

SUBSCRIBE NOW AND RECEIVE A FREE BOOK!



"The Independent Review does not accept pronouncements of government officials nor the conventional wisdom at face value."

—**JOHN R. MACARTHUR**, Publisher, *Harper's*

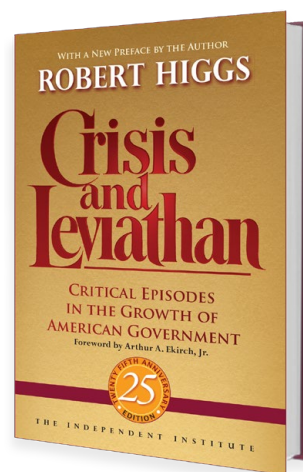
"The Independent Review is excellent."

—**GARY BECKER**, Noble Laureate in Economic Sciences

Subscribe to [**The Independent Review**](#) and receive a free book of your choice such as the 25th Anniversary Edition of ***Crisis and Leviathan: Critical Episodes in the Growth of American Government***, by founding editor Robert Higgs.

Thought-provoking and educational, [**The Independent Review**](#) is blazing the way toward informed debate. This quarterly journal offers leading-edge insights on today's most critical issues in economics, healthcare, education, the environment, energy, defense, law, history, political science, philosophy, and sociology.

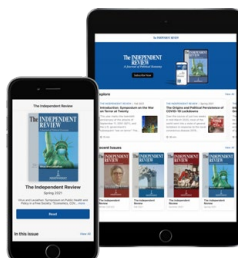
Student? Educator? Journalist? Business or civic leader? Engaged citizen? This journal is for YOU!



Order today for more **FREE** book options

SUBSCRIBE

Perfect for anyone on the go! **The Independent Review** is now available on mobile devices or tablets on the Apple App Store, Google Play, or Magzter. [Learn More.](#)



Editor
Robert M. Whaples

Co-Editors
Christopher J. Coyne
Michael C. Munger
Gregory J. Robson
Diana W. Thomas



A Limited Defense of Factory Farming

The Ethics and Politics of Consuming Intensively Raised Animals

◆

JONATHAN ASHBACH

Forty-seven years ago, in 1975, Peter Singer published *Animal Liberation*, the book largely responsible for initiating the animal rights movement. On a theoretical level, Singer argued that the interests of sentient animals deserve consideration equal to that due humans. “If a being suffers there can be no moral justification for refusing to take that suffering into consideration[;] ... the principle of equality requires that its suffering be counted equally with the like suffering ... of any other being” (2009, 8).¹ Privileging human interests is speciesism—an unjustifiable “bias in favor of the interests of members of one’s own species” (6). On an empirical level, Singer’s argument, to the (significant) extent that it dealt with factory farming,² consisted largely of detailing the practices of factory farms to convince readers that

Jonathan Ashbach is assistant professor of political science at Oklahoma Baptist University.

1. *Animal Liberation* has been reprinted many times, and I cite an updated edition in this essay.

2. There is no one thing, of course, that is “factory farming.” Throughout this essay, as in popular usage, the term refers to a broad array of efficiency-enhancing industrial practices used to raise animals more intensively than is possible in traditional agriculture.

The Independent Review, v. 26, n. 4, Spring 2022, ISSN 1086–1653, Copyright © 2022, pp. 601–621.

animals raised for food are typically treated in a manner that inflicts great misery on them and is therefore morally unacceptable. “The aim,” Singer wrote, “is to demonstrate that under these methods animals lead miserable lives from birth to slaughter” (97). His conclusion (159–60) was that in most circumstances today vegetarianism is morally requisite.³

Timothy Hsiao has recently stirred controversy with a series of articles defending meat eating in general and factory farming in particular (Hsiao 2015a, 2015b, 2017). His stance is noteworthy because although there is a significant literature on the relative ethical merits of vegetarianism and omnivorism,⁴ and although scholarly condemnations of factory farming are not uncommon,⁵ the literature in defense of factory farming (at least from the perspective of the ethics of its impact on animal well-being) is comprised almost exhaustively by Hsiao’s own articles.⁶

Unfortunately, Hsiao’s defense of factory farms is unconvincing. The fundamental problems with his argument are twofold. First, that argument is predicated on a eudaemonistic account of morality that many readers will find deeply problematic rather than persuasive due to its irreducibly self-centered nature.⁷ Indeed, Hsiao indicates lack of familiarity with more common and persuasive (and less egoistic) accounts of morality, writing that “[i]t is hard to see what else morality could be if not a code of conduct that exists for the sake of guiding purposeful action in pursuit of one’s flourishing” (2015a, 1129). The second root problem begins when Hsiao makes a fairly convincing defense of the position that (of the species we know) only human beings are rational actors and therefore moral *agents*. The difficulty is that he then makes an unjustified leap to the position that only humans can be moral *patients*, as if it were impossible for a being to be morally wronged unless it is also capable of morally wronging others.⁸ Such a position runs counter not just to what might be dismissively dubbed the ideology of animal rights apologists but also to

3. Since the distinction is of little relevance to this article, I shall use the broad term *vegetarianism* throughout to encompass both veganism and simple abstention from animal flesh.

4. The literature favoring vegetarianism includes Engel 2001; Rachels 2004; DeGrazia 2009; Singer 2009; Bruers 2015a, 2015b; Hooley and Nobis 2016; and Norcross 2018. The literature favoring omnivorism includes Weir 1988, 1991; Scruton 2004; and Hsiao 2015a, 2015b.

5. For critiques of factory farming from a number of angles but focused primarily on the ethics of animal welfare, see Halteman 2001; Engster 2006; Rossi and Garner 2014; Anomaly 2015.

6. Peter Carruthers (1992) is the only other author, to my knowledge, to defend factory farms on this score, though one can sometimes find defenses in the academic-adjacent literature—for example, Skoble 2020. Neither author addresses the issue in detail. Both Hsiao (2017) and Rossi and Garner (2014) also note the near-total dearth of defenses of factory farming.

7. On this point, see Puryear 2016, 699, and Puryear, Bruers, and Erdős 2017, 316–17.

8. See Hsiao 2015a, 1128–32, and 2015b, 281–86: “If I am right that the concept of moral status *as such* is inherently connected to rational agency, then it follows that moral patients *must* possess in some sense the capacity for rational agency” (2015a, 1130–31, emphasis in original). There is, of course, no justification for the assumption that the community of moral agents must be identical with the community of moral patients. It is highly plausible that the latter is more extensive than the former.

widespread and deep-rooted moral intuitions.⁹ As a consequence, a number of articles have responded to Hsiao, all of them negatively,¹⁰ and so the treatment of animals in factory farming as practiced in the United States today is left with virtually no direct ethical defense in the academic literature.

