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## Contents

Issue Introduction: Getting Back to Our Roots <i>Amber E. George and Nathan Poirier</i>	p. 1-3
Essay: Zoölogy of the Oppressed <i>Ralph Acampora</i>	pp. 4-18
Essay: Silence Abets Violence: The Case for the Liberation Pledge <i>nico stubler</i>	pp. 19-51
Essay: Being Consistently Biocentric: On the (Im)Possibility of Spinozist Animal Ethics <i>Chandler D. Rogers</i>	pp. 52-72
Essay: Mediating a Global Capitalist, Speciesist Moral Vacuum: How Two Escaped Pigs disrupted Dyson Appliances' State of Nature <i>Matthew David and Nathan Stephens-Griffin</i>	pp.73-99
Poem: Sacred Space (An Environmental Poem) <i>Stefan Sencerz</i>	pp. 100-103
Poem: Activism, Ag-gag, Accountability <i>Samantha Skinner</i>	pp. 104-106
Author Biographies	pp. 107-108
JCAS Submission Guidelines	pp. 109-110

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# Issue Introduction: Getting Back to Our Roots

Amber E. George and Nathan Poirier

With this first issue of 2021, the editors are taking JCAS back to its roots. The goal is to support articles that reflect a specifically *critical* animal studies approach instead of more mainstream human-animal studies or anthrozoology approaches. Critical animal studies (CAS) critiques existing power structures and suggests ways to create alternate realities that provide liberation and justice for nonhuman animals. It is also rooted in activism—writ large—as a primary vehicle for creating envisioned change. The editors also believe that being fully inclusive means publishing articles accessible to a broad audience of scholar-activists and other CAS supporters. In other words, essays that appeal to a very narrow discipline and fail to embrace CAS scholarship and activism will need to revise before acceptance. Thus, we encourage all future authors to heed these directives. Doing so will improve acceptance rates and reduce the work for everyone involved in the process, from the peer reviewers to the editors and the authors. Those submissions that clearly take a CAS approach will likely move more quickly through the entire publication process.

While all the above points are central to the mission of CAS—critiquing power, suggesting alternatives, activism, and accessibility—are key, activism is perhaps most central. Action of various types, legal and even illegal, are absolutely necessary to bring about change. Perhaps the most central truism about power is that those with power will do whatever they feel necessary to keep it. Thus, those who remain complacent implicitly (at least) support the status quo. To be clear, this is not to dictate what actions are possible. There are personal and structural limitations to what individuals can do at given times, places, and social locations. But everyone can do *something*. CAS supports the radical direct action of the Animal Liberation Front and the Earth Liberation Front. CAS also suggest people get involved by doing banner drops, rallies, lending direct support to various movements, and organizing efforts by those who may not take more physical approaches. Activism also includes doing activities within classrooms as well.

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In this issue's first essay, Ralph Acampora, uses Paolo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* as a starting point to discover a critical pedagogy for nonhuman animals. Acampora first illuminates Freire's anthropocentrism in a critical fashion. From there, he attempts to salvage ideologies from other critical pedagogues and humane educationists to influence critical animal studies. To de-center the human from education, Acampora also considers the possibility of animals teaching humans. Ultimately, Acampora concludes that the most prevailing pedagogies fall short of a truly animal-centric pedagogy. He proposes that Henry Giroux is perhaps the best figure from which to draw pedagogical inspiration within a CAS perspective.

Next, nico stubler argues in favor of the Animal Liberation Pledge—a commitment to not eat alongside those consuming animal products—as a radical political supplement to veganism. More and more, veganism has been promoted as a way for individuals to address this violence. While theorized as consisting of three “levels,” this pledge is a concept every radical activist should consider. By declaring oneself completely opposed to consuming animals and physically removing oneself from any instances in which this occurs, makes clear the activist's position against nonhuman exploitation and forces those complicit in animal consumption to confront a de-stabilizing force. This essay is one likely to be engaged with for years to come—and it should be—especially by those in critical animal studies. It is stubler's hope that readers will leave convinced to take the Pledge themselves, and if not, that the seeds for such action have been planted and await germination.

The next essay is that of Chandler D. Rogers. Rogers takes a rather underutilized approach to argue that an animal ethic adequate to the demands of our historical moment cannot be developed from within the bounds of Spinoza's system, according to which the assumption of causal determinism and the absence of a biocentric axiology (which would attribute intrinsic value to all living beings) combine to produce a necessarily anthropocentric axiology (in which humans are assumed to be the sole bearers of value). In light of mass injustices promulgated by our species against earth's nonhuman inhabitants, he argues, and in consort with the assumption of a modern, paradoxically anthropocentric axiology, attempts to salvage a feeble semblance of sympathy for animals from within a Spinozist framework prove inadequate to address environmental crises fueled by abuses in animal ethics, for example in modern industrial animal agriculture.

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The final essay written by Matthew David and Nathan Stephens-Griffin, discusses two parallel cases in the United Kingdom: the escape of two pigs in route to slaughter, and Dyson Appliance’s decision to fire all of their vacuum cleaner production staff. While on the surface these two instances may seem unrelated, David and Stephens-Griffin show how these two stories are closely linked in time, space, and through a narrative of “naturalness” and “inevitability.” Adopting a Critical Animal Media Studies lens, the authors explore the contradictions and connections between who gets sent to market and who gets protected in a supposedly “free market” economy to investigate implications of animal escape stories within a carnist and capitalist society.

This issue concludes with two impactful poems about environmentalism and animal ethics. The first, written by Stefan Sencerz, explores the feelings generated when one enters a sacred place on Earth, a poem inspired by several readings in environmental ethics, especially those of J. Donald Hughes and Jim Swan. Sencerz builds on Hughes’s and Swan’s explorations of the clash between an attitude of reverence for all nature and the attitude of treating nature as merely a subject of commerce. This tension is also frequently perpetuated by Christianity in which reverence for anything terrestrial is seen as an affront to God. The second poem, written by Samantha Skinner, confronts the perils of the agricultural industrial complex (AIC) and being animal activists. Skinner ponders the isolation created somewhat ironically by the relentless pursuit to continue business as usual by pointing the finger squarely at major players within the AIC as being largely responsible for the consequences of Covid-19.

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# Zoögogy of the Oppressed

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## Abstract

The essay is inspired by Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, with the twist that the oppressed under analysis are nonhuman animals. However, Freire's approach has been criticized as far too anthropocentric to create an animal pedagogy. Thus, Pedersen and Laird are used to highlight the benefits of Freire's approach to impact critical animal studies. Most of the work surveyed contributes insights about humans teaching each other or other animals; one author, Kelly Oliver, is discovered who turns the lens around and considers how and what other animals teach humans. Finally, the paper ends with a look at Zoe Weil's recommendations for humane education.

**Keywords:** *animal pedagogy; anthropocentrism; humane education; ecopedagogy.*

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## The Master and His Shortcomings: Freire's Pitfalls

In educational praxis, Paolo Freire is often cited due to the emancipatory potential of his pedagogy. For critical animal studies scholars interested in animal liberation praxis, Freire's perspectives seem to meld seamlessly into its themes. However, an in-depth analysis of Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970/2000) demonstrates several speciesist and anthropocentric problems. (In this regard, it is not unlike the broader field of humanistic pedagogy [see Ferrante & Sartori, 2016].) For instance, in the middle of his masterpiece, he reiterates human exceptionalism several times: other animals are "beings in themselves," whereas the human is a being for himself; "animals are ahistorical" and "cannot commit themselves;" "the animal ... is totally determined;" "[t]he ... world of animals contains no limit-situations;" "[a]nimal activity, which occurs without a praxis, is not creative [--] people's transforming activity is" (Freire, 1970/2000, pp. 97-101). The analysis presented in this essay reviews the alleged reasons for each element of anthropocentrism and offers some countervailing considerations as presented by Lauren Corman (2011) and C. A. Bowers (2005). Here, I side more with Bowers' critical stance than with Corman's attempted recovery of Freire. Bowers provides a convincing critique based on Freire's inattention to environmental and ecosophical matters. Corman thinks that the spirit of Freire's work can yet be mobilized on behalf of animal studies, but her case reads more like wishful thinking. Regardless, this essay will survey a number of situations in which other animals are purported to teach humans various lessons. The positive attempts at reconstructing animal pedagogy, or zoögogy, that go beyond the critique of humanistic pedagogy will also be examined. Ultimately, the work of later critical pedagogues, like Henry Giroux (1981, 2011), may be better positioned for use in critical animal studies.

Playing off the existentialist phenomenologist Sartre's (1993) being-in-itself (subjectivity) and being-for-itself (objectivity), Freire emphasizes the supposedly human-only capacity of reflection. Because of this, other animals can neither set objectives nor make their changes in nature with any import beyond themselves. Moreover, decisions to perform transformative activity belong properly to their species, not to them as individual beings (Freire, 1970/2000, p. 97). The Sartrean dichotomy between being-in-itself and being-for-itself is old and tired; it was a recycling of the Kantian

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distinction between person and thing, and is simply too blunt to do the ontological work asked of it—more nuanced concepts are required. As for reflection, cetaceans, apes, and elephants, even corvids appear capable of such. Most other animals do not, it is true, set objectives, but some do (such as those cited) and those who do seem to be truly transforming their environments as individuals (not in terms of species only). (The literature on animal capacities is numerous and wide-ranging. One recent, capacious, and authoritative source is de Waal, 2016.)

Freire claims that other animals are ahistorical because they live “submerged” in a world to which they can give no significance, lacking a “tomorrow” and a “yesterday” because they live in an ever-present “now.” Other animals do not inhabit a world in the pure sense, for the world does not play “not-I” to the self’s “I” in a hermeneutic dialectic. These beings are merely stimulated by the world, not challenged—and consequently, they cannot be risk-takers (Freire, 1970/2000, p. 98). Against these retrograde views, dolphins, whales, great apes, elephants, and corvids all have psycho-physical identity over time, as indeed most if not all mammals do. You get the sense that “the animal” is just a stand-in for not-human and the category is never really investigated empirically at all. For instance, cetaceans and higher primates probably stage an I/not-I dialectic hermeneutically (Marino, 2002). Finally, overlaying the old stimulus-response template onto animal behavior will not do: several of the most sapient species are indeed challenged and become risk-takers as well.

Animals cannot commit themselves, claims Freire. They cannot “take on” life, because they cannot expand their “prop” world into a significant, symbolic world of culture and history. Consequently, other animals neither “animalize” nor “deanimalize” themselves. Even in the wild they remain beings-in-themselves, just as they are in the zoo. Unlike people, other animals only live—they do not exist (Freire, 1970/2000, p. 98). However, great apes and elephants cannot be said to inhabit a prop space; they infuse their settlements and nomadic routes with traces of cultural significance. Thus, some animals do animalize themselves, and certain chimps can be said to deanimalize the monkeys they eat (Teleki, 1973). Conditions of zoo-like captivity very much change life for other animals—there they are reified (or objectified). In contrast, in the wild, many species are beings-for-themselves (capable of behaving like subjects). Likewise, many kinds of animal exist

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beyond merely living. Indeed, at the most radical level of critique, the very distinction between living and existing seems to evaporate.

Other-than-human animals, according to Freire, lack self-consciousness and are thus totally determined beings (Freire, 1970/2000, p. 99). This claim ignores the so-called mirror test of self-consciousness and the many animal species who have passed it. Even more radically, it misses that there may be different forms of self-consciousness and that ours might not be the criterion of all. Those animals with psycho-physical identity over time can hardly be said to be determined unless one also catches humans in their necessitarian net.

There are no limit-situations in the world of other animals. According to Freire, this is because the limit-acts required (separation and objectification of the world to transform it) are absent. The appropriate role for other animals is not to relate to their piece of the world, but to adapt to it. Other animals are organically bound to their various pieces of the world. Freire quotes Marx, “An animal’s product belongs immediately to its physical body, whilst man freely confronts his product.” Only products made without attachment to the physical body can assign meaning to the context of production—thus the producer becomes a “being for himself” and the context becomes a relatable world (Freire, 1970/2000, p. 100). However, some other animals do confront limits: it is known, for instance, that some dolphins have committed suicide (Pena-Guzman, 2017)—and this experience is a rejection of the world holistically. Likewise, other animals produce things not from their body—for example, chimpanzees make tools out of twigs which they then use for fishing termites out of their mounds (termite is rather tasty to the chimp palate).

Following through on the foregoing, Freire reminds us of the difference between animal prop-worlds and human culture/history. As he puts it, “Animal activity, which occurs without a praxis, is not creative; people’s transforming activity is” (Freire, 1970/2000, pp. 100f.). However, not all animal activity occurs without a praxis: the chimp tool-making mentioned before is one example, and elephantine burial practices are another. There are, indeed, animal creators other than humans.

## **Educational Praxis Examined**

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These examples demonstrate that educational theory has pitfalls when it comes to addressing human exceptionalism in pedagogy. One might wonder whether conditions improve within the realm of educational practice. Citing animal studies scholar Desmond, educational theorist Pedersen asserts that, “it is imperative to uncover the various meanings of physical presence and how they operate within systems of social differentiation, legitimate exploitation, and obscure the complexities of its historical origins that have rationalized human and animal oppression with a similar logic.” Indeed, “animal bodies have been disciplined, standardized, and put to use in animal agriculture, biotechnology, and entertainment industries” (Pedersen, 2010, p. 60). Should we suspect any better in educational contexts? One of the first such contexts are zoos, where it is claimed by their self-promotional materials that we can expect better. But Pedersen, quoting ethologist Willis, makes it clear that “An animal in the wild is integral with its surroundings, which it continuously engages through senses, instincts, and corporeal functions. To slice into an animal’s environment [as does the zoo], making its world a window for our [“educational”] gaze, enacts the surgery of invasion and domination” (Pedersen, 2010, p. 63). In other words, we shouldn’t expect better at the zoo.

Beyond the zoo, animal agribusiness has its interventions in schooling. “Schools mediate not only, knowledge, ‘facts,’ and ways of thinking, but also values, norms, and habits. Food socialization is one example. As part of the socialization into meat and dairy consumption, commodification of animals in the agriculture industry [i]s reproduced in some school textbooks.” Incorporation into production technology via the process of mass production is valorized. “By artificial inseminations, genetic manipulation, mutilation, and other measures, the animal is modified and designed to suit the production system and optimize productivity.” This is essentially a process of de-animalization, something specifically excluded from consideration by Freire’s theory. In her ethnography of education, Pedersen concludes that the zoo, the food industry, and wildlife management intrude into educational settings such that “the human-animal relationship is turned into just another form of merchandise for consumption” (Pedersen 2010, p. 96). It is not just zoos, then, but other educational sectors as well that reify and objectify other animals.

Another aspect of animal education is legitimizing the killing of animals for various reasons. For example, when students go on educational

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field trips, veg(etari)ans amongst them were made to feel deviant by imposing different modus operandi on their actions such as being “subjected to various acts of exclusion from the normal food routines” (Pedersen, 2010, p. 103). In another instance, that of hunting, the animal is treated as a dead object or lump of meat, even in advance of hunting activities. This is part of naturalizing the killing of animals—“to make killing appear morally acceptable and obscure the structural relations of power and domination involved” (Pedersen, 2010, p. 115). Education can do better than this—it can show other animals for what they are, subjects-of-a-life with biographies as well as biologies.

Sedimented beneath animal education are certain conflicts and contradictions. Pedersen cites Marxian philosopher Benton (2003) in remarking that emerging sensibilities toward the situation and position of animals, together with the material foundations of human society that require their exploitation, present “one of the contradictions upon which modern civilization can be said to rest” (quoted in Pedersen, 2010, p. 119). The teachings of animal education, both overt or explicit, and parts of the hidden curriculum, have been found by Pedersen to comprise three essential themes as follows: inevitability, benevolence, and common good. Each is summarized in turn.

### *Inevitability.*

Biological/cultural determinism: humans have always eaten meat/hunted; hunting is an innate instinct (in the human being)/an expression of culture; animals are part of nature’s cycle/system where they are also used and eaten by humans; humans are predators; meat consumption is natural/necessary for human survival; animals have no thoughts about the past or the future/live according to their instincts.

### *Benevolence.*

Animals may benefit from their status as “usable”: one can be a friend of animals, and still eat meat; if we shoot the (wild) animals and eat their meat, they won’t have to experience the (animal) industry; animals are no better off in nature (than in captivity); animals are bred for the sake of human beings, otherwise they wouldn’t exist; eating animals can give their life a purpose; provided an animal has been treated well/has had a good life, it is okay to kill (and eat) them; zoos help protect endangered species.

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*Common Good.*

Animal use may have positive consequences for society. If we do not hunt animals, there will be too many of them; hunting is okay if the meat is taken care of; zoos educate people about animals (Pedersen, 2010, pp. 120ff.). It is good to understand what's at stake when we let anthropocentrism have its run through education. For one thing, intersectional mishaps occur: as commentator Bradley Rowe puts it, “[t]o dehumanize is to dissociate and degrade by using animals’ lesser, objectified, repressed position to further the exploitation and oppression of humans (while maintaining the subordinate status of animals)” (Rowe, 2016, p. 36).

### **Building a Non-Anthropocentric Zoölogy**

However, we have spent enough time on the negative side of pedagogy. Let us turn now to the positive side of building a non-anthropocentric zoölogy (or animal pedagogy). One approach, developed by educational scholar Susan Laird, is called “befriending,” and involves “care-sensitive ethics in relations between animals, human and non-human.” Befriending should not happen anthropomorphically; rather, it

does involve one species helping, aiding, or supporting the other, sharing activity, perhaps even working, playing, sleeping or eating together, or somehow acting ‘as’ a friend—that is, with benevolent or just concern for the other’s welfare, for the other’s sake—often with moral consequences for either the human animal or the non-human one, or for both, as well as for the environment they share (Laird & Ogilvie Holzer, 2016, p. 156).

The prospects for this relating are salutary: “The practice of befriending animals can become a dance of interspecies encounters that prods transformative concern for earth others along with self-examination about one’s own prejudices, partialities, and other limitations” (Laird & Ogilvie Holzer, 2016, p. 165). There may be skeptics about this approach—ecosophist Paul Shepard, for instance, excoriated the paradigm of considering other animals as friends; he thought of it as a Disneyesque fantasy that robbed other animals of their dignity. However, as Laird makes clear, “the practice of befriending animals aims neither to anthropomorphize

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non-human animals nor to humanize human animals; it aims, instead, to enable educational encounters between them” (Laird and Ogilvie Holzer, 2016, p. 166). This theoretical vision is similar to the praxis of a small, yet significant, organization, Multispecies Education International (MEI), that aims “[t]o provide educational experiences that develop respect, understanding and cooperation between species, in order that we may all learn to live together in harmony as a global multispecies community, fairly sharing between us the resources of planet Earth” (Roberts, n.d.). Though it may not use befriending lingo, this is still an important part of what MEI does—especially in exposing youth to a zoölogy of life reverence (à la humanitarian Albert Schweitzer). The example of this organization, staging events where children and adults learn coexistence tactics by first-hand exposure to other animals, admirably counters the anthropocentrism of Freire’s pedagogy.

Indeed, Richard Kahn admits “that much of Paulo Freire’s discourse is anthropocentric” (2016, p. 223, n. 7). If we reject this anthropocentrism in favor of a reverence for life ethos, animal studies scholar A. G. Rud asserts, “we may inflict death and suffering on another living being only when there is an inescapable necessity” (2016, p. 207). We will also become much more attentive to other animals’ different modes of communication. Within this attentiveness, according to literary scholar Karla Armbruster, “there is at least a trace of a desire to know and better understand the real otherness of animals, to uncenter from our human perspective and—in whatever limited way we can—open ourselves to the nonhuman” (2013, p. 19).

Finding the affirmative side of zoölogy is difficult yet important because zoölogy enables education that allows for human-animal interface and coexistence. Even when authors are ostensibly providing such, the critical, negative side seeps in and sometimes overwhelms. For instance, the educational ensemble of Julie Andrzejewski, Helena Pedersen, and Freeman Wicklund (2009) sets out to provide curricular proposals for interspecies education, and only a small fraction of the proposal is affirmative. One example is the list of recommendations made for teacher education:

- A. Instruction on animal attributes, the interrelationship of other species to the web of life, the consequences of seemingly harmless human endeavors on this delicate balance, and actions that can be taken to restore balance.

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- B. Instruction on the philosophies, cultural, spiritual, and ethical traditions, and practices of peace, nonviolence in relation to animals, people, and the earth.
  - C. Skills in critical analysis of the roles and representations of animals in media, schools, and other parts of society.
  - D. Skills in integrating appropriate content into their own teaching and disciplines.
  - E. Instruction on the abuse and exploitation of animals in educational institutions, and appropriate alternatives to such educational practices.
  - F. Opportunities to practice new habits of respect, compassion, nonviolence, and justice toward other animals and species in order to model and teach new behaviors to students.
  - G. Instructional and assessment strategies to create curricula and learning environments for students to learn knowledge and skills regarding other species and the environment. (2009, pp. 150f.)

Of these suggestions above, only (F) is entirely affirmative rather than negative or neutral in disposition or coverage.

Nonetheless, because this trio's essay is a treasure trove of zoölogical ideas, let us review one more aspect before returning to our search for positive proposals. Here is the list of recommendations for an interspecies education curriculum:

- A. Foster the study of the intersecting issues between humans, animals, and other species as appropriate in each discipline[.] ...
- B. Provide opportunities to study various cultural, spiritual, and philosophical traditions, and policies and practices pertaining to speciesism, peace, non-violence, respect for individual animals and other species, and principles of eco-justice.
- C. Teach skills in the critical analysis of media, evaluation of information, peaceful conflict resolution, problem solving, democratic action, and the
- D. development of ethical and socially responsible everyday behaviors in relation to animals and other species.
- E. Provide specific opportunities to practice new skills and develop new habits for respect, empathy, equanimity, peace, and advocacy for all

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peoples, other animals (individually and collectively), and the environment.

