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### **Speciesistic Veganism: An Anthropocentric Argument**

A.G. Holdier

In the cold, hard lands of the Eryn Muil, it is easy to lose one’s way; for a hobbit like Frodo Baggins—pursued by enemies and burdened with a heavy purpose—his chance confrontation with the creature Gollum in those dread hills offered him a merciful opportunity to choose cooperation over conflict. By sparing the life of the pathetic creature, even against the advice of his friend Samwise Gamgee, Frodo managed to make common cause with his adversary, convincing Gollum to help guide them on their quest even as the creature continued to disagree with them about the One Ring. By the end of Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*, circumstances made those philosophical differences re-erupt into conflict, but for a time, Frodo’s quest to defeat evil was aided by his enemy.

Vegans would do well to learn from Frodo.

Given that a key concern for vegan movements is the protection of animals who would otherwise be mistreated and eaten, philosophical and political questions of animal rights or animal welfare can be practically (and temporarily) sublimated to the more immediate danger faced by factory-farmed creatures. Much like Frodo relying on the temporary assistance of a philosophical opponent to achieve a pragmatic end, vegans should consider shifting their immediate attention away from any philosophical disagreements with carnists to find a common cause that can more directly benefit the well-being of all conscious creatures.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, a more expedient route to the preservation of would-be slaughter victims lies in an argument based on a premise that most carnists already affirm:

1. Human flourishing should generally be promoted.

Regardless of any ethical problems that may or may not exist with this sort of anthropocentrism, if such a line of thinking could be pragmatically co-opted into the service of vegan goals, then tangible goods could still be accomplished when lives are nonetheless saved. Therefore, what follows seeks to show how a *de facto* form of veganism grounded on a rejection of large-scale food production industries can accomplish the anthropocentric flourishing of (1) in a way that simultaneously, if coincidentally, defends the lives of non-human creatures.

Altogether, four different lines of unsettling evidence each provide good reasons to criticize standard Western animal processing industries given that:

2. If an industry does not generally promote human flourishing, then that industry should not be supported.

“Generally promote” assumes that the costs to human flourishing are outweighed by any simultaneous benefits, whereas “support” includes such actions as the purchasing and consuming of the industry’s products. Given that human factory workers are regularly and severely physically compromised in animal-processing plants, human entrepreneurs are frequently victimized and disenfranchised by monopolistic business practices in the animal-processing industry, human community members are physically endangered by the presence of meat-packing factories in their neighborhoods, and human communities world-wide are threatened by the overall effect of concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) on climate change, there is considerable evidence that:

3. The Western animal processing industries (of meat, eggs, and dairy products, hereafter, “APIs”) contribute in several ways to behaviors that undermine human flourishing.

Any one of these claims is sufficiently significant to give grounds for abstention from the consumer chain that funds such consequences; therefore, the sum total of the evidence for (3) indicates that the simplest course of action to simultaneously undermine each is to adopt a vegan diet—regardless of one’s views on the metaphysical or moral status of non-human animals. The remainder of this chapter aims to develop four lines of evidence for (3) before analyzing (3) against possible benefits of APIs in light of (2); in short, this chapter seeks to determine whether speciesistic veganism might turn out to be a useful stopgap measure to reduce suffering more effectively and pragmatically while philosophical debates continue.

### **Employee Safety**

Worker endangerment in factory farms and slaughterhouses appears in two primary forms, given that employees of the meat, egg, and dairy industries suffer both physically and psychologically from their involvement in the modern system of animal processing. Together, there is more than sufficient evidence to conclude that:

- 3a. APIs create dangerous and deadly working conditions for human employees.

With more than 60 billion pounds of meat processed in a normal month,<sup>2</sup> the economic focus on manufacturing speed and production streamlining in APIs leads to increased rates of accidents to the workforce; overall, of the half-million workers in U.S. slaughterhouses,<sup>3</sup> more than one-quarter are injured each year to an extent that requires more than simple first aid.<sup>4</sup> A recent report from the Southern Poverty Law Center discovered that nearly 75% of workers in Alabama poultry factories suffered some significant form of workplace injury:

In spite of many factors that lead to undercounting of injuries in poultry plants, the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) reported an injury rate of 5.9 percent for poultry processing workers in 2010, a rate that is more than 50 percent higher than the 3.8 percent injury rate for all U.S. workers. Poultry workers often endure debilitating pain in their hands, gnarled fingers, chemical burns, and respiratory problems – tell-tale signs of repetitive motion injuries, such as carpal tunnel syndrome, and other ailments that flourish in these plants.<sup>5</sup>

Unfortunately, these numbers are by no means out-of-the-ordinary for other forms of the animal-processing industry.

While some of these injuries heal with few complications and at least some might be compensated for via employee insurance (though this is no guarantee), chronic maladies characteristic of processing factory jobs, like repetitive motion disorder, have seen incidence rates thirty times higher than comparable industries,<sup>6</sup> a recent CDC study found that 57% of interviewed participants from poultry processing plants reported at least one sustained adverse musculo-skeletal symptom,<sup>7</sup> and the rate at which cumulative trauma injuries are sustained in meatpacking plants is roughly thirty-three times higher

than the national average.<sup>8</sup> Regardless, USDA regulations were updated in 2014 via the HACCP Inspection Models Project (HIMP) to further increase allowable line speeds in poultry processing factories by 25%, from 140 to 175 birds per minute, while simultaneously decreasing funding for federal inspectors by up to 75%—despite the fact that the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights heard testimony concerning the potential dangers of the changes<sup>9</sup> and a petition pleading for the White House to reconsider the new policy garnered nearly 220,000 signatures.<sup>10</sup> Because injury rates were already abnormally high under previous conditions, it seems axiomatic that they should only be expected to further increase under the new, higher-stress, more risk-adverse conditions.