Against this background, I seek to do five things. First, I sketch a plausible philosophical position from which one might approach the question of factory farming. Because all moral judgment takes place from a particular metaphysical standpoint, this section plays a major part in my project by indicating a reasonable philosophical starting place from which one might approve of factory farming. It traces the outlines of an intuitivist, utilitarian, and ratiocentric (IUR) perspective that seems appropriate to this issue. Second, working from this starting point, I suggest a principled approach to evaluating the permissibility of factory farming. Since factory farming is not a distinct target per se but is instead simply a collection of practices sometimes used by farmers raising livestock, I begin by asking what the absolute minimum standards appropriate to the raising of animals for consumption *in general* could be (against a baseline of vegetarianism), and I suggest that raising animals for consumption (and therefore factory farming among other methods) is acceptable if it results in a net gain in utility to humans that more than offsets any net disutility to the animals involved, perhaps discounting animal utility vis-à-vis human utility. This section of the paper thus describes the theoretical position on factory farming that I believe follows from the IUR perspective. Third, I seek to remedy the gap in the literature by offering a moderate prima facie empirical defense of factory farming based on the criterion enunciated in the previous section. Finally, the paper's fourth section does two things. It extends the discussion to regulation and consumer activism, first arguing theoretically that reforms to current factory-farming methods that are more likely to increase (again, perhaps discounted) animal welfare more than they decrease human welfare are worth pursuing. It then suggests empirically the desirability of increased intervention. That is, it offers some initial evidence that animal welfare could be significantly increased at little human cost. My hope is that this article will provide a reasonable middle ground between what appear to me to be twin evils: immoral nonconsideration of animal interests on one hand and immoral overconsideration of those interests to the detriment of human interests on the other.

The limited scope of my argument (in two senses) should be noted. First, factory farming has been criticized from a number of angles, including its effects on the

9. As Jonathan Anomaly notes, "[A]ny plausible theory will hold that sentient creatures capable of feeling pain and frustration have interests that deserve protection" (2015, 249; cf. Puryear 2016). Even the most contrarian authors seek to make room for this intuition. Thus, Tibor Machan, who holds that "no animals possess rights unless they also possess a moral nature," ends up acknowledging that "decency and consideration toward animals" are "part of a good human being's character" (2004, xv, 115). And Hsiao himself tries to indirectly justify the same position (2017, 50–51).

10. For responses to Hsiao, see Bruers 2015b; Erdős 2015; Puryear 2016; Puryear, Bruers, and Erdős 2017; Bobier 2019; and Perrine 2019.

environment and justice (Rossi and Garner 2014; Martin 2016), in addition to the ethics of its impact on animals. One of the most serious concerns is that routine overuse of antibiotics in factory farms is contributing to the rise of antibiotic-resistant bacteria, with potentially widespread negative effects on world public health (Anomaly 2015, 2020). I address only the ethics of factory farming's direct impact on animal well-being. My conclusions are therefore meant to be modified by other lines of argument, not taken as definitive. Second, I do not seek to exhaustively defend the IUR perspective from which this article argues or the empirical conclusions to which it comes. Such a task would be far too involved for any single article. I instead offer a brief initial defense of the position, point readers to literature where each aspect of it is investigated in greater depth, and note a few suggestive empirical findings. My goal is not to prove that my position is the one and certain truth but to suggest a plausible approach that I think offers a reasonable (limited) defense of factory farming and a fruitful framework for further debate.

By *animal welfare*, I mean an animal's net subjective experience—the overall balance of its positive and negative affective states. This is controversial in theory but need not be, I think, in practice. There is debate as to what precisely constitutes animal welfare, and mainstream positions focus not only on mental states but also on animals' health and ability to engage in behaviors normal to their species.¹¹ In practice, however, disease and repression will affect an animal's affective states, and thus other perspectives overlap substantially, if not perfectly, with the definition assumed here.

Philosophical Orientation: The IUR Approach

In this section, I sketch a plausible philosophical perspective from which one might approach the question of the permissibility of factory farming. This perspective is intuitivist, utilitarian, and ratiocentric (IUR).

First, the IUR perspective is intuitivist. By *intuitivism*, I mean not the intuitionist understanding that certain propositional moral truths are self-evident but an approach to moral questions that profoundly respects the complexity of the moral realm and the fact that moral intuition is our primary source of information about it. The intuitivist will hew very close to moral intuitions and be skeptical of attempts to “rationalize” (“oversimplify”?) moral perception by concluding that a moral principle is established and should be applied regardless of counter-intuitive results. The approach I describe will instead be deeply attentive to the intuitive moral relevance of particular circumstances, relationships, or categories, whether the resulting distinctions seem “rationally” relevant or not—whatever that

11. See Fraser 2008 (esp. 61–78) as well as the literature cited in note 26 for an overview of contemporary debates. For a contemporary attempt to provide and apply animal-welfare standards, see the website of the Welfare Quality Network at www.welfarequality.net/en-us/home/.

means.¹² It must be noted, however, that intuitivism does *not* mean simply doing whatever one unreflectively feels to be right. Right use of moral intuition can be trained and educated; empirical information is relevant to our perception of moral rights and wrongs; and deliverances of moral intuition that are broad (across space) and deep (across time) and that present themselves as more fundamental or certain trump those that are idiosyncratic, peculiar to a given culture, or weak.¹³ Respect for the moral categories our intuitions discern will be vital at a number of points in the following pages.

Hsiao objects to an emphasis on moral intuition, but his position is arguably incoherent. Noting that many theorists who conclude that animals possess moral status appeal to intuition, Hsiao objects that “many theories that claim intuitive support are mutually exclusive. What we want from a theory of moral status is a robust conceptual framework for understanding moral status, not just a list of properties that are justified by a mere appeal to intuition” (2015b, 282). No doubt many theories that appeal to intuition do contradict one another—as do many theories that appeal to reason. But this is no more reason to reject intuition than to reject rationality. The solution instead is again reflection on intuitions that are broad, deep, and fundamental rather than idiosyncratic, culture bound, and weak. The trouble with Hsiao’s objection runs deeper than that, however. Dismissing or severely discounting moral intuition in favor of an allegedly “rational” conceptual account of morality is not even coherent: our concept of morality is itself derived from moral intuitions. A conceptual account of morality that radically deviates from intuition is therefore at odds with its own foundation.¹⁴ Moral accounts that appeal to sentience or utility or personhood “instead of” to intuition are incoherent for the same reason. No such factor can contribute to a moral theory except insofar as its connection to moral value is *intuitively* obvious. Intuition is the root of all such theories, and intuitivism simply seeks to emphasize careful attention to the fount of moral data. Unsurprisingly, therefore, Hsiao himself frequently appeals to intuition—as when he assumes the intuitive perspective that humans retain moral status even when unconscious (2015a, 1131; 2015b, 287), an assumption that does not necessarily follow from his conceptual framework.

12. To foreshadow a later discussion by way of illustration, the so-called problem of marginal humans is the result of a “rationalization” of ethics that hastily concludes that if mental capacity is humanity’s distinctive characteristic, then humans with low mental capacity should be treated like animals rather than like humans. The intuitivist will be influenced far more by the strong intuition that the animal/human kind distinction is morally relevant.

13. For a fairly similar account of intuitivism, see Ryn 2003; cf. Boyd 2009, 22–23.

14. To clarify, the independence from intuition that Hsiao seeks is not total. He does admit in this same paragraph that intuition can be “helpful,” but he seeks to distance himself from it. “It may be intuitively obvious that some property is in some way relevant to moral status, but this in itself does not tell us how it is relevant” (2015b, 282). This explanation does not help, however. If moral intuitions tell us that causing unnecessary pain is morally wrongful aggression against another being—which seems undisputed—then they also tell us how the ability to feel pain is morally relevant to being a moral patient. At odds with this understanding, Hsiao’s appeal to an allegedly rational conceptual framework is in direct contradiction to the intuitive foundation on which such a framework must rest.