- F. Develop knowledge and skills for active local/global social change for animal and species supportive policies, and global well-being. (Andrzejewski et al., 2009, pp. 149f.)

These suggestions would enrich any serious and broad-based zoölogy.

### **Animal Lessons Revealed**

Until now, only animal pedagogies that deal with what we teach ourselves about other animals (and, implicitly, what we teach other animals about ourselves) have been considered. One author, philosopher Kelly Oliver (2009), has taken up, in her book *Animal Lessons*, the rather interesting matter of what other animals teach us. Militating against the notion that other animals have nothing significant to impart, her method is to examine a dozen or so classical figures of continental European philosophy, to see how they mediate the presence and function of animals in their texts. “In various ways, these philosophers dissect, probe, exploit, and domesticate animals to shore up their notions of human and humanity.” But this is not all they do—they also “disavow the animal pedagogy at the heart of their philosophies of man.” Oliver takes it as her task to revivify this zoölogy, for these animals “are the literal and metaphorical creatures by virtue of which we become human subjects” (2009, p. 12). As she puts it, “the very conception of ‘ourselves’ or ‘we’ comes under scrutiny” in this project, “because ... animals have always been formative parts of our self-conception” (Oliver, 2009, p. 22). This is a helpful antidote to Freire’s anthropocentrism. Paradoxically, though, it becomes a site for the usage of Freire’s pedagogy, since the animals are not “banking,” but rather guiding from an equal standpoint. (Freire contrasts traditional pedagogy, which works on a model of banking—teacher making deposits of knowledge into students’ heads—, with a more egalitarian model of sharing learning between teacher and student.)

The lessons learned by Oliver’s zoölogy are many and various. One of the first is that “we [humans] are strays, wounded animals, whose scars make us human” (Oliver, 2009, p. 44). This point underscores the condition of human finitude—we are lost, un-whole, and out of sorts. Moving onward, French Romanticist Rousseau’s cat teaches us that humans pick up the content and method of eating from other animals, they imitate other creatures

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and incorporate their instincts (Oliver, 2009, p. 53). Thus, we find a mimesis of edibility at work. Rousseauvian insight extends to (mal)treatment: harsh treatment of animals breeds harsh treatment of humans; tracking down and targeting animals teaches how to hunt and kill humans; conflict is of course an effect of hunting animals (Oliver, 2009, p. 60). Mimesis (denied) crops up again: language insinuates itself into incorporating animal behavior and the ensuing erasure of that zoölogy (Oliver, 2009, p. 63). Finally, a lesson about animals is served up, in that any effort to discriminate animality from humanity must take apart the import of subjectivity or personhood (Oliver, 2009, p. 70). So much, then, from Rousseau's cat.

Next are German Romanticist Herder's sheep, who teach that humans learn to talk, and thus become people, in exchange with other animals (Oliver, 2009, p. 89). Jumping ahead to existentialist and feminist philosopher de Beauvoir's praying mantis, we learn that other animals are predetermined by their biological make-up whereas humans are not (Oliver, 2009, p. 173). Things change when we come to philosopher-psychologist Merleau-Ponty's stickleback: Language and society are not estranged from the animal corpus but rather resound with it in a formal or fictive sense; Merleau-Ponty refers to animality as the logos of the perceivable world (Oliver, 2009, p. 212). Moreover, Oliver quotes Merleau-Ponty directly when sharing the lesson that as bodies, humans exist in a "relation of intercorporeity in the biosphere with all animality" (quoted in Oliver, 2009, p. 219). This implies that "the relation of the human and animality is not a hierarchical relation but a lateral one, a surpassing ... that does not abolish kinship." (Merleau-Ponty, quoted by Oliver, 2009, p. 220)

Famed psychologist Freud's zoophilia, his treatment of bestiality, presents edifying material that contests earlier assertions: human solidarity, he says, depends on a grounding sacrifice of animal solidarity both literally and symbolically (Oliver, 2009, p. 248). On the other hand, some commentators on Freud have insisted that the animal builds semiotic systems, including kinship relationships, that make up both sociality and humanity (Oliver, 2009, p. 250). Indeed, the idea of god itself, which turns totemism into theism, is a domestication of the animal (Oliver, 2009, p. 272).

When we turn to psychoanalytic scholar Kristeva's strays, the lesson is that other creatures are symbols through which humans become talking beings (Oliver, 2009, p. 278). More broadly, Oliver tells us that Kristeva's work implies that humans distinguish themselves from animals so that they

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can imitate those beings for the purpose of becoming human. And so we see that abjection is a turning away from the fundamental grounding in animality that allows for distinction and freedom, which itself allows for mimesis and growth into talking, i.e., human beings; thus abjection is a turning away from the zoölogy at the core of humanity (Oliver, 2009, p. 282). Abjection enables rather violent practices and institutions to evolve: the murder of animals has become civilized and we come to the point of industrial agriculture and mass slaughter being hidden outside of our sight (Oliver, 2009, p. 295). Abjection's dynamics motivate humanity's self-constitution through such violence: however they are treated, other animals are murdered so that sociality and kinship is possible for humans, and all these stories are grounded in murdering and masticating animals (Oliver, 2009, p. 296). Finally, then, we come to Kristeva's psychodynamic conclusion, namely that "our own animality is the return of the repressed" (Oliver, 2009, p. 301).

Oliver's lessons pertain to the pedagogy of humans learning *from* other animals, but if we want to mount a pedagogy that is *about* other animals (humans teaching humans about other animals), we will have to look further. Indeed, nothing we have witnessed so far gives just the right trajectory of instruction. Let us turn, then, to an example of positive or affirmative zoölogy that is full-on constructive.

Zoölogy is a pedagogy of the oppressed because it involves other animals and sometimes subaltern humans. Human(e) educator Zoe Weil offers guidelines for overcoming the oppression endemic to zoölogy. These are especially relevant to K-12 contexts:

1. To provide students with accurate information about the pressing challenges of our time
2. To foster the 3 Cs of curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking
3. To nurture the 3 Rs of reverence, respect, and responsibility
4. To offer positive choices and the tools for problem solving

To these, Weil adds that we ought to "inculcate in students the 3 Is of inquiry, introspection, and integrity." The overarching goal here is "to provide all children, in age-appropriate ways, with the knowledge, tools, and motivation to be conscientious choice makers and engaged changemakers for a peaceful, healthy, and humane world for all people, animals, and the environment" (2014, Ch. 15).

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## Conclusion

In this essay, the drawbacks of an over-reliance on Freirean pedagogy and how it succumbs to various forms of human exceptionalism were analyzed. Freire lacked sufficient guidance on animality, and others, like Andrzejewski et al., provide too critical a stance (not constructive enough). The work of Helena Pedersen uncovered the anthropocentric biases built into normal educational practice, and ways to incorporate pro-animal principles into critical pedagogy were presented. The work of Kelly Oliver was scanned for its potential to fuel a zoögogy that takes seriously the contributions of other animals themselves. And finally, Zoe Weil's humane education stance was also explored. Unfortunately, the foregoing pedagogies contain lacunas or aporias. Despite the drawbacks of the ur-text of critical pedagogy, I yet think the authors can serve useful functions in juxtaposition with critical animal studies. Although Freire wrote an anthropocentric masterpiece, later in life he had a few more inclusive things to say. I would like, finally, to suggest that a younger generation of critical pedagogues, exemplified by educational scholar Henry Giroux, might be most serviceable for this usage. Giroux disturbs commonsense myths that legitimate exploitation, and though he does not take the animal turn, his discourse is not anthropocentric and provides a more neutral tool for the student of critical animal studies. This may seem odd, given that Giroux does not directly theorize animality. However, he does undermine subjugation by dismantling its enabling mind-sets, and does so without the Freirean anthropocentrism that we saw before. Thus, his work is a boon for critical animal studies.

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# Silence Abets Violence: The Case for the Liberation Pledge

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## Abstract

Animal agriculture brutalizes hundreds of billions of animals every year. More and more, veganism has been promoted as a way for individuals to address this violence. However, when passively pursued via personal dietary divestment, a vegan ethic fails to substantively challenge the cultural hegemony of carnism—the ideology that justifies the consumption of certain animals. Rather, in tacitly accepting the carnism of others, passive vegan eaters normalize and perpetuate the very exploitation their ethic stands against. The Liberation Pledge—essentially a commitment to never eat around those consuming animal products—is a response to this understanding. By explicitly and emphatically condemning the dietary violence of others, the Liberation Pledge functions to actively de-normalize the oppressive system, eroding a central tenant upon which carnism persists. Centrally, in this paper I contend that the Liberation Pledge is one of the most effective tools for doing so. It is my hope that readers will leave convinced to uptake the Pledge themselves, and if not, that the seeds for such action have been planted and await germination.

*Keywords: liberation pledge; veganism; animal liberation; animal rights; carnism; activism.*

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*“The world will not be destroyed by those who do evil, but by those who watch them without doing anything.”*

—Albert Einstein (Corredor, 1957, p. 11)

Animal agriculture brutalizes hundreds of billions of animals every year. More and more, veganism is promoted as a way for individuals to address this violence. However, when passively pursued via personal dietary divestment, a vegan ethic fails to substantively challenge the cultural hegemony of carnism—the ideology that justifies the consumption of certain animals. Rather, in tacitly accepting the carnism of others, passive vegan eaters normalize and perpetuate the very exploitation their ethic stands against. The Liberation Pledge—essentially a commitment to never eat around those consuming animal products—is a response to this understanding. By explicitly and emphatically condemning the dietary violence of others, the Liberation Pledge functions to actively de-normalize the oppressive system, eroding a central tenant upon which it persists. The Liberation Pledge is one of the most effective tools for doing so at the individual level.

In line with critical animal studies’ foundational call for linking “theory to practice” (Best et al., 2007, p. 6), the Liberation Pledge advocates the same. It is the practice of the Liberation Pledge—not merely passive veganism—that constitutes enactment of an animal liberation ethic. That is, the Liberation Pledge turns the theory underlying ethical veganism into its logical conclusion in praxis.

Accepting this argument should lead towards reconceptualizing veganism’s role in the animal liberation movement. This article focuses on the individualized application of this conclusion, namely practicing the Liberation Pledge oneself and urging others to follow suit. However, albeit not the focus here, the same lesson applies institutionally, an application that calls for shifting resources and messaging away from encouraging negative duties (e.g., personal dietary change) and towards advocating positive duties to promote animal liberation.

What follows, then, is essentially an argument for animal liberationists to evolve their activism by adopting the Liberation Pledge. Section I begins with an overview of the Liberation Pledge. Section II explains the Pledge’s theory of change. Section III highlights the Liberation Pledge’s historic impact and its potential for growth. And section IV

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responds to seven central critiques. Having thus made the case for the efficacy of the Liberation Pledge, Section V concludes by arguing for the adoption of the Liberation Pledge (or similar activism) as a moral imperative.

Despite being the first academic article to address this topic, I hope it will not be the last. Rather, given my belief in the power and relevance of the Liberation Pledge, I hope this article opens space for continued academic dialogue to follow. For not only is this topic rich with research potential—from qualitative research regarding the experiences of Pledge practitioners to theoretical work exploring its institutional applications—but more importantly, such research has the power to affect positive change.

## I. The Liberation Pledge

*“For to be free is not merely to cast off one’s chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.”*

—Nelson Mandela, *Reflections on Working Toward Peace*

The idea for the Liberation Pledge came out of conversations between activists in the San Francisco Bay Area. Frustrated with the historic trajectory of the animal liberation movement and concerned about its capacity for success moving forward, these activists concluded that neither passive veganism nor the movement’s focus on promulgating it were effective strategies. Instead, they reasoned hegemonic social norms would not change—especially not at the rate they need to—absent direct confrontation and pressure. Given this conclusion, the Liberation Pledge was developed as a way to address passive veganism’s failure to do so.

Since its inauguration in 2015, the Liberation Pledge has historically consisted of three parts: one, publicly refuse to eat animals; two, publicly refuse to sit where animals are being eaten; and three, encourage others to take the Pledge (“The Liberation Pledge,” 2020). Ideally, the Pledge is a lifelong commitment. While this original version of the Liberation Pledge is not meant to condone any form of animal exploitation, its focus has typically targeted the consumption of animal flesh. Its stated purpose for doing so is to avoid slipping into interrogations regarding the ambiguous veganity of products like bagels, sugar, etc. That said, my interpretation and support of the Liberation Pledge argues for adhering to it whenever another is consuming a product of known animal origin.

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Given the Pledge’s focus on dismantling carnism—the ideology that normalizes the edibility of certain animals—it is focused exclusively on boycotting dietary violence. In not applying to other forms of violence done to animals—including clothing production, scientific research, “pet” breeding, and entertainment—the Pledge does not connote tolerance of these industries. Indeed, the ethos underlying many practitioners’ commitment to the Pledge rejects the (ab)use of animals for any purpose. That said, while the Liberation Pledge is specifically designed to dismantle the violence bound up within carnism (the topic of Section II), it can be freely practiced alongside any other liberatory strategies.

In considering nuances to the Liberation Pledge, Torres (2015) outlines and endorses three levels it can take. The most basic level accords with the Pledge’s original framing, and entails abstaining from eating at any non-vegetarian table—i.e., refusing to dine around anyone consuming animal flesh. Torres argues that while this version does condone the consumption of animal products like milk and eggs, it still gets the point across but in a way that can “be touted as a ‘compromise.’” To be clear, I do not endorse this version of the Pledge. As will be argued in Section II, a central power of the Pledge comes from its moral rejection of animal products as edible, and this version patently fails to do so. As a result, I believe this version muddies what should be a clear and coherent position—that animals are not ours to use—to the detriment of the animal liberation movement. We should not make compromises around “tolerable” forms of violence, and the fact that this level does so should be perceived not as beneficial but as disqualifying.

The second level Torres discusses entails abstaining from eating at what he calls “tables of violence”—i.e., refusing to sit at a table where animal flesh *and/or* animal products are present. At this level practitioners are free to attend restaurants or events that serve animal products, even though doing so might necessitate sitting at a different table or in a different room when it is time to eat. The third level entails abstaining from eating in “places of violence”—i.e., refusing to go to any restaurant or event that profits directly from exploiting animals as food. This is the most challenging level, though it is made easier for individuals who have access to vegan-friendly venues and to those who have plant-based or open-minded family members.

While I myself practice the second level, I equally support the third as well, as both in my view are strategic and morally justifiable, albeit with their own strengths. For example, whereas the second level serves to open

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the range of events available to the practitioner (and thus their range of influence) without compromising the Pledge’s message, the latter powerfully clarifies that it is morally reprehensible for institutions to profit from animal exploitation irrespective of the practitioner or their cohort’s direct complicity in those profits. Consequently, while rejecting the first level, I do not advocate for adopting the second or third level. Instead, I encourage others to follow whichever option resonates, and do not distinguish between the two again in this article.

While not required, practitioners of the Liberation Pledge are encouraged to adopt the Liberation Band, a fork bent into a bracelet. The symbology of the Band is both informative and inspiring. From the Book of Isaiah comes the passage: “They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks” (“Swords to Ploughshares,” 2020). “Swords to plowshares” is a concept wherein destructive military weapons, implements of violence, are converted into peaceful tools meant to benefit society. The concept is prominently embodied and enacted by the Plowshares movement, a Christian pacifist and anti-nuclear weapons movement that advocates active resistance to war (Muller & Brown, 2010).

As Gandhi is often claimed to have said, the fork arguably represents the most violent implement in society today (Tuttle, 2005, p. 1). An estimated 70 billion—70,000,000,000—terrestrial animals are slaughtered in animal agriculture alongside well over a trillion—1,000,000,000,000—hunted or farmed aquatic animals every year (Schlottmann & Sebo, 2019, p. 71). To put this aggregate number into perspective, only 108 billion humans are estimated to have ever been born, meaning we kill an order of magnitude more animals each year to eat than the number of humans who have ever existed (Kaneda & Haub, 2020). As such, like turning swords to plowshares, the Liberation Band seeks to transform the fork from its symbol of violence into a symbol of active resistance.

While motivating, the real value of this symbology comes from its utility in empowering the practitioner to affect social change. First, the band is unique and striking, features that enable it to be employed to fulfill the Liberation Pledge’s third goal of encouraging others adopt the Pledge. A stranger’s offhanded comment—“cool bracelet”—can easily be responded to with an explanation regarding its purpose and significance; moreover, such outreach is often made more effective by others initiating the conversation, as the activist’s ensuing explanation seems warranted. Second, the band helps

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to show solidarity and build community with other individuals who have taken the Pledge. Practicing the Pledge can at times be isolating; as such, being able to identify others who have made the same commitment affirms the unity and community of practitioners. Third, in the rote daily actions of washing hands, getting (un)dressed, etc., the Liberation Band serves as a constant reminder to the activist of their values and commitment to them. Humans evolved to react to harms that we experience directly, not abstract harms we have read about (Schlottmann & Sebo, 2019, p. 189). As such, the Liberation Band serves as a way to help regularly remind ourselves of the omnipresent “war against animals” that demands our active resistance (Wadiwel, 2015).

It is primarily for these three pragmatic advantages that activists are encouraged to don the Liberation Band while in public. However, despite this suggestion, practitioners are free to decline wearing the Band if they so prefer. For as the subsequent sections will make clear, the true power of the Liberation Pledge comes from the interpersonal interactions it facilitates and the psychological benefits that stem from them.

## II. Liberation Pledge Theory of Change

*“Sentiment without action is the ruin of the soul”*

—Edward Abbey, *Beyond the Wall*

Like veganism, the Liberation Pledge should not be understood as a privileged bourgeois personal choice that makes practitioners feel better (Kymlicka & Donaldson, 2014). While it can bring tremendous peace and clarity to the practitioner’s life and relationships, these benefits are incidental. Rather, the Liberation Pledge should be understood as a political tool, one of many, used by activists in working towards “total liberation” (Best et al., 2007). At its core, the central power of the Liberation Pledge lies in its ability to actively challenge the “normalcy” with which we exploit animals for food. By refusing to accept such violence as normal, practitioners of the Liberation Pledge sow the seeds for constructing new social norms and ontologies free from human supremacy.

As first explained by Joy (2011), carnism is the ideology that conditions humans to accept the consumption of certain animals as normal and acceptable. Carnism can be understood as essentially the opposite of veganism; whereas a vegan ethic derides the exploitation of animals for food,

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carnism accepts the violence embedded within the consumption of animal flesh, secretions, and other products. Throughout this article, I essentially use the term to stand in for “non-vegan,” as doing so serves to mark carnism as an abnormal system and leave veganism as unmarked (Chambers, 1996); this reframing—of veganism from marked to unmarked—is essentially what the Liberation Pledge does in practice.

Joy (2011) explains that the construction of carnism is built upon and justified by what she names the 3Ns—normal, natural, and necessary. In essence, the justifications for exploiting animals as “food” can be boiled down to these 3 Ns. And as such, these frameworks are essentially what enable carnism to persist. However, it is not inherently normal, natural, or necessary to eat animals; on the contrary, carnism is a social construction that has been normalized and systemized over time. As Chiles and Fitzgerald (2008) explain:

Except under conditions of environmental scarcity, the meaning and value of meat cannot be attributed to intrinsic biophysical value or to the political-economic actors who materially benefit from it. Rather, meat’s status reflects the myriad cultural contexts in which it is socially constructed in people’s everyday lives, particularly with respect to religious, gender, communal, racial, national, and class identity (p. 1).

By historicizing the apparent naturalness and normalcy of animal consumption—particularly through their demonstration that the political-economic, biophysical, and cultural contexts around meat eating have changed—Chiles and Fitzgerald show that the legitimacy of carnism is not material. Rather, in doing so they elucidate the role that culture has played in the legitimation of meat, an understanding that opens space for the construction of a novel framing of what is and is not normal and acceptable to eat. That is, because carnism is not “natural,” per se, but has instead been socially constructed, so too can it be deconstructed.

Given this context, the Liberation Pledge’s primary value comes from its ability to effectively challenge the normalcy with which we consume other beings. In particular, it does so through enacting and reifying what I refer to as “vegan consciousness,” a framework I adapt from Sandra Bartky’s notion of “feminist consciousness.” Bartky (1975) highlights that it’s not that

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feminists are aware of different things than other people, but that “they are aware of the same things differently. Feminist consciousness, it might be ventured, turns a ‘fact’ into a ‘contradiction’” (p. 22). Similarly, vegan consciousness sees the world in very different terms than does carnist consciousness. Those who take the Liberation Pledge do so out of their understanding that it is not inherently normal nor acceptable to consume the flesh or products of sentient nonhumans. Nor should doing so be perceived as a morally-neutral personal choice. Rather, practitioners understand acts of carnism as acts of violence, and actively condemn and challenge them as such.

In enacting “vegan consciousness,” the Liberation Pledge primarily operates by targeting two factors foundational to the construction of carnism: one, the perceived edibility of animals, and two, their invisibility as victims.

With regard to the former, the practitioner explicitly refuses to morally accept the edibility of sentient animals or their products. Unfortunately, the zeitgeist conceptualizes both as edible. To demonstrate why that is problematic, it is useful to consider the human parallel. As a society we staunchly reject and stigmatize human edibility as immoral. For imagine how our interactions with other humans would be impacted if that wasn’t the case, if we came to see humans, even just some humans, as edible (Gruen, 2011, p. 102). Doing so would fundamentally shift our relationships and the value we give them. It would frame ourselves and others as consumable—as useable—and fundamentally compromise our capacity to respect and relate to one another as free beings.