It is also worth noting that a 2005 Human Rights Watch Report on the U.S. meat and poultry industry charged that companies “administer their workers’ compensation programs by systematically failing to recognize and report claims, delaying claims, denying claims, and threatening and taking reprisals against workers who file claims for compensation for workplace injuries,”<sup>11</sup> meaning that workers’ compensation for injuries is by no means guaranteed. Given that a sizable portion of factory employees are undocumented foreign laborers who are less likely to complain about working conditions lest they be deported,<sup>12</sup> the so-called “Climate of Fear” concerning speaking out against these sorts of working conditions is unsurprising.<sup>13</sup> In terms of both injuries (ranging from tendonitis to amputations) and fatalities, various APIs routinely rank as providing some of the most dangerous jobs in the United States.<sup>14</sup>

While the reasons for these dangerous conditions are complex, the extremely high industry-wide employee turnover rate each year only enhances this problem, as plants are staffed with largely inexperienced workers.<sup>15</sup> A 2005 Government Accountability Office (GAO) study

reported that “Labor turnover in meat and poultry plants is quite high, and in some worksites can exceed 100 percent in a year as workers move to other employers or return to their native countries.”<sup>16</sup> Kandel and Parrado reported that same year that “estimates of annual employee turnover in the meat processing industry range from 60 to 140 percent or in some cases significantly higher.”<sup>17</sup> In the last decade, employee replacement has become steadily more frequent, with rates as high as 200% being common in slaughterhouses given certain parameters.<sup>18</sup> Altogether, when hazardous conditions are compounded by extremely fast speed expectations and untrained employees, high rates of injury are bound to result; this is precisely what the available data indicates.

However, physical effects are not the only harms to workers that must be considered; exposure to, and participation in, the violence of this workplace also leads to profound psychological damage to which anyone with anthropocentric concerns must attend. The stress to maintain production speeds already discussed is often unbearable and illegal drug use is not unheard of as a supplement to try and meet an employer’s demands.<sup>19</sup> Even more significantly, though, is that the work itself has disturbing psychological effects, including anxiety, depression, paranoia, personality disintegration, and dissociation as a result of a variety of unhealthy coping mechanisms.<sup>20</sup> According to the testimony of one poultry factory worker, there is indeed much to cope with:

You are murdering helpless birds by the thousands (75,000 to 90,000 a night).

You are a killer...Out of desperation you send your mind elsewhere so that you don’t end up like those guys that lose it. Like the guy that fell on his knees praying to God for forgiveness. Or the guy they hauled off to the mental hospital that kept having nightmares that chickens were after him. I’ve had those, too.<sup>21</sup>

Or consider this story from a “sticker” on a kill line in a slaughterhouse in Iowa whose job it was to kill pigs and drain them of their blood:

The worst thing, worse than the physical danger, is the emotional toll. If you work in that stick pit for any period of time, you develop an attitude that lets you kill things but doesn't let you care. You may look a hog in the eye that's walking around down in the blood pit with you and think, God, that really isn't a bad-looking animal. You may want to pet it. Pigs down on the kill floor have come up and nuzzled me like a puppy. Two minutes later I had to kill them—beat them to death with a pipe. I can't care.<sup>22</sup>

And though anecdotal evidence can be a shaky foundation for an argument, the prevalence and commonality of stories like these is suggestive of a widespread problem. Stephen Thierman has pointed out that working conditions in slaughterhouses are heavily predicated on additional dehumanizing psychological pressures brought about through the partitioning of the workforce based on features like race and socioeconomic status<sup>23</sup> and Jennifer Dillard has catalogued many pertinent examples of the physical consequences of such an environment in her work to seek financial compensation for workers subjected to these sorts of conditions.<sup>24</sup> Perhaps the most damning piece of evidence in this regard, however, may well be a 2012 study of Turkish workers which concluded that “butchers, especially those who work in slaughterhouses, have [statistically demonstrable] higher levels of psychological disorders than the office workers” to whom they were compared.<sup>25</sup> Similar pressures were evidenced at slaughterhouses in Denmark by a 1991 study that not only observed a differentially higher proportion of stress-induced symptoms in workers holding positions on the kill line (versus those in the stables, for example), but that also concluded with the suggestion that the abnormally high strike rates in Danish slaughterhouses (compared to other industries) might be related to the relative lack of coping mechanisms for

such a stressful environment.<sup>26</sup> Still, at this point, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA's) regulations for the meat packing industry include no considerations for the psychological wellbeing of the employees.<sup>27</sup>

Altogether, whether considering the high rate of physical injuries to human workers in animal processing facilities or the suspiciously strong connection of this form of employment to psychological disorders, the supposition of (3a) is well founded.