Second, the IUR perspective is utilitarian. This might seem appropriate simply given that utilitarianism is a prominent ethical theory and a major contributing perspective in the attack on factory farming. (Singer, for instance, is a utilitarian.) More fundamentally, however, this article's utilitarianism and the limits on that utilitarianism comprise the first outworking of its intuitivism. *Universalizing* utilitarian principles, especially where humans are involved, contradicts many of our ethical intuitions (add enough sadistic spectators, and torturing the enslaved gladiator to death certainly makes sense), so a generalized utilitarianism might be problematic. But certain areas of ethics lend themselves to a utilitarian approach. The mainstream acceptance of macroeconomic measures is a testament that utilitarian calculations are widely intuitive in decisions indirectly governing mass marginal increases and decreases of population welfare. Other contributors to this debate have noted that questions relating to the treatment of animals in particular lend themselves to a utilitarian pleasure–pain calculus.¹⁵ My normative conclusions shall be grounded, then, in utilitarian evaluations of the positive and negative affective states (primarily of the animals involved) that factory farming produces. In the circumscribed realm of animal well-being, such calculations seem appropriate.¹⁶

Finally, the IUR perspective is unabashedly ratiocentric. I assume throughout that humans are morally superior to animals in multiple senses, primarily in that utilitarian pleasure–pain calculations are less appropriate to them than to animals. As noted earlier, Singer and others denounce this assumption as speciesism.¹⁷ Here, too, this article's intuitivism becomes crucial. To the intuitivist, the accusation of speciesism is a prime example of an attempt to “rationalize” ethical theory that simply confuses it. Broad, deep, and fundamental intuitions indicate that humans are worthy of more moral consideration and of moral consideration of different kinds than are animals. This is why morally accepted meat eating is virtually universal and morally accepted cannibalism very rare. Indeed, the case for moral nonconsideration of animals may

15. Thus, Jack Weir: “If this statement is a moral judgment ... it begs the question by assuming that animals have a status beyond mere pleasure–pain sentence [used to justify utilitarian calculations] that makes killing them wrong” (1988, 99). Robert Garner calls such a statement and others like it “the conventional animal welfare position” (2012, 163). For this reason, I shall also be considering *average* effects upon animals rather than demanding consideration of the well-being of every individual. See Nozick 1974, 35–42, for some concerns with this approach, though still from the perspective of human superiority to animals.

16. For one defense of utilitarian theory, see Singer 2011. To be clear, I intend to address only the imposition of negative experiences that possess a legitimate justification, very broadly understood, and so may be understood as integral parts of the whole that is routine factory farming. It is uncontroversial that the infliction of pain for its own sake is morally wrong, regardless of utilitarian calculations (cf. Smolkin 2021, 11).

17. See also, for example, Frey 2018. The charge of speciesism is by no means universally considered damning. Tibor Machan (2004), Daniel Engster (2006), and Timothy Hsiao (2015a) are avowedly speciesist. Doran Smolkin recognizes the plausible relevance of “kind” to related questions (2021, 6).

be stronger than the case for equal consideration of them.¹⁸ If this privileging of human beings is speciesism, in other words, then reality is speciesist, and we would do well to get over it. This is by no means to say that animals are unworthy of *any* consideration. Rather, rationality here stands parallel to personhood as moral agency in the helpful multicriterial account defended by Mary Anne Warren (1997). It is the criterion of *full* moral status, not *any* moral status.

Our intuitions not only pick out humans as specially important but also arguably pick out rationality as central to the reason this species is special. Thus, Hsiao calls the ratiocentric approach “the traditional one” (2017, 44).¹⁹ Broad, deep, and fundamental intuitions also indicate that it is not merely the individual capacity to reason that is important, as the so-called question of marginal humans makes clear. Membership in a rational kind (which seems to encompass the species *Homo sapiens*) appears sufficient for full moral status (see, e.g., Warren 1997, 164). This conclusion is certainly coherent. One explanation is that our intuitions are picking out the metaphysical ground of rationality, rather than rationality itself, as morally significant.²⁰ Various candidates for such a ground exist. Hsiao defends the ground of essences (or “root capacities”) (2015a, 1134–136; 2015b, 286–88). Despite its unpopularity in some quarters for the moment, the thesis of an immaterial soul continues to be rigorously defended and widely accepted (e.g., Moreland 2014). The point is not to argue in favor of either of these particular explanations but rather to note the coherence of our intuitive beliefs and a few prominent ways in which these intuitions are sometimes worked out. Several articles in the related literature have attempted to debunk these possibilities on Darwinian grounds (see, e.g., Bruers 2015a; Erdős 2015; Puryear, Bruers, and Erdős 2017), but they have uniformly confused Darwinism with mere Darwinism, fallaciously assuming that the framework of Darwinian

18. See Fraser 2008 (esp. 9–60) for an overview of thought about the place of animals in a variety of cultures and ages. Engel 2001 discusses the broad existence of “speciesist” intuitions.

19. Thus also, for example, W. L. Sumner writes: “Creatures less rational than human beings do not lack standing, but they do lack full standing” (1981, 144). Scholars of course dispute the precise nature of rationality and whether animals possess it (cf. Sumner 1981, 137–38), but these disputes are largely irrelevant to the present argument. Probably few people find their moral judgment that humans are worthy of greater moral consideration than birds affected by debates over whether animals can possess beliefs or concepts or by the knowledge that Alex the Grey parrot was able to recognize red items as instantiating the same color (Andrews 2016). Although I happily concede that animals exhibit a limited kind of rationality, even the most intellectually advanced among them exhibit something so far inferior to normal human intellectual function that humans have overwhelmingly intuitively categorized it as different in kind and moral significance from the full rationality exhibited by humankind.

20. This is the debilitating flaw in Sumner’s question “[I]f we appeal to rationality in comparing kinds of creatures, why should we not also appeal to rationality in comparing individual creatures?” (1981, 98). The same is true of Smolkin’s argument that “[i]f the strength of a right to life is a function of one’s psychological capacities, then this will have unacceptable implications when thinking about the right to life of [human] persons” (2021, 9). Both arguments depend on ignoring the criterion of kind membership strongly picked out by intuition.

evolution excludes any further explanatory factors—even those necessary to make sense of further data.²¹

Tempting as it might be, however, to simply raise the rebellious flag of anthropocentrism, it is not clear that this is an appropriate description of the position to which our intuitions lead us. There is good reason to distance the IUR position from speciesism plain and simple: membership in the species *Homo sapiens* appears to be *sufficient* but not *necessary* for full moral consideration. Suppose that humans come into contact, in the near future, with extraterrestrial beings who appear to be just as rational and sensitive as we are. Call them, perhaps, the Na’vi. Probably most of us intuitively recognize these beings as the moral equals of humans (cf. Warren 1997, 136; Smolkin 2021, 4). Further, these intuitions probably recognize that status as obtaining even when a particular individual is unconscious or mentally disabled. Thus, once again, it appears to be the rationality of the new kind, or perhaps the metaphysical ground of that rationality, that our intuitions pick out as special. In short, the position espoused here privileges human interests over those of other species with which we are familiar, but it does not do so arbitrarily and thus is a poor candidate for the label “speciesist.”

Minimum Standards: When Is Raising Livestock in *Any* Way Acceptable?