The same consequences apply to nonhuman animals. Accepting animals and their products as edible ontologically positions them as (ab)useable, a framing that precludes them from being fully incorporated into our moral circle. Consequently, expanding our moral circle to include all sentient animals requires us to see them as inedible. So in the same way most would never entertain eating humans killed unintentionally (e.g., being struck by lightning or hit by a car), we should likewise never entertain the consumption of animals, irrespective of whether or not our consumption fuels future economic demand for their “production” (e.g., flesh *qua* “roadkill” or “trash”). The Liberation Pledge acknowledges this reality by refusing to condone or tolerate the labeling of any sentient individual as food and challenges others to make the same connection.

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Instead, directly challenging the notion of animal edibility functions to cut through problematic distractions and present a clear and coherent message. In practicing the Liberation Pledge, the practitioner rejects any superfluous label such as “humane” or “cage-free” as immaterial. Rather, their actions are informed by the understanding that such considerations are morally compromised from the outset, as they tacitly accept both the legitimacy of animal use as well as the notion that others have the right to its violent products. Instead, by unconditionally challenging the edibility of animals, the practitioner focuses the conversation on what matters: the bottom line that animals are not ours to use.

With regard to the second factor—carnism’s dependence upon hiding its victims—the Liberation Pledge responds by refusing to allow what Adams (2015) calls the absent referent to remain absent:

Behind every meal of meat is an absence: the death of the animal whose place the meat takes. The “absent referent” is that which separates the meat eater from the animal and the animal from the end product. The function of the absent referent is to keep our “meat” separated from any idea that she or he was once an animal, to keep the “moo” or “cluck” or “baa” away from the meat, to keep *something* from being seen as having been someone (p. 29).

By erasing the victim, the absent referent serves to enable well-intentioned individuals to more easily accept the normalization of carnism. In fact, nearly two dozen scientific studies have found such cognitive dissociation to be one of the most common and important psychological factors for doing so (Benningstad & Kunst, 2020).

Acknowledging this, practitioners of the Liberation Pledge refuse to tacitly allow those they are around to erase the individuality of the persons whose flesh and products they are consuming. Instead, the practitioner makes it clear that they will not condone such actions, and centrally, that their activism is motivated by the individuals who suffered to produce the meal others are eating. Doing so not only forces others to think critically about *who* they are eating, but emphatically de-normalizes the practice in the process.

While the Liberation Pledge’s theoretical motivations are foundational, their true power comes from the manner in which they are

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enacted. Most importantly, by taking the Liberation Pledge, practitioners transform their resistance to carnism from passive to active, from an ideology to an applied practice—that is, to praxis. Some may argue that veganism already does so effectively, pointing in part to the economic impact affected by boycotting carnist products in favor of vegan alternatives. But while doing so may in fact decrease demand for carnist products and increase demand for vegan products, given the vanishingly small percentage of vegans today the systemic economic impact of this is unfortunately marginal at best (Kagan, 2011, p. 122).

Instead, given carnism’s cultural construction, a practice’s capacity to impact cultural norms is a much more salient feature to consider when evaluating its strategic worth. Many readily recognize this and contend that veganism’s true value comes from the way it challenges social norms irrespective of veganism’s marginal economic impact. For example, Smith (2002) argues that “Vegetarianism’s anti-hegemonic and anti-industrial stance forces contemporary culture to formulate and defend its principles, to explicitly justify the treatment of animal Others” (p. 55). I disagree; passive veg(etari)anism does nothing of the sort. At its worst, passive veganism done solely within the privacy of one’s home does absolutely nothing to challenge societal norms; from a cultural perspective, one could just as well eat flesh in secret and have the same cultural impact, i.e., none. At its best, passive veganism practiced in the presence of carnism does little better to challenge hegemonic oppression; while it does, perhaps, demonstrate that eating animals is not necessary, in passively condoning the carnism of others this marginal benefit comes at the devastating cost of instantiating carnism as a morally-neutral personal choice.

But eating animals should *not* be treated as a morally-neutral personal choice in the way that we treat, for example, one’s decision to wear red or blue pants. Rather, eating animals is an act of violence and should be vociferously condemned as such. Just as passive veganism is problematic for its failure to do so, the Liberation Pledge’s power comes from its commitment to actively reject carnism as a morally-neutral personal choice. Instead, the Liberation Pledge goes beyond simply limiting one’s economic complicity to directly challenge the violent dietary practices of our culture(s). That is, its active practice forces carnism to defend itself. In doing so, the Pledge actuates the moral table turning that Regan (1975) called for:

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Contrary to the habit of thought which supposes that it is the vegetarian who is on the defensive and who must labor to show how his [sic] “eccentric” way of life can even remotely be defended by rational means, it is the non-vegetarian whose way of life stands in need of rational justification (p. 203).

Carnism’s deconstruction requires active resistance, and the Liberation Pledge facilitates just that.

The Liberation Pledge’s power is further strengthened by its capacity to showcase the practitioner’s moral conviction via the personal sacrifice that stems from it. Simply put, practicing the Liberation Pledge can be difficult; however, this very difficulty enhances the Pledge’s impact on each of the three imbricated cohorts: (a) those whose ideologies remain conditioned by carnism; (b) the individual practitioner; and (c) the animal liberation movement collectively.

In relation to the first group—those who still eat animals—the practitioner’s personal sacrifice empowers their activism by clarifying its ethical motivation. Practicing the Liberation Pledge is no easy task, and others immediately recognize that. This notable sacrifice makes it clear to others that the practitioner is driven by a pursuit of justice, not personal pleasure, and consequently forces them to contend with the action as a form of activism rather than as a morally-neutral quirk. Whereas one’s choice to eat vegan silently in the presence of carnism allows others to understand it as a personal dietary decision—e.g., akin to eating gluten free (Hsiung, 2009, p. 8)—practicing the Pledge serves to shift the frame and force others to seriously contend with the ideology motivating their activism. At the *very* least, this sows seeds of doubt about carnism within others, powerfully serving to erode the normalcy upon which the system is propped up.

Even better, reifying this position—that carnism is not a morally-neutral personal choice—often helps the activist to win outright ethical support. That is, by centering the ethics motivating one’s behavior, observers are more likely to follow suit for the same ethical reasons (Wheeler, 1966). This strength of the Liberation Pledge is notable when compared to passive veganism, which fails to win ethical support in the same way. Even when passive vegan consumers explain their dietary choice as one rooted in animal ethics, they continue to frame it as their *personal* ethic. While this framing can readily win converts to eating plant-based for personal reasons like health

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and fitness (e.g., note the prominence of documentaries like *What the Health* and *Game Changers*), it fails to do so at the same scale for ethical reasons. But de-normalizing and dismantling carnism fundamentally depends upon promulgating a moral critique. As such, through emphasizing the activist's moral convictions, the Liberation Pledge threatens carnism's cultural hegemony beyond passive veganism's capacity to do so.

With regard to the second group—the individual practitioner—the personal sacrifice invoked by the Liberation Pledge serves to toughen their resolve. Just as a monk's asceticism functions to strengthen their soteriological commitment, so too do the practitioner's personal sacrifices strengthen their moral conviction. Given the depth with which carnism has been embedded within societal norms, unshakable conviction is necessary to uproot it. As such, the Liberation Pledge provides one with frequent opportunities to practice and instill their commitment, every time serving to deepen their resolve and subsequent capacity to change the world for animals. Just as importantly, practicing the Liberation Pledge also protects one from needing to (sub)consciously normalize the carnism of others—an act that is often necessary to amiably dine with others eating animals—as doing so profoundly compromises both their conviction and efficacy as an activist.

The third cohort—the animal liberation movement—is collectively strengthened via the capacity of shared sacrifice to unify activists. Just as grueling pre-season training regimens are meant to strengthen group cohesion within athletic teams, the difficulty imposed by the Liberation Pledge functions in an analogous way. Seeing that one's comrades are willing to voluntarily shoulder the same difficulties for the animal liberation movement poignantly demonstrates the group's shared values and commitment to them. Given carnism's social hegemony and the paucity of animal activists actively fighting it, this shared sacrifice promotes the solidarity necessary to transform the zeitgeist's conception of nonhuman animals.

Practicing the Liberation Pledge may seem daunting at first, but it is in part this difficulty that makes the Pledge worthwhile. And when we consider our overwhelming privilege relative to the oppressed victims we are fighting for, the uncomfortable social interactions that can sprout from the Liberation Pledge are a paltry price to pay in fighting for their liberation.

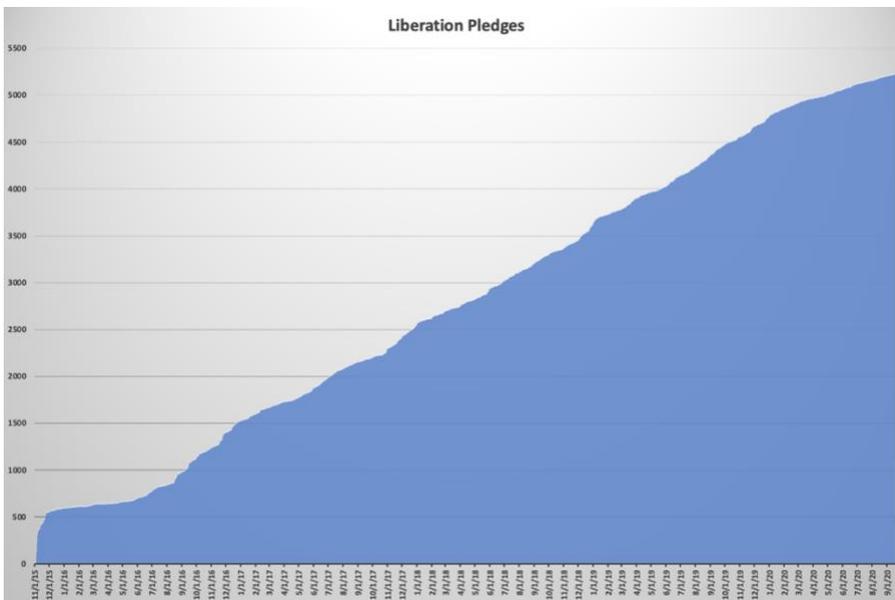
### III. Current Status & Historical Context

*“A small body of determined spirits fired by an unquenchable faith in their mission can alter the course of history.”*

—Gandhi, *Harijan*

Is there reason to believe the theory of change articulated above is having the intended impact? In short, it remains too early to say. The formal Pledge and its campaign were launched in late 2015 in the weeks leading up to Thanksgiving. Since then, as of October 2020, nearly 5,200 humans from 98 countries and six continents have formally taken the Pledge (“The Liberation Pledge,” 2020).

The graph below visually tracks the global uptake of the Liberation Pledge since its launch. Following a rapid spike of over 500 individuals taking the Pledge in the first month, the following six months saw relative stagnancy. However, since June 2016, there has been a *remarkably* consistent rate of uptake over the past four and a half years, albeit with a minor reduction beginning with the onset of Covid-19 (a reduction that, given the general decrease in activism alongside the limited ability to freely choose one’s social interactions, makes sense). This trend leads one to infer that those practicing the Liberation Pledge have found it worthwhile and have continued to promote it throughout their network.



Global Adoption of the Liberation Pledge.

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Five thousand humans, it may be said, is clearly only a drop in the bucket. Even so, 5,000 humans actively practicing the Liberation Pledge around the world is still very relevant, very powerful. Everyday these 5,000 activists interact with strangers and challenge their beliefs. They form a bubble of anti-speciesism wherever they go, where this ethic is a defining norm of all their interactions. In doing so, the goal is not to segregate themselves from the carnist milieu, but rather confront and perforate it everywhere they go.

But while these individual bubbles are powerful, the Liberation Pledge's true capacity for affecting social change is dependent upon concentrated growth. Such geographic concentration is critical for two reasons. First, concentration dramatically empowers the Pledge's ability to challenge carnism's perceived normalcy. For in every additional instance an individual meets a Pledge practitioner, the more normal taking the Pledge seems and the less normal failing to do so becomes. As a result, such concentration serves to reduce social barriers to adopting the Pledge while also increasing social pressure to follow suit. Second, as numbers of impassioned activists grow within a community, so too does their capacity to build the political power required to seriously challenge carnism. Laws regulating the consumption of animal products can only manifest once a sufficient threshold of constituents avidly support it, and the geographic concentration of Pledge practitioners function to create this committed base of support.

So while the Pledge's historically linear trend is a positive sign, its success ultimately depends upon concentrated, exponential growth moving forward. And this is where the importance of the Liberation Pledge's third goal—encouraging others to take the Pledge—comes in. Carnism's moral license will dissolve—even if initially just at the municipal level—once the number of Pledge practitioners reaches a critical mass, and it is the role of early adopters to create the foundation for this to happen.

While the Liberation Pledge remains too young to fairly assess its success, there is historical reason to believe that this campaign, beginning with relatively few individuals, has the power to grow rapidly and transform society. The Liberation Pledge's theory of change is inspired by the successful campaign to end foot binding in China (Hsiung, 2017). For a thousand years, this campaign struggled to gain traction against foot binding's cultural hegemony. However, it built rapid momentum in 1890

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with the initiation of a public pledge where families would promise to one, never bind their daughter's feet, and two, refuse to allow their sons to marry women with bound feet ("The Liberation Pledge," 2020). Appiah (2010) explains how the campaign transformed a region south of Beijing from 99% to 0% support in a matter of thirty years. This movement grew exponentially, and rapidly led to the societal stigmatization of the practice.

Notably, as Hsiung (2017) points out, the similarities between both campaigns and the oppression they target are striking. First, carnism today, like foot-binding historically, is an oppressive practice most in society are born into and conditioned to accept as normal. Second, like foot-binding, tradition is used to justify carnism's continuation. And third, like foot-binding, individuals who attempt to extricate themselves from carnism for ethical reasons are ridiculed and ostracized, a tactic that enables the oppressive practice to maintain its normalcy and cultural hegemony. Given their stark similarities, there is reason to see the Liberation Pledge not only as an appropriate reaction to carnism but as a strategy with the potential to be transformative in the long run.

Early anecdotal evidence lends weight to this claim. While the impact of a practitioner's moral stance leading to their entire family shifting to veganism are common, larger examples include one individual's Pledge leading to nearly their entire high school eating plant based on campus (Aspey, 2017). Although the Liberation Pledge remains in its formative years, these examples give reason to expect its power and efficacy to grow. As activists, it is our responsibility to make that happen.

#### **IV. Critiques of the Liberation Pledge**

*"The fact that you can only do a little is no excuse for doing nothing."*

—John Le Carré, *A Most Wanted Man*

Critiques of the Liberation Pledge fall into three categories: (a) that it is ineffective; (b) that it is harmful; and (c) that it is immoral. Arguments within the first category—that the Liberation Pledge is ineffective—make the case that adopting the Liberation Pledge does not actually challenge the normalcy and cultural hegemony of carnism, a consequence they argue renders the Pledge unnecessary. This perspective is not a case against the Liberation Pledge, per se, but rather a critique of its relevance and value.

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The second and third categories, on the other hand, do argue against the adoption of the Liberation Pledge. Whereas critiques within the second category—that the Liberation Pledge is harmful—may accept that the Pledge is effective in some ways, they argue that it is more detrimental than helpful. Consequently, even if they may hold the ideals of the Liberation Pledge to be admirable, critics from this camp argue against its practice from the basis of a cost/benefit analysis. Similarly, while critiques from the third category—that the Liberation Pledge is immoral—may also accept that the Pledge is effective in some ways, they argue that aspects of its very practice are immoral and as such it should not be practiced or promoted. This article collectively is a refutation of arguments that fall within the first category; as such, in this section I consider and respond to the seven central arguments that fall within the latter two.

### *1. Misses an Opportunity to Engage with Carnism.*

One critique claims that the Liberation Pledge compromises the ability of activists to engage with individuals as they invoke the texts of carnism. As such, it argues that the Liberation Pledge does more harm than good. Activists who hold this position instead argue that we should be eating at carnist tables, both demonstrating that it is possible to eat vegan while also condemning their practice (Aspey, 2017).

However, there is reason to doubt the efficacy of this tactic. As Cato cautioned, “It is a difficult task, O citizens, to make speeches to the belly which has no ears” (Giehl, 1979, p. 128). Arguably one of the least fruitful places to talk with others about the immorality of their action is while they are enacting it. In such situations the cognitive dissonance between one’s actions and values is simply too deafening to fruitfully engage with. With relation to carnism, this cognitive dissonance climaxes at each meal that animal products are present. As so many activists know, for all but the most effective outreachers attempting to convince someone to “go vegan” while flesh is on their fork is a fool’s errand. Midgley (1998) clearly articulates this tension, explaining that while meat eaters see themselves as “eating life,” vegan consumers see them as “eating death” (p. 22). As such, Midgley observes that “there is a kind of gestalt-shift between the two positions which makes it hard to change, and hard to raise questions on the matter at all without becoming embattled” (p. 22).

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Moreover, due to the increased tension present at mealtimes, many activists are unwilling to have these direct conversations and speak truth to power in the first place. Rather, many vegan eaters while dining in the presence of carnism feel silenced and isolated, personally stressed by seeing their loved ones consuming violence while disquieted by not knowing how to respond. Instead, I believe it is more effective to emphatically condemn carnism and boycott every meal it is invoked, enabling thoughtful discussions to be had away from the plate.

Even better is having these conversations over shared vegan food. The purpose of the Pledge is not to limit our interactions with carnists, per se, but rather to bring a wider audience to our vegan table. For while secretly taking the Pledge and eating at home alone is at least not harmful in the way that silently condoning the carnism of others is, neither is it actively productive. Instead, the idea is for practitioners to invite those who eat animals to share a vegan meal with them. For just as there is little hope for fruitfully discussing the immorality of carnism as the other invokes its text, there is no better context to discuss the morality of veganism than when sharing vegan food. Until that is possible, the best alternative remains respectfully boycotting interactions based around carnism. For not only does this patience avoid counterproductive interactions, it expedites the process for others to decide differently and elect to eat vegan alongside the practitioner in the future.

## **2. *Damages Relationships.***

A second critique argues that taking the Liberation Pledge can damage relationships, a position that contends the Pledge is consequently both harmful and immoral. This critique is most salient in regard to familial, social, and professional relationships.

Let's begin by considering the claim that as a result of straining familial/social relationships, the Liberation Pledge does more harm than good. This argument rests on the premise that by taking such a firm stance, practitioners run the risk of damaging their relationships. This risk, the argument goes, further risks compromising one's mental-health and support system. Given these possibilities, it is thus argued that practicing the Liberation Pledge limits the activist's ability to be as effective as they otherwise would outside of these contexts.

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While an important consideration, it is also important to note that perhaps even more compromising to one's mental health is seeing loved ones consume the products of violence. Sitting alongside family or friends and feigning normalcy while the scent and sight of cooked bodies floods one's system is a far cry from nurturing self-health. Rather, in order for an animal liberationist to eat around others consuming animal products they must either (a) accept the normalcy of the action, or (b) deeply bury their true feelings; while the former compromises one's ability to be an effective activist, the latter compromises one's mental wellbeing.

Moreover, while taking the Liberation Pledge in some cases can damage relationships in the short run, it lays the foundation for a much stronger relationship in the long term. Healthy relationships are built upon trust and mutual respect, and forcing oneself to stay silent and choke back moral concerns while surrounded by loved ones at tables of violence negates both. Furthermore, many (including myself) find the directness of the approach a salve to previous relational friction. By calmly and explicitly addressing the elephant in the room before mealtimes—our veganism and condemnation of their carnism—we not only clear the underlying tension that would have otherwise existed, but do so in a space away from the plate where our message is more likely to be sincerely heard and received.

Even so, familial tension can often be the hardest, as these relationships are largely out of the practitioner's control; moreover, family members tend to be acculturated to one's past habits and can bristle when their loved ones "suddenly" change. However, the depth of these relationships often means that the practitioner's family members are eager to find recourse, and—assuming the practitioner is compassionate and patient in the process—there is reason to expect this tension can be ironed out in the long run. Furthermore, for many, familial interactions are sporadic throughout the year, and as such the tension that can arise as a result of one's commitment to the Liberation Pledge is made more tolerable.

While close friendships are often much more constant, so too are they more fungible. In this context, an activist must ask themselves if they want to have friends who actively endorse the murder of innocent individuals, or if they should instead be standing with allies against those who brutalize them (Hsiung, 2009, p. 9). To be clear, that is not to say the practitioner should abandon all their close carnist friendships, but rather encourage their current friends to eat plant based around them while actively exploring new

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friendships with vegan consumers. While admittedly challenging, the initial difficulty imposed on social relationships by the Pledge provides a valuable impetus to become more integrated within the activist community, a reality with clear positive impacts to the movement (Chenoweth & Stephan, 2013).

Much the same argument and responses can be made in regard to how practicing the Liberation Pledge can hamper workplace dynamics. However, rather than just compromising one's mental health, the concern is centered on damaging relationships critical to one's professional success, and consequently, their efficacy as an activist outside of work. However, similar to above, is lying to coworkers about one's feelings in relation to animal exploitation a good foundation for a positive relationship? Moreover, if one would be discriminated against in the workplace based on their activism, is that a healthy or positive space for the individual to be working in the first place?