### **Employee Victimization**

To consider dangers of a different sort, the reality of the misanthropic dangers of APIs expressed in (3) is likewise undergirded by standard business practices within the largely monopolistic animal processing industry that contribute heavily to the frequent abuse and marginalization of laborers and businesspersons located on the lower end of the socioeconomic spectrum. Indeed, it is not hard to conclude that:

- 3b. APIs contribute to the economic disenfranchisement of human workers and entrepreneurs.

Not only is this the case for migrant workers as discussed in the previous section, but also for farmers who are forced into manipulative contractual relationships functionally similar to indentured servitude.

As mentioned above, contemporary industrialized husbandry practices rely heavily on migrant and illegal immigrant workers to maintain staffing in the sub-par working conditions of many slaughterhouses. In addition to physical dangers, this work can also lead disproportionately



to common abusive economic arrangements for minority workers, including those of legal working status. Consider, for instance, how a 2012 study of Latino meatpackers in Nebraska determined that roughly 50% of workers had not heard of the Nebraska Meatpackers Bill of Rights but had received negative information regarding unions; roughly a third had failed to receive information about workers' compensation during their orientation, and at least 12% were unaware of their hours or their pay rate until after they had begun working.<sup>28</sup> Recent governmental approaches to immigration policy have only encouraged worker abuses of this sort, given that "The single-minded focus on immigration enforcement without regard to violations of workplace laws has enabled employers with rampant labor and employment violations to profit by employing workers who are terrified to complain about substandard wages, unsafe conditions, and lack of benefits, or to demand their right to bargain collectively."<sup>29</sup> Effectively, this sort of exploitation amounts to a contemporary rebirth of age-old silencing and slavery-type practices based on the disempowerment of the human labor force.

Surprisingly, this is also the case for business owners themselves, given the manipulative character of many of the contracts that farmers are expected to sign in order to do business with large conglomerates. Particularly prevalent among chicken farmers (though similar contractual arrangements have become increasingly common with pig farmers and, to a lesser extent, cow ranchers),<sup>30</sup> the nature of contract-farming arrangements means that production is closely coordinated with the integrating firm (such as Tyson Foods or Perdue Farms) that will eventually process the animal into a marketable consumable product; what this leads to is an arrangement where the farmer will "provide capital (housing and equipment), utilities, and labor. They receive chicks, feed, transportation, veterinary services, and technical guidance from integrators, who pay contract fees to the growers to raise the chicks to market weights."<sup>31</sup> Essentially, the farmer

owns the equipment and does the job of raising the chickens, but must comply with the strict regulations laid out by his or her integrator because the farmer does not own the chickens themselves.

The effect of this arrangement is twofold: firstly, the farmer must bear most of the unexpected costs of raising the chickens to market weight as well as pander to any additional requirements levied by the integrator as a condition of renewing a contract (including, as detailed in Jonathan Shepard's 2010 documentary *The Sharecroppers*, expensive equipment upgrades that drive farmers further into debt, thereby deepening their reliance on their relationship with the integrating firm). As Mary Hendrickson and Harvey S. James point out, "bucking the integrating firm's production standards is not an option for farmers stuck with 10-year loans on buildings that are a quarter of a million dollar investment"<sup>32</sup>—an investment, it is worth noting, for which the multi-million-dollar chicken processing company is not financially responsible but from which the company reaps the majority of its profits.

Not only does the debt burden fall to the individual farmer, but the farmer's compensation from this complicated system is typically drawn from a "tournament-style" payment structure where farmers from a given geographical area compete against each other in an annual ranking system designed to reward low-cost production.<sup>33</sup> Based on the inconsistencies of year-to-year farming and the impossibilities of predicting output rates of animal weight (much less predicting one's own annual output in tandem with one's neighbors), it is next to impossible for farmers to engage in any real long-term financial planning. As Dudley Butler, former administrator at the Department of Agriculture said in the 2015 documentary *Cock Fight*, "all the tournament system is, is a cost-controlling device for the companies. Sure, they give a bonus to somebody over here, but then they give a discount to somebody over here." In short, the farmers

must bear the majority of the costs while reaping a minority of the profits; it should come as little surprise, then, that in 2001, 71% of U.S. farmers who grew only chickens lived at or below the federal poverty line with little demographic improvement since.<sup>34</sup>

A secondary effect of this unnaturally complex economic arrangement between animal farmers and the companies that own and process the animals themselves is the degradation of farmers' moral compasses as a result of their economic instability. As James and Hendricks discovered in 2007, "perceived economic pressures are correlated with a greater willingness of farmers to tolerate unethical conduct," including the mistreatment of "the land, animals or the food they produce."<sup>35</sup> Although a purely anthropocentric argument might ignore this nonetheless interesting fact, vegans concerned about animal rights or welfare would do well to pay attention to this human-centered harm and its spillover effects to other species.<sup>36</sup> Even apart from increased toleration of unethical conduct, economic pressures on laborers from the cradle to the grave of a food animal's life give a strong indication that claim towards economic disenfranchisement expressed in (3b) is sound.

### **Community Safety**

Notably, workers are not the only human beings to experience adverse effects in connection with standard practices of the animal-processing industry. To take a wider perspective on the scope of (3) and its ramifications, community members in neighborhoods surrounding slaughterhouses and other meat-processing facilities are negatively affected by APIs to a degree that is increasingly confirmatory of the next premise:

- 3c. APIs contribute to the physical endangerment of neighboring community members.