With these foundations laid, this section explores the minimum standard of treatment the IUR perspective can justify in raising animals for consumption. That is, it generalizes the animal-welfare question typically directed against factory farming and asks to what standard *any* method of livestock rearing must conform. This will make possible an initial evaluation of whether the collection of practices generally referred to as factory farming fall short of that standard and are therefore intrinsically problematic or whether they are simply amenable to improvement. Asking under what circumstances individuals may support factory farming and taking that question as a simple binary choice between status quo consumption and total abstention from animal products will provide a helpful if simplistic starting point that can then be developed further. The understanding seems universal that the

21. The appeal to mere Darwinism to refute specific ethical positions comes with particular ill grace in view of the substantial literature noting that mere Darwinism probably undermines the ethical project—and in fact the rational project—in its entirety. See Plantinga 2002; Linville 2012; Ritchie 2012; and Ruse 2012. Commentators who embrace such a position simply remove themselves from the conversation. Those of us who continue to believe that moral intuitions and reasoning about them provide some degree of moral knowledge can ignore such naive and unhelpful attempts at critique. Stijn Bruers also confuses verifiability and *empirical* verifiability when he writes that “[i]t is inherently impossible to scientifically (empirically) establish the truth of those properties, so they cannot be used to determine who gets the basic right” (2015a, 279). As Hsiao points out, such naive empiricism is quite obviously self-refuting (2015a, 1135–136). Of course, given that Bruers ends up acknowledging that on the position offered by his critique one cannot identify a human or even the letter F (2015a, 280–81), the self-refuting nature of that position may not come as a complete surprise.

relevant principle is “do no unnecessary harm,” but the last two words are tricky, and discussion in the literature could benefit from additional sophistication in several respects.

Begin with the word *harm*. There is great need for a more nuanced approach to the significance of this word—one that *balances* rather than *weighs* the harms experienced by animals on factory farms. That is, one must take both harms and benefits into account instead of simply tallying up animals’ negative experiences. The standard treatment in the literature is simply to describe several unpleasant operations to which animals are subject—debeaking, castration, ear notching, and so on—and conclude that these operations are harms inflicted on the animals and therefore unacceptable. Some articles even begin by assuming this much as an undefended premise (e.g., Abbate 2020, 398). The issue is nowhere near so simple, however. The process of raising animals for consumption is responsible not merely for the infliction upon them of various negative experiences but for the provision to them of many positive experiences as well. The more obvious examples include food, drink, social interaction, sometimes sexual experience, and that greatest of all animal goods, life itself.²² Further, these two categories of action—providing positive and negative experiences—are not separable. Both are integral components of one unitary process: the production of animals for consumption. To separate the two is to arbitrarily delink components of a unitary whole—rather like describing the pain inflicted in the delivery of a vaccine as an unjustifiable harm rather than recognizing that it is unavoidably linked to the resulting societal security from disease and that it is the whole process that must be judged, not just one arbitrary part of it.²³ The question, then, must be not whether raising animals for consumption results in negative experiences to the animals being farmed but whether the negative experiences it inflicts are of greater significance than the positive experiences it bestows.²⁴ If it inflicts more pain, it is presumptively bad; if more pleasure, presumptively good.²⁵

In deciding whether raising livestock for consumption causes more pleasure or pain to the animals involved, there is a further need for increased nuance in

22. Much of the literature (e.g., DeGrazia 2009; perhaps Yeates 2011, 402) seems to assume that life is merely a boat for experiences, positive or negative, and that those experiences are what determine whether an animal’s life is worthwhile. It thus concludes much too hastily that factory-farmed animals’ lives are not worth living. This conclusion fails to take seriously the great value of life as such to almost all living beings: “[C]onsciousness itself is a good, whatever its object, and whatever the pleasantness of a particular experience” (Jamieson 1983, 145).

23. This is the problem with the attempt by DeGrazia to delink the bringing of animals into existence and treating them in ways that are necessary for their purpose but that inflict some pain (2009, 162).

24. A reader of this essay raised the question whether some of the positive and negative experiences might be incommensurable—the pain of castration and the pleasure of socialization, for example. This possibility is excluded by the utilitarian nature of the calculus. Incommensurability obtains between subjective and objective values—as when desire confronts moral law. But the values at issue here are positive and negative subjective preferences. For any given set, it is comprehensible to speak of that set as overall positive (preferable) or overall negative (not preferable) for the animal.

25. Engster (2006, 532) and DeGrazia (2009) do a better-than-average job—though still seriously wanting—of attempting to balance rather than simply weigh harms.

selecting the baseline from which to judge the increase or decrease to animal well-being. Specifically, the highly relevant fact that is rarely confronted in the literature is that most of the animals in question would not exist if they were not brought into being for consumption. Much of the literature appears to assume that the relevant baseline is a more or less idyllic life. This assumption is indefensible. If livestock-raising enterprises operated by purchasing animals that would otherwise lead a pampered existence, such a baseline would be appropriate. Similarly, if they operated by capturing wild animals and preparing them for slaughter, the natural baseline would be an animal's probable level of comfort or discomfort in its habitat. But given that such enterprises operate by bringing animals into existence who would not otherwise have existed, the baseline must be nonexistence. In other words, the appropriate evaluation to make when judging whether the affected animals are better off, given the process of being raised for consumption, than they would otherwise have been is whether the animal's life is, on the whole, a life worth living.²⁶ The presumptive minimum standard to which factory farms and other enterprises raising animals for consumption should (initially) be held, having brought animals into existence, is whether they provide a life to an animal that involves, on the whole, greater positive experience than negative experience.²⁷

It is at points like this that the intuitive ratiocentrism of the IUR view is vital to its perspective on factory farming. In response to reasoning like that in the previous paragraph, Doran Smolkin objects that it would authorize all manner of vile human rights abuses. "Lots of practices may be good for all involved, and yet are morally impermissible." He lists as examples "[i]nvoluntary active euthanasia" and "having children solely for the purpose of killing them at age 15, so that their organs can be used for transplantation" (2021, 3, cf. 10). After all, the children gain fifteen years of a good existence. Is it therefore acceptable to raise them only as organ repositories?²⁸ From the IUR position, however, the objection is incoherent. It ignores a vital distinction that has been picked up by most people's intuitions from the dawn of recorded history: different moral rules govern treatment of animals and treatment of humans (and other rational beings). The IUR approach's utilitarianism applies to

26. The phrase "a life worth living" is the most natural one but may occasion some confusion. There has been a movement recently to replace the "Five Freedoms" evaluation of animal well-being with a judgment as to whether the animal is leading "a life worth living." See, for example, Wathes 2010; Yeates 2011; Mellor 2016a, 2016b; and Webster 2016. It is apparently intended as a movement toward heightened standards, but, taken literally, it almost certainly implies a serious loosening of them. J. W. Yeates also notes the overoptimism sometimes expressed about what is necessary for a life to be worth living (2011, 403).

27. Coleman Solis is almost alone in recognizing this: "[T]he first event in the chain that led to Annie's being sent to the slaughterhouse was her farmers' decisions to raise another meat cow... Assuming that a few years of good life is better or no worse than none, it seems that all things considered, her death was not at all bad for her and that her farmers did not harm her" (2020, 9).