A powerful rebuttal to these questions justifies the activist tolerating carnism in the workplace when done for the purpose of empowering their activism outside of work, a line of thought analogous to effective altruism's framework of "earning to give" (Singer, 2005, ch. 4). But the purpose of earning to give shouldn't force one to compromise their morality; on the contrary, in Section V I argue that silence in the face of violence is itself immoral. As such, I argue that higher economic gains or economic stability do not justify staying silent to assuage coworker/supervisor guilt.

To be fair, I recognize that the notion of what constitutes a "healthy" or "positive" relationship is fraught with ambiguity. And while I do believe that healthy and positive relationships are built upon trust, others may very well disagree; instead, they may hold that maintaining relationships based upon deception and insincerity is a just cost to pay to facilitate their activism outside of these relationships. In some extreme cases, that may be true. However, more often than not, I believe this argument stems from carnism's social hegemony and a misunderstanding of how it is perpetuated. Simply put, tolerating the carnism of others does more to promulgate the oppressive system than does filling a role on a slaughterhouse disassembly line, for the root issue lies not with slaughterhouse workers but with those who normalize the demand for such labor. As such, for those who would refuse to work at a slaughterhouse irrespective of how much it facilitated their activism outside working hours, consistency asks them to do the same with regard to rejecting the carnism of others in the workplace.

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To be clear, I fully recognize that some of these positions depend upon a level of privilege. A single parent, for example, may not have the luxury of losing their job due to their “anti-social” behavior. Nor may a teenager have the freedom to practice the Liberation Pledge fully. I further recognize that individuals who already face marginalization due to other aspects of their identity may both have less room to navigate added stigma from their activism and may receive heightened stigma against their activism due to their identity (Greenebaum, 2018). That said, at least with the regards to the latter, it is worth mentioning how oppressed groups have long taken on veganism as part of their own liberatory struggle. Feminists like Carol Adams (2005), prison abolitionists like Angela Davis (Davis & Lee Boggs, 2012), and anti-imperialist groups like the MOVE organization (Pilkington, 2018) have all helped to show how speciesism is imbricated with other systems of oppression, and subsequently how dismantling one requires dismantling all. Informed by this intersectional understanding, adopting the Liberation Pledge can actually be used as a tool for fighting one’s own oppression.

However, despite this theoretical endorsement, willingly accepting further marginalization is easier said than done. As such, as acknowledged in Section V, such cases may very well merit a modified response. I simply ask that when considering such modifications, the harm of tolerating carnism be weighed similarly to how society considers already stigmatized social harms (e.g., beating a dog in the cultural context of the United States), and not be discounted as an unimportant consideration undeserving of personal hardship. That is, if in a certain context a U.S. resident would be unwilling to passively tolerate watching a dog be beaten, so too should the person object to carnism practiced in an analogous context.

The second dimension of this critique argues that damaging social relationships as a result of practicing the Liberation Pledge is immoral, and as such, that the Pledge ought not be practiced or promulgated. This argument extends from the premise that we have special duties to loved ones that transcend animal ethics and that it is immoral to ignore those. The veracity of this claim—that we have special duties to loved ones that transcend their carnism—is outside the scope of this article. However, refusing to eat with loved ones while they consume violence does not preclude one’s ability to fulfill any moral obligations we accept owing, as practitioners can still spend meaningful time with loved ones between meals. Moreover, if we accept the premise of familial or social duties, then so too do a practitioner’s loved ones

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have a duty to make the practitioner feel supported and understood. As such, if family members or friends refuse to eat plant based around their loved one, then it seems the best space to collectively fulfill their duties to one another exists away from the dinner table.

### **3. *Overly Radical.***

A third critique argues the Liberation Pledge is harmful because it is “too radical.” That is, that its perceived extremeness serves to push others away that might otherwise be open to changing if presented with a more moderate approach, and as a result, generates a net negative impact.

In short, I believe this argument is unfounded and not made in good faith; rather, I believe it is weaponized as justification for individuals to continue their carnistic habit patterns by shifting blame from themselves to the “radical” practitioner. While this framework may help to assuage the critic’s own cognitive dissonance, in doing so it demonstrates how deeply entrenched they are within carnism and belies their claim of feigned openness/neutrality. For in reality the commitment to not condone the violence of others is in no way radical. Rather, the reason such critics perceive the Pledge as extreme is due to how normalized this violence has become. On the contrary, given that the Pledge’s theory of change is centered in its ability to undermine this normalcy, its very practice serves as a mechanism for targeting the root of such critiques.

Moreover, these types of vehement rejections are in part what the Liberation Pledge seeks to uncover. As Martin Luther King Jr. (1963) explained:

[W]e who engage in nonviolent direct action are not the creators of tension. We merely bring to the surface the hidden tension that is already alive. We bring it out in the open, where it can be seen and dealt with.

It is only in identifying this underlying tension that it can be overcome. In unearthing such conflict, the purpose of the Liberation Pledge is not to convince 100% of the population to support veganism or animal liberation; rather, the purpose of this activism is to force individuals to choose a side, to make complacency and indecision so uncomfortable that they are forced to directly confront the issue and make a concrete decision one way or the other.

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In doing so—forcing individuals to explicitly choose sides between oppressors and oppressed—some individuals will inevitably be pushed away. However, this is a necessary and worthwhile cost. Simply put, neutrality within an oppressive context means acceptance of the oppression, a point vociferously made by Martin Luther King Jr. (1967b): “The hottest place in Hell is reserved for those who remain neutral in times of great moral conflict.” However, given the extent of carnism’s cultural embeddedness, most individuals have never been forced to think deeply about the issue; instead, they understandably follow the path of least resistance by uncritically accepting culturally dominant practices. So for many it isn’t that they are consciously remaining neutral, per se, but that they are unaware of the conflict to begin with. As such, practicing the Liberation Pledge serves to demonstrate to others that this conflict exists, and that they have historically been neutral within it.

Thankfully the vast majority of humans in the United States (Reese, 2017) and majority of humans around the world (Anderson & Tyler, 2018) already support animal welfare and oppose animal cruelty. So while uncovering such underlying tension and forcing individuals to confront the violence of carnism head on may indeed push some individuals away, the individuals it pushes away were never allies to begin with. Rather, forcing them to confirm their support of animal exploitation is a necessary cost to empower the greater majority to crystalize their support for animal rights and realign their actions as required.

#### ***4. Proselytizing is Immoral.***

A fourth critique argues the Liberation Pledge is immoral for pushing one’s beliefs onto others. That irrespective of the veracity of one’s belief, it is immoral to push it unto others without their consent, and as such, that the Liberation Pledge ought not be practiced nor promoted.

While the critique against proselytization is fairly charged with regard to morally-neutral personal choices, it does not apply to decisions that impact others. My right to swing my fist through the air ends with another’s right to not be hit. While having one’s favorite type of cuisine be Italian is a morally-neutral personal choice, electing to have a pasta dish cooked with the dairy and flesh of a cow is not. Consuming the flesh of another should be understood as a morally intolerable action, as it profoundly impacts the welfare of another. As such, neither we nor others have the right to do so.

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On the contrary, those of us who have been privileged to break free from social conditioning and develop the understanding of carnism's violence have a responsibility to share this understanding with others. Practice of the Liberation Pledge is simply the logical continuation of a vegan ethic; once we understand that veganism is not a personal choice but rather a moral imperative, it becomes incumbent on us to extend this understanding and knowledge outward. The vast majority of the world's vegan consumers were not born as such; after exposure to facts we decided to make the change, and we can play a role in helping those around us do the same.

As an instructive example, society readily condemns sexual violence irrespective of the perpetrator's sexual desires. In this context, the perpetrator's personal interests are rendered irrelevant. Indeed, rather than being perceived as problematically proselytizing, unapologetically condemning such violence has become the norm. So too must society come to collectively condemn carnism, regardless of one's taste preferences.

### ***5. Cultural Differences.***

A fifth critique questions the morality of practicing the Liberation Pledge in the context of foreign cultures. It is one thing, proponents of this argument claim, to practice the Pledge while embedded within one's own culture, but problematic to do so in others.

However, while cultural differences are deeply important and deserving of respect, that is not a justification for moral relativism (Brown, 2008; Jarvie, 1993). I assume that most readers will agree that racism, (hetero)sexism, and other forms of discrimination are wrong regardless of the culture in which they are practiced. For example, just because a specific culture has historically denied personal liberty and freedom to women does not give those conditioned within this culture license to continue doing so. Human supremacy should be dealt with in the same way. Culture simply does not justify the oppression of nonhuman animals (Gruen, 2001).

Moreover, culture is not a uniform nor a static entity; on the contrary, cultures are constantly evolving in large part due to internal contestation. Within this context cultural natives are best positioned to lead change, and examples abound of folk doing so with regard to animal liberation (Gaard, 2001; Robinson, 2013). But while it is often not appropriate for outsiders to lead in affecting social change in foreign cultures, that does not negate the importance of maintaining one's ethical values and serving as allies to

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culturally native animal liberationists when in cultures foreign to one's own. Practicing the Liberation Pledge is a basic but responsible way to do so.

That said, other cultural differences that do not violate the rights of others should be honored and respected. As such, the explanation of the Liberation Pledge can and should look different depending on the cultural context. Stated differently, while it may very well be appropriate to convey veganism and one's commitment to the Liberation Pledge in varying ways depending on the cultural context, the moral necessity of maintaining one's own veganity does not shift. Nor do I believe it problematic to maintain one's Pledge in these contexts. On the contrary, making such exceptions when embedded within cultures foreign to one's own can be interpreted as a form of chauvinism, in that the practitioner condescendingly believes foreign cultures are incapable of understanding the ethics/rationale of the Liberation Pledge.

As a personal example, I have easily and fruitfully maintained my own commitment to the Liberation Pledge in Nicaragua (where I served as a Peace Corps Volunteer), in Colombia (where I worked for nearly a year), and throughout south and southeast Asia (where I cumulatively spent a year). In each of these contexts, while the explanation at times did take longer than it generally does in the United States (my native culture), more often than not it was received with more grace and support. To be clear, I recognize that these anecdotal examples are just that, anecdotal, and simply share them to explain my personal confidence regarding the Pledge's international feasibility.

In the case of extreme outliers—e.g., Inuit who depend upon seal flesh or Sherpa who depend upon yak milk to survive (Arnaquq-Baril, 2016)—the discussion becomes more complex. Given the highly atypical character of these outliers along with the nuance needed to address them adequately, it is an issue I set aside in this article (though the curious reader may find discussions from Kim [2015, ch. 7] and Robinson [2016] of interest). That said, apart from such outliers the ethics around animal edibility are very clear and should be advocated for as such.

## **6. Dependents.**

A sixth argument against the Liberation Pledge holds that because the Pledge is not universally practicable, advocating for its universal adoption is immoral. For example, there are minors, humans with disabilities,

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incarcerated individuals, and other exceptions where humans with anti-speciesist values are unable to choose their diet or the circumstances in which they are able to eat. I resonate with the unique challenges some individuals face in relation to adoption of the Liberation Pledge and explore the topic in more detail in the final section. However, I do not contend that adopting the Liberation Pledge is universally mandatory and acknowledge the reality that some humans are simply unable to practice it. That said, accepting that some individuals are unable to practice the Liberation Pledge is not a justification against the Pledge itself nor a rationale for others with different circumstances for not maintaining it.

### **7. *Moral Licensing.***

Moral licensing describes the practice wherein one justifies their immoral acts based on other moral acts they have taken. For example, someone justifying the carbon footprint of their travel by noting their practice of recycling. As such, moral licensing can give the impression that all one needs to do to be a good person entails what they are already doing (Schlottmann & Sebo, 2019, p. 190). In the context of this article, the moral licensing critique argues that practicing the Liberation Pledge encourages activists to abstain from taking more poignant and effective activism, thus making the Pledge's efficacy net negative.

This argument, however, can be made with regard to any form of activism. As such, acknowledging its credibility here would justify never doing any type of novel activism. However, at least in this context, the opposite impact is more likely. Powerfully and publicly acting on one's values every mealtime helps the practitioner to build their confidence and conviction. And rather than limiting one's additional activism, this impassioned conviction more often spills over to inspire continued engagement in the movement.

Having canvassed and responded to these seven central critiques, I contend that the main arguments against the Liberation Pledge, despite perhaps meaning well, are unfounded. With regard to critiques within the first category discussed—that the Liberation Pledge does more harm than good—I argue that they largely emerge from a failure to understand the mechanisms that make the Liberation Pledge effective and powerful. On the contrary, more often than not these critiques target what I hold to be the most powerful and effective aspects of the action. In response to the second

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category of critiques discussed—that practicing the Liberation Pledge necessitates immoral actions—I argue that these actions are not inextricably connected to the Pledge itself, and that they can be dealt with in a sensitive way that addresses the moral concern without compromising the practice of the Pledge.

To be clear, this is not to say that practicing the Liberation Pledge is necessarily free from unintended detrimental impacts; rather, I hold that these impacts are not inherent to the Pledge itself. As such, activists can and should work to mitigate the downsides pointed out in these critiques—e.g., bringing those who eat animal products to a vegan table rather than just blocking them out of their lives, communicating one’s position calmly and empathetically, centering messaging around the suffering of individual animals rather than the immorality of others, etc. When practiced thoughtfully and strategically, I argue that the critiques of the Liberation Pledge carry little weight; on the contrary, I contend that thoughtfully and strategically practicing the Pledge is morally consistent and profoundly effective.

## **V. Ethical Imperative to Take the Pledge?**

*“There may be times when we are powerless to prevent injustice, but there must never be a time when we fail to protest.”*

—Elie Wiesel, *Nobel Lecture*

Is there a moral imperative for one to take the Liberation Pledge? To answer this, we must first consider if there is a moral imperative to eat a vegan diet. Unfortunately, an in-depth exploration of that question is outside the scope of this article. Without delving into the nuances of this question—one that has already been explored at length by writers like Regan (1975) and Francione and Charlton (2015)—I accept that there is a moral imperative to eat a vegan diet, what Plumwood (2000) pejoratively calls ontological vegetarianism.

More specifically, I advocate a position of aspirational veganism as articulated by Gruen and Jones (2015), whereby the practitioner eats 100% plant based in a way meant to minimize harm. This clarification is important as a cruelty-free diet does not exist. We are entropic beings whose existence requires energetic consumption (Marder, 2013), and as such our lives inevitably result in the death and suffering of others. However, eating plant based is a level of magnitude less harmful than a carnist diet, and is a basic requirement of aspirational veganism.

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While accepting the framework of aspiration veganism, it is worth noting that carnism’s immorality is not fixed. While accepting ontological veganism—that it is always immoral to consume nonhuman animals and their products—we can also hold that extenuating circumstances can make this position more or less immoral. This perspective is influenced by the framing of contextual moral vegetarianism, a concept that has long been argued for by ecofeminists who recognize that “gender, race, class, ethnicity, and location can create genuine difficulties with choosing a vegetarian diet” (Gruen, 2011, p. 93).

To be clear, acceptance of contextual moral vegetarianism does not imply an acceptance of moral relativism; rather, it accepts that under extreme conditions—e.g., killing an animal to feed one’s child (Curtin, 1991, p. 70)—the moral question becomes less stark, more nuanced. However, the need to feed one’s child does not magically make the killing of another (a)moral; violence, I contend, is always *prima facie* wrong, even when there are morally relevant justifications. By unequivocally holding violence as *prima facie* wrong, the onus of justifying violence is put on the individual enacting it (Regan, 1975, p. 188). These justifications, however, tend to be radical outliers from the lived experiences of everyone reading this article; as such, eating 100% plant based is almost certainly possible and I posit morally required for everyone reading this sentence.

However, before answering if there is a moral imperative to take the Liberation Pledge we must also consider if there is a moral obligation to actively resist injustice. This is particularly striking if we accept that veganism made at the individual level is a form of passive—and not active—resistance. In “Famine, Affluence, and Morality,” Singer (1972) essentially argues that if we accept (a) that suffering and death are very bad; and if we accept (b) that we are morally required to do something if we can prevent very bad things from happening without sacrificing something of comparable moral significance; then we must accept (c) that we are morally required to work to prevent suffering and death if doing so does not require sacrificing something of comparable moral significance. As previously noted, carnism necessitates astronomical levels of suffering and death. Moreover, most common forms of activism meant to reduce this harm—the Liberation Pledge included—require sacrifices of low moral significance. As such, accepting Singer’s two premises listed above should lead us to view actively resisting carnism as morally required.

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Thus, if we accept the premise that (in most contexts) veganism is morally required, just as accessible activism to promote veganism and condemn carnism is morally required, does it then follow that there is a moral imperative for adopting the Liberation Pledge? In short, not necessarily. If one accepts that the Liberation Pledge is an effective and expedient tool in fighting for animal liberation, then it can be strongly argued that taking the Pledge is morally required, especially because doing so is relatively easy and the issue it targets is devastatingly massive. Conversely, if one rejects the premise of this article and instead maintains that the Liberation Pledge is ineffective, then adoption of the Pledge would obviously not be morally required.

However, even if it can be argued that it is okay to not take the Pledge, that does not mean it is okay to be silent. Rather, choosing to eat around carnism morally necessitates speaking out clearly and directly. Failing to do so—to poignantly and explicitly object to another’s consumption of animal products whenever it happens—empowers the carnistic consumer to continue viewing eating animals as a morally-neutral personal choice, one they have the right to continue choosing. Thus, not only does such silence fail to challenge carnism’s normalcy, but it further serves to license the reproduction of carnism’s cyclical violence. As such, despite not themselves ingesting the products of violence, the passive vegan practitioner is not absolved of culpability. Rather, they too share responsibility for the violence that stems from carnism.

However, as I hope has been made clear, I believe that taking the Liberation Pledge is more effective in deconstructing carnism than simply vocally condemning the practice. Given that position, I contend that adopting the Liberation Pledge is morally required when possible. This caveat, *when possible*, is important to articulate. I acknowledge that the Liberation Pledge is not universally practicable, and in these instances do not hold the individuals unable to eat vegan or follow the Pledge morally culpable (though again, that does not suddenly make the practice of carnism [a]moral, but simply shifts the ethical derision onto the shoulders of the caretaker). For example, there are minors, humans with certain disabilities, incarcerated individuals, and others with anti-speciesist values unable to choose their diet or the circumstances in which they are able to eat. That said, these examples are clearly exceptions, not the rule. And given my position that the Liberation Pledge is an effective tool for deconstructing carnism, as long as practicing

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the Liberation Pledge is possible and does not require sacrificing something of comparable moral significance, I do view its practice as morally required.

On the contrary, many may argue that the Liberation Pledge is itself too passive. That accepting the moral urgency of animal liberation alongside Singer's rationale that favors active resistance should compel us to take much bolder and more direct actions. I emphatically agree. However, a valid critique of insufficiency does not detract from the Pledge's necessity. I strongly support activists taking further action beyond the Liberation Pledge, and simply hold that it is one tool amongst many that should be employed by liberationists.

What we eat is deeply political, and it is time for activists to live out the consequences of this reality by refusing to condone the consumptive violence of others. It is my hope that in reading this you leave convinced to uptake the Pledge yourself, and if not, that the seeds for such action have been planted and await germination. In accordance with that desire, I end with a reference to Martin Luther King Jr.'s (1967a) shared sentiment: "In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends."

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# Being Consistently Biocentric: On the (Im)Possibility of Spinozist Animal Ethics

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## Abstract

Spinoza's attitude toward nonhuman animals is uncharacteristically cruel. This essay elaborates upon this ostensible idiosyncrasy in reference to Hasana Sharp's commendable desire to revitalize a basis for animal ethics from within the bounds of his system. Despite our favoring an ethics beginning from animal affect, this essay argues that an animal ethic adequate to the demands of our historical moment cannot be developed from within the confines of strict adherence to Spinoza's system—and this is not yet to speak of a more robust animal ethics which would advocate actual care and compassion for the animals themselves. We argue that on the assumption of Spinoza's ontological biocentrism, in the presence of Spinozist determinism and the absence of an axiological biocentrism, an anthropocentric axiology necessarily follows. Any Spinozist animal ethic must fall back, therefore, upon appeals to the maximization of human pleasure and power; hence Spinoza's ruthless injunction to "use (the animals) at our pleasure." These are the very ontological and ethical assumptions which have incited human self-exaltation in the modern period, in pursuit of power and pleasure even despite the destructive long-term consequences for all the living. We suggest that an adequate animal ethic would require either an abandonment of Spinoza's ontological biocentrism or the adoption of an axiological biocentrism.

Keywords: *Spinoza; biocentrism; anthropocentrism; posthumanism; animal affect*

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Spinoza's *Ethics* presents a vision of reality that has inspired environmental thinkers for the past four decades and beyond. Reasons for this are clear: the ontological biocentrism laid out in this work would appear to undermine human arrogance and give grounds for reconceptualizing the human as one humbled part of a larger whole, a conception by all appearances conducive to fostering respect or concern for nature. When it comes to Spinoza's own understanding of his system's implications regarding human relations to the rest of nature, however, we find aversion to some of the ethical conclusions environmentalists might expect. Far from encouraging care or concern for animals of other species, for example, whether of the holist or individualist variety, he doubles down on the human right to dominion—even writing of the pleasure he obtains in forcing spiders to fight one another to the death, and of attaching flies to spiderwebs in order to watch them struggle for their lives.

Spinoza clutches to hold onto the traditional distinction between human and animal by appealing to a specifically human “essence” or “nature,” despite the fact that by his own definitions these terms fail to designate anything specific about the human animal. In the Scholium to IIP57 he writes, “Hence it follows that the emotions of animals that are called irrational...differ from the emotions of men as much as their nature differs from human nature.” But later in the same note he indicates that the difference in nature between a drunkard and a philosopher might just be greater than the difference in nature between a lusting horse and a lusting human. The insinuation is clearly that when human beings fail to live up to their capacity to reason, they make themselves lower than the animals. At one point in the *Ethics* Spinoza goes so far as to interpret the biblical story of the Fall as an allegory for the first man's imitation of animal affects, the very source of human “evil,” to be avoided at all costs.