This can be demonstrated in at least two ways: firstly through common practices that can lead to contaminated products, but secondly (and more problematically) via crime rates that statistically increase in areas adjacent to abattoirs.

Not only do increased line speeds raise risk factors for employee safety, but also they simultaneously lower reasonable quality expectations for the end result of the production chain as unavoidable inspector oversights impact a greater percentage of workflow output in system that prompted Joy to remark that “it appears that in our nation’s meatpacking plants, contaminated meat is the rule, rather than the exception.”<sup>37</sup> When inedible contaminants and pathogens are accidentally introduced into the production line, faster speeds make it more difficult for inspectors to catch each mistake; for example, rates of food poisoning cases associated with contaminated meat products have increased at rates roughly comparable to chain speed rate increases inside meat production facilities.<sup>38</sup> In the words of a USDA inspector for a pork production facility testing the pilot HIMP program (previously mentioned in connection with poultry line speed increases), “contamination such as hair, toenails, cystic kidneys, and bladder stems has increased under HIMP. Line speeds don’t make it any easier to detect contamination. Most of the time they are running so fast it is impossible to see anything on the carcass.”<sup>39</sup> This same report indicated that the plant in question was, at least at times, processing in excess of 1200 animal carcasses per hour (one carcass every three seconds). Not only is this sort of contamination thoroughly unsurprising given the working conditions inside the factory,

but it also has wide-ranging effects on the eventual health of the human consumers of the animal meat products.

However, on the local level, an even more troubling side effect of the meat-production industry is indicated by the results of a study published in 2009 on the spillover effects that slaughterhouses have on the communities in which they are located. Even when controlling for variables like unemployment or demography, “the findings indicate that slaughterhouse employment increases total arrest rates, arrests for violent crimes, arrests for rape, and arrests for other sex offenses in comparison with other industries.”<sup>40</sup> The correlation between abattoir employment and sexual crimes, particularly rape, was especially strong, leading the researchers to suggest that their data may imply that “the work done within slaughterhouses might spillover to violence against other less powerful groups, such as women and children,” a point that feminist care ethicists like Carol Adams have been arguing for years.<sup>41</sup> Dubbed the “Sinclair Effect”—after the author of the landmark novel *The Jungle* that detailed the dismal working conditions in the American meatpacking industry of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century—the product of this phenomenon is of acute anthropocentric concern regardless of one’s views on the morality of animal abuse itself.

Notably, popular-level considerations have already begun to take slaughterhouse employment into consideration during courtroom deliberations in criminal trials. Dillard reports how in two cases from the early 2000s “the murders at issue were performed in a manner similar to the way in which an animal at the defendant’s former place of employment would be slaughtered,”<sup>42</sup> making the habits of the defendant connected to his profession particularly relevant. Given that non-institutionalized forms of animal abuse have long been recognized as carrying implications for similarly violent attitudes towards human beings,<sup>43</sup> such a conclusion is

hardly a large leap. Similarly, with increased risks of disease and localized violence evidently connected with current abattoir realities, the case for (3c) is likewise a short jump.

### **Community (and Global) Victimization**

Although also problematic on a local level, the most widespread anthropocentric consequence of the contemporary industrialized animal husbandry paradigm is the significant set of contributions made by APIs to global climate change. While relatively small-scale environmental effects have been evidenced in areas directly around large-scale animal processing facilities, global-level concerns about land degradation and deforestation, air and water pollution, and subsequent biodiversity instability make a convincing case for:

- 3d. APIs contribute significantly to anthropogenic climate change.

It is worth noting that, if true, the potential ramifications of this consequence of APIs could affect entire human populations, even if they abstained from consuming animal products raised in any format.

On the smallest level, in this regard, Fitzgerald has documented a plethora of studies concerning the degradation of the immediate environment following the development of large-scale CAFOs, largely due to the high amount of manure that is necessarily produced in industrialized farms with thousands of animals inside.<sup>44</sup> On average, a CAFO must process roughly fifty pounds of liquid and solid waste matter from each of its steers on a daily basis;<sup>45</sup> standard industry practice is to deposit the manure into large, frequently open-air “lagoons” where it is stored until it can be recycled as fertilizer, posing a significant environmental risk in

the interim period.<sup>46</sup> Disease-causing microbes flourish in such systems and a 2001 report from the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Clean Water Network detailed many of the possible ways that lagoon systems can fail and contaminate local neighborhoods' air and water supplies:

People living near factory farms are placed at risk. Hundreds of gases are emitted by lagoons and the irrigation pivots associated with sprayfields, including ammonia (a toxic form of nitrogen), hydrogen sulfide, and methane. The accumulation of gases formed in the process of breaking down animal waste is toxic, oxygen consuming, and potentially explosive, and farm workers' exposure to lagoon gases has even caused deaths. People living close to hog operations have reported headaches, runny noses, sore throats, excessive coughing, respiratory problems, nausea, diarrhea, dizziness, burning eyes, depression, and fatigue.<sup>47</sup>