28. DeGrazia similarly defends the position that it is immoral to bring into existence animals from whose lives both humans and the animals themselves would benefit if doing so entails subjecting the animals to slaughter (2009, 163–64).

treatment of animals, not of humans. What no doubt seems like special pleading to Smolkin is just respect for the morally relevant categories intuition discerns.

Thus far, I have assumed for simplicity that only the well-being of animals themselves is of relevance in the pleasure–pain calculus that justifies or fails to justify the raising of livestock for consumption. This is not the case, however. Human utility must be factored in, which leads to consideration of a further failing in the existing literature. Its treatment of the word *unnecessary* would also benefit from a significantly greater degree of nuance. The standard attack on omnivorism merely notes that adequate nutritional intake is possible on a vegetarian diet (as may well be the case on any diet, if one takes enough supplements [see Weir 1991, 17]) and concludes that the consumption of animal products has been proven unnecessary.²⁹ But the question of necessity is never a simple binary. It is always a question of innumerable shades of inconvenience, and the literature radically fails to take seriously the degree of inconvenience associated with avoidance of animal products. For one thing, the dismissive tone with which “mere” gustatory pleasure is discussed indicates that the compounded utility to hundreds of millions of people is not being given serious consideration. Quick as vegetarianism’s apostles are to stress the pleasure they derive from plant-based dishes, the simple fact remains: most people find a diet composed exclusively of such dishes to be seriously wanting. If the vegetarian cuisine fully satisfied people’s appetites, the debate over its ethics would be moot.³⁰

More than “mere” gustatory pleasure is at issue, however. A central planner capable of imposing a reconfiguration of society overnight might be able to limit consideration of the ills of abolishing consumption of animal products in this way. For an individual acting as consumer or political advocate, however, much more is at stake. Second, then, from the perspective of a consumer, the inconvenience of attempting to avoid (even factory-farmed) animal products is very real, especially for those unaccustomed to devote much time and effort to investigating, purchasing, and preparing food. The brainpower, time, and energy necessary to effect this transition are real costs to an individual operating in the present world. Third, strict abstention imposes significant social costs—most obviously, being limited in one’s ability to participate in the hospitality of others and consequently being perceived (correctly or not) as rude. Fourth, there are times when significant physical discomfort may hang in the balance. I write this having just made an exception to my (loose) norm against the purchase of factory-farmed chicken in order to buy soup to sooth a troubled stomach. At times, the food most conducive to physical ease includes animal products (including some derived from factory farms) among its ingredients.

29. For fairly standard treatments, see Engel 2001; Rossi and Garner 2014; Bruers 2015b; and Norcross 2018.

30. Since most animal products available in the United States today are factory farmed, the argument about factory-farmed animal products specifically follows in close parallel the one given here. Simply replace “vegetarianism” with “avoidance of factory-farmed animal products” and replace “elimination” with “severe reduction” in the enjoyment of animal products generally.

And fifth, despite vociferous declamation to the contrary, there are still unresolved questions about vegetarianism's consequences for health (Cofnas 2019). The nontotalitarian political advocate also faces significant costs in discouraging the consumption (even of merely factory-farmed) animal products. One of the most obvious costs, noted and hastily dismissed by John Rossi and Samuel Garner (2014), is, sixth, the consequent rise in the cost of meat. Regardless of whether the least fortunate in our society *could* choose to eat vegetarian, many of them will continue consuming meat. The increase in cost attendant upon a restriction in meat's availability constitutes a de facto diminution of their income that raises concerns about fairness. Seventh, the destruction of the livelihoods of those involved in the raising of livestock (including on factory farms) is another real cost that has received less attention than it is due.

For all these reasons, a more nuanced evaluation of the legitimacy of the consumption of animal products in general and of factory-farmed animal products in particular must balance the harm done to animals by being raised for consumption against the benefit they receive from it plus the benefit that humans receive from it—an equation in which the latter factors are no insignificant variables. (To be precise, the *net* benefit must be considered. As noted earlier, additional cases against factory farming allege various harms to humans. For reasons of space and salience, I focus on *benefits* to humans, which have been virtually ignored by the literature, but this analysis must be modified by taking harms to humans into account.) At the present level of analysis, the minimum standard for the treatment of animals could actually be such that the animals' total life experience would be negative so long as the disutility to the animals is outweighed by the utility gained by humans.

One additional complication must still be addressed, however, before this minimum-standards account will be complete. Ratiocentrism—belief in the lesser moral status of animals—is a necessary presumption of the utilitarian analysis this article employs. But it may have a further role to play. There is a case to be made that pleasures and pains to animals should be discounted relative to those experienced by humans. If one judges this to be true and relevant,³¹ then a more or less final minimum standard for factory farms would look something like the following: *factory farming is morally acceptable if the discounted net disvalue of the lives that the farms impose on animals is less than the positive value that the farms provide to humans.*

Obviously, “discounted” is quite vague. Discounted how much? Unfortunately, the vagueness is almost certainly irreducible. This appears to be the inevitable point at which principles cease to be meaningful and details must be filled in by individual judgment about how much weight is due each value. This vagueness should not be taken as a strike against the possible necessity of discounting, however. As Aristotle

31. Even if true, this factor may be of little significance. I find that I am relatively indifferent to such a discount at low states of pain—I see little difference between a world in which a man is slapped and one in which a horse is slapped hard enough to produce an identical amount of pain, for example. It is only when suffering becomes severe—a world in which a man experiences severe burns versus one in which a pig does, for example—that I find a significant difference between the two.

pointed out millennia ago, a theory can approach only the level of specificity permitted by its subject matter (2011, 1094b10–1095a5). For a theory to be more precise than reality allows is a failing, not a strength, because that means it is certainly wrong.

Toward an Empirical Judgment: Factory Farming Is Probably Acceptable

Although a final judgment would require a level of empirical investigation I am not prepared to claim, it seems likely, *prima facie*, that the standard derived from the IUR approach legitimates all routine treatment of animals on farms in America today—including factory farms. Judging whether an animal's life is, taken as a whole, a positive experience is vastly tricky. Not only are pleasures and pains inherently difficult to quantify—much less to do so precisely enough to balance them against one another—there is the further difficulty that we do not know precisely what experiences are like from an animal's perspective, and we cannot ask the animals to articulate their experience.³² So while one's initial response may be to declare that the sort of life to which factory-farmed animals are subjected is obviously not worth enduring, this response may be much too hasty. Although it is rhetorically dramatic to report that animals live surrounded by excrement, for example, anyone who has a pet dog will realize that human revulsion to feces is highly species specific.

Two methods suggest themselves for evaluating animals' levels of well-being, but both are riddled with serious shortcomings. First, the most natural approach would be to let the animals themselves decide: Confronted with the possibility of death, do the animals seem indifferent to it, or do they resist? Resistance indicates that the animal experiences its life as worth living. Probably few would argue that factory-farmed animals are indifferent to death, and David DeGrazia (2009, 161–62) as well as Dan Hooley and Nathan Nobis (2016, 95–96) explicitly concede that death is a loss to such animals. The difficulty with this approach is that an animal's struggle in the face of death may have more to do with instinct than with deliberate choice (to the extent that it is coherent to speak of animals making a deliberate choice) in favor of life.