Just as deep ecologists of previous generations, notably George Sessions and Bill Devall, following Arne Naess, looked to Spinoza's *Ethics* for an ontological vision to ground a new environmental ethic, so too posthumanists of more recent years have pushed to extend Spinoza's biocentric outlook into the realm of animal ethics. Hasana Sharp is one such advocate, an impressive Spinoza scholar and an exponent of posthumanist ethics and politics, to be extended to humans and nonhumans alike (Sharp 2009 and 2011; Sharp and Willett 2016). While acknowledging that Spinoza himself exhibits not just passive indifference, but indeed promotes active

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cruelty to nonhuman animals, Sharp joins Arthur Schopenhauer and others in suggesting that this lapse in character breaks with the tenor of his system, or with what it would seem to demand (cf. e.g. Berman, 1982, p. 203). Accepting Spinoza's premises, she argues on behalf of an animal ethic that appeals to pleasure or joy received from an exchange of animal affects, across species. Such is assumed to be more consistent with Spinoza's ontology, and Sharp suggests that posthumanist thinkers like Gilles Deleuze and Donna Haraway have already made great strides in this direction (Sharp, 2011, p. 64).

Under the conditions assumed, we maintain, such an animal "ethic" could not be properly called *ethical*. In the field of environmental ethics, this was essentially Attfield's response, albeit brief, to Spitler (Attfield, 1987, pp. 48-49; Spitler, 1982). Our thesis is that an adequate animal ethic would require either breaking with, or at least substantially modifying Spinoza's biocentric ontology, in order to undermine the axiological anthropocentrism it entails; or adopting a biocentric axiology and thereby attributing intrinsic value to nonhuman animals, along with the many other modes of Being.

Having mentioned Spinoza's "biocentric outlook," we must clarify our uses of the term biocentric. First, we note that Devall and Sessions went beyond Spinoza in their attribution of intrinsic value to all life. On its own terms Spinoza's philosophical system implies only that humans and other modes of being are to be afforded equal *ontological* status—not equal *axiological* status. Far from attributing intrinsic value, as anecdotes concerning animal cruelty would indicate, Spinoza assumes that merely instrumental value accrues to creatures not of our species. This is the axiological position typically identified as anthropocentric. We begin, therefore, by distinguishing between what we'll label *ontological biocentrism* and *axiological biocentrism*. Ontological biocentrism would be the position which holds that all modes of being stand on equal ontological footing, as expressions or modifications of Being. By contrast, axiological biocentrism would be the value-positing standpoint which attributes inherent worth to all living beings. The Spinozist viewpoint we address affirms Spinoza's ontological biocentrism while joining him in the rejection of axiological biocentrism. Hence the title of this paper: "Being Consistently Biocentric."

Section one, "Spinozist Determinism," foregrounds Sharp's argument that Spinoza's causal determinism accords with the modern

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scientific understanding of our species being just as causally determined as any other species. We maintain that Spinoza's promotion of animal cruelty stems not from an unwitting reversion to pre-modern ontological anthropocentrism, as Sharp and others, like Schopenhauer, have suggested, but rather from the converse. Ontological biocentrism without an axiological biocentrism necessitates the axiological anthropocentrism characteristic of Spinoza's system. The human animal has just as much a right to actualize the powers of its nature as do animals of other species, including the power to kill or be killed. And it is just as susceptible to affective contagion—a point Deleuze and Guattari drive home with their notion of *becoming animal*—as are animals of other species. Unlike Deleuze and Guattari, however, Spinoza's real fear is that affective contact with animals of other species will lead to societal discord and deter us from what promotes the human advantage; reason-overriding affects like hatred or envy are prone to cause discord and strife in and amongst members of our own societies.

The second section, “Anthropocentrism: A Modern Paradox,” highlights the modern paradox lurking behind the assumptions of both Sharp and Spinoza: if the human is merely one species among many (ontological biocentrism), and just as causally determined (Spinozist determinism), we are therefore liberated to pursue what is to the increase of our power and our pleasure, no matter the cost to the rest of earth's inhabitants (axiological anthropocentrism). This is why ontological paradigms as distinct as those of Descartes and Spinoza can both beget the same kind of animal cruelty, stemming from the assumption of an axiological anthropocentrism. And this is why Spinoza, whose ontological paradigm would seem to call for a check upon Cartesian cruelty, no longer conceiving of nonhumans as mere animal-machines, could be consistently crueler than Descartes.

Finally, section three, “Axiological Anthropocentrism,” addresses the question as to whether an animal “ethic” which appeals to the maximization of human pleasure and power, following Spinozist premises, is sufficient to meet the demands of our present moment. We argue that the stakes for our species and our planet are simply too high to endorse such an animal “ethic,” when the maximization of human pleasure and power stands behind so many abuses which combine to hasten the demise of all the living.

## **Spinozist Determinism**

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Sharp begins her analysis of Spinoza's comments about animals by contrasting the consistency of her own Spinozist, thoroughgoing determinism with the view she believes the majority of contemporary philosophers hold, "the Kantian compatibilist view of human freedom." These thinkers affirm, on the one hand, that "our bodies and behaviors are determined by an entirely predictable chain of cause and effect" and additionally, on the other hand, that "morality requires that we attribute to rational beings a free agency that can nowhere be observed except by the inward looking eye of reason" (Sharp, 2011, p. 49). Such misguided optimism indicates either self-deception or an inability to fully part with human hubris. Moral sentimentalism aside, she maintains, we actually know that the compatibilist position cannot be true. Modern science has proven as much.

Sharp indicates that Spinoza's ontology is fully consistent with the determinist conclusions of modern natural science, providing a vision of reality much truer to our scientific understanding of the world as a closed causal nexus in which all effects are determined by their causes. When Spinoza postulates Definitions 3-6 in Part I of the *Ethics*, successively defining Substance as "that which is in itself and is conceived through itself" (ID3) and God as "absolutely infinite being, that is, substance consisting of infinite attributes, each of which expresses eternal and infinite essence" (ID6), he is already well on his way to having limited the number of substances to only one possible, God (IP5, IP6, IP14), which necessarily exists (IP7, IP11). God, of course, is another name for Nature: *Deus sive Natura*.

In Spinoza's ontology these originary determinations concerning Substance demote all other beings to the status of modes, or "the affections of substance, that is, that which is in something else and is conceived through something else" (ID5). While modes are perceived according to the infinite attributes of Substance (ID4, IP15), our limitations restrict us to recognizing only two of these infinite attributes, thought and extension.

Substance alone is a "free," or efficient cause. Since only one substance can exist, "It follows, secondly, that God alone is a free cause" (IP17Cor2; cf. also IP25). God causes in accordance with his infinite nature, as a necessary cause, but is not capable of *willing* (IP32Cor2; IP17s). Thus, things could not be otherwise than the way in which God has produced them, in the order in which they have come into existence (IP33). Modes are

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determined by God to act in particular ways, which cannot be changed: “A thing that has been determined by God cannot determine itself to act” (IP26), and can never “render itself undetermined” (IP27). No individual mode can exist or act unless another finite cause determines its action (IP28), such that “Nothing in nature is contingent, but all things are from the necessity of the divine nature determined to act in a definite way” (IP29). According to Spinoza’s biocentric ontology, in which all finite things retain equal status as modes of one infinite Substance, there would be no possibility of quasi-claims to moral agency: “In the mind there is no absolute, or free, will. The mind is determined to this or that volition by a cause, which is likewise determined by another cause, and this again by another, and so ad infinitum” (IIP48).

Compatibilism attempts to retain “a vestige of the wishful thinking that aims to maintain that humans are, concomitantly, natural beings and absolutely distinct in kind from natural things” (Sharp, 2011, p. 49). But in the same manner, Sharp argues, *Spinoza’s* attempts to salvage an essential distinction in species—asserted a century prior to Kant and in the wake of the original Copernican revolution—are symptomatic of recalcitrant human hubris: “This antinomian logic – this view of ourselves a A(nimal) and not-A(nimal) – is visible even in Spinoza, whose system denies any absolute differences between finite existents” (ibid.). Even despite the clear consequence that humans and nonhumans are mere modes among modes, Spinoza appears to assume a human claim to ontological supremacy. And unlike Kant, he exhibits such human hubris despite the fact that he can rightfully be deemed, as Yitzhak Melamed puts it, “the most radical *anti-humanist* among modern philosophers” (Melamed, 2011, p. 148).

If so great an anti-humanist as Spinoza could fail to rid himself of anthropocentric tendencies, Sharp ventures, this fact must attest to a profound anxiety lurking at the core of each of us, rooted in the recognition that we are not really essentially different from animals of other species. She writes, “In what follows, I will bring out Spinoza’s contradictory and ambivalent remarks pertaining to the specific differences between humans and animals. It is my suspicion that this ambivalence continues to plague us today” (Sharp, 2011, p. 50). For fear of what giving up pride of place might entail, Spinoza refuses to give animals of other species the ethical consideration they deserve. The bold among us, she insinuates, must push past Spinoza and stare headlong into the abyss.

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But perhaps the problem is that Spinoza *has* stared into the abyss. In other words, it's not the case that he looks away from the consequences of his biocentric ontology in fear, reverting to an exceptionalism characteristic of his tradition. It's not the case that Spinoza holds himself back from assenting to conclusions he *should* but cannot bring himself to draw. Far from hatred of nonhuman animals, *love of humanity* is what keeps him from "humane" consideration of other animals, remaining perfectly consistent with species-favoring considerations of animals from other species—wolves hunt sheep or other animals and not each other, for instance, and so too with humans who hunt animals of other species. Love of kind drives him to affirm our right to kill or be killed, absolutely barring contact with nonhumans for fear of affective contagion.

Sharp's no-nonsense attitude in expressing the consequences of Spinozist determinism embodies and attests to what we can call Spinoza's *brute realism*, not to be understood in a metaphysical sense, but rather after the everyday idiom that designates a characteristically modern commitment to assess actions and behaviors as they are, not as they ought to be. A. O. Hirschman explains further in his now-classic economic work *The Passions and the Interests*, noting that while Hobbes bases his political analyses upon the assessments of human nature which span the first ten chapters of *Leviathan*,

...it was Spinoza who reiterated, with particular sharpness and vehemence, Machiavelli's charges against the utopian thinkers of the past, this time in relation to individual human behavior. In the opening paragraph of the *Tractatus politicus* he attacks the philosophers who "conceive men not as they are but as they would like them to be." And this distinction between positive and normative thinking appears again in the *Ethics*, where Spinoza opposes to those who "prefer to detest and scoff at human affects and actions" his own famous project to "consider human actions and appetites just as if I were considering lines, planes, or bodies" (Hirschman, 2013, p. 14).

Spinoza the brute realist, in diagnosing the human predicament, recognizes dangerous possibilities brought into play when human behavior sinks below the level of rationality. He refuses a moral sentimentalism that would describe the human animal as it ought to be, not as it is, and that would

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attempt to force relinquishment of what it can rightfully lay claim to by virtue of its power.

It's not the case, therefore, that Spinoza's view of humanity is too high, or too anthropocentric. He does not give the human unique pride of place or set him above and apart from other species. Rather, the human animal is just as prone to the same sorts of affects as are other animals. By analogy, as I've often heard it said, the true feminist does not dumb down arguments for female students, or grade their exams more leniently. To do so would be to exercise a lack of respect for women, to belie an assumed superiority that directly contradicts claims to respect. Just as the true feminist actually maintains a high degree of consistency in such matters, so too the true ontological biocentrist is necessarily an ethical "anthropocentrist," in the sense that she affirms that humanity is merely one species among many, boasting an *equal* right to act in accordance with the powers of its nature.

For Spinoza the actions and behaviors of the human animal are just as causally determined as those of any other animal, save for the possibility of a rational assent that can transform passive and even painful affectations into active pleasures of contemplation. But the more we enter into affective contact with animals of other species, the more we are diverted from goods integral to the powers of our own natures. Thus, Spinoza writes, "Nothing can be more in harmony with the nature of anything than individuals of the same species, and so there is nothing more advantageous to man for preserving his own being and enjoying a rational life than a man who is guided by reason" (IVapp9). The danger of affective communion with "beasts" is that human individuals are just as susceptible to diversion from what best promotes their own advantage as are animals of other species. And insofar as painful, passive affects like pity stand in total tension with reason as active and pleasurable, suffering the former tends toward the destruction of the human's nature, whereas cultivating the latter tends toward its perfection.

The truth of the matter is, "men are changeable (few there are who live under the direction of reason) and yet for the most part envious, and more inclined to revenge than to compassion. So it needs an unusually powerful spirit to bear with each according to his disposition and to restrain oneself from imitating their emotions" (IVapp13). Due to high vulnerability to affects like anger, envy, and hatred, and considering the socially detrimental effects these passive affects are prone to cause, it is extremely difficult for

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one human to reason with and dissuade another human who is under the sway of such affects, preventing the destructive acts that usually follow. It's much more likely that the one attempting to dissuade will fall under the same affective spell, becoming complicit in the other's socially destructive acts.

Note that here in the appendix to part IV of the *Ethics* (IVapp13), summarizing the proofs scattered throughout the main text, Spinoza repeats verbatim a phrase used in the Scholium to Proposition 68, regarding the fall of the first man from a state of originary perfection. Of Adam he writes, "But when he came to believe that the beasts were like himself, he straightway began to imitate their emotions and to lose his freedom..." (IVP68s). Human "freedom" is possible only according to a correct use of reason, on the basis of adequate ideas generated by active states of mind. By contrast, inadequate ideas are generated on the basis of passive states of mind (IIIP1, IIIP3). And by IIIP27, "From the fact that we imagine a thing like ourselves, toward which we have felt no emotion, to be affected by an emotion, we are thereby affected by a similar emotion." Far from passive affectation, especially of pain leading to pity, human perfection consists in active reasoning, which brings pleasure and so perfects our nature (IIIP53, IIIP54, IVP52, VP15). Affinity for beasts, leading toward imitation of their affects, is the very source of human "evil" (IVP68s) and must therefore be avoided at all costs.

In the absence of a biocentric axiology, Spinoza's axiologically anthropocentric "ethical" conclusions concerning animal affect are thus perfectly consistent with his ontological biocentrism. The human animal is to avoid affective contact with animals of other species, and especially the painful emotion of pity. Such a view precludes the possibility of human care for nonhuman animals, and of embracing any seemingly "beneficial" affects in which we might be tempted to trust.

### **Anthropocentrism: A Modern Paradox**

Having argued that the axiologically anthropocentric directives concerning nonhuman animals found in Spinoza's *Ethics* are consistent with his thoroughgoing ontological biocentrism, we move beyond Spinoza to argue that in the absence of a biocentric axiology and the presence of an ontological biocentrism, any animal ethic will prove axiomatically anthropocentric. In this case other modes of being are reduced to having merely instrumental value, and are "morally" considerable only in terms of increasing or decreasing human pleasure. With Tim Hayward, following up

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with Sharp's arguments about Spinoza's causal determinism and its coincidence with the modern scientific understanding of human being's place in nature, we highlight a uniquely modern paradox. If "man" is simply one species among many (ontological biocentrism) and just as casually determined (Spinozist determinism), he is thereby "liberated" to pursue pleasure and avoid pain without ethical restraint (axiological anthropocentrism), no matter the cost to earth's other animate inhabitants.

Hayward parses two senses in which the term *anthropocentrism* is used, and in doing so he draws out a paradox resulting from the modern scientific understanding of humanity. Typically the term is used in a manner that sets our modern understanding of ourselves and our place in nature in contrast with older, ontologically anthropocentric views of the universe. As he writes, "This cognitive displacement of human beings from centre stage in the greater scheme of things has been made possible, above all, by developments in modern science" (Hayward, 1997, p. 50). Concurring with Sharp's denunciation of compatibilist views of human ethical freedom, in this sense "anthropocentrism" is typically employed as a byword for an "old-fashioned" or "obsolete" human hubris that would seek to exempt our species from causal laws observed to be at work in the rest of the natural world.

This modern, ontologically humbled understanding of our species as one among many brings about the paradox: "This detached view of humans has been made possible by just that kind of objectivating knowledge which more recently has been held to lie at the root of an attitude toward the natural world to be condemned as anthropocentric" (Hayward, 1997, p. 50). Ontological dethronement brings liberation from the ethical restraints of pre-modern ontological anthropocentrism, for example from the demands of piety that led the Church to resist Copernicus and to condemn Galileo, and from the subsequent constraints of fear that prevented Descartes from publishing *The World* and compelled Spinoza to publish anonymously. The ontological flattening that comes in consort with modern scientific discovery frees the human to pursue the goals and aims of modern natural science without having to fear deterrents which had plagued previous generations.

But if ours is merely one species among others, ontological considerations will no longer restrict "man" from exerting power in pursuit of pleasure, and in flight from pain, in whichever ways he so desires. This new ontological understanding invigorates a uniquely modern axiological anthropocentrism, part and parcel of the Enlightenment quest to conquer

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nature: the position Charles Taylor refers to as “exclusive humanism” (Taylor 2007). It is on this basis that thinkers with ontological paradigms as seemingly distinct as Descartes and Spinoza—one of whom relies upon a real distinction between thinking substance and extended substance, and so relegates nonhumans to the status of animal-machines, and the other of whom would appear to obliterate grounds for any such distinction between humans and animals of other species—can hold the same axiological position in reference to nonhuman animals. Both Descartes and Spinoza glory in the modern supposition that we are absolutely unrestrained with(out) respect to animals of other species, paradoxically ‘free’ to enact whichever cruelties we so desire upon them, whether for business or for pleasure. ‘Free,’ in other words, in “making use of them as we please” (IVP37s1).

Spinoza’s anthropocentric axiology is perfectly consonant with his biocentric ontology, such that there’s no need to try and twist his practical “ethic” to make it fit more consistently with the rest of his thought. Richard Watson, assuming the absence of an axiological biocentrism, argued this point in response to an earlier generation of deep ecologists: “A fully egalitarian biocentric ethic would place no more restrictions on the behavior of human beings than on the behavior of any other animals” (Watson, 1983, p. 245). Insofar as we employ the term *ethics* to indicate governance of human behavior in the direction of goodness, or at least, with Spinoza, in the direction of increased pleasure, anything less would fall outside the ethical realm. In this sense a Spinozistic, “biocentric ethics”—by which we mean: a guide to human action operating on the assumption of ontological biocentrism, in accordance with Spinoza’s determinist thesis, and so in the absence of axiological biocentrism—would not be properly “ethical” at all. Its imperative would have to be something like this: “act in such a way that whatever you’re doing is what you’d normally do without further consideration, being just as bound by deterministic constraints as any other mode of being.” Under these conditions “Spinozist animal ethics” becomes an oxymoron. Being consistently biocentric would entail something like what Annie Dillard suggests in *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, channeling her anxiety at the impossibility of escaping our uniquely human capacity for moral reflection: “We are freaks, the world is fine, and let us all go have lobotomies to restore us to a natural state. We can leave the library then, go back to the creek lobotomized, and live on its banks as untroubled as any muskrat or

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reed” (Dillard, 1974, p. 180). And, of course, her next line is telling: “You first.”

As a result of his own more consistent ontological biocentrism, in the absence of a biocentric axiology, Watson argues in response to the deep ecologists that perhaps “nature” as a whole, the same nature that includes humans, is better off undergoing another mass extinction event, to be promulgated this time by the self-interested actions of animals that happen to belong to the human species. “Human beings do alter things. They cause the extinction of many species, and they change the Earth’s ecology. This is what humans do. This is their destiny. If they destroy many other species and themselves in the process, they do no more than has been done by many other species.” Thus again the consistent ontological biocentrist is forced to admit, “The human species should be allowed—if any species is said to have a right—to live out its evolutionary potential, to its own destruction if that is the end result. It is nature’s way” (Watson, 1983, p. 253).

As David Wood points out, any call to action is first and foremost human-focused; critiquing *any* ethic as “anthropocentric” would be misguided (Wood, 2011, p. 32). This has not been our line of approach. The fact of the matter is that when we endorse ontological biocentrism and reject axiological biocentrism, and especially when we accept Spinoza’s determinist thesis, a genuine care or compassion for animals outside of our species can be salvaged only if at all by an appealing to the maximization of *human* pleasure and power. Consider Watson’s claim: “But civilized man wreaks such havoc on the environment. We disrupt the ecology of the planet, cause the extinction of myriad other species of living things, and even alter the climate of the Earth. Should we not attempt to curb our behavior to avoid these results? Indeed we should as a matter of prudence if we want to preserve *our* habitat and preserve the survival of *our* species” (Watson, 1983, p. 252; my emphasis). He concludes: “But this is anthropocentric thinking.” In accepting Spinoza’s premises, therefore, one is committed to an axiological anthropocentrism.

### **Axiological Anthropocentrism**

Spinoza argues that pity for nonhuman animals is more harmful than beneficial, due to the human animal’s vulnerability to passive affects that hinder its power, rather than promoting it. Sharp attempts to draw the contrary conclusion from the same premises. Having established that

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Spinoza's axiological anthropocentrism is perfectly consistent with his biocentric ontology, and that such would have to be the case in the absence of axiological biocentrism, it remains to evaluate on ethical grounds Sharp's proposal concerning animal affects, in the context of concerns that will, or at least should matter deeply to the animal activist. Her view provides a case by which to test our thesis that if axiological biocentrism is rejected, a biocentric ontology cannot support the normative claims a robust animal ethics—and the demands of the present moment—would require.

