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Issue Introduction: Protection, Care, and Activism

Nathan Poirier

Carol Gilligan (1982) is frequently credited with developing feminist ethics of care as both a critique and counter to more traditional ethical stances such as utilitarianism or deontology. Gilligan's main objective was to highlight how traditional ethical theories (derived by deceased, white men), marginalized feminine virtues and values typically associated with women. Another criticism of traditional ethical theories is that they exist in abstraction, using universalized "rules" or "codes" to determine who deserves ethical consideration. Gilligan's ethics focuses much more on interrelationships and the role emotion plays in caring for others rather than following abstract rules. The interdependent nature of Gilligan's feminist care ethics allowed ecofeminists to extend moral consideration to nonhuman animals (Donovan & Adams, 2007). This extension fits within Gilligan's overarching care ethic because concern for nonhuman animals and nature is typically feminized as mere "sentimentality." However, caring for nonhumans is a way of responding to our ecological crises and a general pattern of harm caused by humans, which is gendered and racialized.

This brings us to the first essay in this issue, by Janet O'Shea, titled "Sentimentality or Prowess: Animal Advocacy and (Human) Physical Labor." Basing her essay on an (eco)feminist ethics of care, O'Shea describes some of the physical work involved in taking care of animals at sanctuaries. Much of this effort happens behind the scenes, is considered less glamorous, and is therefore less high profile than tactics such as open rescues. Care work at sanctuaries is also gendered with women making up most of the staff. O'Shea challenges perceived normalcy and embeddedness of all of these conceptions. In doing so, she labels sanctuary work "reflexive activism," denoting the dual strategies of raising awareness of injustice while simultaneously enacting alternatives. O'Shea describes care work as emotional but physical, a different type of physical care work that gets gendered female instead of the more "masculine" work of heroically rescuing animals.

To be effective, activism needs multidimensional tactics, facets, and activists. It also needs to be conscious to not reproduce the same hierarchies it critiques and seeks to abolish. When animals are rescued, they need a place to live freely (or as freely as possible). Although not necessarily mutually exclusive, rescue work and sanctuary work complement each other and help each other create a fuller picture of radical animal activism. O’Shea is keenly aware of this and digs into the radical feminist foundation of CAS to challenge common (mis)conceptions of nonhuman animal-focused activism. Does “care” consist of illegally breaking into animal confinement facilities, risking arrest, to expose the cruelty involved in animal oppression? Is “care” about cleaning animal feces from animal enclosures on sanctuaries and “declumping” chickens? Yes.

Next is Nathan Poirier’s essay, “Alternative Animal Products: Protection Rhetoric or Protection Racket?” Poirier’s analysis traces some preemptive concerns about cell- and plant-based meat products, including (potential) links to racism through popularizing the phrase “clean meat” to describe meat products created through culturing animal cells instead of farming. Although speculative at this point, Poirier’s likening of IVM to racism parallels that of Kim’s (2015, pp. 152-156) comparison of racialized rhetoric concerning “invasive” species and that of racial minorities within the United States. Since food is certainly racialized, especially the consumption of animal products, this is indeed an issue to take seriously and is an attempt to interject race into the discourse of IVM as so far those promoting such products have been rhetorically colorblind, completely ignoring the issue of race and meat/food consumption.

Poirier also critiques the apparent alliance between GFI and mainstream animal protection organizations with numerous animal agriculture corporations and other capitalist institutions. This critique is much like how Marceau (2019) questions the alignment of mainstream animal protection with the prison industrial complex, emphasizing incarceration as a punishment for breaking animal cruelty laws. Finally, Poirier’s study reveals the co-optation of animal and environmental protection rhetoric by industries premised on animal and environmental exploitation and oppression: animal agriculture, animal testing facilities, and bio- and chemical products manufacturers. This finding follows La Veck’s (2006) theory exactly, which says that vested interests can and do pervert and spin “care” rhetoric to align with their interests. This is why Poirier argues that the approach taken by

mainstream animal protection in general and GFI in particular regarding alternative animal products turns protection rhetoric into a protection racket.

Similar to yet different from O'Shea, Poirier also questions what "care" and "protection" are, entails, or should be. Are those who are promoting alternative animal products centering care for nonhumans in their rhetoric? Or is care sidelined for the sake of creating niche businesses that aim to capture significant portions of the traditional animal product markets and gain cultural cache within the social movement of mainstream animal protection?

The issue closes with Ermanno Castanò's review of *Animality in Contemporary Italian Philosophy*. As an edited book, Castanò highlights its different perspectives. Some authors, such as its editors, write about "human animality" or the human/animal relationship, while others write about animals and critical animal studies. Included among the latter are various antispeciesists (marxist, deconstructive, and radical), including an overview of antispeciesist movements in Italy. Thus, the book and Castanò's book applies to CAS through at least some covering of multiple sites of oppression. The book seems to explore the construction of human superiority and a vegan orientation to human-nonhuman relationships. Castanò's review further provides the context of the role of Italian thought on aspects of mainstream and radical approaches to animal studies.

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Sentimentality or Prowess? Animal Advocacy and (Human) Physical Labor

Janet O'Shea¹

¹ *University of California, Los Angeles, CA, United States.*

Abstract

This essay analyzes farmed animal sanctuaries as a form of reflexive activism, through which activists contest oppressive conditions while simultaneously living out their alternatives. I suggest that farmed animal sanctuaries demonstrate that it is possible to live alongside animals without exploiting them, unlocking the relational ethic of compassion via the intentional mobilization of sentiment that feminist care scholars have called for. At the same time, farmed animal sanctuary work necessitates a raw, physical engagement with the materiality of animal bodies, an engagement that is rooted in human manual labor. This physical labor suggests the need to add a corporeal analysis, focused on muscular effort, to an ethics of care. I use the example of animal sanctuaries to invite a conversation between critical dance studies, feminist care theorizations of animal ethics, and a consideration of labor to consider how an investigation of physicality and care might further both scholarly effort and activist intervention on behalf of non-humans.

Keywords: care ethic, labor, corporeality, animal sanctuaries, activism

It is a September Friday in the southeastern United States, the beginning of what would, elsewhere, be autumn. But it's hot and humid here and my drive has taken me through dense woods and exurbs whose lawns are more a battle against explosive verdant life than the more familiar fall diminishment of it. When I reach the sanctuary, I double check to make sure the little ranch house is the office of the organization where I've come to volunteer and not simply another small-town home, then pull into a de facto parking space by the road.

The place is quiet, a feature of both its limited scale and my arrival at off-hours. The director takes me on a tour and I'm surprised to witness how much land stretches back from this little house, as paths wind through thickets and animal enclosures reach into the copse that precedes the adjacent forest. Grazing goats stop to watch us as we pass, then resume their eating, playing, and exploration. We move on to the fowl enclosures, where ducks paddle in purpose-built ponds and chickens meander through dense vegetation meant to replicate the low brush of the jungles in which the ancestors of domestic chickens evolved (Jones, 2011, p. 46). This is a little utopia, a haven from the ills meted out to humans and animals on a constant basis, a place where humans and non-humans can simply be together, experiencing our differences, and appreciating one another for them.

I get to work. Since I have volunteered at animal sanctuaries before, the director trusts me to work on my own. I clean buckets and then move on to mucking out the quarantine shed, where recent rescues – ducks and geese – who can't yet join the general sanctuary population recover while the sanctuary staff monitors them for illness. My job is to do the things sanctuaries need the most: keep the animal quarters clean. I rake the wet straw, dampened by waste and drinking and bathing water, gathering it into piles. I scoop it up with my gloved hands and move it to the wheelbarrow. When the cart is full, I roll it through the groves and past the other animals' enclosures to a huge compost pile at the edge of the woods.

The size and shape of the quarantine shed make my job challenging: its ceilings are low and each animal enclosure is just a few feet in area so I can't stand up straight and I can't stretch out with the rake. It's a movement puzzle that intrigues me, learning how to rake where I can't turn around, moving slowly and steadily and telegraphing my actions, so I cue the geese and ducks to move to the other side of the enclosure if they want to avoid me. Still, by the time the shed is cleaned and I'm ready to close it down for the

night, my back is stiff, my muscles ache, and I am covered in dirty water and the traces of animal waste, thinking longingly of the shower that awaits me.

Farmed animal sanctuaries hinge on this work, the mucking of stalls and the laying of clean bedding. Sore muscles, filthy clothes, and blistered hands are fundamental to this kind of animal care. I've experienced it before and I will again, many times. The sanctuary directors do this every day, seven days a week, with no break for holidays. Sanctuaries typically rely on small staffs and volunteers because running any non-profit requires more work than money. But farmed animal sanctuaries are different from other non-profits because of the physical nature of much of its labor. To keep animals who are domesticated but not typically nurtured clean, safe, and healthy requires an outlay of human kinetic effort. In this messy, muscular, and visceral (jones, 2011, p. 47) regard, farmed animal sanctuary work reveals deep and contradictory connections between emotional attachments, social and political advocacy, and the raw physicality of care work.

In this essay, I suggest that farmed animal sanctuaries' ability to unlock a relational ethic of compassion and the human physical labor required to do so require revisiting the feminist care and its significance to animal advocacy. Sanctuaries – and their efforts to provide care within economic and physical constraints – indicate the promises of such a care model while also signaling its limitations. Specifically, the physical labor demanded by animal care suggests the need to add a corporeal analysis, focused on muscular effort (jones 2011, 2014), to an ethics of care. It also necessitates attention to labor, including historically invisibilized labor, in the vein of feminist socialist interventions (Federici, 1975; Davis, 1981). I use the example of animal sanctuaries to invite a conversation between critical dance studies, feminist care theorizations of animal ethics, and a broadly Marxian consideration of labor to consider how an investigation of physicality and care might further discussions of animal ethics.

Like feminist care ethic and ecofeminist scholars (Adams, 1990, 1994, 2007; Donovan, 2006, 2007a,b; jones, 2011, 2013, 2014; Gruen, 2015b), I attend to emotion as it plays a role in cultivating human concern for – and willingness to act on behalf of – non-humans. Building upon the work of these scholars, my goal is to introduce a sustained consideration of physicality and muscular effort to a reflection on caring efforts. Such an overlap between sentiment and physical effort already exists within the concept of care as care has at least two different meanings: 1. Care as the

concern that sparks attention to individuals in need and 2. Caring action, or the work that sustains the well-being of others. Theorizations of care, within animal ethics, have attended largely to the first definition, investigating how emotion undergirds rather than contradicts critical thought, and considering how affect can drive political critique. Acts of care, while generally feminized, challenge a conventional, gendered split between sentiment and muscular prowess. My aim here is to reflect on the union of physical effort and emotional attachment in care actions within the animal context, using this as an opportunity to reflect on the valuing of care, labor, and bodily action. Likewise, my goal is to consider how rendering physical experience visible may assist in shifting human-animal relations away from exploitation and toward interdependence.

In putting care and labor in conversation with muscular effort, I deploy the concept of corporeality as it has been theorized in critical dance studies and studies of martial arts and self-defense (Foster, 1995, 2010, 2019; McCaughey, 1997; Wacquant, 2004). Corporeality, as defined here, treats physical actions as a conduit between subjective experience and broader social conditions. Theorists concerned with corporeality intentionally delink kinetic practices from a generalized physicality and individual experience, attending instead to the role that social, cultural, political, and economic forces play in constructing bodies and their differences (Rothfield, 2020). I suggest, therefore, that corporeality augments the political analysis that feminist care theorists have called for, allowing us to perceive physical labor, its demographics, and its compensations, as revealing of and contributing to societal structures, including those that permit the exploitation of animals.