A second approach might be to conduct a thought experiment borrowing from John Rawls's original position.³³ Silly as it might seem, the ideal manner by which to evaluate animals' welfare, if possible, would be to imagine oneself in a sort of original position with the choice to come into the world as a factory-farmed animal or to not exist. Unfortunately, this approach's flaw is again human beings' inability to know what exactly life is like for an animal. Probably many humans would rather

32. As Webster colorfully puts it, "Since I can never be entirely sure how you are feeling, I am reluctant to speak with authority on the mental state of a dairy cow" (2016, 35).

33. For an overview of the literature on Rawls and animals, see Garner 2012. Bruers 2015a also draws on Rawls to evaluate animal welfare.

cease to exist than experience life as a chicken in the first place, even a free-range one, especially those of us who place enough value on abstract thought to be engaged in asking the question. It is hard to judge the relative value of eating beetles against the disvalue of having one's feathers plucked when we have difficulty viewing even the good in question as other than outright bad. To the extent that this thought experiment is possible, one will have to rely heavily on observation of animals' own behavior. This observation, again, seems *prima facie* to weigh in favor of the thesis that animals even on factory farms lead lives that are on the whole more positive than negative. Video footage of the procedures frequently cited as dramatic examples of routine animal abuse—such as the debeaking of chicks, the castration of bulls, and the notching of pigs' ears—is readily available, and the animals' behavior indicates much less discomfort than one might assume upon reading about the procedures.³⁴ Even sows in gestation crates give little appearance of deriving no net benefit from life, stereotypic behavior notwithstanding.

It seems likely that both of these approaches lead to the conclusion that animals even on factory farms in the contemporary United States typically lead lives worth living and therefore significantly above the minimum standards that could theoretically be justified in the raising of animals for consumption.³⁵ The conclusion of this section, then, is provisionally that in a simple binary choice as to whether factory farms as currently operated should be permitted and even supported or whether one should abstain from animal products entirely, support for factory farming is fully permissible.

An irony should be confronted at this point, though, lest it appear to be a contradiction. It is highly probable that the conclusions drawn here allow for the treatment of animals in ways that most people would intuitively deem immorally harsh. This reply is not as devastating, from an intuitivist perspective, as it might initially seem, however. To begin with, three nuances to the meaning of *intuitivism* should be kept in mind. First, recall that empirical education shapes ethical intuitions. Having read about factory-farm procedures before witnessing them, I am keenly aware that the images evoked by such texts are suggestive of far more suffering than direct observation indicates. Second, recall that the intuitivism defended here stresses the

34. For example, consider debeaking. In his account, Singer describes “guillotineline devices with hot blades” and reports that the “infant chick’s beak is inserted into the instrument, and the hot blade cuts off the end of it.” He also quotes the following statement: “The hot knife used in debeaking cuts through this complex of horn, bone, and sensitive tissue, causing severe pain” (2009, 101). Debeaking is without doubt unpleasant for the birds, and Singer provides some evidence that they continue to feel its effects after the fact. This unpleasantness should not be minimized. Yet observation of the procedure indicates that the pain involved may be a good deal more tolerable than the ideas that Singer’s words awaken in the imagination. Obviously, it is impossible to substantiate such a point except by direct perceptions—which may differ from person to person—but video footage is widely available (e.g., *AfriChic* 2018; Hossen 2018; *Unseen Moment* 2020). Further, one must recall that such dramatic procedures are limited in duration, and the generally brief unpleasantness that they represent must be balanced against the much more routine pleasures of life.

35. According to Weir, “Even by today’s intensive methods, except for battery chickens, tethered sows, and veal calves, most food animals during their lives probably experience individually more net pleasure than pain” (1991, 19).

need for moral education. It is plausible that most people's cultivated and considered opinion might be more amenable to these procedures than are their initial gut reactions. Third, just as animals' response to imminent death may be more reflective of instinct than of deliberate choice, so humans' reactions to suffering inflicted upon animals may involve nondeliberate or even antideliberate sympathy that irrationally seeks to forestall present pain regardless of consequences. (A nurse of my acquaintance tells of having to restrain a mother to prevent her from interfering with a potentially life-saving operation upon her child. The mother's rationale? "You're hurting my baby!") To the extent that such reactions are a factor, they must also be discounted. Most important, however, is a probable confusion about the question being asked. The conclusion defended in this section represents a truly minimal standard to which factory farms could be held, if necessary, in a simplistic up or down vote on their existence as presently operated. To qualify the foregoing discussion and make it more applicable to the actual decision making of everyday life will be the burden of the following section.

Practical Action: Possibilities for Regulation and Selective Consumption

In reality, of course, the question that each of us faces is not limited to either a simple blanket endorsement or a rejection of factory farming. It is instead an infinitely varied assessment of an assortment of animal-raising practices grouped under the heading "factory farming" and of responses to each practice that are appropriate given individual circumstances. Thus, a more complex analysis is in order—one that confronts the messiness of action in real life. This sort of reasoning could be extended in any number of directions. Farmers and retailers must decide what reforms are financially feasible. Financiers must decide whether to invest or divest. For purposes of space, I continue to focus on two roles: How should individuals³⁶ act as citizens and consumers? In this final section, then, I suggest a principled approach to the application of government and market pressure to factory farmers and an empirical conclusion (again *prima facie*) that some degree of such pressure is justified.

In keeping with the utilitarian pleasure–pain calculus of the IUR perspective, the principle that should govern analyses of factory-farm practices is straightforward. Marginal improvements in the conditions under which animals are raised that increase (perhaps discounted) animal well-being more than they decrease human well-being are worth investing some degree of effort to pursue. Decreases in human well-being can be measured fairly straightforwardly in the cost of reforms in lost profits to producers and the increased price of animal products to consumers. Measuring

36. The specification is intentional. A reader asked, "Who judges?" All judgment is individual. My interest, therefore, is in principles that each of us can apply as appropriate to our circumstances.

increases in animal well-being is inherently more subjective, but the goal should be to institute reforms (and only reforms) that are reasonably judged to increase animal utility more significantly than they increase human cost.

Even while acknowledging the disclaimer that such evaluations are highly dependent on subjective judgment, it is worth noting a *prima facie* conclusion that a number of reforms to current factory-farming practices are probably justified. The most frequently cited “abusive” practices—castration of cattle, debeaking of chicks, and so on—are arguably acceptable. Given these procedures’ brevity and the fact that observation indicates the pain imposed by them is tolerable, they may well be justified by decreased cost.³⁷ Practices that inflict long-term frustration or suffering that could be ameliorated at reasonable cost are probably worthy of reconsideration, however. Chickens are subject to especially harsh treatment. The condition of broilers is bad enough that it is difficult to believe that at least some marginal improvements would not be worthwhile. And most egg layers are housed in battery cages so crowded that the birds are unable to perform natural functions like standing upright, spreading their wings, or nesting. But the increased cost of cage-free eggs can be reasonable enough that a number of companies are adopting this approach of their own volition (Shanker 2019). The induced anemia of veal calves is another case in point. Given that the sole benefit of consuming veal appears to be what Singer calls “snob appeal” (2009, 133), it seems unlikely that there is any legitimate human cost associated with such a reform, so it would be all to the good.