We begin by acknowledging that Sharp's examples of affective contact between humans and animals of other species, instances in which nonhuman animals appear to assist humans in achieving Spinozist, human-centered ends, are indeed *prima facie* persuasive. She cites a few examples and then posits an attempt at further justification:

Alzheimer's patients, for example, show improved memory upon friendly interaction with cats or dogs. Likewise, research reveals a 'cardiovascular benefit' for males with dogs (...). Children who have difficulty reading can be helped significantly by a canine audience, and mere pet presence improves arithmetic calculations, something Spinoza would surely appreciate. Although Spinoza does not offer reasons to proscribe human interest in favor of animal flourishing (...), his conception of agency as an effect of our involvement with ambient powers should furnish an appreciation of the many enabling aspects of the involuntary affective community between humans and animals (Sharp, 2011, p. 65).

We note firstly that Sharp earlier eliminated the possibility of "agency" when disallowing the possibility of Kantian compatibilism, writing, "morality requires that we attribute to rational beings a free agency that can nowhere be observed..." (Sharp, 2011, p. 49). Perhaps her reference to Spinoza's "conception of agency as an effect of our involvement with ambient powers" is meant to refer to determination by the affects of those within one's general proximity, and her use of the term "agency" here is simply equivocal, harboring an implied reference to notions of nonhuman agency as found in the works of the new materialists. Nonetheless, as we have understood, Spinoza staunchly opposes "involuntary affective community between humans and animals" as the very source of human evil.

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Perhaps Sharp's defense of the "useful" effects of contact with nonhumans animals could be accommodated on the basis of a qualified statement Spinoza makes concerning good and evil in the appendix to Part IV of the *Ethics*. He begins, "Whatsoever in nature we deem evil, that is, capable of hindering us from being able to exist and to enjoy a rational life, it is permissible for us to remove in whatever seems the safer way" (IVapp8). What if, contra-Spinoza and in support of Sharp's position, we refused to deem contact with nonhuman animals to be evil in the way Spinoza maintains? In this case we would seem to have no reason to "remove" nonhumans from among us. Purporting to locate Spinoza's anxiety when faced with collapsing species boundaries, Sharp argues in favor of this type of circumnavigation. In making this proposal she claims to be reading Spinoza against himself.

Spinoza continues, "On the other hand, whatever we deem good, that is, advantageous for preserving our being and for enjoying a rational life, it is permissible for us to *take for our use and to use it as we please*. And as an absolute rule, it is permissible by the highest natural right for everyone to do what he judges to be to his own advantage" (IVapp8, emphasis mine). His phrasing here in the appendix reproduces the exact phrasing from the body of part IV, where he encourages the same "usage" with(out) respect in particular to nonhuman animals, namely our right of "making use of them as we please" (IVP37s1). Sharp does not deny his claim about an absolute human right to usage, but instead seeks to satisfy its criterion by affirming that affective contact can be conceived as one example of increasing human pleasure and intensifying human power.

But we must be careful to recognize what would be conceded if we were to agree to these premises, in the context of pressing environmental problems that stem from abuses against animals. Spinoza's stipulation, his license to kill in whatever manner and to whichever scale we deem appropriate, would not only condone killing for nourishment, or for recreation. It would also justify much less licit practices like large-scale slaughter, as in factory farming, or even malicious animal testing—so long as torture is carried out for the sake of increasing human pleasure or power and decreasing human pain or impotency. Sharp admits as much when introducing her examples of contact, which aim to promote human benefit: "We are rendered powerful *not just by instrumentalizing them as food or test subjects for pharmaceuticals*, but by simple attentive co-presence, or

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companionship” (Sharp, 2011, p. 64, emphasis mine). Even if we allow that one-on-one contact with nonhuman animals might serve to increase human pleasure or power, still we have to ask: what ethical basis is there, on Spinoza’s view, for combatting large-scale injustices like factory farming? Or even for restraining oneself from buying products that support this and other heinously inhumane practices toward nonhuman animals, let alone our shared environments? Is there a basis for abstinence from unnecessary consumption of meat, consumed for the purpose of an unnecessary increase of human pleasure, despite the heedless increase of animal suffering?

A consistent ontological biocentrism, in the absence of axiological biocentrism and the presence of Spinozist determinism, must allow that humans *simply do* whatever we do best. We’ve become highly skilled in effecting many types of human-to-nonhuman domination, instrumentalization, and, it appears, world-destruction. Such a reduction of “ethics” to the maximization of human power and pleasure comes at an extremely high price, especially at a cultural moment when the stakes have grown so high.

One such example of heightened stakes is taking place in the Amazon, where large swaths of rainforest are clear-cut daily to make room for land upon which to graze cattle (see for example Lovejoy & Nobre, 2018). Such practices simultaneously deplete a primary source of oxygen, eliminate one of earth’s most essential carbon sinks, and increase the emission of carbon by adding an increase of cattle where foliage, once part of a flourishing local ecosystem, previously stood. And all this not for the sake of feeding starving human populations (a laudable goal for which a more sustainable, vegetable-based diet would be necessary), but for the sake of economic gain, to increase the power and pleasure of human consumers.

At one point Sharp contrasts Hobbes’s view of the human animal with Spinoza’s, arguing that Spinoza’s view is unquestionably more optimistic about the possibility of human goodness with respect to intra-species relations. She writes, “Spinoza invokes the adage ‘man is a God to man’ to rebut Hobbes’s suggestion that humans have an irreducible lupine tendency that political organization must suppress, precariously and constantly. For Hobbes, one must not forget that ‘man is a wolf to man,’ even if the sword can maintain godly relations among citizens” (Sharp, 2011, p. 63). On the basis of this comparison she suggests that Hobbes’s “image of man as beast”

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motivates self-negation, or bald-faced denial of *what* we are, for fear of becoming animal.

She then argues that Spinoza likely has Hobbes in mind, writing, “the perpetual fear of our fellow man as predator bars the discovery of those who might be standing beside us, in perfect agreement with our natures” (Sharp, 2011, p. 63). In other words, fear or anxiety in the face of our own animality—fear or anxiety which, she seeks to establish, is principal cause of Spinoza’s wrongheaded, anti-animal, human-centered ethics—may be holding us back from “discovering” affective contact with the nonhumans already dwelling beside us. And such contact may turn out to be more than simply predatorial, she suggests. It might also, possibly, be beneficial for us.

Whereas Sharp sets Spinoza’s dictum “man is a wolf to man” against Hobbes’s “man is a God to man,” we recognize that the two statements are not incompatible. Sharp argues in response to Hobbes that wolves don’t fight wolves, instead sticking together in a pack. Yet it should be clear that Hobbes’s maxim, drawn from Plautus, isn’t intended to evoke an image of wolves fighting wolves, as Sharp maintains. Rather, it evokes the image of wolves together preying upon *sheep*, a flock of weaker animals among whom they stalk, unnoticed. Weaker men are like sheep subjugated to the perverse power of the strong; such disharmony would pit individuals *of the same species* against one another and so set their “natures,” and what follows to the advantage of each, in insurmountable opposition. Spinoza simply maintains that Hobbesian “wolves” succumb to the affects of beasts when neglecting to seek their *true* advantage, in accordance with reason.

These wolves sink below human “natures” in pursuit of lesser ends, which would presumably provide satisfaction only to beasts, or lesser animals. Such are, Spinoza implies, the pleasure and power that accrue through acts of domination. Man’s *becoming wolf* to man, preying upon the weak, would be to seek his own advantage over and against the advantage of others of the same species. And Spinoza strongly objects to such a conception. But he also objects to a Hobbesian conception of the state that would coerce man to be a god to man through fear (cf. IVapp16). Instead and in response he posits that “man is a God to man” by right use of reason.

An originary “fall” from a state of perfection was induced when the first man subverted the demands of his rational nature and began to imitate the affects of beasts (IVP68s). One key proposition that helps us understand the danger involved in such imitation is Proposition 27 of Part III of the

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*Ethics*: “From the fact that we imagine a thing like ourselves, toward which we have felt no emotion, to be affected by an emotion, we are thereby affected by a similar emotion” (IIP27). Note the phraseology used after the proof, when he explicates in the Scholium, “This imitation of emotions, when it is related to pain, is called Pity, but when it is related to desire it is called Emulation, which is therefore ‘nothing else but the desire of some thing which has been engendered in us from the belief that others similar to ourselves have this same desire’” (IIP27s). Pity is a passive emotion of pain (IVP50) that destroys rather than perfecting our nature (IIP11s). And for Spinoza *pity* is the sole emotion that would lead us to consider extending care or concern to animals of other species. This is precisely what he condemns when chiding “womanish compassion” for animals (IVP37s1; cf. also IIP22s).

Spinoza has no conception of nature promulgating evil. This is a direct consequence of his thoroughgoing ontological biocentrism, coupled with his determinist thesis. Nature *is*—and, in fact, is perfect (IP33s2)—and so who are we to challenge its preeminence? What right have mere modes to challenge their maker? He claims explicitly that if God has decreed that it be so, reason will not challenge it. In the Scholium to IVP50 he writes, “He who rightly knows that all things follow from the necessity of the divine nature and happen in accordance with the eternal laws and rules of Nature will surely find nothing deserving of hatred, derision, or contempt [and] nor will he pity anyone” (IVP50s, cf. IP33). This note follows the Corollary: “Hence it follows that the man who lives by the dictates of reason endeavors, as far as he can, *not to be touched by pity*” (IVP50cor, my emphasis). Pity, or passive affectation of pain on behalf of another in pain, directly contrasts with our highest good, namely active reasoning in accordance with our nature.

Sean McGrath has recently responded to the posthumanist tendencies of environmentalists inspired by Spinoza, especially through the work of Deleuze and Guattari, “Naturalism without humanism produces a flattened ontology in which nothing is particularly good or evil.” He continues,

We ought to recall that Spinoza’s argument for why we should treat others well is that it is better to be surrounded by friends rather than enemies—i.e., the utilitarian calculus. When we recall that utilitarian thinking is the very core of ecological degradation—everything

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reduced to exchange-value (in Marx’s language)—the conundrum facing political ecology becomes clear: naturalism without humanism leaves us with nothing but the ethics of capitalism (McGrath, 2018, p. 102).

Especially in light of pressing *practical* consequences, considering the contemporary effects of the modern quest to conquer nature and to put its resources to work “for our pleasure,” the question as to whether Spinoza’s ontology is sufficient to ground care and compassion for animals, and more generally environmental concern, is paramount now more than ever. Even if she operates on the basis of laudable desires to temper Spinoza’s antipathy toward nonhuman animals, and to incorporate animal affects in a more positive light, Sharp’s proposal does not go far enough to challenge Spinoza’s suppositions.

## Conclusion

Sharp’s “ethical” proposal is not properly ethical at all, at least not in any substantive sense. It is perhaps more aptly characterized as an animal *aesthetics*. And this conception is perfectly in line, as far as we can tell, with Deleuze and Guattari’s Spinoza-inspired conception of *becoming animal*, which others have taken up in similar attempts to encourage ethical responsibility toward nonhuman animals from within a generally Spinozist framework. But by now it has become clear that Spinoza’s precise point in condemning interactions with animals is to warn us against just such a notion, on the basis that the majority of humans are indeed likely to “become animals” based on affective contact—and with consequences that extend not just to those outside the species, in line with Spinoza’s fear. This is precisely what Hobbes’s dictum suggests, and what Spinoza tries to prevent by promoting the right use of reason. For Spinoza, imitating the affects of beasts leads to every manner of “evil.” Recalling Watson’s arguments about what a consistently biocentric ethics—in the presence of Spinozist determinism, and absence of a biocentric axiology—would entail, it appears that endorsing Spinoza’s biocentric ontology opens irrevocably a Pandora’s box of evils.

Axiological anthropocentrism versus axiological biocentrism: why should we care? With Katie McShane we can now affirm that the question is relevant because our ethical attitudes are relevant (McShane, 2007). Mounting consumptive desires for products that expend finite resources

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excessively, that end valuable lives prematurely, and that tend toward the destruction of all the living, are relevant. We should care because the problems we have pinpointed produce a lack of care for those nonhumans whose suffering is compounded by an anthropocentric axiology. In light of mass injustices promulgated by our species against earth's nonhuman inhabitants, in consort with the assumption of a modern, paradoxically anthropocentric axiology, such attempts to salvage a weak semblance of sympathy for animals from within a Spinozist framework prove inadequate to address environmental crises fueled in part by, and in consort with abuses in animal ethics, for example in modern industrial animal agriculture. We must care, because in ignoring the question we're left with the "business-as-usual" scenario, with nonhuman animals still conceived as mere material to be manipulated for human ends. Even despite Spinoza's ontological rejoinder to Descartes, the animals continue to be practically conceived as mere instruments to be "used for our pleasure." And business cannot continue as usual.

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# Mediating a Global Capitalist, Speciesist Moral Vacuum: How Two Escaped Pigs disrupted Dyson Appliances' State of Nature

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## Abstract

In 1998, two Tamworth Ginger pigs escaped on-route to slaughter, remaining fugitive for over a week on Dyson Appliances' land in Malmesbury, Wiltshire, England, the United Kingdom (hereafter UK). Dyson factory workers helped search for them, and media interest was global. National UK newspaper The Daily Mail bought the animals, preventing their slaughter. Whilst two pigs dubbed "Butch" and "Sundance" were publicly "saved," slaughter continued in private, justified as "natural." Dyson Appliance's subsequent decision to sack all 800 Malmesbury vacuum-cleaner production staff was likewise reported as an inevitable, natural consequence of the market. The Press Gazette voted The Daily Mail's coverage of the Tamworth two the greatest British media scoop of all time. Adopting a Critical Animal Media Studies lens we explore the contradictions and connections between moral identification in UK media-framing of Malmesbury's animal-escape story, moral invisibility of animal-slaughter in general, and reporting of the factory's closure as a neoliberal state of nature's "inevitable" and "natural" consequence.

**Keywords:** *animal escape/protection stories, critical animal media studies, critical theory, neoliberal globalization, moral identification/invisibility, naturalization.*



Image created by Phillip Kingsbury - [woodenspoonpress.com](http://woodenspoonpress.com)

## Introduction

In the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic's first wave, *The [UK] Sunday Times* released its annual rich list (Sunday Times, 2020). Top of the list was vacuum cleaner and hand dryer manufacturer Sir James Dyson. As the virus threatened to overwhelm health services, Sir James promised to rapidly invent and mass-produce a new generation of medical ventilators. This did not happen as Dyson Appliances had outsourced production, having closed the company's UK factory in 2002/3 and relocated production to lower cost sites in Malaysia and the Philippines. This is the story of that closure, the workers sacrificed to the myth of the market, and two pigs that resisted that fate.

The pigs, dubbed the "Tamworth two" escaped whilst being moved from the back of a van into Malmesbury's *Newman's* slaughterhouse. The pair managed to get under a fence and then crossed the river Avon into an area of trees, grass and scrub. That land had only recently been purchased by Dyson Appliances. After the Tamworth two escaped in 1998, *The Daily Mail* (hereafter, *The Mail*) proclaimed the need to "save our pigs." British national newspapers located the story of the pigs within divergent editorial frameworks even amidst their near universal consensus for "saving" the pair. Editors and headline writers feasted on puns. Even the *BBC* "caught swine fever." Media coverage enabled the fate of two pigs to be revised, and celebrated their protection, whilst ignoring ongoing, routine large-scale animal slaughter (Morgan & Cole, 2011). On January 15<sup>th</sup>, the weekly *Wilts*

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and *Gloucestershire Standard's* Ella Cservenka (1998a, para. 8) reported town police constable PC Bull's claim, that: "This is obviously a well planned escape". A week later she reported: "A sweep-search of the town was planned last week by staff at Dyson vacuum manufacturers in Malmesbury in a bid to track down the run-away Sundance [the last of the pair to be caught]" (Cservenka, 1998b, p. 5). Moral attachment was mobilized in the media to rescue the pigs, but the same mobilization did not happen for the Dyson staff who had helped in the rescue. When Dyson Appliances later announced its Malmesbury factory's closure, media coverage framed events as the inevitable logic of natural market forces.

In telling this story and linking these seemingly separate cases we hope to emphasize the importance of a joined-up approach in awareness-raising animal advocacy campaigns. Speciesism and global capitalism are intrinsically linked and as such our struggles against them should be too. As Upton Sinclair (1906[1985], pp. 376-377) describes the commodification of human and other animals; "it was the Great Butcher, it was the spirit of capitalism made flesh"; a horror and a threat, evoking empathy and demanding action in equal measure. This article first summarizes local context, presents a critical animal media studies approach, details Malmesbury's escaped pigs and their UK media-framing before analyzing this media-framing. Media-framing of Dyson's vacuum-cleaner production's relocation to Malaysia is then outlined. The contradictions of rationality within modernity are then explored.

The two pigs escaped in 1998, onto land bought by Dyson Appliances the year before with a view to expanding production. However, when told in 1999 that planning permission might take up to a year, the company began a pilot project in Malaysia. This was operational by mid-2000. All production relocated there in 2002 despite all subsequent planning applications for the Malmesbury site being granted.

National British newspapers tend to be divided into the categories of broadsheets (such as the *Telegraph* and the *Guardian*), which deal with more serious news reporting; "red tops" tabloids (such as the *Sun* and the *Daily Mirror*), which lack the credibility of broadsheets and tend to focus on sensational stories and are distinguished by their red mast heads; and "middle market tabloids" (such as the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express*), which are often understood as a mid-way point between broadsheets and "red top" tabloids, dealing with a combination of serious issues and entertainment

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(Stephens Griffin, 2020). Journalists' names will be given when present in the original news source. Except where stated otherwise, newspapers referenced in this article are British national publications.

### **Historical Context**

North Wiltshire is famous for “Wiltshire Cure Ham.” The county’s largest town is Swindon (Swine town). Calne, a short distance southwest of Swindon, became the country’s largest center for pork-processing from the 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century – of both local animals and those imported to Bristol from Ireland and then slaughtered on route to London. Wiltshire cure ham was developed in Calne to store pork (being soaked in brine for five days to preserve the meat). With the closure of Calne’s *Harris and Co.* in 1983, Chippenham became the center of pork processing.

Two months before the “Tamworth Two” escaped, the Italian Parma ham producers’ association took the UK supermarket chain ASDA to the European Court of Justice (ECJ). ASDA used a Chippenham based company to process meat bought from Parma. The Parma producers claimed the Parma appellation required both rearing and processing be in Parma. ASDA counterclaimed, stating that rearing was sufficient to warrant the application. The initial recommendation of the Court in 2002 was in ASDA’s favor. As per Dyson’s factory closure announced only weeks before, the market was prioritized over protection. A year later however, the final decision of the Court reversed its recommendation. The “saved pigs” moved to Chippenham. Parma ham processing ceased. The affix “-ham” in Chippenham does not refer to cured-pork, but rather to a flat area largely enclosed/protected by a river. Whilst the affix “-ham” relates to social protection, “Chipp-” derives from “ceap,” the Saxon word for market. The cases of Chippenham versus Parma Ham, the “Tamworth Two”, and the closure of Malmesbury’s vacuum-cleaner factory show the primacy of protection or the primacy of the market - whether for pigs or people - is a choice, not an inevitability.

### **Capitalism, Animals and the Media**

Nibert (2017) argues that there is a fundamental connection between the systematic oppression of animals, the environment, and the relentless everyday harms caused to humans under capitalism. Best (2009, p. 42) argues that “the profit imperative overwhelms the moral imperative; value is

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reduced to exchange value... [C]apitalism devours nature, species, human lives, and indigenous cultures.” The scale at which animals are slaughtered is staggering, with 70 billion animals killed every year for food, according to the UN (Sanders, 2018). As Cudworth (2015) argues, “violence towards domesticated animals is routinized, systemic and legitimated. It is embedded in structures of authority, such as the nation state, and in formations of social domination” (p. 14). Taylor (2016) explores the way these overlapping systems of domination play out across the media landscape, and has encouraged more focus on the media processes by which animals are represented as being expendable objects. The Tamworth two represent a case whereby “special” animals are conferred subjectivity in the media, crossing over the “subject-object divide” allowing them to no longer be viewed as “food” (Morgan & Cole, 2011, p. 126). While Morgan and Cole rightly identify manifestations of what Stan Cohen calls “techniques of denial” in media coverage of the Tamworth Two, such texts are not monolithic and afford divergent readings. It is for activists to promote such alternative readings, and such high-profile coverage creates useful spaces for such interpretive counterwork.

Almiron et al., (2018, p. 374) discusses critical media studies’ (CMS) efforts to highlight the role of the media in manufacturing consent for mainstream ideologies and systems of domination; however, the “entanglements of violence affecting other animals have been a blind spot for CMS.” They therefore call for a critical animal media studies (CAMS) sub-discipline to address the traditional neglect of research on animals in critical communication studies. Using Almiron et al.,’s (2018) CAMS lens to revisit media coverage of the Tamworth two, and subsequent media coverage of Dyson Appliances’ decision to relocate manufacturing to Malaysia, reveals a fascinating case study in the relationship between capitalism and animal oppression. Appeals to nature are employed to justify each, but such justifications can be disrupted.