Farmed Animal Sanctuaries as Loci of Physicalized Care

Farmed animal sanctuaries reveal the intensity and extensity of the human labor involved in the care of domesticated and commoditized animals. Sanctuary work consists of the same manual labor that goes into a for-profit farm – mucking and rebedding stalls, replacing food and water, preparing food, and arranging veterinary visits – but with primary attention afforded to the animals’ subjective experience rather than to the economic bottom line. Given this effort to treat animals with respect and offer them a life of dignity, the manual labor of a farm sanctuary exceeds that of a for-profit farm, at least on a per-capita basis. The physicality of animal care reveals the immediacy of animal experience and the intrusions upon it in a current system of animal

exploitation: the provision of food and water contrasts with the deprivation experienced by animals en route to slaughter; the need to shovel straw made heavy by waste evokes the abjection of animals in CAFOs, Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations, or factory farms, standing for days in their own feces and urine. The trust with which farmed animals rely on humans for care and affection illuminates, especially when coupled with the history the animals bring with them to the sanctuary, the violations of that trust through their mistreatment and eventual slaughter.

Within the capitalist structure beyond the sanctuary space, the necessity for care produced by domestication becomes, through a circular logic, the driving force for the exploitation of animals. Domesticated animals depend upon humans to meet their basic needs, their existence comes at an economic cost. This need for care seems to justify the subjugation that arises from their domestication. The intensity of animal care, and its expense, explain the exploitation of farmed animals within capitalism even as their dependence arises from human domestication and breeding. The animal exploiter gestures to the material obligations of animal-related labor to argue that species equality is unrealistic and that animal rights activists are naïve idealists (Pollan, 2006). Animal exploitation seems inescapable: a labyrinth built around cost and profit, it seems to have no exit.

This matrix of dependence and exploitation builds itself around a paradox. A capitalist system reduces animals to commodities by typically providing a minimum of care and treating that care as a deficit against eventual profit. Although farmed animals labor for human benefit, they have no active place in a capitalist framework as they are neither recognized workers nor consumers but are, rather, commodities even in their living state. Within animal agriculture, the care that their dependence necessitates is usually diminished in relation to need because of the profit motive. And, yet, the basic needs that push against profit reveal the vulnerability of non-humans to pain, illness, infection, hunger, and thirst. This vulnerability, shared with other living beings, signals the status of animals as non-objects. Human labor in farmed animal sanctuaries reveals the contradictory status of animals as beings, property, and commodities. At this same time, this labor is aimed at rectifying this situation of exploitation.

Farmed animal sanctuaries respond to this normalization of exploitation by making alternatives conceivable. They imagine possibilities through the human-animal relationships they create, based on care, mutual

affection, and respect (Abrell, 2016; Adams & Gruen, 2014, p. 18), rather than on exploitation on one side and fear on the other. In doing so, they have the potential to create a new lived reality. Although that reality is small scale and although it runs the risk of replicating the structures of captivity it opposes (Donaldson & Kymlicka, 2015), it nonetheless can operate as a form of world making (Kondo, 2018), not simply for the animals under its care but also for the humans who work, visit, and volunteer there. As such, farmed animal sanctuaries operate as a form of intervention that, following Susan Foster (2003), I label “reflexive activism.” In line with Foster’s theorization of protest as choreographed action, I understand reflexive activism as efforts that simultaneously call attention to inequity while also enacting an alternative. “Reflexive” in this case, does not refer to introspection or inquiry into one’s own personal experience. Rather, reflexive activism refers to justice actions that act simultaneously as protest, as acts of imagination, and as models of new modes of living. Reflexive action refers to the deconstruction of hegemony toward its alternative. Reflexive action on behalf of animals demonstrates that it is possible to live alongside farmed animals without exploiting them.

The umbrella concept of animal sanctuaries spans a wide range of organizations, including wildlife sanctuaries, companion animal sanctuaries, exotic animal sanctuaries, and farmed animal sanctuaries. While all sanctuaries, at least in principle, exist primarily for the care and protection of the animals under their stewardship and while all sanctuaries provide safe and comfortable accommodation and species-appropriate enrichment, the politics of sanctuaries vary. Farmed animal sanctuaries represent an important intervention as, unlike companion animal and wildlife sanctuaries, they care for animals who are generally treated as expendable. Most farmed animal sanctuaries thus aim to improve the lives of the animals under their custody while they also strive to shift the larger world away from the exploitation of animals that makes their emergency care necessary. Such sanctuaries foster interspecies sociality, potential reciprocity, and overall relations of care (Adams & Gruen, 2014, p. 18; Abrell, 2016, p. 59; Scotton, 2017). At their best, then, farmed animal sanctuaries operate within the political care model that feminist animal scholars have called for (Adams, 1990, 1994; Donovan & Adams, 1996; Donovan, 2006). Many sanctuaries operate as outreach organizations, seeking to educate the public about the devastating effects of animal agriculture on non-humans, humans, and the

environment. Such outreach initiatives are based on the premise that humans who view animals as individuals – someone not something – will come to appreciate the subjectivity and experiential reality of farmed animals collectively and will, accordingly, act against their subjugation.

Farmed animal sanctuaries typically operate as the most gentle and non-confrontational of animal rights intervention: they offer visitors a chance to interpret farmed animals as living beings with feelings, responses, interests, and relationships instead of as commodities. Animal sanctuary work hinges on positive associations with non-human animals rather than negative emotions generated by exposure to their exploitation. They typically avoid the violent imagery that produces the moral shock that can prompt behavior and risks backlash, compassion fatigue and the spectacularization of suffering (Fernández, 2020). In a society where most people only interact with farmed animals via their remains, that is, as food on their plate (Adams & Gruen, 2014, p. 18), and where most consumers imagine these animals once lived in the idyllic red farm house of children’s storybooks (Donaldson & Kymlicka, 2015, p. 54), sanctuaries provide a chance to learn about the atrocities most farmed animals experience while, simultaneously witnessing them experience joy, pleasure, curiosity, and undisturbed rest.

At their best, then, sanctuaries retrain emotion and imagination. Sanctuaries invite visitors to tap into their compassion, activating the same emotional attachment toward farmed animals that they (presumably) feel toward companion animals. Sanctuaries have the potential to develop what Josephine Donovan, following Iris Murdoch, labels an “epistemology of attentive love” (2007, p. 192). They likewise encourage visitors to cultivate the admiration, wonder (Kheel, 2006), or awe (Donovan, 2007a; Bryant, 2013) they feel toward nature and free-living (“wild”) animals. Animal sanctuaries both rely upon and intentionally cultivate emotional attachment to animals, potentially encouraging visitors, volunteers, and workers to undo years of socialization that teaches them to disregard the pain, suffering, and death of some animals (farmed animals) while developing strong emotional bonds to others (companion animals). Such efforts militate against the “techniques for forestalling sympathy” that undergird animal exploitation (Luke, 2007, p. 137).

While animal exploiters deride compassion toward non-humans as childish, naïve, squeamish, and sentimental, farmed animal sanctuaries intentionally mobilize emotional attachment. Animal sanctuaries evoke

responses that have the potential to supersede rationality as the basis for behavior change (Jasper in Fernández, 2020, p. 59). Such advocacy efforts intentionally cultivate what Carol J. Adams, following Allison Jaggar, calls “outlaw emotions,” sentiments that operate as a source of (political) knowledge (1994, pp. 187-188). By urging their visitors to make the connection between their own food choices and the suffering of animals, sanctuaries undermine the societal investment in animal suffering as necessary and normal (Joy, 2009) and work against its invisibilization.

Farmed animal sanctuaries operate as a phenomenological encounter with difference, one that, potentially, locates ethics in the act of coming together. This has the potential to enable a Levinasian turning toward, in which the self is “overwhelmed and cannot totalize... the other” (Topolski, 2015, p. 34). This interaction can, potentially, constitute a face-to-face encounter with a deeply othered being (Derrida & Willis, 2002; Chaudhuri, 2007; Berger, 2009; Mason, 2009). By creating moments where the self recognizes its own limits, sanctuaries have the potential to shift hierarchies of harm in which animals are subjected to horrors that most humans and their companion animals avoid.

Intentionality and Sentiment: The Feminist Care Ethic in Animal Activism

Animal advocacy differs from other forms of activism in several ways. While activists in other social justice movements work to make institutionalized violence visible, species equality activists are in a unique position of revealing normalized subjugation while also struggling to convince the public that the targets of this oppression – farmed animals – are victims at all. Most consumers in advanced capitalist economies directly support systemic violence against animals through their purchasing habits, which allows them to avoid witnessing the resultant harm; simultaneously, most of those same consumers claim to love animals even as they participate in their subjugation. At the crux of these differences is the question of emotion.

While animal rights theorists have historically focused on rationality and logic (Singer, 1975; Regan, 1983) as the basis of their efforts on behalf of animals, animal advocates tend to deploy emotion. In this regard, animal activists are not alone. Most solidarity efforts activate emotion in some way. Humanitarian interventions, for example, provide personal narratives of

suffering, extracting individuals from the “massification” (Adams, 2007) that allows systemic violence. However, animal rights activism contends with emotion directly because most humans in the capitalist Global North have strong attachments to animals and cannot conceive of animals as true subjects. Moreover, having strong positive feelings for animals exists in conjunction with a desire to consume them and their products (Chaudhuri, 2007, p. 10). This contradiction is at the heart of the cognitive dissonance to which most animal rights efforts point as crucial to the continuation of animal exploitation.

Although this dissonance is referred to as cognitive, it is profoundly emotional. For a system that rests upon animal exploitation to continue functioning, it needs to deny the emotional conflicts produced by this discord (Luke, 2007, pp. 136 – 137). Typically, this takes the form of dismissing animal rights advocacy in emotional terms, representing such efforts as feminine, immature, or conversely as volatile and impulsive. Dismissing emotional attachment to animals as womanish (and childish) is also at the root of the debates between rights and care theorists. As scholars working with feminist care theory have pointed out, the efforts of animal rights philosophers to distance themselves from sentiment, with their suggestion that emotion is unreliable, inconsistent, and non-transferable, reveals a mistrust of emotion that is rooted in the same Cartesian binaries they strive to overcome (Kheel, 1993, p. 248; Donovan, 2007a, p. 69). It is rooted in the same Kantian paradigm that, historically, excluded women, people of color, the disabled, and the working classes from political participation (Donovan, 2007b, p. 187; Jones, 2014). In addition, the assumption that emotion cannot undergird morality or political organization is misguided in that mobilization against political wrongs is often based in an emotional identification with or concern for the oppressed (Donovan, 2007b; Gruen, 2015b). Likewise, rationality is not watertight: rationality, like emotion, can produce misguided judgment (Kelch, 2007, p. 279).