And even if health risks and environmental concerns were set aside, the aesthetic experience of CAFO exposure is more than mildly unpleasant; as Eric Schlosser eloquently describes the hometown of one of the nation's largest CAFOs, "You can smell Greeley, Colorado, long before you can see it. The smell is hard to forget but not easy to describe, a combination of live animals, manure, and dead animals being rendered into dog food. The smell is worse during the summer months, blanketing Greeley day and night like an invisible fog."<sup>48</sup> Altogether, it should not be surprising that a variety of movements have sprung up to challenge the encroachment of large-scale operations into rural community life.<sup>49</sup>

On a wider scale, the polluting side-effects of CAFO-style farms spread far beyond the local communities where the factories themselves are located. Though estimates of the overall quantities of greenhouse gases (GHGs) produced by industrialized farming operations vary, two conclusions do not seem to be in dispute: firstly, that meat and dairy operations account for the majority of food-related GHG emissions (in most cases at least 50%), and, secondly, that livestock operations are one of the largest single industries that contribute to GHG emissions

internationally—ranging from 18 to 20% of overall GHG emissions in both the United States and in Europe.<sup>50</sup> A single cow can produce more volatile organic compounds that contribute to methane and ammonia emissions than do many small cars, and New Zealand’s cattle and sheep industry, for one example, is responsible for 43% of the country’s overall GHG emissions.<sup>51</sup> Given that global demand for meat and milk products is not only increasing but expected to double by 2050, atmospheric conditions unfortunately show no sign of benefiting from a potential downturn in the livestock industry that would reduce the level of pollutants in the air.<sup>52</sup> As has been detailed in a wide variety of other settings, potential consequences of the greenhouse effect are already affecting human livelihoods around the world.

Further environmental concerns over contemporary animal processing methods are found in second-order impacts such as the necessary land used to facilitate standard industry practices. The thousands of animals in industrialized farms require large amounts of food, typically in the form of cereal grains; it has been estimated that more than a third of the world’s cereal output is dedicated to farm animal feed,<sup>53</sup> despite the fact that “it would be much more efficient for humans to consume cereals directly since much of the energy value is lost during conversion from plant to animal matter.”<sup>54</sup> Even though livestock already occupy 20% of terrestrial animal biomass<sup>55</sup> and 80% of anthropogenic land use overall,<sup>56</sup> the continuous need to expand growing operations to meet factory demands has been a significant motivation for deforestation in places like the Brazilian Amazonian region.<sup>57</sup>

Not only does the destruction of habitats in this way release stored carbon reserves into the atmosphere at higher rates,<sup>58</sup> but that devastation also poses a significant risk to global biodiversity. As humans continue to encroach on wild habitats, native species are continually put at risk—not only has the WWF listed livestock as a potential threat for 37% of its listed



terrestrial ecoregions, but twenty-three of Conservation International's thirty-five emergency-level global hotspots for biodiversity have been reportedly affected by livestock and livestock-related projects.<sup>59</sup> Finally, limited resource consumption is characteristic of the rather inefficient meat-processing industry; as Matsuoka and Sorenson summarize, "Producing meat is more energy-consumptive than producing vegetables for consumption, requiring far higher amounts of water, at least 16 times as much fossil fuel, and producing 25 times as much carbon dioxide emissions."<sup>60</sup>

Given the myriad impacts on global climate change to which these industries contribute, not only is the soundness of (3d) easy to defend, but it also is a fourth example of a problematic consequence of the industry poignantly affecting human beings.

### **The Counterpoint**

However, it might well be the case that, as significant as they are, these costs could be superseded by sufficient benefits resultant from the animal production industry. A comprehensive anthropocentric analysis must consider both benefits and harms to human populations, and it is the case that, broadly construed:

4. APIs contribute in several ways to actions that do not undermine human flourishing.

This would be defensible, firstly, insofar as it is the case that:

- 4a. APIs create jobs for human workers.

Secondly (and most prominently), (4) is also strengthened by:

- 4b. APIs create popular animal products that create pleasure for human consumers.

In the United States alone, the meat and poultry processing industries provide jobs for nearly a half-million human beings.<sup>61</sup> Considering that only roughly 7% of the U.S. population identifies as either vegetarian or vegan, nearly 296.5 million consumers in the US alone enjoy some form of animal-based food regularly—often because the taste of the meal is described as enjoyable.<sup>62</sup> Though gainful employment and pleasant aesthetic experiences might ultimately be outweighed by sufficiently significant concerns, they are factors that cannot, in principle, be ignored.

### ***Speciesistic de facto Veganism***

Recall the argument to this point:

1. Human flourishing should generally be promoted.
2. If an industry does not generally promote human flourishing, then that industry should not be supported.
3. The Western animal processing industries (of meat, eggs, and dairy products, hereafter “APIs”) contribute in several ways to actions that undermine human flourishing.

- 3a. APIs create dangerous and deadly working conditions for human employees.
- 3b. APIs contribute to the economic disenfranchisement of human workers and entrepreneurs.
- 3c. APIs contribute to the physical endangerment of neighboring community members.
- 3d. APIs contribute significantly to anthropogenic climate change.
- 4. APIs contribute in several ways to actions that do not undermine human flourishing.
  - 4a. APIs create jobs for human workers.
  - 4b. APIs create popular animal products that create pleasure for human consumers.