During archival research on *Dyson* planning applications in The Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre, an archivist gave one of the authors a file of “Tamworth two” national and local newspaper cuttings from 1998. This initial data set was supplemented by a keyword search (using “Tamworth two”) of later newspaper coverage via online archives. Newspaper and broadcast coverage of the factory closure was collected using a manual search of local newspaper micro-fiche archives (held by the above

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*History Centre*), and an online search of national coverage. Small by comparison to Elena Lazutkaite's (2020) 1,754 UK media texts on chickens published over 38 years, our sample of 27 articles was only of UK national daily newspaper coverage of the "Tamworth two" (*Guardian, Times, Telegraph, Mail, Express, Mirror, Sun, Star, Financial Times* and *Independent*), and of regional titles (*Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard* and *The Western Daily Press*) in the immediate period during which events were unfolding. One article from the London-based, but nationally read *London Evening Standard*, a BBC radio feature from the time and one retrospective newspaper article from 2004 are also referred to.

Headlines were analyzed intuitively for metaphorical language; images were analyzed semiotically in relation to the prior theoretical frame (of facial identification); whilst all text was then interrogated using inductive thematic analysis – the search for emergent themes. Those emerging were: *naming* and identification; *framing* within prior editorial positions; and *narrative* development (storytelling and intentionality). For a further discussion of multiple modes of qualitative data-analysis, see David and Sutton (2011, chapter 20, pp. 361-387).

### **Media Accounts and (In)visibility**

On Thursday January 8, 1998, Arnoldo Dijulio, a local council road cleaner, took three Tamworth Ginger pigs to Malmesbury's *Newman's Slaughterhouse*. Mr Dijulio had reared the three piglets in his three-acre smallholding, and at five months old he was taking them for slaughter, expecting to be paid £40 each for the three animals.

Tamworths (sometimes called Sandy Backs or Tams) are a rare and ancient breed of ginger-colored pigs. They are often selected for garden rearing as they are relatively small but grow rapidly – reaching near full development after only a few months (Mizelle, 2015). Such home-reared animals in the Western world have declined in number as health and safety regulations have led to most small-scale, local slaughterhouses having closed in recent decades (Mizelle, 2015). Most large-scale industrial slaughterhouses will not deal with small numbers of pigs as in Mr Dijulio's three. In fact, *Newman's Slaughterhouse* closed in 2004 after repeated health and safety inspection failures. On arrival at *Newman's* the three pigs were unloaded. In the process of being moved from Mr Dijulio's van to the slaughterhouse building, two of the animals escaped.

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*Newman's* was located at the bottom of Tetbury Hill. Tetbury Hill was also the site where Dyson Appliances had relocated itself in 1995, having established its original assembly line in Chippenham in 1992. In 1997, Dyson Appliances received planning permission to extend its factory and car park on land next to its existing site. It was into this abandoned and largely overgrown waste ground that the pigs escaped. The pigs evaded capture on their first day, and their story was picked up on by a group of national and international journalists in the area at the time awaiting an announcement from Prince Charles, whose home is situated between Malmesbury and Tetbury, regarding his relationship with Camilla Parker Bowles following the death of Princess Diana in 1997. The pigs' continued ability to evade capture allowed the story to escalate to the point where over one hundred print and broadcast journalists were stationed in Dyson Appliances' car park looking to get an angle on the situation. Despite editorial differences, these "angles" shared a common celebration of the animals' escape, and support for their being, in some sense, "saved."

After a week, Butch was caught, and the next day Sundance was also captured with assistance from Dyson Appliances workers. *The Mail* paid Mr Dejulio for the animals. Butch and Sundance were then taken to Kevin and Debbie Stinchcombe's *Langley Wild Animal Rescue Centre* in Chippenham. Dyson Appliances had moved from Chippenham to Malmesbury in 1995. Contrawise, Butch and Sundance moved from Malmesbury over to Chippenham. As has been noted above, Chippenham means both protected space and open market. Whilst Butch and Sundance were saved from the market by the extension of moral protection to them, the workers who helped save them were sacrificed to the supposedly morally neutral market.

### *Media Accounts of the Tamworth Two*

Camera crews, photographers and journalists arrived in the days following Butch and Sundance's escape. Television crews from the *BBC*, *ITV* (who hired a helicopter), *NBC*, *CNN*, *Sky TV*, *France2* and *LCI*, and two Japanese TV channels came. Local, national and international radio broadcasters also arrived. At least a dozen national newspapers sent teams, some with five to seven people each.

Regional paper, *The Western Daily Press's* Wendy Best was first to go to print on 13 January 1998. Geraint Smith, a reporter sent to cover the story by *The London Evening Standard*, and who stayed at Malmesbury's

*Old Bell Hotel* (allegedly England’s oldest) claimed (14 January, 1998) he could only eat cornflakes at breakfast: “I couldn’t eat them one minute and interview them the next. I was offered bacon but I could not face it.” (Cservenka, 1998b, p. 5) The *London Evening Standard* published the first “exclusive interview” with the two pigs – a fabrication complete with imagery of two pigs in dark glasses (Vallely, 1998). A feast of puns ensued and are collected together in Table 1 below, along with their respective media outlet and publication information:

<b>Pun based headline</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Author, Date, Page</b>
“Pig of a day for press gang,” and “Tamworth hunt ends after pig of a day”	<i>The Times</i>	Simon De Bruxelles, 17 January 1998, pp. 1-2
“Pig knocks stuffing out of police,” and “Swimming boars save their bacon”	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	Sean O’Neill, 14 January 1998, p. 4
“World Oinksclusive: How the Mail saved the bacon of the Tamworth Two”	<i>Daily Mail</i>	Paul Harris, 16 January 1998, p. 2
“Three Little Piggies went to Market, but two went on the run. They saved their bacon, with a swim in the Avon; and now the farmer looks glum”	<i>The Western Daily Press</i>	Wendy Best, 13 January 1998, p. 3
“Piggies on the run to save their bacon,” “Hog hunt brings home the bacon,” “Swine fever,” “Pigmania,” “The great escape – a snort by snort account”	<i>Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard</i>	Ella Cservenka, 22 January 1998, p. 5
“Tamworth One cops it in copse ending great escape”	<i>Guardian</i>	Geoff Gibbs, 17 January 1998, p. 1
“The grunt escape,” and “How the flying pigs became a crackling good tale”	<i>Independent</i>	Paul Vallely, 17 January 1998, p. 16
“A crackling good yarn”	<i>Guardian</i>	Steven Morris, 1 March 2004, online

“Market awaits news on pork futures”	<i>Financial Times</i>	Julia Jowit, 17 January 1998, p. 1
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Table 1: Pun-based headlines of the Tamworth two from UK news media

The use of puns in so many article titles (see Table 1) highlights contradiction in attitudes to pigs. Even as readers are encouraged to identify with the animals, “pig” is a negative euphemism for a police officer, a “pig of a day” is a bad day, even as “swine fever” and “Pigmania” equate pigs with madness. Bacon is “saved,” but in different accounts, the pigs save themselves, are themselves saved, or else the hunt is successful in catching the pigs. “The Great Escape” puns identify the pigs with prisoners of war escaping Nazi tyranny in the film of the same name, even as the play on cracking and “crackling” equates virtue with roasted pig skin, and “Pork Futures” parallels speculation on whether the pigs would escape death, and that of profiting from investments in butchered meat.

Michael Hornsby entitled one article: “Tamworth Two ‘were right to flee abattoir’” (30 January) due to a poor health and safety inspection of *Newman’s*. The article cited Jeff Rooker, the then Food Safety Minister as claiming: “We have now discovered why the two Tamworth pigs, Butch and Sundance, did escape. They decided they did not want to be chopped up in a low-scoring abattoir.” This flippant assertion presupposes that the pigs would have been content being killed in a more “hygienic” slaughterhouse (1998, para 3).

*The Independent*, true to its self-styled impartiality (or indifference) ran one story on January 15<sup>th</sup> (Garner, 1998) in line with the liberation narrative; whilst on January 17<sup>th</sup> it ran another lengthy article castigating “animal daft England” for its anthropomorphism; citing a Leicester University psychology lecturer on animal naming and an Oxford professor of animal theology who blamed Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas in equal measure (Vallely, 1998, p. 17).

*The Sun* was adamant that the story, once again, illustrated the superiority of the “Great British Public” in coming to the rescue of the two escaped pigs, and recalled its involvement in saving “Blackie” the Donkey in 1987. *The Sun* claimed that they had saved Blackie from being crushed to death by “six fat Spanish men” in a supposedly traditional Spanish ritual commemorating the execution of a medieval rapist. In 1987 *The Daily Star* had managed to somehow appropriate Blackie the Donkey from *The Sun*, and

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deliver him to a donkey sanctuary (Baird, 2010). This coverage was marked in its racism, Europhobia and jingoistic British nationalism. For example, to celebrate bringing Blackie home *The Daily Star* ran as its front-page headline the word ‘GOTCHA!’ (Baird, 2010). Innocuous though this may seem, this was actually a jocular reference to a headline *The Sun* had run during the Falklands war, triumphantly celebrating Britain’s sinking of an Argentine ship in which 368 people died, many teenage conscripts (Horrie, 2002), imbuing this supposedly light-hearted dig at their rival newspaper with a morbid nationalist significance and imperialist symbolism.

Colling (2020) discusses the way that animal exploitation and resistance should be understood within the social conditions of oppression, especially the intertwined processes of domestication, colonialism and capitalism. Through this lens, these narratives of animal salvation can invariably be read as an attempt to emphasize British moral superiority, often as compared to the ‘barbarism’ of others. In Blackie’s case, the comparator was Spain, and the coverage reinforced prevalent right-wing nationalist and Europhobic sentiments at the time, the sort that have continued to dominate the British news media landscape since (Partington & Zuccato, 2018). Indeed, Gillespie & Narayanan (2020, p. 3) argue that non-human subjects have “long been entangled with global cultural politics of nation-building and nationalism.”

On reading the early report in *The Western Daily Press*, the team at *The Mail* set out to rescue the Tamworth two. It was also *The Mail* who coined the nicknames Butch and Sundance. *The Mail* was keen to ensure that its rival, *The Daily Express* (hereafter, *The Express*), did not do to it what *The Daily Star* had done to *The Sun* eleven years earlier. In 2009, *The Press Gazette* voted *The Mail*’s handling of the Tamworth two the greatest British media scoop of all time (Wilson, 2012). News editor Ian MacGregor dispatched freelance journalist Barbara Davies to capture the pigs, telling her not to come back if she did not succeed (Morris, 2004). Davies recruited the Stinchcombes (owners of *The Langley Wild Animal Rescue Center*) to aid in the capture. Staying up all night, Davies and the Stinchcombes managed to capture Butch on January 15<sup>th</sup>.

*The Express* assigned two reporters (one the former parachute regiment officer Sean Rayment), who had already agreed on a price with Mr Dejulio’s family. *The Mail*’s team, with Butch in their possession told Mr Dejulio they would run a photo of Butch the next day, so undoing his contract

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with *The Express*. Other journalists were allegedly banging on the door of Mr DeJulio's house with checks for tens of thousands of pounds and the "poacher's pockets" of their wax jackets wedged with cash (Morris, 2004). Eventually, Mr DeJulio signed the pigs over to *The Mail*.

The paper then sent its top writer, Paul Harris, to interview Butch (Harris, "WORLD OINKSCLUSIVE: The Mail Saves the Bacon of the Tamworth Two," 16 January 1998, p. 2), who, allegedly said: "I caught a glimpse of the Daily Mail girl [Davies], a redhead like me, and I knew I was in safe hands" (see Cudworth (2008) for a pertinent discussion of the gendered objectification of women and animals). A rival journalist parked his car behind Davies' four-wheel drive, preventing her from being able to capture Sundance, who was caught on January 16, 1998 by a team from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) and a local pig breeder. Sundance was taken to the local veterinarian, where the press pack descended. Davies asserted "exclusive rights" and tried to get PC Bull to seal off the area. However, she could not produce a receipt. Donatella Lorch of *NBC* (veteran of Iraq and Rwanda) demanded access in the name of press freedom. 250 million Americans had a right to know, she asserted. However, she was denied access by the vet. Sundance was later smuggled out of Malmesbury to be united with Butch at the Stintchcombe's Chippenham sanctuary.

*The Mail's* royal photographer, Mike Forrester, wanted to photograph the pair looking out over a stable door at the Stinchcombes'. However, the pigs were too small to reach the top. A carpenter was found to shorten the door and the desired front facial shot was created (Morris, 2004). An analysis of images in the different news-titles shows the same pattern—all pro-escape stories use facial shots. However, three pro-escape stories contained side-on images, each of which show the pigs running away. One pro-animal story even had a backside photograph again showing the animal "getting away." As such, whilst Molloy (2011) is correct in her account of how facial shots can foster identification with animals, it is also possible to complement a pro-animal story with a side shot or even a backside image.

*The Independent* article that was fundamentally hostile to "animal daft England" carried eight side-on line-drawn outlines of generic pigs. They were in a pose that suggests running, and were located within an image presenting the time-line of the escape-rescue in the form of a board game. However, these side-on outlines also resembled the silhouettes of pigs shown

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in butcher shops where various cuts can then be displayed. Whilst front-on face shots may afford “identification,” in context side-on imagery, and even a backside shot, can do likewise. It is not the image, in isolation, that gives meaning (David & Sutton, 2011, p. 430). For further discussion of the role of images in encouraging humans to identify with animals, in particular the significance of images of animal suffering, see Jenni (2005).

Morris (2004) lists where the six key journalists who participated in *The Mail/Express* rivalry over the pigs were working six years on. One stayed at the *The Mail*, and one switched from *The Express* to *The Mail*. The others had moved to *The Guardian*, *Mirror*, *London Evening Standard* and *Telegraph*. *The Mail* and *The Express* are right-wing tabloids and *The Daily Mirror* left-wing. *The Telegraph* and *The Guardian* position themselves on the political right and left respectively. As Schattschneider (1960) notes, pluralism is only window dressing if the apparent left-right diversity of voices in fact come from one common pool of people. When Dyson Appliances’ Malmesbury vacuum-cleaner production workers, who had helped find the pigs were made redundant, overwhelmingly press coverage reported this as inevitable. Media pluralism: and pigs might fly!

### **Accounting for the Media**

Animals are a recurring feature of human storytelling in all times and cultures (DeMello, 2012). Animals are routinely presented in human stories as heroic and justified in their resistance to humans. Animals are used to present particular social arrangements as natural, to present a nostalgic version of the past, or to individualize actions; thereby often rendering systemic realities invisible. Contemporary media representations contain all these elements, and so represent a space of illusion, contradiction and of potential provocation.

Cole and Stewart discuss Burger King’s “happy meal” tie-in with animated film *Chicken Run*:

Burger King offered promotional tie-ins... allowing children to take home a toy representation of the characters with which they had been invited to identify, while simultaneously consuming actual animals who had been subject to the very fate the film’s heroes had fought against. (2014, p. 3)

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Molloy (2011) lists fourteen box office blockbuster films between 2001 and 2009, featuring animal protagonists, which each grossed over a hundred million US dollars. In all but one of these films, the animals are “the heroes.” In many cases humans are the villains, against which the animals justly hide from, resist or escape. Even when animals are presented as a threat to humans, this threat is shown originating in the way humans have mistreated them. Pig escape stories, like E.B. White’s *Charlotte’s Web* and Dick King-Smith’s *The Sheep Pig* (the basis for the film *Babe*), Brett Mizelle (2015) writes, focus on individuals “saved from slaughter,” as these do not challenge us to address the routine nature of mass slaughter.

Mizelle notes the contrast between traditional, small-scale, family farm based, nostalgic and romantic representations of pig rearing, slaughter and sale, relative to the reality of today’s industrial meat production system. Mass production is largely invisible. Factory farm buildings and slaughterhouses adopt a uniformly anonymous and windowless architectural style to preserve this invisibility (for a compelling Green Criminological exploration of the connections between slaughterhouses and prisons, see Fitzgerald, 2012). Gould (2019) argues that animal slaughter’s move from relative visibility in urban areas to the invisibility of windowless rural buildings, parallels cinematic portrayals of animal slaughter, which have shifted from displaying real animal death to now almost never showing the moment when an animal is killed.

Joy suggests media coverage of meat production serves to “reinforce this invisibility of the system,” through omission, prohibition and aberration (2010, p. 103). Routine is, by definition, not news. However, when activists publicize the brutality of this routine, animal farming-based organizations lobby to prevent such work being broadcast/printed. For example, in the UK, a campaign funded by the Vegan Society to promote “Veganuary” (going vegan in January), did get coverage in media and on billboards. However, this was then framed in some media sources in terms either of “harming” various economic sectors (restaurants, pubs, shops and farms) or as being “disloyal” to British farmers (e.g., Gill, *The Telegraph*: “‘Veganuary’ blamed for January pub hangover,” 19 February 2019, para 1). Finally, when a scandal breaks, damage limitation is sought through presenting particular cases as exceptions, aberrations, and the results of particular failings, not systemic ones (Joy, 2010, p. 104).

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“Ag-gag-laws” make it hard for slaughterhouse employees to talk (Mizelle, 2015). Media outlets receive advertising revenues from a food industry which would not fund any channel or title that highlighted significant criticism of the meat industry. Even Oprah Winfrey was sued for “libelling beef” (Joy, 2010, p. 91). Martin (2014) argues that, in this context, images of farmed animals in modern agricultural settings can represent contested sites of education, critically exploring the possibilities and limitations of such deployments. These contested sites arguably also provide an ideal space within which to challenge the exploitation of workers which is intrinsic to global capitalism, and to draw connections between the exploitation inherent in both animal agriculture and global capitalism. Most people still eat meat, yet few want to see how meat is produced. The industrialization of meat production produces more meat and, yet, paradoxically perhaps, even amongst those that can afford to eat meat, a greater proportion choose to be vegans/vegetarians today. How is that possible?

### **Market “Inevitability” and Naturalization**

Returning to Dyson Appliances’ sacked workers, the claim, repeatedly made, was that the relocation of vacuum-cleaner production from Malmesbury to Malaysia was “inevitable.” James Dyson told the *The Guardian’s* Geoffrey Gibbs: “We don’t want to present them [the workers] with a fait accompli, but I have to say that the end decision is fairly inevitable” (Gibbs, 2002, para. 15). Sir Richard Needham, the former MP for Malmesbury, was the deputy “chairman [*sic*]” of Dyson Appliances in 2002. Needham told the *Devizes Gazette and Herald’s* Derek Valler: “Looking at our future made us realise with stark intensity that we could not hope to survive if we stayed making our mass market cleaners in Wiltshire.” (Valler, 2002, p. 10)

Robert Uhlig (2002, online), then the business and technology correspondent for *The Telegraph*, repeated the company’s “inevitability” line. Uhlig sets an earlier quote from James Dyson – that, “I do not believe that the nation that was the home to the Industrial Revolution can remain great if it loses the ability to make things” - against the following claim: “Yesterday he [Dyson] was forced to abandon his beliefs to the economic imperative.” Uhlig further cites James Dyson as saying: “I agonised over it particularly because I put so much faith in manufacturing in Britain, but the

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decision became inevitable when I looked at the facts.” It is an objective thing out there to be observed that compelled the course of action that was undertaken. Where denying responsibility for an outcome avoids liabilities it is framed as an external reality, existing beyond human action and control, a discovery to be found “out there.”

Production foreman [*sic*] Bob Tidey told the *Devizes Gazette and Herald*: “I think the cost of making the vacuum-cleaners on this site is spiralling out of control, so the move is inevitable” (Valler, 2002, p. 10). A letter to the *Devizes Gazette and Herald* on February 21<sup>st</sup>, entitled “Firm not to Blame,” blamed Malmesbury’s high wages, productivity issues and planning barriers, concluding “what did they expect?” given cheaper and more flexible alternatives. Such “inevitability” was only questioned once (a year later). David Gow (2003), writing in *The Guardian*, reported trade union leader Roger Lyon’s claim that British consumers put Dyson where he was in 2002, not overseas markets. At the time, the decision was represented as just a “thing” that had to be done. The *BBC* (2002, para 1) reported the then UK Prime Minister: “Blair ‘disappointed’ over Dyson jobs,” but that he accepted the market should decide.

Yet, no external market pressure actually existed. In 2000/2001 Dyson Appliances won court cases against *Hoover*. These court decisions upheld Dyson Appliances’ patent monopoly despite the fact that James Dyson’s original 1980 patent should have lapsed after twenty years. Hoover was forced to cease production of bag-less cyclone vacuum cleaners. Entrenching Dyson Appliances’ monopoly further, this market-suspension was upheld globally through the WTO’s TRIPS Treaty, and Dyson Appliances immediately cancelled its dual-cyclone licensing agreements in North America to capitalize further on this global protection, so removing choice there to buy any but its branded bag-less products. Interestingly, the original Dyson patent was issued three years after a Japanese patent for a root cyclone vacuum cleaner design had been granted (Pearce, 2009). Under today’s TRIPS rules Dyson’s original patent would never have been granted. No planning application was denied, preventing expansion of production in Malmesbury so as to keep up with the increased demand caused by the enforced suspension of alternative production. Relocation simply reduced labor costs. Where the Tamworth two were saved, the workers were framed in the media as inevitable victims of a fictional market, global capitalism’s

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imaginary “jungle out there,” even as the company benefited from global monopoly protection.

What Cammaerts (2015) calls neoliberalism presents its own negative consequences as an inevitable “state of nature,” not as parts of a hegemonic order to which alternatives exist. Cammaerts (2015, p. 522) observes that “the neoliberal project is geared towards making itself invisible, positioning itself as quintessentially anti-ideological and natural.” In other words, where choices are made which negatively impact workers, they are justified as being an inevitable consequence of the market, which is itself presented as “natural.” The original author of this “nasty, brutish and short” representation of the “state of nature” is of course Thomas Hobbes, or as he signed his name, and as his name appears on the famous 1651 frontispiece of his book *Leviathan*, “Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury.” This article is one locally sourced challenge to that locally produced but now globally circulating myth.