Accordingly, scholars whose commitments span feminism, anti-racism, environmentalism, and animal rights have mobilized the feminist care ethic, put forward by Carol Gilligan (1982), Nel Noddings (1984), and Joan Tronto (2005) as a way of foregrounding contextual contingencies and interdependencies rather than universal moral absolutes as the basis of ethics. Such inquiries foreground the situational nature of morality, its rooting in communities rather than autonomous individuals, and its

incorporation of responsibilities rather than rights. Scholars and activists have noted that the apparently atomized individual depends on the labor of others to feed, clothe, house, and otherwise attend to him (Adams, 2007, p. 200; Ahmed, 2006, p. 30). Eco-feminists and feminist scholars invested in multifaceted analyses of power structures have used the feminist care ethic to respond to theorizations of animal ethics based in absolute notions of rights, arguing that rights-based analyses fail to truly accommodate the respect for difference (Gruen, 2015b) that liberatory politics require. The feminist care ethic and eco-feminism shift attention from the individual to the inter-relational, suggesting that obligations of care exist across individuals and species and extend to the natural environment. Repurposing the care ethic to not simply extend moral consideration to animals but to analyze and counter the many ways in which their exploitation undergirds and justifies the oppression of humans holds the potential to shift conversations in animal ethics away from a “one or the other” question, of valuing humans versus valuing animals (Colb, 2015; Gruen, 2015a).

As care theorists have pointed out, emotion operates as a beacon in the development of animal ethics and a commitment to animal liberation: it signals that something is deeply flawed in our society’s treatment of animals. Many of us became animal advocates when we “made the connection” between the meat on a plate or the animal in captivity and the love we have felt for a specific animal. Animal rights activists point to the dismay that most people experience as children when they realize for the first time that meat comes from animals who suffered and died and who bears an undeniable similarity to beloved pets or admired “wild” animals. Emotional distress, not an abstract concern with justice and consistency, signals a moral obligation to animals, producing responses that lead to a refusal of the current social reality and the effort to strive for alternatives.

Farmed animal sanctuaries cultivate potentially “outlaw” emotions but they do not, in themselves, provide a solution to animal exploitation (Foer, 2009). Given that animal exploitation emerges from economic factors of supply and demand, effective change needs to address both the consumption and production of animal flesh and secretions as well as the system that subsidizes their production. Sanctuaries primarily strive to alter consumption, by encouraging visitors to change their buying habits, while also advocating for legislative or other interventions to improve the lives of animals currently in captivity. In addition, they adopt strategies that attempt

to remap human-animal relationships and redress a few of the wrongs done to non-humans. Such efforts to provide care, nurture, and curate relative freedom for those in state of dependence replace a relationship of dominance with relationships of care (Adams & Gruen, 2014, p. 18; Abrell, 2016; Scotton, 2017).

Further Reflections on Raking Muck: Sanctuary, Muscularity, and Chicken Care

A few years ago, I attended an animal rights conference where a speaker reflected on the gendering of animal activism. Specifically, she spoke about the recent spike in open rescue, a form of activism in which animal advocates enter a CAFO or slaughterhouse and walk out with animals in hand, undertaking these actions in full public view. As its name implies, open rescue contrasts with clandestine rescue, where activists remove animals from abusive conditions through undercover actions, by breaking into facilities at night or disguising their identities. Open rescue also contrasts with planned rescue, wherein activists coordinate with farmers to remove and provide shelter animals who are no longer wanted and who would otherwise be destroyed. In an age of digital documentation, open rescue has become a highly recognizable form of animal rights activism. While open rescue began as an effort to highlight the atrocities experienced by farmed animals (Davis, 2004), its recent incarnations celebrate a heroic, individual rescuer. The speaker noted a rise in the popularity of this relatively new form of visible, social-mediatized open rescue with the following critique: we tend to celebrate high-profile, spectacular interventions to the neglect of the ongoing, effortful labor that accrues to both political activism and animal care. She summed it up pithily: the modern animal rights movement celebrates what men are good at – walking into a slaughterhouse and rescuing an animal – and not what women are good at: declumping chickens.

I was surprised to hear a noted activist replicate the gendered assumptions she aimed to critique. The assumption that women excel at small motor, detailed movement at the expense of acts of prowess has been challenged by sports studies scholars (Brownell, 1995; Channon & Matthews, 2015; Channon & Phipps, 2017), self-defense researchers and practitioners (McCaughey, 1997; Hollander, 2001) as well as by women athletes. When I heard this analysis of the gendered nature of animal care, I

had never declumped chickens. Indeed, I had trouble picturing what declumping chickens was and what actions it might consist of. I have, however, done so since. I learned that it is part of a rubric of care that involves gross motor movement and short-burst strength, alongside measured, sustained effort. This experience showed me quite a bit about sanctuary work, the physical demands it engages, and how it both does and does not confirm dominant gender conventions. As a dance scholar, I take movement seriously. As such, I think it's worth breaking this action down into its component parts and attending to the lived experience of sanctuary work to see what it might tell us about physicality, sentiment, gender expectations, and activism.

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I arrive at a narrow valley tucked into dry hills just after dawn. Driving down a long dirt road alongside fields and thickets as the fog lifts and slowing for the wildfowl who cross my path, I arrive to find the other volunteers already at work. We're a small group, a mix of men and women; everyone, other than the director, is younger than me. They are all, apparently, white and they are relatively local to the Sacramento Valley of Northern California in which the sanctuary is located.

The coordinator hands me a rake and leads me to a barn. In it, there are more chickens than I've ever seen in one place. And a mess to match: chickens produce exorbitant amounts of waste in proportion to their size. Hay bales line the barn and piles of straw cover the floor, protect the chickens' feet, and give them a space to explore, forage, and sit comfortably. Wooden slats connect the bales, providing a perch for those chickens who have learned how to roost after a lifetime in factory farm cages. Overnight, the bales, the slats, and the straw have become covered in excrement.

We scrape waste off of bales and slats. We rake the floors, accumulating the heavy, wet straw and filling carts with it. When the floors are bare, we sweep and, when necessary, scrape still more waste. We shift the hay bales and clean up broken eggs. My shoulders burn from the repeated effort of raking and my hands, even in their gloves, develop hot spots and blisters. When the barn is clean, we move and break apart fresh bales, cutting the twine with box cutters and scattering the hay around the barn floor. Although lifting the bales is hard work – my biceps and deltoids remind me of this with each bundle I move – it's such a relief to scatter the hay, see the chickens run to explore it, and hear them clucking to one

another that it overrides my exhaustion. My relief at the chickens' joy is partially selfish: it means my job is nearly done.

The cleanup shift is over by midmorning. I wash up and leave with instructions to return by late afternoon for declumping. After a few hours spent, incongruously, in a café at a nearby suburban town, I return, driving the same dirt road, the approach as magical in the gloaming as it was at dawn. Ten of us have shown up. Everyone else is local and most of them volunteer at the sanctuary regularly. A few of the volunteers are older women, likely retired, but there's also a woman in her late thirties or early forties who has brought her teenage son, and two men in their twenties. The participants are a mix of white and Latinx. All of them have come from nearby towns. It seems I'm the only one who hasn't done this before.

The coordinator leads us to a barn, already gloomy in the dying light. Having spent their entire lives confined to a space no bigger than a piece of letter paper, the chickens crowd together at nightfall. They push against each other, in huddled formation in the corners of the shed. As these animals have spent their entire lives in cages, they have never met their instinctual desire to perch and therefore have to be taught how to roost in the higher spaces that birds would otherwise find safe and comforting. If left to their own devices, the birds huddle so tightly that they suffocate one another; those who arrive in the corners first are at the highest risk. We have limited time to separate them: it must be dark enough for them to be willing to roost but light enough that we can see what we're doing; the task feels like a race against the fading light.

Our job is to pick up the chickens and move them, one by one, to perches that have been set up for this purpose. Bending down, I take a chicken in hand; she fights at first but quickly settles, whether from comfort or terror, I can't tell. Something is disconcerting about handling a bird. Their physical structures are so delicate – their musculature light and their bones slender – it seems like it would be far too easy to wound one by accident. At the same time, their faces are so alien compared to mammalian ones that I, with my limited knowledge, have no way of determining if or when one of them might peck or scratch defensively.

I move the hen to one of the many wooden slats set up for this purpose, gently placing her feet on the wood. Flapping her wings, she jumps off and heads back to the corner. It goes on like this for a while, gradual successes replacing failures. Most of the birds take to their perches, some

on the first try, some only after they've been moved a few times. When full darkness falls, we leave, even though some chickens remain huddled in corners. My back is sore from bending to retrieve chickens or from the day's heavy lifting, or both, I'm not sure. My hands are raw and filthy. The memory of this morning's experience, of watching the chickens exploring their hay and roosting on hay bails offsets the sense of incompleteness, if not failure, that lingers as I leave the barn.

Declumping chickens is part of a broader framework of care that comprises sanctuary work. This structure includes work that is gentle, compassionate, and painstaking. It also includes sweaty, rugged, and dirty labor (Jones 2011, p. 45, 2014). Declumping can, of course, happen in the absence of the more intense manual labor that accompanies cleaning up after rescued animals. However, declumping does not typically stand in isolation; it is part of a spectrum of care actions that includes gross motor skills, short-burst action, and upper body strength as well as deliberate, fine motor actions and endurance efforts. In this (admittedly brief) experience, the muscularity of care efforts spanned gender. It is not readily apparent from gender, age, stature, or physique who is likely to thrive on the manual labor required by animal care and who struggles with it. The only distinction I noted in the physical care of animals lies with experience: not surprisingly, those who were familiar with animal care work accomplished its tasks more effectively and with less effort than newcomers.

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An analysis that hinges primarily on gender and the measured, often slow, sustained, and continual nature of care work carries some weight within the mainstream animal rights movement critiques. In its recent iterations, open rescue has morphed into a cult of personality that celebrates the individual human and his intervention, while the millions of nameless, faceless animals in captivity remain in the background. It celebrates the heroic, atomized individual, whose invention and consolidation emerged through the Enlightenment rationalism that subjugated animals as inferior. Moreover, the animal rights movement replicates larger, longstanding hierarchies: its leaders are typically cis-gender men, most of who are white and middle class (Adams & Gruen, 2014, p. 15; Kheel, 2006) while its rank and file consist of women, non-binary people, and people of color (McQuirter, 2010; Harper, 2010; Ko & Ko, 2017; Reiley, 2020). Open rescue replicates a celebration of the spectacular in political activism more generally,

overlooking the ordinary and often tedious labor that ushers in substantial political change, in favor of sudden and dramatic action by charismatic individuals (Kheel, 2006; Jones, 2013; Solnit, 2019).

However, conflating women with patience and men with heroism risks replicating an essentialist binarization of traits and behaviors in which men act boldly and women proceed with caution (O’Shea, 2019). It normalizes feminine comportment inscribed by a patriarchal society in which women excel at fine motor movement while gross motor action remains men’s territory (Young, 1980). Treating meticulous, sustained, repetitive actions as essentially feminine naturalizes women’s association with domestic labor, of which care work is an extension. The history of the association of men and women with contrasting, if not opposite, physical skills is also racialized and class-marked. The ascription of physical weakness, sentimentality, emotional care, and delicate, sustained movement to women emerged from the 19th century separation of spheres ideology, that associated men with the rough demands of the outside world and women with the tenderness of the domestic sphere. This binarization of physical, mental, and emotional skills was rooted in a fantasy of feminine domesticity that applied to a minority of women, even in the Victorian period from which it emerged. For the majority of women, at the time that this ethos was developed, life was characterized by intense physical labor. The raw materials of food and clothing in the United States and in much of the circum-Atlantic world, were produced via the physical labor of enslaved Black women and men and were turned into consumables via the waged labor of poor and working-class women in factories (Davis, 1981). The ascribed frailty of their elite counterparts could not have endured without the muscular effort of working-class and enslaved women.

