first rabbit, and I can still recall the excitement I felt when my father told me I was finally old enough to go deer hunting. In our garage, my family kept a large freezer stocked all year with venison, flesh from deer killed by my father or uncle. In our home meat was a staple and I believed a meal was incomplete without it. My beliefs as a child echoed the beliefs of my parents and the majority of the people in our small southern community. I resided in an area of immense natural beauty and wildlife, where hunting and fishing were cultural traditions, just like any other hobby or sport. It was not until I was older that I realized my rationalization for hunting was false. This rejection of a years-long practice stemmed from an episode I experienced while dove hunting.

Coming upon a shot dove I was instructed to retrieve, I discovered the fallen animal lying wounded, but alive. The buckshot had torn through the bird's wing just missing vital tissue. The common practice for hunters who confronted a wounded bird is to break the animal's neck to end its life. But as the small creature lay helpless on the ground before me, it was then that I realized

the error of my ways, the falsity of my indoctrination, and the wrongness of a traditional practice that I always considered innocent. At the time, I was unfamiliar with ethics, had never stepped foot into a college classroom, and was unaware that at that very instance millions of animals across the world were suffering as a consequence of human dominion, just as the dove laying before me.

Animals within the factory farming industry, those locked in cages awaiting painful experimentation, and animals hunted and killed, and all are hidden away in the shadows of human dominion. Before we can truly liberate animals and fight to end their suffering, the shadows under which they suffer must be pushed away. I believe revealing the immense suffering inflicted on animals across various practices is paramount to affect change. To some extent, all people are blinded by their own cultural indoctrination and socialization, which, at least in part, is responsible for obscuring many of the moral wrongs committed by human animals. We rarely view our consumption of meat, our purchase of certain products, or our “normal” practices such as hunting as contributing to animal suffering. It is because of this false perception of normality that informing the consumer of the horrors of hunting, vivisection, and intensive farming practices, among other cruel and unnecessary evils we inflict on animals, becomes the catalyst to begin alleviating centuries of wrongdoing. It is essential that humans witness the anemic veal calf crying for his mother, the pregnant sow confined to such degree that she is unable to turn around in her crate, the beagle in the laboratory used for cosmetic testing who has never felt the warmth of the sun, the circus elephant whose scars detail a lifetime of abuse, or the dove wounded by gun fire who will never again fly alongside her lifetime mate. It is imperative that we see the violence, pain, and suffering our way of life inflicts on others. Only



then will we as humans truly see what resides in the shadows of our own dominion and begin our transition from oppressor to liberator.

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