Joy (2010) uses the term carnism to describe the ideology, which allows people to support animal exploitation. Exploitation of certain animals is justified on the grounds that it is natural, normal, necessary, and nice (Joy, 2010). Consumption of pigs is generally understood as natural in the West, in contrast with consumption of dog meat, which is understood as abnormal, cruel and barbaric (Joy, 2010). The media plays a central role in the ideological reproduction of contingent choices as natural, inevitable and invisible.

### **Technology and the Free Market**

Mizelle documents the development of the Chicago slaughterhouses in the period after the U.S. Civil War. These slaughterhouses were proud of their efficient killing and highly rationalized dis-assembling of animals. One such firm, *Swift & Company*, even ran public tours. Chapter three of Upton Sinclair’s (1906[1985]) *The Jungle* offers a fictionalized account of just such a Chicago slaughterhouse (called Durhams) promotional tour. Today, Mizelle suggests, such openness has all but disappeared.

According to TheHenryFord.Org website, when telling the story of Henry Ford’s adoption of the “assembly line” in the production of his Model T cars, it was a visit to *Swift & Company*, and the observation of its “dis-assembly line” that inspired him. The example serves to further underline the connection between capitalism and animal exploitation highlighted by Nibert (2017). As Upton Sinclair characterized the relationship:

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There is but scant account kept of cracked heads in back of the yards, for men who have to crack the heads of animals all day seem to get into the habit, and to practice on their friends, and even on their families between times. This makes it a cause for congratulation that by modern methods very few men do the painfully necessary work of head-cracking for the whole of the civilised world (1906[1985], p. 24).

It should be noted that Sinclair was being ironic in his use of both the word's *necessary* and *civilized*.

Joy (2010) suggests technology distances us from the consequences of our actions. Animals are objectified as things ("Live Stock," "Units" or "Parts"), de-individualized as numbers without names, and packaged symbolically (categorized) as food by a mechanized process. Joy argues this is how we can love dogs, eat pigs and wear cows without confronting the paradoxical difference in how we relate to each. Subsumed under nameless abstractions and industrially "processed" (bred, raised, killed and disassembled) in unimaginable numbers, animals are rendered invisible, even as they are *rendered* invisibly (Shaffer & Young, 2015).

However, the dialectic of enlightenment (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1997; Maurizi, 2012) Joy parallels above must have its reverse. Whilst Bauman (1989) is correct to say that modern genocide can only be as lethal as it is because it applies the most modern principals of bureaucracy, division of labor and techno-scientific methods, this is not the inevitable end of rationalization (for further discussion of these ideas see Cudworth, 2015; Davis, 2004; Painter, 2014).

Cole and Stewart (2014, p. 16) classify human and non-human animal interaction within a "practico-discursive map" (p. 22) of "hegemonic human-nonhuman relations in contemporary Western cultures" (p. 28). One axis locates the degree of objectification or subjectification. The other axis measures the degree of sensibility (extending visibility and invisibility to the full range of sensation). Human animals are located at the highest levels of both subjectification and sensation. "Vermin," "meat," and "wild" animals occupy the extremes of the other quadrants, with other animals distributed at lesser extremes.

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Cole and Stewart (2014) then use a Weberian account of the modern struggle over sense making, i.e., meaningful social action, to identify how forms of human-nonhuman animal relations that appear to resist objectifications/non-sensibility (invisibility), are routinely re-incorporated into the dominant, hegemonic mode of instrumental rationality. They note Weber's four ideal typical modes of social action: instrumental rational action, value rational action, affective action and tradition (Weber, 1968 [1914]). Whilst Weber highlighted the driving force of instrumental rationalization in the development of modern society, this "disenchantment of the world" (Weber, 1991a [1919]) was itself insufficient to account for all social action, nor was it sufficient to give meaning to any one individual's life (Weber, 2004 [1905]). Cole and Stewart (2014) identify farmed animals, laboratory animals and vermin (citing Rentokil) as the paradigmatic examples of instrumentalized, non-sensible objects of instrumental rational action.

Other modes of meaningful relation exist—value-rational, affective and traditional; but Cole and Stewart illustrate that each is routinely subject to alignment back to the hegemonic instrumental framework. Animal welfare initiatives, laws and policies, offer a value rational approach to animals – seemingly treating animals as ends in themselves (moving them into the same quadrant as humans and pets in Cole and Stewart's practico-discursive map). However, such "welfare" models are subsumed largely within attempts to "improve" the quality of animal farming rather than challenging it. Likewise, affective (emotional) approaches to animals are routinely appropriated by instrumental drivers, such as in the language of "happy meals" and "comfort food." Affective identifications with animals are constructed mainly as childish, and thereby deemed immature in adults (with empathy being likewise dismissed as feminine). Similarly, tradition is regularly used as "window dressing" whereby modern farming practices are hidden behind a veneer of romantic nostalgia (Hillyard, 2007).

"So, in the light of Weber's typology, a reading of Figure 2.1 [Cole and Stewart's practico-discursive map] is that it depicts the triumph of instrumental-rational action, but often disguised as value-rational ('caring'...), affective action ('loving'...), or traditional action (rehearsing the rural idyll)" (Cole & Stewart, 2014, pp. 32-33). These authors are certainly correct to draw attention to the power of instrumental rational drivers in modern society, even in the ability to colonize (Habermas, 1986)

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non-instrumental modes of action and identification within their logic. Yet, Cole and Stewart also note that such relations are “contingent and inherently unstable” (p. 28). Whilst instrumental exploitation is “at root” (p. 18) or is “the bottom line” (p. 19) within today’s hegemonic anthroparchal order, disruption can take place. Even if attempts will always be made to trivialize animal escapes and to incorporate human resistances to instrumental rational reduction, such attempts are not always successful. Just because value-rational, affective and traditional challenges to instrumental rational reduction *can* be colonized does not mean they always *will* be. The map of oppression which Cole and Stewart provide, must be used to resist colonization, and certainly not to objectify it. “Non-instrumental social action (value-rational, affective, or traditional) ... prowls around the edges of our instrumentalized relations with animals, but is tamed as soon as it enters” (Cole & Stewart, 2014, p. 33). Activists, those that have a vocation for politics, must enter into the fray, even whilst not capitulating to the frame (Weber, 1991b [1919]).

The stability of compartmentalizing is uncertain. Enlightenment rationalism’s claim that values should be founded on universal principles has provided a foundation for subsequent arguments in defense of non-human animals. Bentham’s utilitarian rationalism led to both his instrumental rational Panopticon, and to his argument that animals’ ability to feel pleasure and pain meant they were morally equal to human beings. Peter Singer’s (1975) *Animal Liberation* builds specifically on Bentham’s utilitarian calculus of the maximum happiness for the maximum number. In contrast, Tom Regan’s (1983) *The Case for Animal Rights* argues for animal rights based on a Kantian categorical imperative that lives have inherent value, including those of non-human animals. Furthermore, it was arguably the romantic reaction to modernity that assigned affective qualities to nature, and therefore to animals. Tradition, too, is a modern invention and is always therefore being reinvented. Utilitarian, rights based, romantic and traditional conservationist frameworks of value rationality offer multiple foundations for action, but do not naturally cohere. It is only through activism that such threads can be woven together. Diverse foundations are both opportunity and challenge.

Modernity created the instrumental rational conditions for today’s industrial farming and mechanized animal slaughter, but it also created the value rational, affective and nostalgic frames of meaningful social action that

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might oppose such practices. We should not dismiss such challenges to instrumental rationality that exist within modern culture, as to do so would only replicate those attempts to marginalize them by the animal-industrial complex (Noske, 1989; Twine, 2012).

Joy (2010, p. 105) is right to say Western cultures largely normalize the consumption of meat. However, Western cultural norms are also contradictory. “It appears that when it comes to animals, our contradictory attitudes and practices are the norm” (Mizelle, 2015, p. 286). These contradictions in our norms regarding animals are mirrored by contradictions in our attitudes to other people as well. Sometimes action is taken on the premise that we choose and should do. On other occasions, we are told that it is merely “the way things are” and nothing can be done differently. “Naturalness” and “inevitability” conceal choices made in line with hegemonic ideologies such as what Cammaerts (2015) calls neoliberalism, and what Joy (2010) identifies as carnism.

Giving human names to animals turns them into symbolic humans. Classifying animals with names denoting function—“farm animals,” “livestock,” “milk-cows,” “porkers”—renders them down to their utility rather than as ends in themselves. Where the former anthropomorphizes animals, the latter naturalizes their reduction to human purposes. The paradoxical interplay of anthropomorphism and naturalization applies to both how humans regard animals and how humans regard other humans.

Animals routinely escape (Hribal, 2010; Colling, 2020). Allen and Von Essen (2018) discuss the significance of animal resistance, arguing that when animals escape from slaughterhouses, it is appropriate to describe this in social justice terms, as they become primary agents of resistance to their own exploitation.

Naturalization seeks to render a particular state of affairs as natural, necessary and unavoidable, whether that be in relation to humans or in the treatment of animals. The extension of value rational or affective meaning to animals is rejected by some as anthropomorphism. Arguments against relocating Dyson Appliances’ factory were scarcely countenanced; redundancies were framed as a natural inevitability.

## **Conclusions**

The name Chippenham is the fusion of market (ceap/chipp) and protected enclave (-ham). This article has explored the contradictions of this

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relationship. Dyson Appliances moved from Chippenham to Malmesbury, whilst the Tamworth two moved from Malmesbury to Chippenham. Who gets sent to market and who gets protected is open to dispute? At the time the events of this article were unfolding, Chippenham was in dispute with Parma Ham over market freedom versus the right to be protected from the market. The same dispute played out with Butch and Sundance, as was later the case with the Dyson Appliances' workers who had helped "save" them. In applying a CAMS analysis to the Tamworth two and Dyson Appliances, we have highlighted the close connection between capitalism, animal exploitation, and the way these connections play out in mainstream media-reporting via narratives of nature and inevitability. It is never enough to reproduce the "escape from slaughter" trope in animal liberation messaging, whereby specific individualized animals are presented as exceptional, and only thus worthy of identification and salvation because *we* have given them names, and because *we* have seen their faces. This may implicitly condemn nameless and countless others to an effaced fate.

Nevertheless, when animals resist, their action disrupts a routine that *we* can and must follow up on. We should work to build empathy and identification with the animals who do not manage to escape, as well as the ones that do. All are worthy of our concern. Invisibility and false reasoning underpin ideologies of naturalization and inevitability in relation to both speciesism and global capitalism. As such, activists should also continue to demonstrate the connections between the exploitation inherent in capitalism and animal exploitation as a means of building resistance to both. As Covid-19 has highlighted the catastrophic consequences of intensive animal exploitation, activists must highlight that this is a global capitalist phenomenon, not just a one-off "aberration" (Joy, 2010, p. 104). We hope that in telling the story of the Tamworth two and their escape onto a global capitalist billionaire's land we have helped further reveal the connections between the logics of speciesism and global capitalism, and underlined the need to join-the-dots in the way we campaign for animals, be they human or non-human. Two pigs gained sanctuary from the market because they removed themselves from objectification, and were removed from object status in the media, whilst slaughter continued, invisible. Workers' jobs were sacrificed to global capitalism's fictional "state of nature," the market. Claiming nothing could be done—"it's a jungle out there"—is a lie.

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# Sacred Space (An Environmental Poem)

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After J. Donald Hughes and Jim Swan,  
“How Much of the Earth is Sacred Space?”



A wise man was asked:  
“How much of the Earth is sacred space?  
Where can we find the Great Spirit?”  
Standing upright in a ceremonial robe  
holding a spear in one hand, he said:  
“You can see the Great Spirit everywhere.  
All of the Earth is sacred space!”

In the beginning there was the Grand Vastness.  
The Heavens and the Earth  
plants, animals, humans

---

are born from It, through It, within It  
complete, flawless, nameless  
like the Grand Vastness --  
all of the world is sacred space

Those who have wisdom know  
“No name that can be named is the true name.”  
But we are humans, we name names

With names the ten thousand things are born  
and some *seem* good, some bad  
so, we try to separate good from evil

So, we carve places from the rest of the Earth  
surround them by walls and fences  
decorate with high ceilings  
pictures of seekers striving to find sacred space  
images of the Divine hovering above  
stained glass windows sifting bright light  
as if from another world  
tall towers pointing to the sky

We call them “temples,” what an irony  
for the word “temple” means  
“a part that is cut off”

Black Elk, a Lakota holy man, says  
“Every step we take upon You  
should be done in a sacred manner.  
Every step should be like a prayer”

But once we establish our temples  
once we establish our cut off places  
they become our places of worship  
the only places where we believe  
the Divine would reveal itself

---

Some think it wrong to love the world outside.  
Some preach it is in the Satan's dominion.  
Some pray to be released from "the demon of the earth".

And some proceed to plunder the world  
spreading further and further the empire of iron and cement  
murdering plants, animals, even humans  
especially those who worship  
outside of our temples  
outside of our cut off places

And thus we have arrived at today:  
Our Mother, raped and wounded, bleeds in front of us  
while we, like vermin, gnaw upon her intestines.  
Can this cure our hunger, fear, and pain?  
How can we return to the source?

At the beginning there is the Grand Vastness.  
The ten thousand things are born from It, through It, within It  
complete, flawless, nameless  
like the Grand Vastness.  
All of the world is Sacred Space



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This poem was inspired by the references listed below:

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# Activism, Ag-gag, Accountability

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I write because I love animals, it's as simple as that  
People usually say the same with one big caveat  
When it comes to dinner there seems to be a disconnect  
Between the loyal pets they would never neglect  
And the farm animals that never get a second thought  
They rarely get a first until people are taught  
What really happens behind farm walls and fences  
The animals need us to come to our senses  
Humans must realize that having animals suffer since birth  
Until the moment of death simply isn't worth  
A quick meal to enjoy for just a moment  
I did it for years but I changed, now I've chosen  
To research and study law meticulously  
Which I found the ag industry manipulates ridiculously  
Between their legal loopholes and exemption clause  
They've built an impressive wall of fake animal laws

We only get the truth from animal rights activists  
We really must praise them more for all their activeness  
And bravery in going undercover for a video shoot  
To record the thing that disgusts them in pursuit  
Of exposing the cowards and helping the creatures  
If the meat-eaters watch their exposé features  
The agriculture industry builds public perceptions  
That animals are saved by robust legal protections  
Then quietly the cry their buddy legislators  
That activists are a threat, and that as law creators

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A new law needs to give farmers impunity  
While looking like it's promoting bio-security  
And family and worker safety because they're so scared  
And so one-by-one the states and provinces declared  
That truth-telling exposés are disrupting Big Ag  
And even witness-bearers must be included in the gag  
'Animal rights activists must be stopped' they decree  
With no consideration for the guarantee  
Of the constitutional right to freedom of expression  
The point of ag-gag is activist voice suppression

Of course animals aren't the only victims of the industry  
They cut so many corners in the name of efficiency  
And knowing the risks, they do so deliberately  
There's not enough time to address them all sufficiently  
But since we are here in these 'crazy times'  
I want to highlight that Ag ignored the signs  
And science of animal-to-human illness  
The only conclusion to draw from farmed filth is  
That the exploitation of animals eventually leads  
To dangerous life-threatening zoonotic disease  
HIV, SARS, Ebola, avian and swine flu  
Mad Cow, MERS, and Zika were a preview  
Showing us that animals plus humans minus hygiene  
Leads us to the 'unprecedented times' of COVID-19

Dear Big Ag, you're a willing participant  
Stop your claims of innocence, outbreak was imminent,  
You take advantage of marginalized workers, like immigrants  
And they don't get any sick leave or any benefits  
They have to beg for PPE, risk unemployment  
While you live in luxury and take enjoyment  
Complaining that slowing production hurts the country  
To obtain government payouts, more concerned with money  
And making your profits and essential business  
When transitioning to plant-based crops could be the difference  
In preventing the next widespread deadly virus

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But it seems you're too stubborn and blinded by bias  
To see that right in front of you is the compassionate choice  
And I have lots of fight left in my passionate voice  
To implore that you change your ways, embrace the future  
Put new products in the marketplace for your consumers  
The number of vegans in the world is only rising  
I wonder if you tried it may be surprising  
How much profit there is in vegetarian food  
I promise if you stick with this contrarian mood  
And refuse to acknowledge that the continued systemic  
Abuse of farmed animals will cause another pandemic  
Your lack of morals will doom humanity  
To continue this tragic recurring calamity

As we sit at home in this pandemic's confinement  
There's an opportunity to introduce moral alignment  
In the way we treat each other starting with what's on our plates  
To defeat the next pandemic we need to create  
A world with a little less oppression, like we've learned our lesson  
Deserving our attention, removing the deception  
Asking the tough questions and food-for-thought reflections  
To make the animal connection to this COVID depression

I didn't write this piece with any expectation  
Only to shed light on our current situation  
And invite you here today on this occasion  
That you might consider while we sit in isolation  
That every bite of dinner holds a bit of information  
An insight to the fallout of this meat fixation  
So I cite my work and justification  
Of the animal rights movements versus ag-gag legislation  
Feed my appetite with ethnographic education  
I explore our plight and learn from this explanation  
We can unite in our social justice orientation  
Towards a bright future that includes animal liberation

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## Author Biographies

**Ralph Acampora** is an Associate Professor of Philosophy at Hofstra University. He is the author of *Corporal Compassion: Animal Ethics and Philosophy of Body* and the editor of *Metamorphoses of the Zoo: Animal Encounter After Noah*.

**Matthew David** is an Associate Professor of sociology at Durham University in England. Since completing a Ph.D. exploring local environmental movements, Matthew's interests have remained focused on the politics of science and the wider relationship between humans and non-human animals. He is the author of *Science in Society* (2005), *Owning the World of Ideas* (with Debbie Halbert, 2015), and *Sharing: Crime Against Capitalism* (2017). He is currently completing *Living in a Vacuum* (2021), a critique of Thomas Hobbes' myth of 'the state of nature.'

**Chandler D. Rogers** is a doctoral candidate in philosophy at Boston College. His work has been published in journals such as *Environmental Philosophy*, *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*, and *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*.

**Nathan Stephens-Griffin** is a senior lecturer in criminology at Northumbria University in England. His work is situated within the fields of green criminology and critical animal studies, and he is particularly interested in researching state repression and criminalization of ecological and animal liberation struggle. He is also interested in cultural, biographical, visual and graphic narrative approaches to social research. He is the author of *Understanding Veganism: Biography and Identity* (2017).

**Stefan Sencerz** born in Warsaw, Poland, came to the United States to study philosophy and Zen Buddhism. He teaches philosophy, Western and Eastern, at the Texas A&M University, Corpus Christi. He has numerous publications in professional philosophy journals as well as several refereed poems and short stories that appeared in various nationally distributed literary journals. He has been active on a spoken word scene in Texas and nationally.

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**Samantha Skinner** is a Toronto-based lawyer and emerging scholar, currently completing their LLM degree at Osgoode Hall Law School. Research and writing in the areas of animal law, constitutional law, and policy development, Samantha's work has been published in the *Animal & Natural Resource Law Review* and the *Global Journal of Animal Law*, and has been featured at the *Canadian Animal Law Conference*. Here, they use lyric poem to express the frustrations of researching Canadian ag-gag laws during an ag industry-induced global pandemic.

**nico stubler** is an activist and a scholar. He completed his MA in Animal Studies from New York University. Before cofounding New York City's current Direct Action Everywhere chapter, he organized full-time with various animal liberation groups in Medellín, Colombia.

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## **JCAS Editorial Objectives**

The *Journal for Critical Animal Studies* is open to all scholars and activists. The journal was established to foster academic study of critical animal issues in contemporary society. While animal studies is increasingly becoming a field of importance in the academy, much work being done under this moniker takes a reformist or depoliticized approach that fails to mount a more serious critique of underlying issues of political economy and speciesist philosophy. JCAS is an interdisciplinary journal with an emphasis on animal liberation philosophy and policy issues. The journal was designed to build up the common activist's knowledge of animal liberation while at the same time appealing to academic specialists. We encourage and actively pursue a diversity of viewpoints of contributors from the frontlines of activism to academics. We have created the journal to facilitate communication between the many diverse perspectives of the animal liberation movement. Thus, we especially encourage submissions that seek to create new syntheses between differing disputing parties and to explore paradigms not currently examined.

## **Suggested Topics**

Papers are welcomed in any area of animal liberation philosophy from any discipline, and presenters are encouraged to share theses or dissertation chapters. Since a major goal of the Institute for Critical Animal Studies is to foster philosophical, critical, and analytical thinking about animal liberation, papers that contribute to this project will be given priority (especially papers that address critical theory, political philosophy, social movement analysis, tactical analysis, feminism, activism and academia, Continental philosophy, or post-colonial perspectives). We especially encourage contributions that engage animal liberation in disciplines and debates that have received little previous attention.

## **Review Process**

Each paper submitted is initially reviewed for general suitability for publication; suitable submissions will be read by at least two members of the journal's editorial board.

## **Manuscript Requirements**

The manuscript should be in MS Word format and follow APA guidelines. All submissions should be double-spaced and in 12 point Times New Roman. Good quality electronic copies of all figures and tables should also be provided. All manuscripts should conform to American English grammar spelling.

As a guide, we ask that regular essays and reviews be between 2000-8000 words and have no endnotes. In exceptional circumstances, JCAS will consider publishing extended essays. Authors should supply a brief abstract of the paper

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(of no more than 250 words). A brief autobiographical note should be supplied which includes full names, affiliation email address, and full contact details.

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