In the contemporary Global North, the industrial work that operates as the most recognizable form of manual labor typically associates with men. Except when this effort is necessary to and subordinated to larger political mobilizations, as on the World War II home front, women’s manual labor, especially in the Global North, is invisibilized. Although cis-gender men’s labor is also occluded through its alienation, union movements militated against this invisibilization by creating and putting forward images of manual work. By contrast, women’s manual labor has few images to represent it (Welsch, 2004). It is also largely de-unionized, subjected to an even higher rate of union busting than the labor of cis-gender

men. Women's manual labor is largely sequestered, taking place in Export Processing Zones, maquiladoras and sweatshops, agricultural fields and slaughterhouses, hospitals and other medical facilities, and private homes. Women's muscular effort also comes largely from those left out of mainstream definitions of femininity: working-class and poor women, immigrants, women of color, and non-gender conforming people. As such, the muscular prowess of women's work is literally marginalized and, therefore, goes largely unrecognized.

By contrast, muscular action, physical prowess, and exertion by women and feminine-identified people in caring professions go unquestioned. Because tending to the needs of others is feminized, displays of muscularity and prowess that are specific to caring are acceptable for women. Not only do they go uncontested and unremarked, they are encouraged, even as they are under-reimbursed (Waring, 1988). Tasks such as nursing and care for the elderly and disabled, largely carried out by women of the Global South (Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2003), require physical strength, including the short burst muscular effort and upper body strength usually defined as masculine. The feminization of care and its racialization and commoditization appear through the muscularity of its demands rather than in spite of it.

A feminist care ethic approach that focuses on labor can illustrate the appeal, the demands, and the significance of sanctuary labor. Sanctuary workers, volunteers, and organizers carry out repetitive, sweaty, dusty animal care actions because of an emotional attachment to animals. We act this way not out of an abstract commitment to justice, because of a desire for consistency in how animals and humans are treated, or because non-human animals are like humans. Indeed, it is the difference among animals and the specificity of their needs that undergird such care actions. These efforts come out forms of attention that value the subjective experience of non-humans (Gruen, 2015b, p. 37).

Attending to the physical skills required by farmed animal care unsettles a potentially essentialized conflation of care and femininity. In considering animal care as invisibilized labor, we can also think of it as movement, as physical actions that establish relationships and enact social realities. The effort to recraft human-animal relationships is an act of imagination but also located in physical tasks. These corporeal actions are specific, effortful, and produce the set of results that we understand as care.

By attending to the muscular work that constitutes care we can address the devaluing of care work via its feminization, its racialization, and its classed associations.

In light of the convergence of the invisibilization of animal exploitation and a continued devaluing of care labor, I am suggesting that animal liberation would benefit from a reconsideration of the feminist care ethic by its physicality. I propose to refigure care via a consideration of its labor, its muscularity (Jones, 2014), emotional basis, *and* ethical and political potential. To delink the care ethic from essentialized notions of women and femininity, as well as to reveal the invisibilized and unreimbursed labor that fuels care efforts, we need a material understanding of care, one rooted in the physicality of experience.

A corporeal care ethic could reclaim sentiment as linked to, aligned with, and supported by muscular effort. Corporeal approaches to care ethics could consider, for instance, what physical demands care makes upon its practitioners but also what physical experiences and sensations a carer gains. Similarly, a corporeal care ethic would examine how care is constituted socially, economically, and politically, why some bodies come easily under the rubric of care and some are removed from it, and why some bodies appear suited to care work. Rather than binaristically splitting care and effort, sentiment and muscularity, we can put them into conversation in such a way that reveals the current occluding of the muscular effort of activism, care work, and waged and unwaged labor. Indeed, I want to suggest that the political critique that feminist care ethic scholars call for is best accessed through a consideration of corporeality. A corporeal care ethic has the potential to reveal the subjectivities of both those who are commoditized and those whose labor is taken for granted.

While it is optimistic to suggest that understanding the effortful nature of care work would result in its revaluing, it is nonetheless hard to change what we do not see. Acknowledging the materiality and muscularity of care, alongside its emotional resonances, opens up the possibility of creating and perceiving images of it. Sanctuary work provides examples of other ways to live by meeting the needs of non-human animals, observing their responses, and cultivating their positive experiences. Attending to animal needs allows shifts in human-animal relationships (Adams & Gruen, 2014; Donaldson & Kymlicka, 2015; Abrell, 2016; Scotton, 2017). A closer look at its physical components suggests it can allow us to reimagine

human-to-human relationships as well.

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Alternative Animal Products: Protection Rhetoric or Protection Racket?

Nathan Poirier¹

¹ *Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI, United States.*

Abstract

Few from mainstream animal protection seem to view in vitro meat critically and instead hail it as a means by which to liberate “farmed” animals and the environment from their exploitative realities. This essay critically assesses some of the arguments that support in vitro (or cultured or cell-based) and plant-based meat. From viewing videos of the entire alternative animal product conferences organized by the Good Food Institute in 2018 and 2019, video of the debate over in vitro meat at the 2019 Conscious Eating Conference, and from attending the 2020 Alternative Protein Conference, key strains of arguments are distilled and analyzed in terms of overall efficacy of potential for liberation. It appears that those who support and promote in alternative meat products as a form of animal and environmental protection are constrained by short-term technological fix strategies and a reliance on compliance from capitalism and the animal agriculture industry. Such approaches are highly suspect. This essay also provides a theoretical contribution to CAS by more clearly and explicitly drawing out a close link between in vitro meat and the cleantech industry.

Keywords: in vitro meat, capitalism, veganism, fetishization, co-optation

Early research and writing on the topic of in vitro meat (IVM)—meat made from animal cells grown outside the bodies of animals, essentially removing the theoretical need for animal farming and slaughter—while seemingly miraculous, possesses some clear shortcomings. The first is that proponents have made large and sweeping claims such as stated goals of reducing or eliminating various types of environmental harm and avoiding the needless killing of billions of farmed animals. Some proponents claim—and still claim—that alternative animal products will completely eliminate animal agriculture, feed the world, and significantly diminish the effects of climate change (Edelman et al., 2005; Shapiro, 2018). This was evident at the Good Food Conferences in 2018 and 2019, conferences dedicated to boost the production and promotion of food products made to resemble meat but without any animals (this includes both IVM and plant-based products). Josh Tetrick, CEO of JUST, an IVM company, clearly implies completely eliminating animal agriculture when he says, “...to solve the really urgent challenge we have and around intensive animal agriculture it can’t be added to a menu it has to be the only thing on the menu.” Similarly, Pat Brown, CEO of Beyond Meat, a major plant-based meat company, explicitly declares, “Our mission is to completely replace animals in the food system by 2035.” While these goals are commendable, for “complete” animal liberation to occur, *all* animals must become free from exploitation. Yet, the likelihood of this scenario through such imitation meat products is shrouded in doubt.

If animal liberation is not complete until all animals are free (in fact, until *all* are free—human and nonhuman), then treating alternative animal products as supplemental to traditional animal agriculture is an insufficient end goal. A complete replacement as stated by those above is necessary. However, IVM’s ability in particular to liberate nonhuman animals has been problematized, even if critical views on IVM are still underrepresented in the literature. Poirier and Russell (2019) problematize IVM’s ability to liberate animals and the environment from exploitation by looking at the concept of “total liberation” (see Pellow, 2014); IVM continues to carry most of the problematic associations and symbolism of traditional meat (Miller, 2012); there are inherent limitations to grandiose promises (Jönsson, 2016); and the “IVM imagination” seems to disregard ethical human relations with nonhuman animals and the environment (Metcalf, 2013). Proponents have also shown a lack of imagination in asserting that IVM was the *only*

alternative to traditional meat joined with a concomitant devaluation of vegetarianism (Poirier, 2018b).

A key contemporary shortcoming is that those from mainstream animal protection seem to view alternative meat products rather uncritically and perhaps even naively (Bauer, 2019; Friedrich, 2018; Shapiro, 2018; Reese, 2018; Ward, Oven, & Bethencourt, 2020). There are very few sustained, in-depth critiques against these products and this approach to animal liberation. In fact, mainstream animal advocacy seems plagued by naive techno-optimism. In a section titled “If you can’t beat them, join them,” Reese (2018, p. 56) states that the most common sentiment expressed by alternative animal product companies is excitement over interest from Big Food. Tragically, this is likely the only way such products can penetrate the market, a self-defeating prophecy—except for those who join the corporate industrial complex as fellow exploiters. This section in Reese’s book portrays Big Food in a glowing light, as if such industries will suddenly switch to being true environmental and animal protectors. Similarly, Leah Garces (2019), president of Mercy for Animals, likens IVM to automobiles that replaced horse transportation, hailing this as a major win for nonhuman animals. Yet, roadkill is devastating for nonhuman animals (not to mention the pollution from automobiles and the environmental impact of road construction) as the second leading cause of death for nonhuman animals (Soron, 2011). Likewise, Shapiro (2018), a former executive of the Humane Society of the United States, touts the replacement of whale oil by petroleum. But here again, petroleum has become a source of energy that has wreaked havoc on this planet. These are uncritical comparisons that reveal the naivety of mainstream animal advocacy.

Alternative animal products such as IVM and plant-based meat replacements have recently been the focus of several major conferences such as the Good Food Conferences in 2018 and 2019, a debate at the Conscious Eating Conference (2019) on IVM, and the Alternative Protein and Alternative Dairy Conferences in 2020, among others. Despite this academic and industrial activity, and major capital investments, the progress of IVM seems to have lulled (Chriki & Hocquette, 2020). Therefore, this paper extends the relatively small literature critical of alternative animal products.

Prevailing discourse on alternative meat products by stakeholders has been decidedly optimistic. However, few have questioned the wider aspects of alternative animal product production and promotion. Critical analyses

have failed to question the shortcomings of using technology and capitalism to solve problems wrought by technology and capitalism. The rhetoric and tactics behind technological innovation have important consequences for how technology is received and utilized (Huesemann & Huesemann, 2011). In turn, this impacts the efficacy of the proposed technology to “solve” or adequately deal with the problem(s) it is designed to address. Thus, relying on capitalism and fetishizing meat is inherently problematic for alternative animal products to achieve the proponent’s goal of animal and environmental protection. Here, the term “proponents” collectively refers to several groups of people such as academics who provide technical and social research to develop these products, industry firms and investors, and animal advocacy groups. Taken together, these are the industry insiders. They are the creators and promoters of alternative animal products. Based on prevailing discourse on alternative animal products at the Good Food Institute’s (GFI) conferences, proponents act like they save and protect untold numbers of animals and the environment, but ultimately, seem to simply act as props for industrial animal agriculture.

Alternative Meat Products in Historical, Cultural, and Ideological Context

As a leading and central figure in the alternative animal product landscape, the Good Food Institute (founded by long-time animal, environmental, and peace activist Bruce Friedrich who serves as its Executive Director) merits special attention as they embody techno-optimism and an uncritical acceptance of using capitalism to promote alternative animal products. They are also a central hub for the alternative animal product space, endorsing whoever wishes to advance the science, start a business, or contribute financially to the industry. Two particular aspects from the 2018 and 2019 Good Food Conferences are central to how notions of capitalism and fetishization will likely inhibit the disruptive potential of alternative animal products. This paper is a portion of a wider analysis of how alternative meat products are framed and communicated by GFI and other industry stakeholders (Poirier, in prep).