Political regulation is the most effective means of extending reforms to an entire industry. Our market economy incentivizes producers to minimize the cost of producing any good or service. When the correct Pigouvian taxes are in place, costs represent resources used, so the effort to diminish cost just is the effort to satisfy as many of people’s desires as possible while using as few of our finite resources as possible. In contrast, when engaging in unethical behavior leads to a decrease in material resources used, markets will incentivize that behavior by giving a price advantage to the most unscrupulous producer. The job of regulation in such situations is to enforce moral principles, thus evening the playing field by ensuring that producers are not disadvantaged for being ethically conscientious (Wilson [1889] 2005, §1278, 66–67). Thus, the job of political advocates with respect to animal-welfare reform is straightforward: obtain estimates of the costs and benefits of various marginal reforms to the well-being of factory-farmed animals that are as reliable as practicable and seek legislation implementing those reforms that would, on balance, do good.

In addition to new regulation, additional enforcement of existing regulation may be called for. Allegations abound that “many” (Engster 2006, 530) factory-farmed

37. A reader challenged this conclusion, arguing that such procedures could be avoided “without great cost.” Perhaps. It must be stressed that the judgment here is tentative. One way to determine the fact might be to impose a small Pigouvian tax and let the market decide.

animals are “routinely” (Engel 2001, 101) slaughtered in horrific ways that violate the Humane Slaughter Act of 1978. Such allegations of widespread law breaking strain credibility but are worth investigation. Given the intense pain that such killings would inflict, it is fairly certain that the cost of prevention would be worthwhile. One can never entirely eliminate accidents or outright crime, of course, but their existence is no more reason to end animal production than the existence of other sorts of accidents and crime are reason to end human life itself. But to the extent that widespread misbehavior is plausible, it should be investigated and punished.

How are consumers to promote marginal reforms that do more good than harm? The recommendations in the literature have thus far consisted primarily of exhortations to eat vegetarian or at least to avoid animal products derived from factory farms, but here, too, significantly more nuance is in order. As discussed earlier, such an extreme blanket response is unreasonable. I suggest instead that the moral responsibility of most consumers of animal products who have been made aware of the conditions under which animals are raised in factory farms is much more modest and certainly situation-dependent. There are an infinite number of good causes in the world, and not every person is obligated to focus significant energy on every one of those causes, so for the most part people should feel free to go on living and eating much as before. They should not feel obligated to abstain even from the products of the most questionable kinds of factory production when circumstances make it particularly difficult or awkward for them to do so. Yet at the same time those who have even minimal time, money, and interest to invest in this cause can do some good by voting with their dollars and choosing to consume the slightly more expensive products of animals raised in a slightly more humane manner when reasonably possible. As a general rule, avoiding veal, purchasing cage-free eggs, and favoring pork or beef over chicken are probably worth the cost. Such a response is actually more likely to promote the cause of animal welfare than all-out vegetarianism does. The latter approach merely removes support from factory-farmed animal production, whereas the approach advocated here positively encourages producers to engage in animal-production practices that are more humane than those that are standard at present.³⁸

Conclusion

This article has attempted to suggest a more moderate approach to the ethics and politics of the welfare of factory-farmed animals than those that overwhelmingly dominate the literature at present. Rather than going either to the extreme of refusing animals moral consideration or to the extreme of treating pigs as persons, it suggests that animal welfare is a real concern, but one that should be approached

38. For an overview of some literature on this and related topics, see Shah et al. 2007.

from what I have called the IUR perspective. Given that factory-farmed animals are brought into existence solely for human consumption, factory farming is minimally acceptable so long as the lives of the animals in question involve less net disutility (perhaps at some discount) than the utility that results to humans from their existence—a principle that, *prima facie*, legitimates all factory-farming practices in the contemporary United States. At the same time, political and consumer pressure is appropriate to improve the well-being of animals raised on factory farms so long as the (again, perhaps discounted) gain in utility to the animals is more than sufficient to balance the cost of such reforms to humans. Such an approach is truer to the ethical intuitions that ground all moral theorizing than is either disregard for animal suffering or advocacy of morally mandatory vegetarianism. I hope it can provide a widely persuasive ground for moderate but effective reform that exploits the benefits while mitigating the costs of factory farming.

References

- Abbate, C. E. 2020. Meat Eating and Moral Responsibility: Exploring the Moral Distinctions between Meat Eaters and Puppy Torturers. *Utilitas* 32, no. 4: 398–415.
- AfriChic. 2018. *Automatic Chicken Debeaking*. Video, YouTube. At <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OA9NHOSe5Bc>.
- Andrews, Kristin. 2016. Animal Cognition. In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Summer ed., edited by Edward N. Zalta. At <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2016/entries/cognition-animal/>.
- Anomaly, Jonathan. 2015. What's Wrong with Factory Farming? *Public Health Ethics* 8, no. 3: 246–54.
- . 2020. Antibiotics and Animal Agriculture: The Need for Global Collective Action. In *Ethics and Drug Resistance: Collective Responsibility for Global Public Health*, edited by Euzebiusz Jamrozik and Michael Selgelid, 297–308. Cham, Switzerland: Springer Nature.
- Aristotle. 2011. *Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics*. Edited by Robert Bartlett and Susan Collins. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bobier, Christopher. 2019. Varieties of the Cruelty-Based Objection to Factory Farming. *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 32:377–90.
- Boyd, Brian. 2009. *On the Origin of Stories: Evolution, Cognition, and Fiction*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Bruers, Stijn. 2015a. The Core Argument for Veganism. *Philosophia* 43, no. 2: 271–90.
- . 2015b. In Defense of Eating Vegan. *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 28, no. 4: 705–17.
- Carruthers, Peter. 1992. *The Animals Issue: Moral Theory and Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cofnas, Nathan. 2019. Is Vegetarianism Healthy for Children? *Critical Reviews in Food Science and Nutrition* 59, no. 13: 2052–60.

- DeGrazia, David. 2009. Moral Vegetarianism from a Very Broad Basis. *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 6, no. 2: 143–65.
- Engel, Mylan. 2001. The Mere Considerability of Animals. *Acta Analytica* 16, no. 27: 89–107.
- Engster, Daniel. 2006. Care Ethics and Animal Welfare. *Journal of Social Philosophy* 37, no. 4: 521–36.
- Erdős, Laszlo. 2015. Veganism versus Meat-Eating, and the Myth of “Root Capacity”: A Response to Hsiao. *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 28, no. 6: 1139–144.
- Fraser, David. 2008. *Understanding Animal Welfare: The Science in Its Cultural Context*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Frey, R. G. 2018. Moral Standing, the Value of Lives, and Speciesism. In *The Ethical Life: Fundamental Readings in Ethics and Moral Problems*, edited by Russ Shafer-Landau, 283–99. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Garner, Robert. 2012. Rawls, Animals, and Justice: New Literature, Same Response. *Res Publica* 18, no. 2: 159–72.
- Halteman, Matthew. 2011. Varieties of the Harm to Animals in Industrial Farming. *Journal of Animal Ethics* 1, no. 2: 122–31.
- Hooley, Dan, and Nathan Nobis. 2016. A Moral Argument for Veganism. In *Philosophy Comes to Dinner: Arguments about the Ethics of Eating*, edited by Andrew Chignell, Terence Cuneo, and Matthew C. Halteman, 92–108. New York: Routledge.
- Hossen, Moinul. 2018. *Layers Chicken’s Beak Cutting 04-07-2018*. Video, YouTube. At <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4tJpa5yr-rA>.
- Hsiao, Timothy. 2015a. A Carnivorous Rejoinder to Bruers and Erdős. *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 28, no. 6: 1127–138.
- . 2015b. In Defense of Eating Meat. *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 28, no. 2: 277–91.
- . 2017. Industrial Farming Is Not Cruel to Animals. *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 30, no. 1: 37–54.
- Jamieson, Dale. 1983. Killing Persons and Other Beings. In *Ethics and Animals*, edited by Harlan B. Miller and William H. Williams, 135–46. Clifton, N.J.: Humana.
- Linville, Mark. 2012. The Moral Argument. In *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, edited by William Lane Craig and J. P. Moreland, 391–448. Chichester, U.K.: Blackwell.
- Machan, Tibor R. 2004. *Putting Humans First: Why We Are Nature’s Favorite*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Martin, Adrienne M. 2016. Factory Farming and Consumer Complicity. In *Philosophy Comes to Dinner: Arguments about the Ethics of Eating*, edited by Andrew Chignell, Terence Cuneo, and Matthew C. Halteman, 203–14. New York: Routledge.
- Mellor, David J. 2016a. Moving beyond the “Five Freedoms” by Updating the “Five Provisions” and Introducing Aligned “Animal Welfare Aims.” *Animals* 6, no. 10: n.p.
- . 2016b. Updating Animal Welfare Thinking: Moving beyond the “Five Freedoms” towards “a Life Worth Living.” *Animals* 6, no. 3: n.p.
- Moreland, J. P. 2014. *The Soul: How We Know It’s Real and Why It Matters*. Chicago: Moody.