We are now at the point where the costs of (3) can be considered in light of the benefits of (4) to determine what the sum effect of the animal processing industry is on human welfare and the potential for human flourishing. Given that an instance of employment is not an inherent good (because of any number of possible workplace injustices that could, in fact, damage a life to a greater degree than a paycheck would assist it) the benefits of (4a) are directly countermanded by the nature of the jobs provided as detailed in (3a): in more than a few cases, workers' physical and mental ailments are sufficiently debilitating such that it likely would have been better for the worker in question to have continued looking for a different job rather than settling for a job at the trauma-inducing slaughterhouse.

Secondly, it seems unlikely that the simple aesthetic pleasure of taste on which (4b) is grounded will ever overrule the harmful total weight of (3a-d). Granting for the sake of argument that meat is, in fact, aesthetically pleasurable, the noncompulsory nature of at least most aesthetic pleasures makes such a benefit irrelevant in light of the significant ethical problems that cause the experience in question.<sup>63</sup> If no physical pleasures are taken to rationally predominate over concerns as drastic as those listed above, then it cannot be the case that an optional, fleeting pleasure outweighs a collection of substantial, long-lasting harms. That is to say that, regardless of how tasty animal meat is for some humans, the painful experiences, financial corruption, physical endangerment, and climate-based catastrophes to which that meat contributed in its production chain are, in fact, more significant. So much so that:

5. The sum benefits of APIs as listed in (4) are ethically outweighed by the sum costs of APIs as listed in (3).

Which, rephrased in light of (2), means:

6. Therefore, APIs do not generally promote human flourishing.

And, if human flourishing is indeed something to value as proposition (1) indicates, then we must conclude that:

7. Therefore, APIs should not be supported.

Which is precisely to say that the products of animal processing industries—in this case, the collection of Western industries that raise, process, harvest, and slaughter animals via concentrated, industrialized methods—should neither be purchased nor consumed.

Admittedly, this argument does not require a principled vegetarian or vegan conclusion, but rather a systematic rejection of animal outputs produced commercially in the most common Western method. Raising and butchering one’s own meat (or, similarly, eggs or dairy products) in one’s own backyard for one’s own consumption would not be open to criticism on these grounds—additional arguments not restricted to purely anthropocentric concerns would be required for the condemnation of such activities—but the sheer rarity of homegrown (and home-killed) options make this objection essentially irrelevant for most consumers.<sup>64</sup>

Importantly, one can ignore non-human animal rights and wellbeing entirely and still recognize, based on the argument presented here, that the current standard system of industrialized animal husbandry leads to human suffering. Consequently, even the most devout speciesist could still conclude, on the sole basis of his or her concern for *homo sapiens*, that a *de facto* vegan diet is morally obligatory in most Western contexts (wherever conditions [3a-d] sufficiently obtain). Therefore, much like Frodo temporarily making use of the pitiful Gollum to reach his goal of destroying the ring in the fires of Mount Doom, a speciesistic attitude can still be beneficially appropriated in the service of vegan goals. Consequently, if it contributes to the expedited prevention of creaturely slaughter, then animal welfarists can rest somewhat more comfortably on the pragmatic beachhead of this anthropocentric argument.

Suggested Index Entries: anthropocentrism, speciesism, CAFOs, factory/industrial farms, slaughterhouse worker safety, psychological damage,

slaughterhouse worker victimization, community safety, climate change, Sinclair effect,

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<sup>1</sup> Following Melanie Joy, *Why We Love Dogs, Eat Pigs, and Wear Cows: An Introduction to Carnism* (San Francisco: Conari Press, 2010), 28-30, a "carnist" is an individual who, on the basis of some ideology, chooses to eat meat.

<sup>2</sup> Economic Research Service, "Livestock and Meat Domestic Data," United States Department of Agriculture. Accessed 1/12/2016, <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/livestock-meat-domestic-data.aspx#26056>.

<sup>3</sup> Carey Biron, "Meatpacking Workers Fight "Unacceptable And Inhumane" Conditions," *Mintpress News*, March 27, 2014, <http://www.mintpressnews.com/meatpacking-workers-fight-unacceptable-and-inhumane-conditions/187409/>.

<sup>4</sup> Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the American Meal* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2002), 173 and 185.

<sup>5</sup> Tom Fritzsche, "Unsafe at These Speeds," *The Southern Poverty Law Center*, February 28, 2013, <https://www.splcenter.org/20130301/unsafe-these-speeds#summary>.

<sup>6</sup> Roger Horowitz, "Government, Industry Play the Numbers Game on Worker Safety in Meatpacking Plants," *LaborNotes*, June 13, 2008, <http://labornotes.org/2008/06/government-industry-play-numbers-game-worker-safety-meatpacking-plants>.

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, "Evaluation of Musculoskeletal Disorders and Traumatic Injuries Among Employees at a Poultry Processing Plant," by Kristin Musolin, et. al. <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/hhe/reports/pdfs/2012-0125-3204.pdf>, i.

<sup>8</sup> Schlosser, *Nation*, 173.

<sup>9</sup> Lydia Zuraw, "Inter-American Commission on Human Rights Hears Testimony on Poultry Worker Safety," *Food Safety News*, March 27, 2014, <http://www.foodsafetynews.com/2014/03/iachr-hearing/#.Vh9E7PIVhBd>.