It is worth noting that GFI decided to switch its terminology when referring to IVM between the 2018 and 2019 conferences. For 2018, IVM was exclusively referred to as “clean meat” through panel titles and by Friedrich and others at GFI. In 2019, IVM terminology at the GFI conference

changed to “cell-based meat,” although “clean” meat persists in the general discourse. The use of the term “clean meat” signals its connection to clean energy and industrial agriculture. This linguistic association is intentional. In 2018, Jessica Almy, director of Policy at GFI stated, “we use clean meat as an analogy to clean energy because it is much more efficient than traditional forms of meat production but it also is a nod to the clean environment in which clean meat will be produced.” While clean meat is meant to invoke a healthier and more sustainable approach to meat via a link to clean energy, it is also explicitly stated that alternative animal products stakeholders do not want people to think of traditional meat as “dirty” because this might offend meat producers and processors, an ironic stance for those spouting animal protection rhetoric. In 2019, the opinion was now that “it [the term ‘clean meat’] more kind of points to the other kind of meat not being clean and that's the kind of divisive attitude that we wouldn't want to adopt as an industry” (Niya Gupta, Founder and CEO, Fork & Goode).

That “clean meat” was used at all raises some red flags. First, the parallel with clean energy is not a good one. As detailed more in the next section, “clean” or “green” energy overwhelmingly fails at its stated goal of reducing environmental destruction. A purposive association with this industry is questionable, unless perhaps marketing is of greater concern to alternative animal product proponents than animal protection. Secondly, cleanliness is a term associated with civility, whiteness, and hygiene. These associations have historically been—and persist in being—associated with environmental racism (Zimring, 2017) and colonialism (Lugones, 2010). To overlook this point and adopt the modifier “clean” for IVM neglects the historically racialized narrative surrounding meat consumption. Although this association of “clean” meat to whiteness is speculative, these are the types of considerations that must be considered ahead of time to help avoid such associations from taking hold. If “clean” meat becomes the meat of choice for more affluent whites, much like many “value added” animal products today, then traditional “dirty” meat could be left for “dirty” people or places. Since all oppressions are linked, if IVM reinforces speciesism, it will also reinforce racism, which are unacceptable.

The phrase clean meat also situates the development of IVM within the modern concept of “progress” premised on human control over the nonhuman world. Indeed, cleanliness was a major discourse in developing the “modern” slaughterhouse and milk production (Lee, 2008; Nimmo,

2010). As Nimmo and the contributors to Lee’s volume show, rhetoric of cleanliness and safety achieved by human control over biochemical processes and animal lives was used to justify industrial meat and milk production, and convince people to consume these products. The underlying ideology of “modernity” is problematic: Modernity is premised on a social construction of humans being separate from and superior to nature. Steeped in the logic of colonialism, the modern logic intersects with other forms of oppression (Lugones, 2010). “Clean” meat falls in line with this rhetoric and history. So, the rather uncritical promotion of the term clean meat omits (intentionally or not) an ideological and cultural alignment with human supremacy, colonialism, and animal agribusiness. (For an alternative to “modernity,” see Lugones (2010) for a discussion of the *non-modern*.)

Further, the economic logic of capitalism extends to alternative animal products. The global meat market has a current revenue of \$90 billion and in 2050 is expected to be \$1.6 trillion (CB Insights, 2019). There are headlines like “Lab-Grown Beef will Save the Planet-and be a Billion-Dollar Business” (Burningham, 2016). Thus, replacement of traditional meat with non-animal alternatives poses financial incentives for both start-ups and meat processors. In the past few years, Tyson Foods, Cargill, Smithfield Foods, PHW and Maple Leaf Foods have invested in IVM and plant-based meat companies (CB Insights, 2019). This represents another clear link between IVM and industrial animal agriculture. It is risky for meat companies to incorporate alternative meat products into their existing business as environmentally friendly. In this way, corporations could create an image of themselves as protectors of animals and the environment they have harmed so deeply and for so long (Neo & Emel, 2017).

If consumers believe alternative meat products are environmentally sustainable and purchase them from a meat corporation, they would also be supporting farmed animal meat consumption. When meat companies own or control alternative meat products, they influence their effectiveness to protect the environmental and animals. Meat processors could acquire alternative meat products and companies to reduce the effectiveness of these products as meat alternatives (LaVeck, 2006). Unfortunately, the tactics LaVeck (2006) points out in his article map perfectly onto the rhetoric at the GFI conferences and encapsulates the mainstream approach of the alternative animal product industry’s approach to animal and/or environmental “protection.” Considering the global trend towards increasing concentration

in food systems and meat processing in particular (Howard, 2016, 2019), acquisition or control of the alternative meat market by meat corporations would also likely become concentrated, giving major companies the power to constrain the diffusion of alternative meat products. Given that meat industry lobbyists are some of the more candid deniers of climate change and animal harm (Stănescu, 2020; Hannan, 2020), links of alternative animal products to animal agriculture are important considerations regarding their potential efficacy of environmental and animal protection.

What follows is a selection of the wider results of an empirical investigation into the rhetoric revolving around capitalism and meat from both years of the GFI conferences (author, in prep). A content analysis of videos from the entirety of both conferences was performed. Each time a panelist spoke, the essence of the content of their words was labeled. In particular, this paper focuses on how and when capitalism, animal agribusiness, and fetishization were brought up or alluded to. These topics are not merely selective but revealed themselves to be major talking points at the conferences. This approach to content analysis blends with discourse analysis as both literal words are used in reproduction of quotes (rhetoric) as well as the overall message of panelists (discourse) (Hardy et al., 2004). As of this writing, this represents the entirety of the Good Food Conferences as Covid-19 led GFI to cancel the 2020 iteration and the status of a 2021 Good Food Conference is still in question. In this paper quotes are used verbatim from panelists that illustrate a close alignment with Goldstein's theory of "cleantech" (see below). Although there is necessarily a degree of subjectivity in the selection of quotes, readers are free to watch the GFI conference videos to check their own opinions against the conclusions presented in this paper. All videos are freely available on GFI's website, <https://goodfoodconference.com/videos/>, as well as every panelist's name, affiliation, and job position as of their appearance at the conference(s).

Cleantech and Fetishization

Sociologist Jesse Goldstein (2018) examines green capitalist entrepreneurs of what is termed "cleantech." The term is mostly applied to energy usage (indeed, this is Goldstein's case study) but extends to any technology that improves the efficiency of existing technologies. Goldstein finds the existing capitalist paradigm severely constrains such ventures. This is because cleantech entrepreneurs critique capitalism as inherently

unsustainable yet pursue paths that solely work through it. “Good” entrepreneurs are willing to be constrained by investors and in turn, investors are constrained by the market. Those in the cleantech space gesture at planetary improvement but are willing to accept short-term capital gains (Goldstein, 2018). Ultimately, cleantech sounds radically transformative in theory but ends up being practically reformist with negligible results. This occurs by way of capital constraining and co-opting the rhetoric, creativity and possibilities of environmental salvation through providing technological “solutions” that hardly, if at all, address underlying conditions that cause the problems new technologies are supposed to address (Goldstein, 2018).

The disruptive potential of cleantech is hindered in its ability to make an “impact.” Goldstein (2018) discusses impact in two senses; to refer to making money within existing industries (impact as capital) and to the positive social and environmental gains of cleantech (impact beyond capital). Further, Goldstein found clear interpretations difficult to come by in examining the term *impact* among clean energy entrepreneurs and investors. Ultimately, Goldstein discovers that although cleantech entrepreneurs aim to critique, disrupt, and maybe even replace traditional energy industries, “clean technologies largely rely upon their persistence” (Goldstein, 2018, p. 48).

Goldstein (2018) calls clean tech innovations “non-disruptive disruptors.” He means that such technologies are created with the idea of transforming a market sector but end up supporting existing infrastructure and have a negligible impact on both the market and the product created to solve the issue. This paper aims to show that alternative meat products, as promoted and discussed by its stakeholders, are destined to be non-disruptive disruptors. Partly this is because capitalism only exists through continuous growth which necessitates animal and environmental oppression (Nibert, 2017); and partly because alternative animal products continue to fetishize meat.

Karl Marx is the central figure around the concept of fetishization. Marx (1906) likened the fetishization of objects to human mental constructs such as gods. Using his analogy, it is here, in “the mist-enveloped regions of the religious world” that the products “of the human brain appear as independent beings endowed with a life, and entering into relation both with one another and the human race” (Marx, 1906, p. 83). Gods and spirits converse with each other and humans as if all are autonomous individuals. Spiritual entities are products of the human mind and thus all meaning of

such entities is socially constructed. Machines are reified abstractions of human ingenuity and appear to drive production. To Marx (1906), fetishization is inherent in commodity production via the social relations required to produce commodities. Only in the exchange of commodities is one's labor connected to society. Therefore, it appears as if the commodity itself generates social action and meaning. Meat functions similarly. The meanings and symbolism invested in meat are dependent on the thought and actions of human actors. It appears likewise with alternative meat products.

Pedersen and Stănescu (2014) critique “humane” approaches to meat consumption as itself a fetishization. People want to pierce the commodity fetish by purchasing alternatively made animal products, reinforcing the original fetish and making it more invisible by normalizing meat consumption. In the end, “humane” meat—including plant-based alternatives and IVM—does not critique the system they can disrupt but becomes part of that very same system. Ellen (1988) finds four cognitive processes of fetishism: concretization (making a material object beyond an abstract idea), animation (attribution of qualities of living organisms to non-living objects), conflation of signifier and signified (the object versus what it signifies as the causal agent), and ambiguous power relations (who controls whom?). These processes of fetishization contribute towards overlooking the social impacts (unequal exchange) of technology and capitalism. Such a view can lead green capitalists to claim that innovation can and will be spread throughout the world, especially where it is needed most and therefore increase people's quality of life. But this is misguided. The history of technology shows that such a vision hardly, if ever, materializes (Huesemann & Huesemann, 2011; Twine, 2015). Therefore, it is crucial to be skeptical of IVM and plant-based alternative animal products.

Alternative Animal Products as “Cleantech”

Alternative animal products fit the umbrella term of “cleantech” because they are technologically created commodities that aim to improve existing food products. Reese (2018, p. 69) refers to alternative animals as “cleantech,” albeit indirectly by comparing it to other cleantech ventures. The director of policy at GFI, Jessica Almy, links the notion of IVM as cleantech to clean energy: “we use clean meat as an analogy to clean energy because it is much more efficient than traditional forms of meat production but it also is a nod to the clean environment in which clean meat will be produced.”

Cleantech aims to “disrupt” existing practices (Goldstein, 2018). Indeed, this is the aim of alternative animal products. Panelists established these products as disruptors to the current food system in a variety of ways:

“I will classify cell-based meat or cultured meat as a disruptive innovation.” (Kelvin Ng, Head of Strategic Innovation, Bioprocessing Technology Institute, A*STAR)

“across the entire store, plant-based products are disrupting categories, whether it's dairy, whether it's milk, whether it's refrigerated, frozen, even center store.” (Dan Altschuler Malek, Managing Partner, Unovis Partners and New Crop Capital)

“what all of us on this stage have been doing in one way or another which is proving this idea that hey we can disrupt this trillion-dollar animal protein industry.” (James Joaquin, Co-founder, Obvious Ventures)

“the time is right to really disrupt this seafood supply chain but also supplement while cutting farm-raised with another solution.” (Lou Cooperhouse, President and CEO, BlueNalu [a cell-based seafood company])

Even the meat industry players comprehends themselves as disruptors. Referring to getting into plant-based meat products, the Chief Marketing Officer at Perdue Farms says that Perdue “think[s] of ourselves as a disruptor in the [protein] space.”