- Norcross, Alastair. 2018. Puppies, Pigs, and People: Eating Meat and Marginal Cases. In *The Ethical Life: Fundamental Readings in Ethics and Moral Problems*, edited by Russ Shafer-Landau, 267–82. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Nozick, Robert. 1974. *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. New York: Basic.
- Perrine, Timothy. 2019. Hsiao on the Moral Status of Animals: Two Simple Responses. *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 32, nos. 5–6: 927–33.
- Plantinga, Alvin. 2002. Reply to Beilby's Cohorts. In *Naturalism Defeated? Essays on Plantinga's Evolutionary Argument against Naturalism*, edited by James Beilby, 204–76. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.
- Puryear, Stephen. 2016. Sentience, Rationality, and Moral Status: A Further Reply to Hsiao. *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 29, no. 4: 697–704.
- Puryear, Stephen, Stijn Bruers, and Laszlo Erdős. 2017. On a Failed Defense of Factory Farming. *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 30, no. 2: 311–23.
- Rachels, James. 2004. The Basic Argument for Vegetarianism. In *Food for Thought: The Debate over Eating Meat*, edited by Steve F. Sapontzis, 70–80. Amherst, Mass.: Prometheus.
- Ritchie, Angus. 2012. *From Morality to Metaphysics: The Theistic Implications of Our Ethical Commitments*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rossi, John, and Samuel A. Garner. 2014. Industrial Farm Animal Production: A Comprehensive Moral Critique. *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 27, no. 3: 479–522.
- Ruse, Michael. 2012. *The Philosophy of Human Evolution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ryn, Claes. 2003. *A Common Human Ground: Universality and Particularity in a Multicultural World*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press.
- Scruton, Roger. 2004. The Conscientious Carnivore. In *Food for Thought: The Debate over Eating Meat*, edited by Steve F. Sapontzis, 81–91. Amherst, Mass.: Prometheus.
- Shanker, Deena. 2019. Companies Are Rushing to Meet Cage-Free Egg Deadline. *Bloomberg*, March 8. At <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-03-08/clock-is-ticking-as-companies-scramble-to-produce-cage-free-eggs>.
- Shah, Dhavan, Douglas M. McCloud, Lewis Friedland, and Michelle R. Nelson. 2007. The Politics of Consumption/the Consumption of Politics. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 611:6–15.
- Singer, Peter. 2009. *Animal Liberation: The Definitive Classic of the Animal Movement*. Updated ed. New York: HarperCollins.
- . 2011. *Practical Ethics*. 3rd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Skoble, Aeon J. 2020. The Conscience of an Omnivore. *Cato Unbound*, February 12. At <https://www.cato-unbound.org/2020/02/12/aeon-j-skoble/conscience-omnivore>.
- Smolkin, Doran. 2021. Is Humane Farming Morally Permissible? *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 38, no.2: 244–257. March 13.
- Solis, Coleman. 2021. How Much Does Slaughter Harm Humanely Raised Animals? *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 38, no.2: 258–272. November 6.

- Sumner, L. W. 1981. *Abortion and Moral Theory*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Unseen Moment: Debeaking of Broiler Breeder Chicks/Beak Trimming of Chicks*. 2020. Video, YouTube. At <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mh8CUuLp61g>.
- Warren, Mary Anne. 1997. *Moral Status: Obligations to Persons and Other Living Things*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wathes, Christopher. 2010. Lives Worth Living? *Veterinary Record* 166:468–69.
- Webster, John. 2016. Animal Welfare: Freedoms, Dominions, and “a Life Worth Living.” *Animals* 6:35.
- Weir, Jack. 1988. Vegetarianism and the Argument from Unnecessary Pain. *Southwest Philosophical Studies* 10, no. 3: 92–100.
- . 1991. Unnecessary Pain, Nutrition, and Vegetarianism. *Between the Species* 7, no. 1: 13–26.
- Wilson, Woodrow. [1889] 2005. The State. In *Woodrow Wilson: The Essential Political Writings*, edited by R. J. Pestritto, 31–70. Lanham, Md.: Lexington.
- Yeates, J. W. 2011. Is “a Life Worth Living” a Concept Worth Having? *Animal Welfare* 20, no. 3: 397–406.

Acknowledgments: I thank John Meyer, Lewis Waha, and the anonymous reviewers for insightful comments and criticism. Special thanks to Jessica Frenkel for inspiring this project.

SUBSCRIBE NOW AND RECEIVE A FREE BOOK!



"The Independent Review does not accept pronouncements of government officials nor the conventional wisdom at face value."

—**JOHN R. MACARTHUR**, Publisher, *Harper's*

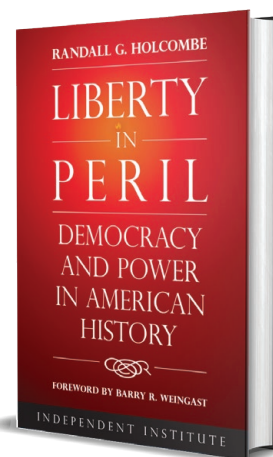
"The Independent Review is excellent."

—**GARY BECKER**, Nobel Laureate in Economic Sciences

Subscribe to [*The Independent Review*](#) and receive a free book of your choice such as *Liberty in Peril: Democracy and Power in American History*, by Randall G. Holcombe.

Thought-provoking and educational, [*The Independent Review*](#) is blazing the way toward informed debate. This quarterly journal offers leading-edge insights on today's most critical issues in economics, healthcare, education, the environment, energy, defense, law, history, political science, philosophy, and sociology.

Student? Educator? Journalist? Business or civic leader? Engaged citizen? This journal is for YOU!



Order today for more **FREE** book options

SUBSCRIBE

The Independent Review is now available digitally on mobile devices and tablets via the Apple/Android App Stores and Magzter. Subscriptions and single issues start at \$2.99. [Learn More.](#)