<sup>10</sup> Biron, "Meatpacking".

<sup>11</sup> Lance Compa, *Blood, Sweat, and Fear: Workers' Rights in U.S. Meat and Poultry Plants* (Humans Rights Watch, 2004), 57.

<sup>12</sup> Atsuko Matsuoka and John Sorenson, "Human Consequences of Animal Exploitation: Needs for Redefining Social Welfare," *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare* XL, no. 4 (2013): 15.

<sup>13</sup> Fritzsche, "Unsafe".

<sup>14</sup> For example, in 2013 "Farmers, Ranchers, and Other Agricultural Managers" ranked as the 9<sup>th</sup> most dangerous industry with 21.5 fatalities per 100,000 full-time workers and "Fishers and Related Fishing Workers" ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> with 75 fatalities per 100,000 full-time workers, with preliminary data from 2014 indicating that fishing industry

fatality rates are further increasing. See U.S. Dept. of Labor, *National Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries in 2014 (Preliminary Results)* 2015, <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/foi.pdf>; Joy, *Introduction to Carnism*, 79-81.

<sup>15</sup> Gail Eisnitz, *Slaughterhouse: The Shocking Story of Greed, Neglect, and Inhumane Treatment Inside the U.S. Meat Industry* (Amherst: Prometheus, 2007), 62.

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office 2005, 7

<sup>17</sup> William Kandel and Emilio A. Parrado, "Restructuring of the US Meat Processing Industry and New Hispanic Migrant Destinations," *Population and Development Review* 31, no. 3 (2005): 458.

<sup>18</sup> Amy J. Fitzgerald, "A Social History of the Slaughterhouse: From Inception to Contemporary Implications," *Human Ecology Review* 17, no. 1 (2010): 64.

<sup>19</sup> Schlosser, *Nation*, 174.

<sup>20</sup> Matsuoka and Sorenson, "Human Consequences," 16-17; Joy, *Introduction to Carnism*, 82-85.

<sup>21</sup> Sandor Ellix Katz, *The Revolution Will Not Be Microwaved: Inside American's Underground Food Movements* (White River Junction: Chelsea Green, 2006), 258.

<sup>22</sup> Eisnitz, *Slaughterhouse*, 87.

<sup>23</sup> Stephen Thierman, "Apparatuses of Animality: Foucault Goes to a Slaughterhouse," *Foucault Studies* 9 (2010): 103-104.

<sup>24</sup> Jennifer Dillard, "Slaughterhouse Nightmare: Psychological Harm Suffered by Slaughterhouse Employees and the Possibility of Redress through Legal Reform," *Georgetown Journal on Poverty Law and Policy* 15, no. 2 (2008): 395-396.

<sup>25</sup> Abdurrahim Emhan et. al., "Psychological Symptom Profile of Butchers Working in Slaughterhouse and Retail Meat Packing Business: A Comparative Study," *The Journal of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine* 18, no. 2 (2012): 319.

<sup>26</sup> Tage Kristensen, "Sickness Absence and Work Strain Among Danish Slaughterhouse Workers: An Analysis of Absence from Work Regarded as Coping Behavior," *Social Science and Medicine* 32, no. 1 (1991): 24.

<sup>27</sup> U.S. Dept. of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Safety and Health Topics, "Meat Packing Industry – OSHA Standards," Accessed January 12, 2016. <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/meatpacking/standards.html>

<sup>28</sup> María Teresa Gastón, "Meatpacking Workers' Perceptions of Working Conditions, Psychological Contracts and Organizational Justice," (MA Thesis, University of Nebraska-Omaha, 2011): 30 and 47-49, <http://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/studentwork/9/>.

<sup>29</sup> R. Smith, A. Avendaño, and Martínez Ortega, *Iced Out: How Immigration Enforcement has Interfered with Workers' Rights* (Washington, DC: AFL-CIO, 2009), 5 <http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/laborunions/29/>. The whole of the report is worth reading as it details several examples of corrupt practices commonly used to arrest abused workers and leave abusive conditions unresolved rather than to address the abuse itself.

<sup>30</sup> Mary Hendrickson and Harvey S. James, "The Ethics of Constrained Choice: How the Industrialization of Agriculture Impacts Farming and Farmer Behavior," *University of Missouri Agricultural Economics Working Paper* (2004), 9. Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=567423> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.567423>.

<sup>31</sup> James MacDonald, *Financial Risks and Incomes in Contract Boiler Production* (The United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service, August 4, 2014), <http://ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2014-august/financial-risks-and-incomes-in-contract-boiler-production.aspx#.Vh9PXPIVhBf>.

<sup>32</sup> Hendrickson and James, "Constrained Choice," 13.

<sup>33</sup> MacDonald, "Financial Risks."

<sup>34</sup> The Pew Campaign to Reform Industrial Animal Agriculture 2013

<sup>35</sup> Harvey S. James and Mary Hendrickson, "Perceived Economic Pressures and Farmer Ethics," *University of Missouri Agricultural Economics Working Paper* (2007), 16-18. Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1007080> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1007080>.