In further alignment with Goldstein (2018), the term *impact* is also used explicitly numerous times by panelists.

“we want to be able to work with the people who are trying to have more impact and and distribute this solution as widely as possible. The impact the impact aspect is really critical I mean what we are doing needs to have an impact I think we all feel very strongly about that here.” (Thomas Jonas, CEO and Co-founder, Sustainable Bioproducts)

“we've got environmental, we've got economic, and we've got social impact so really to make a business valuable and to continue to

support the world in all those ways we'll do whatever it takes to basically meet our goals there so you know when you look at something like plant-based or cell-based or anything like that it fits perfectly in what we want to do and want want we want to achieve.” (Christy Lebor, Global Innovation Lead, JBS)

“so we're going to be talking here about the impact that of our businesses what we're doing and part of the impact this is something I learned when I launched Honest Tea is that when you believe in something if you believe in it and you believe that every time you're selling your product and making your product you're having an intrinsic positive impact relative to the alternative then your duty and almost requirement is to bring it to scale.” (Seth Goldman, Executive Chair, Beyond Meat)

“by all means clean meat, plant-based meat will continue to progress over the years to come but in the meantime we can make an immediate impact by making meat better and by better we mean more plants less animal.” (Joanna Bromley, The Better Meat Company)

As these quotes illustrate, the term impact is often used in a vague sense. What impact refers to is unclear. It is unclear whether impact, as used above, is intended to mean impact as capital or impact beyond capital. Importantly, the quotes from both Christy Lebor and Joanna Bromley imply a persistence of the meat industry. Lebor represents JBS, one of the world's largest meat processors. She explicitly says JBS will “do whatever it takes” to retain their “environmental impact” (which, from all indications is actually an exceedingly negative impact, see also Neo & Emel, 2017). Bromley refers to blending plant-based meat with animal meat so that their meat products would be 30% plants. This implicitly relies on the meat industry continuing to operate at 70% capacity. Animal agribusiness operating at 70% will still not protect 70% of the animals raised for food. While this does represent a relative reduction in current practices, which is a positive, with meat consumption continuing to grow worldwide and in absolute terms, animals used for meat (and concomitant environmental destruction) could still increase under this business model.

Capitalism Turns Protection Rhetoric into a Protection Racket

While panelists position themselves and their products as disruptors and making an impact, the path to disruption that alternative animal products stakeholders are pursuing is strongly suggestive that these products will also be *non-disruptive* disruptors (Goldstein, 2018). Goldstein (2018) finds that entrepreneurs in the cleantech space use rhetoric of “planetary improvement”—technological innovation aimed at disrupting current markets to “saving the planet”—but end up falling short of these goals. Panelists at the Good Food Conferences certainly suggested the sweeping benefits alternative animal products could have. Pat Brown, founder of Impossible Foods, a plant-based meat company speaks to this point: “the reason that I founded this company was to save the world from what is right now the biggest environmental catastrophe that has basically ever happened which is the insanely destructive impact of our use of animals a food technology.” David Welch, GFI’s Director of Science and Technology, says that the point of alternative animal products is “to specifically replace an animal-based meat.” Celeste Holz-Schietinger, Director of Research at Impossible Foods, echoes this call for “planetary improvement”: “it’s really exciting to be able to think we can get there we can replace meat from a cow with plants and be able to have a much more sustainable ecosystem for us and all animals.” This point, or “gesturing” in Goldstein’s (2018) terminology, continually recurs throughout both years of the conferences. Not only is there to be change, but the size of this change is envisioned to be massive. As Sophie Egan, from The Culinary Institute of America puts it, “this is an enormous shift we’re talking about.”

Yet, these calls to radically transform world food systems are budding against some problems in effecting change. One is the approach for achieving these grand visions—a reliance on capitalism, large corporations, and animal agriculture itself. A second problematic point is that alternative animal products do not encourage a change in consumer thought or behavior concerning consumption. Instead, they fetishize meat by centering meat in their rhetoric and keep meat (in some form) at the center of consumers’ plates. The panelists at the conferences support both points. These calls do not seek to unpack the commodity fetishism of either traditional or plant-based meat.

A major point of the panelists is a reliance on capitalism, corporations, and animal agriculture to help out the “impact” of alternative animal products. Dan Altschuler Malek, Managing Partner at Unovis

Partners and New Crop Capital, combines disruption with the use of a corporate strategy: “we have companies all over Europe. They're launching their respective [alternative animal products] along with all the larger corporate players, so each category will be disrupted.” This quote explicitly uses the word *disrupted*, signaling the type of change envisioned. It also gives the scope of this disruption—*each category* of animal products will be disrupted. Further, it clearly states the path to such widespread disruption is through corporations. The following quotes support the notion that this approach is widespread in the alternative animal product space:

“the large meat players for instance who have been here is very encouraging.” (Rosie Wardle, Program Director, Jeremy Coller Foundation and Senior Advisor, FAIRR)

“let's not forget that eventually the hope is that the conventional meat players will be the ones marketing and producing it eventually and they have the best knowledge of the final consumer, the product, what the consumer wants to know, how to advocate this to the consumer. So it might be our problem now but eventually when we'll get to market, it's going to be the issue that will be addressed by the big players who I'm sure will do a fantastic job advocating this the in the best way possible.” (Shir Friedman, Co-founder and CCO, SuperMeat [a cell-based meat startup])

“for the market to explode it has to go mainstream. To go mainstream the big companies have to get in and have to get in and win that's just what's going to have to happen. It's just the facts.” (Christy Lebor, Global Innovation Lead, JBS)

Given the problems of technology and capitalism for creating and sustaining inequality (Twine, 2015; Huesemann & Huesemann, 2011), it is difficult to imagine how capitalism can drive the success of alternative animal products to make an “impact” (beyond capital at least) given that the corporations involved will surely not put themselves out of business. There is simply no historic reason to believe this will happen. Indeed, animal agriculture companies seem to view alternative animal products as simply a way to diversify their “protein” portfolio and capitalize on a rising market share.

“we were set up to be an early warning system for the business figure out what's coming on the horizon years down the road that could be disruptive to our core businesses.”

“I don't think it has to be a matter of this idea it has to be binary, that meat has to go down and plant-based has to go up.”

“we look at plant-based, we look at cultured meat as ‘and’ opportunities.”

This string of quotations from 2018 and 2019, all from Tom Mastrobuoni, Chief Financial Officer of the venture capital wing of Tyson meat processors, illustrates how major meat processors view alternative animal products. The first quote suggests that such products might be viewed as disruptive to current business models and profits, perhaps in light of the impact of alternative dairy products on the dairy industry. It also references Tyson’s “core business” which is traditional animal meat. This suggests that traditional animal meat is viewed as central to the company and likely will remain so. The second quote at least somewhat substantiates this interpretation. If alternative animal products gain a significant market share, Tyson grasps them as something that can be incorporated without impacting their core business. The last quote from Mastrobuoni above makes this even clearer. Alternative meat products are simply to be assimilated into the prevailing business model to provide consumer choice. This “green spirit of capitalism” (see Goldstein, 2018) provides products to those who wish to purchase non-meat-based products for whatever reason (ethics, health, etc.). The problem here is that no disruption occurs. The corporate meat processor continues to profit from primarily animal-based meat and all the environmental harms that go along with it.

Other meat processors echo this vision:

“if another aspect of protein is wanted by consumers you know we're gonna stand ready to answer it whether it be chicken, beef, pork, lamb, goat, bison, maybe who knows, but certainly plants will be a big part of that.” (Eric Christianson, Chief Marketing Officer, Perdue Farms)

“we do know at JBS that we are the biggest protein company and we will remain the biggest protein company, so whatever it takes to do that and if plant based becomes a meaningful part of the protein segment we'll be we'll be there in a big way.” (Christy Lebor, Global Innovation Lead, JBS)

“we stay relevant so that you know we continue to grow and be the best in being number one, so we see it just like the consumers we see it, as an ‘and’ not an ‘or.’ We continue to focus on our core business which is animal protein.” (Christy Lebor, Global Innovation Lead, JBS)

Again, animal protein continues to occupy a central role in these narratives. In the first bullet point above, while saying plants will be a big part of this company’s protein portfolio, it will exist alongside many types of traditional animal meat. Likewise, Lebor explicitly states that animal-derived protein will continue to make up the bulk of JBS’s business. These quotes would seem troubling to those promoting alternative animal products as disruptors of incumbent industries.

Even so, Bruce Friedrich himself is often the most direct in his vision of using capitalism and animal agribusiness to drive the manufacture and sale of alternative animal products. In his introduction to the 2019 conference, Friedrich promotes fast food chains and animal agribusiness as two primary and positive vehicles for this change: “we’ve got the Impossible Whopper [at Burger King], we’ve got Beyond Chicken at KFC which sold out in about five hours, we’ve got the Beyond Burger at Carl’s Jr. and Tim Hortons, and it just goes on and on and on.” Indeed, Friedrich continues,

the four largest meat companies are also diving in. So JBS, Tyson, Cargill, Smithfield they’ve either launched their own plant-based plant brand or they’ve taken a large stake in a plant-based company. And then, as we all know, Tyson and Cargill are also invested in cell-based meat. And then don’t even get me started on ADM which is kind of the co-founder of Memphis Meats.

Based on the prevailing quotes, capitalism and animal agriculture are more likely to become further entrenched rather than disrupted. In fact, capitalism

may even be strengthened because it can promote itself as protecting the environment, farmed animals, and people.

Additionally, vegetarians and vegans who have avoided eating at fast food and other non-vegetarian friendly restaurants can patron these establishments again. Indeed, this is one result of alternative animal products being sold at fast food restaurants. As reported by Patty Trevino, SVP of Marketing for CKE Restaurants, Inc. which owns the fast-food chain Carl's Jr., "The stories that I've heard mostly on social media have been that 'I haven't been to a Carl's Jr. in 20 years because you know I became a vegetarian or vegan and I can have my famous star again'." Likewise, overall sales at Burger King have increased, along with its traditional beef Whopper, after launching the plant-based Impossible Whopper (Taylor, 2019). While other explanations could be imagined for this outcome, the points of raising this issue are (1) there are always unintended consequences of technology and (2) the purchase of alternative animal products from any fast-food chain at least indirectly promotes capitalism and all of the negatives associated with it, fast food, and the specific restaurant chain itself.

Continued Meat Fetishization in Alternative Animal Products

Not only is a reliance on capitalism and animal agriculture seemingly problematic for the disruptive potential of alternative animal products, but rhetoric from panelists also explicitly suggests that neither attitudes nor behavior need to change either.

"this category is incredibly fascinating because what we see is pulled by the consumer, right, it's not us trying to get consumers to change their habits or eat differently. It really is consumers looking for choices." (Lisa Feria, CEO, Stray Dog Capital)

"your vegetarian and vegan children could get really excited about it because no one's giving up anything." (Uma Valeti, CEO and Co-founder, Memphis Meats [an IVM company])

These quotes demonstrate both a cell-based meat company and a venture capitalist sharing these sentiments. Thus, it seems as if proponents of alternative animal products envision their "impact" to be realized by simply switching animal-based products out for non-animal-based products. There are multiple problems with this line of thinking. First, it is known that food,

and animal-based food in particular, possess powerful symbolism and meaning beyond a means of sustenance (Miller, 2012). Another problem with simply switching out products is that it keeps animal products—mainly meat—at the forefront of people’s thoughts and plates. In other words, meat is fetishized.

Meat is portrayed as inescapably desirable by panelists as shown by the quotes above from the panelists from Stray Dog Capital and Memphis Meats. But the fetishization of meat is also much more explicit. Often, statements are to the effect that there is an inherent love of meat by humans, that our taste for it is built into our history and being:

“when we are talking about cell-based meat, beef, chicken, cow, duck, tuna, I mean, these are these are things that people have loved for thousands of years and I think that's what the field should be really proud and talk about it.” (Uma Valeti, CEO and Co-founder, Memphis Meats)

“investors are acknowledging that meat is a product that people love and love to eat and it's probably here to stay.” (Uma Valeti)

“we just need clean meat now because people grew up on meat and and they won't accept anything other than than genuine meat.” (Alison Rabschnuk, Director of Corporate Engagement, GFI)

Beyond a historical narrative, or one based on tradition, these quotes also have in common an oversight of the social influence meat companies have had over consumers. For instance, sociologist David Nibert (2002) uses examples from recent history to show that even if there is a *consumer-led* drop in the purchasing of animal products, corporations respond with voracious advertising campaigns which can end up boosting sales of their products to higher levels than before (Nibert, 2002, pp. 125-126).

One particularly insightful quote comes from Brian Spears, CEO and Cofounder of New Age Meats, an IVM company. Spears describes a pig named Jessie whom New Age Meats took a biopsy to obtain cells to grow sausage. He then addresses concerns that the IVM process may seem unnatural to consumers who may feel as if “I want to think of a farm. I want a barn. And I want I want Jessie. I want to eat Jessie.” This passage about Jessie indicates how deep the fetishization of meat runs. Since the IVM

sausage New Age Meats is creating *does* come from Jessie, and hence can be said to *be* Jessie, IVM showcases how meat takes on a mystical power whereby humans feel compelled to follow their taste for meat wherever it may lead. Here, it is useful to recall one of Ellen's (1988) cognitive fetishization—concretization. The idea of IVM is made concrete through being created while the pig from whom the meat was created walks around still alive. A small clump of cells becomes “Jessie meat.”

This discussion of Jessie can extend this point of fetishization further. Another of Ellen's (1988) processes of fetishization, namely, ambiguous power relations, is on display. Given what has been presented in this paper, it is pertinent to ask whether humans are really in control of their attachment to meat, or if an unhealthy fetishization of meat is now in control of humans. Based on his own research, Chris Bryant, a sociologist at the University of Bath states, “I've been looking at more traditional messages to persuade people to cut down on their animal product consumption and as a result of that I've become more confident than ever that producing high-quality alternatives to conventional meat really is the only way forward.” “Traditional” methods of trying to persuade people to eat less meat—presumably, rational arguments, sentimental arguments, so forth—are said to be ineffective in breaking an attachment to meat. So, the *only* other option is to pursue meat in a different but indistinguishable form. By asserting that meat must be pursued in some form opens the door to question precisely why meat must be pursued at all, and especially *only* through a highly technical, expensive, time-consuming process such as that of alternative animal products. Alternative animal product stakeholders and consumers are looking for a way to replace meat with meat (essentially at least, or perhaps literally via IVM). This is not a critique of the meat industry—the focus of “disruption”—but a part of that very same system, reinforcing it and make it more invisible by normalizing meat consumption, animal and environmental exploitation (Pedersen & Stănescu, 2014).

Panelists at the GFI conferences overwhelmingly and proudly promote a heavy reliance on capitalism, meat companies, meat, and other animal exploitation industries to help develop and market their products. There was also the recurring theme of alternative animal products existing side-by-side with animal agribusiness. While there were some calls to eliminate animal agriculture completely, discourse overwhelmingly revolved around the persistence of animal farming. There is also a notable shift in

protection rhetoric. On IVM, earlier publications heavily push rhetoric of animal and environmental protection as potential benefits. However, at the GFI conferences, concerns such as taste, health, and cost of products now appear to dominate. Together, these constitute an orientation towards consumer acceptance, meaning that these alternative animal products proponents are looking to follow the whim of consumers to penetrate the market (impact *as* capital [Goldstein, 2018]). Animal and environmental protection rhetoric has been severely curtailed in favor of capitalism and meat-eating rhetoric. Indeed, alternative animal products appear as non-disruptive disruptors and constitute a protection racket couched in protection rhetoric.

Vegans Eating IVM, Ethical Consumption, and Building an Alternative to Alternative Animal Products

From the analysis above, promoting alternative animal products at the GFI conferences aligns with cleantech (Goldstein, 2018). Because of this, it seems all but guaranteed that these products will follow other cleantech industries and fail at their attempts of planetary improvement before they even start. Thus, it is pertinent to consider an alternative to alternative animal products. In line with CAS, I suggest this alternative should be an anti-capitalist, decentralized, holistic and intersectional veganism founded on a premise of inherent worth of all living beings and a respect for the abiotic environment. This argument is further nuanced below by briefly considering the implications of vegans eating IVM, reflecting on some wider considerations of ethical consumption, and finally putting forth brief comments on an anarchist approach to food production.

During his presentation at the Alternative Protein Conference in October 2020, Ryan Bethencourt, scientist and co-founder of alternative pet food company Wild Earth, talked about his eating of IVM. Although Bethencourt has followed a vegan diet for some time and is concerned about animal protection, after trying several IVM products, he labeled himself and others who have eaten IVM (e.g., Leah Garces and Paul Shapiro) “post-vegan.” It is interesting to think about the meaning of vegans eating IVM and the term post-vegan. From a CAS perspective, eating IVM is unacceptable because for all intents and purposes—if not literally—IVM is meat. It represents exploitation of nonhuman animals without their consent, and is theoretically, and to a large extent practically, unnecessary. And, as has been

shown in this paper, IVM is positioned as pro-capitalist, pro-animal agribusiness, and will not be animal protectionist, despite rhetoric and appearances from proponents to the contrary. Simply put, IVM is not vegan. IVM is not animal liberation (Poirier & Russell, 2019; Miller, 2012; Stănescu & Twine, 2012).

The term “post-vegan” is also problematic. It suggests veganism may not be necessary anymore. Would this imply that ethics would, or should, no longer be a component of consumption given the reality of alternative animal products? Bethencourt applies the term vegan in a restricted sense that only applies to diet. But “vegan” has a much wider and deeper meaning, signaling an avoidance to all reasonable extents of all exploitative use of humans or nonhumans (including plants and inanimate matter). Bethencourt does not communicate this wider and more intersectional meaning of the term. As applied to vegans who care about animal protection but have eaten or would eat IVM, the term post-vegan loses veganism’s holistic outlook and radical challenge to the status quo. As previous editors for the *Journal for Critical Animal Studies* have put it, IVM’s fetishization of meat “...only helps to further steer veganism from the wider intersectional struggles against both capitalism and human chauvinism ... since now vegan could encompass the active endorsement of biotechnology produced animal flesh rendered purely for human consumption” (Stănescu & Twine, 2012, p. 7). To be clear, I do not doubt Bethencourt’s intentions and care for nonhuman nature. Yet it seems that he and others who feel similarly are misguided in their approach and choice of words for reasons outlined in this essay. Although not part of the GFI conferences, Bethencourt’s comments reflect those of participants at GFI’s conferences, providing some generalization of this phenomenon outside of GFI.

For effective animal advocacy to materialize, activists promoting animal and environmental protection need to encourage whole food, local, organic veganism that is ethically grounded and intersectional (Rodrigues, 2018; Brueck, 2019; Feliz & McNeill, 2020). As part of this, alternative animal products should be widely discouraged in favor of more nutritious, accessible, and cheaper plant foods. Alternative animal products sidestep the point that any animal product is unnecessary. The solutions to animal and environmental protection issues are known: local, organic, vegan food grown and provided equitably to those who need it whenever and wherever possible. The goal of veganism is to do one’s best to achieve this ever-elusive ideal.

Granted, there are of course practical constraints on this vision of animal and environmental liberation. Further, it must also be admitted that too many vegans consuming as ethically as possible can still overwhelm resources (Jones, 2016).

It is also pertinent to point out that consumption itself entails some violence. Eating plants kills plant life and at least some insects through harvesting. This is a reality humans are unable to escape and still remain alive. But even while local, organic, whole-food veganism may also have ethical conundrums, it is overwhelmingly recognized as the *best* approach to ethical, sustainable food consumption (Gaard, 2016)—especially in its raw form (Alvaro, 2020). It is important to not overlook the lives and interests of plants, and avoid creating a hierarchy of nonhuman animals as categorically more important than plants (something Gaard (2016) cautions ethical vegans to be aware of, and for consistency, to avoid). But it should also be made clear that serious consideration of plant ethics is not to be confused with support for eating animals.

Plant liberation and human hunger do not have to be opposing values (Marder, 2013). Critical animal studies implies this philosophy with its collective rejection of single-issue politics, hierarchy, capitalism, centralization, a human-nonhuman binary, etc. (Best et al., 2007; see also, Houle (2011) for an explicitly CAS perspective on plants). Marder’s (2013, p. 29) claim that plants are “capable of processing, remembering and sharing information – [beings] with potentialities proper to it and a world of its own” is why activists should not support the consumption of most plant-based meat products. As evident at the GFI conferences, the approach to these products is capitalistic, objectifying (i.e., reducing plants to their macro and micronutrients), highly processed and technical. In other words, these are not respectful orientations toward plant consumption.

Other ethical considerations of plant consumption include: many plant-based companies are now owned by animal agribusiness (this is one theme brought up at the Conscious Eating Conference (2019) debate on IVM), and whether it is proper for vegans to purchase plant-based products at fast food conglomerates, such as the Beyond Whopper at Burger King. These approaches lend support to animal agriculture and environmentally destructive corporations. They constitute further reasons ethical vegans should avoid plant-based meat products.

All alternative animal products are not necessarily antithetical to ethical and respectful eating. Elsewhere, I have laid out some necessary conditions for a partial vision for how IVM could be realized responsibly to partially address animal and environmental protectionists' goals (Poirier, 2018a). And IVM could be a suitable alternative for the disastrous effects of animal-based pet food (Ward, Oven, & Bethencourt, 2020). Further, I would argue that plant-based alternative animal products are qualitatively better than IVM. There is also a difference within plant-based products: tofu and seitan are qualitatively better than the heavily processed Beyond or Impossible Burgers. But mode of production matters. Protection rhetoric is present in alternative animal products at the GFI conferences, but as Goldstein's (2018) theory of cleantech asserts, protection rhetoric is eventually transformed into a protection racket, inevitably co-opted by capitalism.