<sup>36</sup> For example, standard operating procedures inside large-scale egg farms require non-egg-laying-male chicks to be killed, typically by being suffocated in a plastic bag (See Mylan Engel, "The Immorality of Eating Meat," in *The Moral Life: An Introductory Reader in Ethics and Literature*, ed. Louis P. Pojman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 884) or by being thrown into a meat grinder while still alive (Elisabeth Braw, "The Short, Brutal Life of Male Chickens," *Al Jazeera America*, February 20, 2015, <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/2/20/the-short-brutal-life-of-male-chickens.html>); neither of these are actions that would be easily promotable among the general

public, but the economic necessity of standard factory farm processes lead to their acceptance among farmers and workers.

<sup>37</sup> Joy, *Introduction to Carnism*, 76.

<sup>38</sup> Fitzgerald, "Social History," 64.

<sup>39</sup> Food Integrity Campaign, "WTF Hormel?! – Affidavit #2" *The Government Accountability Project*, accessed January 12, 2016, <http://www.foodwhistleblower.org/campaign/wtf-hormel/#affidavits>.

<sup>40</sup> A.J. Fitzgerald, L. Kalof, and T. Dietz, "Slaughterhouses and Increased Crime Rates: An Empirical Analysis of the Spillover From "The Jungle" Into the Surrounding Community," *Organization & Environment* 22, no. 2 (2009): 158.

<sup>41</sup> Fitzgerald, Kalof, and Dietz, "Spillover," 175.

<sup>42</sup> Jennifer Dillard, "Slaughterhouse Nightmare: Psychological Harms Suffered by Slaughterhouse Employees and the Possibility of Redress through Legal Reform," *Georgetown Journal on Poverty Law and Policy* 15, no. 2 (2008): 400.

<sup>43</sup> Arnola Arluke et. al., "The Relationship of Animal Abuse to Violence and Other Forms of Antisocial Behavior," *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 14, no. 9 (1999): 963-975; Catherine Miller, "Childhood Animal Cruelty and Interpersonal Violence," *Clinical Psychology Review* 21, no. 5 (2001): 735-749.

<sup>44</sup> Fitzgerald, "Social History," 66.

<sup>45</sup> Schlosser, *Nation*, 150.

<sup>46</sup> Discussing one of the largest CAFOs in the country (located outside of Greeley, Colorado), Schlosser indicates that just two feedlots "produce more excrement than the cities of Denver, Boston, Atlanta, and St. Louis – combined." See Schlosser, *Nation*, 150.

<sup>47</sup> Robbin Marks, *Cesspools of Shame: How Factory Farm Lagoons and Sprayfields Threaten Environmental and Public Health* (National Resources Defense Council and the Clean Waters Network, 2001), 1.

<sup>48</sup> Schlosser, *Nation*, 149.

<sup>49</sup> Fitzgerald, "Social History," 63.

<sup>50</sup> Hope W. Phetteplace, Donald E. Johnson, and Andrew F. Seidl, "Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Simulated Beef and Dairy Livestock Systems in the United States," *Nutrient Cycling in Agroecosystems* 60 (2001): 99; Tara Garnett, "Livestock-Related Greenhouse Gas Emissions: Impacts and Options for Policy Makers," *Environmental Science and Policy* 12 (2009): 491; Jessica Bellarby, et. al., "Livestock Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Mitigation Potential in Europe," *Global Change Biology* 19, no. 1 (2013): 1.

<sup>51</sup> Matsuoka and Sorenson, "Human Consequences," 14.

<sup>52</sup> Garnett, "Emissions," 491.

<sup>53</sup> Bellarby, et. al., "Mitigation Potential," 1.

<sup>54</sup> Garnett, "Emissions," 494.

<sup>55</sup> Henning Steinfeld, et. al., *Livestock's Long Shadow: Environmental Issues and Options* (Rome: The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2006), xxiii. Available:

<http://www.fao.org/docrep/010/a0701e/a0701e00.HTM>.

<sup>56</sup> Bellarby, et. al., "Mitigation Potential," 1.

<sup>57</sup> Garnett, "Emissions," 494.

<sup>58</sup> Garnett, "Emissions," 494.

<sup>59</sup> Steinfeld, et. al., *Livestock's Long Shadow*, xxiii.

<sup>60</sup> Matsuoka and Sorenson, "Human Consequences," 14.

<sup>61</sup> "The United States Meat Industry at a Glance," *The North American Meat Institute*, accessed January 12, 2016, <https://www.meat institute.org/index.php?ht=d/sp/i/47465/pid/47465>.

<sup>62</sup> Frank Newport, "In U.S., 5% Consider Themselves Vegetarians," *Gallup.com* July 26, 2012, accessed January 12, 2016, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/156215/consider-themselves-vegetarians.aspx>.

<sup>63</sup> Admittedly, some aesthetic pleasures might well be genuinely necessary for an individual's flourishing existence, but it seems remarkably unlikely that someone would defend the animal-based products of APIs discussed here on such grounds. Because space constraints prevent a more comprehensive consideration of this potential objection, I will simply assert that this is not the case and trust that my boldness is uncontroversial.

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<sup>64</sup> Though difficult to determine concretely, estimates based on USDA census data indicate that CAFO-style farms account for more than 99% of farmed and slaughtered animals in the United States. See “Ending Factory Farming,” *Farm Forward*, accessed January 12, 2016, <https://farmforward.com/ending-factory-farming/>.