This can be countered in part through holistic and intersectional veganism that rejects capitalism. Some may assert that small changes (reforms) are easier to accomplish and may lead to more substantial changes later (Phelps, 2014). But examples of previous efforts in this direction tend to be few, isolated and limited. Liberation should be the overall goal and always kept front and center of advocacy. This is not to dismiss as irrelevant welfare measures that improve animal's lives in the present, *if they are part of an overarching goal of liberation*. They are gains we can appreciate along the way, but they are not ends in themselves. Nor are they likely to lead to transformed food systems, as the theory of cleantech suggests. The overall effect of welfare measures or "green capitalism" has been to strengthen the animal industrial complex through industry rhetoric of care and sustainability (Hannan, 2020). However, as Jessica Pierce (2020) illustrates, such "care" amounts to almost completely losing freedom for individual animals. Those involved in animal agriculture build careers and identities through their exploitation. Therefore, capitalism or animal welfare are not considered legitimate or meaningful means for liberation because they rest on an inherent inequality and hierarchy (Best et al., 2007; Nibert, 2017). Capitalism does not alleviate poverty and inequality, it creates poverty and inequality; capitalism does not feed the malnourished or undernourished, it creates malnourishment and undernourishment. If capitalism is the only vehicle to drive technological alternative animal products into the mainstream, then it is a doomed pursuit.

Instead, capitalism, or any centralized governmental, political-economic body, should constantly be actively resisted and activists should aim to replace it with anarchy “towards greater freedom, peace, and ecological harmony” (Best et al., 2007). Food systems should be built around people’s needs with the mode of production in line with community-identified goals (White, 2017). People do not need IVM or highly processed foods. So instead of a “pig in the backyard” model to keep pigs as donor animals for cells to create IVM (Van der Weele & Dreissen, 2013), perhaps a “garden in the backyard” model should be promoted, or a community garden cultivated and shared by all. This also implies decentralization, community autonomy, and geographic emancipation. This is what Richard White (2017) refers to as “critical vegan praxis with anarchism.” Such a nonhierarchical and cooperative approach to food production and consumption helps address the limits of an uncritical animal-free diet as an alternative to capitalism. To some, this stance may seem naive in an equal but opposite way to using capitalism for total liberation. But this is the sort of critical eye that should be set on technological fixes. An “ideal” society is worth imagining and striving for.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the point is that the tools to effect radical positive change already exist and are generally available. Part of the problem is that global food corporations—many of the very same companies those at the GFI conferences are working with and portraying in a positive light—control the supply and distribution of these products. There is simply no reason to believe that such companies will suddenly become benevolent regarding alternative animal products, human hunger or nutrition, or animal or environmental liberation. Yet, GFI seems to brag about working with numerous large corporations, including big animal agribusiness. And, apparently, the larger the corporation the better. The reason being that larger entities have more resources to further research and promotion of alternative animal products. While perhaps true, GFI appears willing to accept and promote any and all-comers—as long as a person or business is willing to financially support GFI, GFI seems willing to support the capital lender regardless of the source. This is a naive, misguided, and dangerous approach to animal protection.

This analysis has provided evidence, via the words of animal agribusiness, corporate representatives and other industry insiders, that they clearly do not intend to significantly change their business practices. Alternative animal products are a distraction from a just and equitable world in favor of fetishes of money and meat. Promoting alternative animal products promotes consumerism, presuming that people can buy their way out of crises involving irresponsible production and consumption. Right here and right now, consumers and activists must resist and reject the trend of alternative animal products and the corporate food system, and instead rebuild foodways in an anarchist fashion, one that reflects a future free from hierarchy and coercion, built around peace and interspecies mutual aid, not exploitation.

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**Book Review: Cimatti, F. and C. Salzani (Eds.).
(2020). *Animality in Contemporary Italian
Philosophy*. Palgrave MacMillan.**

Ermanno Castanò¹

¹ Laboratorio Archeologia Filosofica, Rome, Italy.

At the beginning of the new millennium two texts were published that profoundly impacted the terms and concepts of the “animal turn,” the growing attention of contemporary philosophy on the question of the animal: *The Open: Man and Animal* by Giorgio Agamben and *The Animal That Therefore I Am* by Jacques Derrida.

These works have contributed to pushing a part of Animal Studies toward a focus on the nature of animality which continues to be one pillar of Critical Animal Studies (CAS). In this turning point that characterized world culture, Italian philosophy played a central role, pushed by—among others—Agamben’s work, and bridged its presumed gap with the English-speaking one, that focused on the animals since the work of Peter Singer and Tom Regan.

Animality in Contemporary Italian Philosophy is a book of collected essays which reconstruct the unique way Italian philosophy has reflected on the question of the animal. It references well-known names from “Italian Theory” such as Agamben, Roberto Esposito, and Antonio Negri. At the same time, it also focuses on lesser-known authors, who are introduced to an English readership. The book aims to contribute to the international debate on animality through the specificity of Italian thought, showing both its high points and the marginality it has sometimes suffered, which preserved its alternative to Cartesian modernity. The editors of the volume, Carlo Salzani and Felice Cimatti, are two Italian philosophers who have garnered considerable attention in Italy and abroad thanks to their groundbreaking studies. They have enriched the volume with an introduction and two essays. The volume includes works by foremost Italian thinkers who deal with

animality, and at the same time all voices share a common perspective, which is unpacked in the book's introduction and Cimatti's first essay.

The guiding thread of the volume is that Italian philosophy (with its ancient roots) has acted as an alternative to Cartesianism. Today, as its mechanistic paradigm wanes, it speaks to the present with renewed vigor. In short, Italian philosophy has never been Cartesian. When, in fact, Descartes articulated a theoretical system founded on the ontological division between *res cogitans* and *res extensa* (man and animal), he found fertile ground in German and French philosophy, but not in Italy, where Giambattista Vico firmly criticized this dualism. While Vico's philosophy would go almost entirely unnoticed outside the peninsula, this ushered in an era (the 17th century) where Italy and Italian philosophy was lost to the periphery of modern Europe.

Cimatti traces how this anti-Cartesian paradigm had its cornerstones in thinkers such as Dante Alighieri, Francis of Assisi and Niccolò Machiavelli and reached its highest level of conflict with Giordano Bruno, who affirmed the identity of God and Nature well before Spinoza. Cimatti also shows how the Italian tradition embodies a path of Western thought of Nature that the murder of Bruno has violently disrupted. Nonetheless, the anti-Cartesian possibility, which had been rejected and sidelined for centuries, suddenly reemerges in the twentieth century in the work of thinkers such as Antonio Gramsci and Pier Paolo Pasolini. Their almost Dionysiac immanentism rejects the idea of an unbridgeable separation between humans and nature, or thought and body. This perspective points the way toward new paths in our society, whose relationship to animality and nature is now so deeply in crisis.

The book advances through three sections. The first, following Cimatti's essay, continues with Luisella Battaglia's essay on the thought of Aldo Capitini, called the "Italian Gandhi." Capitini believed in non-violence concerning the relationships with animals envisioning a moral consideration that embraces all sentient beings. The following is a long essay from Niccolò Bertuzzi and Giorgio Losi (one of the Italian translators of *Total Liberation* by CAS co-founder Steven Best) that offers a complete overview of Italian anti-speciesist trends and organizations, from the mainstream to the more radical, that includes well known activists like Marco Reggio, editor of the Italian translation of Rasmus Rahbek Simonsen's (2012) *Queer Vegan Manifesto* (originally published in the *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*),

Marco Maurizi, activist and philosopher, and Massimo Filippi, editor of the journal *Liberazioni. Rivista di critica antispecista*, also present as authors in the book reviewed here.

Carlo Salzani, the co-editor of the book, dedicates a section to Giorgio Agamben's thought. According to Salzani, animality occupies a central point in Agambenian reflection as sovereignty is nothing but the "anthropological machine" that separates man and animal, placing the former's dominion over the latter. Only a thought capable of going beyond such opposition can disable this machine and cancel out its deadly effects on both human and nonhuman animals, thus moving towards the idea of a life as destituent power.

Matías Saidel and Diego Rossello's essay examines Roberto Esposito's philosophy. Although he is not directly involved in anti-speciesism or a reflection on animality, Esposito has nevertheless engaged in a deconstruction of political devices to highlight the harmful attempts to immunize the human from any "contamination" of "the animal." A similar subject, linked to the "posthuman" perspective, is dealt with in the paper by Giovanni Leghissa.

Marco Maurizi works off the Frankfurt School by elaborating the implications of the human/animal and reason/nature dialectic. His essay traces the history of Italian Marxism, showing how these problems are frequently present from Labriola to the post-workerists like Antonio Negri, and outlines the perspectives and unresolved issues of the debate.

The book continues with Federica Giardini's essay connecting animality with sexual difference as developed by Italian feminist thinkers such as Adriana Cavarero, Rosi Braidotti and Carla Lonzi, claiming that both animals and women need liberation from patriarchy, a notion also fundamental to CAS. This second section closes with Alma Massaro's paper illustrating the attention to animals found in Paolo De Benedetti's theology who perceives them as pure and "edenic" beings that, unlike men, are incapable of wickedness.

The third section opens with an essay by Massimo Filippi, who deconstructs the paradigm of the slaughterhouse and the sacrificial policy according to which the very notion of human rational Subject is an effect of the anthropocentric separation of humans from animals, based on the consumption of the latter as merely flesh. Even the biological concept of "species" is, for Filippi, only a device to separate humans from other living

beings otherwise connected in the continuum of life. The whole capitalistic society is anthropocentric in its main core. His reflection, inspired by philosophers such as Agamben, Derrida, and Haraway, indicates how overcoming anthropocentrism can only occur in an animal-political form of life as a joyful and sensual hybrid.

Following this is the essay by Roberto Marchesini (editor of the review *Animal Studies: Rivista Italiana di Antispecismo* and member of the International Critical Animal Studies Network) who demonstrates the presence of animal subjectivity through scientific and philosophical ethology; and then that by Laura Bazzicalupo who interprets the Anthropocene through Foucauldian categories as a biopolitical battle for the control of animality and biological life by political and economic devices.

The book closes with the brief overview by Valentina Sonzogni who examines several cases of speciesism in contemporary Italian art, discussing artworks made of dead animals and, through them, documents the insensitivity to the pain of others characteristic of some artists. Finally, Leonardo Caffo, a prominent vegan and anti-speciesist voice in the media, articulates an ethical vision of a relationship with animals that is no longer instrumental but carried out “only for them,” insisting that the time has come to talk about animality without any relation with human purposes (however morally good or socially revolutionary). *Animality in Contemporary Italian Philosophy* introduces some of the most prominent Italian philosophers engaged in animal studies to an English-speaking audience. It is an indispensable resource written by highly respected researchers and addressed to those who care about nonhuman animals and our relationship with them.

Author Biographies

Ermanno Castanò teaches Philosophy and is the author of (2018) *Agamben e l'animale. La politica dalla norma all'eccezione* (*Agamben and the Animal. Politics from the Norm to the Exception*) and (2011) *Ecologia e potere. Un saggio su Murray Bookchin* (*Ecology and Power. An Essay on Murray Bookchin*).

Janet (Jay) O'Shea is author of *Risk, Failure, Play: What Dance Reveals about Martial Arts Training* (2019, Oxford University Press) and *At Home in the World: Bharata Natyam on the Global Stage* (2007, Wesleyan University Press). She is currently writing a book on risk, vulnerability, and activism entitled *Bodies on the Line: Physicality, Sentiment, and Social Justice*. She is Professor of Dance Studies at University of California, Los Angeles.

Nathan Poirier is a PhD student in Sociology with specializations in Animal Studies and Women's & Gender Studies, and previous master's degrees in mathematics and anthrozoology. He also is co-director for Students for Critical Animal Studies, and Director of Publicity for the Institute for Critical Animal Studies. Nathan is currently planning a dissertation to investigate links between proponents of "in vitro meat" and animal agribusiness.

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

(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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