**Abstract**

Industrial animal farming has been rejected in academic as well as non-academic spheres for several reasons, in particular its negative impact on animal welfare and the environment. As an alternative, people have turned to "organic," "small scale," and "local" animal farming, treating it as an ethical solution to many, or perhaps all, of the problems caused by industrial animal farming. However, Tom Regan's paper, "The Case for Animal Rights," and Christine Korsgaard's paper, "Getting Animals in View," note that there is something morally wrong that happens when we use animals—both human and non-human—as resources. Therefore, Regan and Korsgaard's arguments seem to ultimately reject any kind of animal farming, including "organic," "small scale," and "local" animal farming. In this thesis, I use these two papers by Regan and Korsgaard as well as Peter Singer's paper, "All Animals Are Equal," as the foundation of my own argument. I introduce the *ideal animal farm* as the perfect animal farm which is ethical and ideal in every way we might want it to be, and I argue that even ideal animal farms can be unethical because of what Regan and Korsgaard note in their papers. I identify exploitation as a necessary part of many cases of animal farming, and I argue that exploiting non-human animals is always morally wrong.

I am additionally interested in the stark contrast between our treatment of humans and non-human animals, even in ideal farms, which implies that exploiting a human is morally worse than exploiting a non-human animal. This thesis looks closely at what I think are the strongest arguments and explanations in defense of this contrast in treatment, and I ultimately conclude that the defenses are not strong enough to justify systemically treating non-human animals, and not humans, as resources.

# The Ethics of Ideal Animal Farming

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**Contents**

## Introduction

This thesis is about what it means for an animal farm to be morally permissible, and which considerations I think we're often missing when we decide which animal farms *are* permissible. There are some farms whose moral impermissibility we might think is easy to identify: for example, we might think of "industrial" farms, whose animals often experience physical suffering as a result of their subpar facilities and regulations, and which may contribute to global warming and health problems among humans. As an alternative to industrial farms, many of us might instead buy meat from "local" or "organic" farms, whose regulations and facilities cause less suffering than industrial ones and which contribute less to pollution and human health issues. Many of us might be satisfied stopping there, deciding that less (or, ideally, no) physical and mental suffering is enough for a farm to be morally permissible.

The idea behind this thesis was to challenge the reasoning of people who are satisfied with these animal farms which cause no suffering—which I will refer to as "ideal" animal farms. I am interested in the stark contrast between our treatment of humans and non-human animals, even in ideal farms. Farm animals, as the producers of a lot of our food, are treated as though they were permissible renewable resources, while the treatment of humans as renewable resources is generally considered to be impermissible. This contrast implies that there is a difference between humans and non-human animals which justifies treating one as a renewable resource and not the other. This thesis tries to look closely at what I think are the strongest arguments and explanations in defense of this contrast in treatment, and I ultimately conclude that the defenses are not strong enough to justify systemically treating non-human animals, and not humans, as resources.

Establishing the rejection of the systematic prioritization of one species over another complicates the ethics of animal farming, and the rest of this thesis means to offer an answer to the question of when an animal farm is ethical. I am interested in exploitation as an essential aspect of many animal farms (even ideal ones), and whether cases of exploitation are always morally wrong. I am also interested in consent as a factor which can decide the moral permissibility or impermissibility of exploitation, and how we should consider inability to consent among humans and non-human animals. I think that this aspect of exploitation (as well as inability to consent) is missing from our discussions about the ethics of animal farming, and I propose conditions for morally impermissible exploitation to identify cases of morally impermissible animal farming. I hope this thesis will show that ideal animal farms are not straightforwardly morally permissible, and that suffering and pain are not the only ethical considerations to think about when we discuss ethical animal farming.

This thesis is split into three chapters: Chapter 1: Literature Review; Chapter 2: Morally Impermissible Exploitation; and Chapter 3: Possible Objections. In Chapter 1, I will look at three different ethical views about animal farming and the general treatment of animals by humans. I will present Peter Singer's argument in "All Animals Are Equal," Tom Regan's argument in "The Case for Animal Rights," and Christine Korsgaard's argument in "Getting Animals in View." After explaining and comparing the three views, I will explain which aspects I agree with but why I ultimately find them unsatisfactory. I will use Peter Singer's rejection of speciesism, Regan's rejection of using non-human animals as resources, and Korsgaard's rejection of using non-human animals as mere means in my own argument in Chapter 2.

In Chapter 2, I will first describe the ideal animal farm in more detail as a charitable version of animal farming which I will ultimately reject. This conception of the ideal animal

farm will be the foundation of my argument and will allow me to look at what is morally wrong with animal farming when no suffering is caused. I will then introduce my own argument that many ideal animal farms are morally wrong because they use non-consensual exploitation, and I will use the chapter to explain the complicated or controversial premises. Using the specific parts of Singer, Regan, and Korsgaard's views, I will explain why we should be concerned with the exploitation of non-human animals and I will also explain how exploitation is always morally wrong when it is non-consensual.

Finally, in Chapter 3, I will offer possible questions or objections to my argument and I will attempt to defend my thesis against them. I will answer questions which ask about how my thesis should or shouldn't be extended to other non-human animals and other living things, like plants. Additionally, I will try to explain a possible real-world application of my thesis and why it could be possible. Finally, I will address the connection between animal farming and cultural practices and what the implementation of my conclusion might mean for the preservation of culture.

# Chapter 1: Literature Review

## 1.1 Introduction

In this first chapter, I will be introducing some of the well-known literature on animal agriculture. In order, I will discuss Peter Singer's view in "All Animals Are Equal," Tom Regan's view in "The Case for Animal Rights," and Christine Korsgaard's view in "Getting Animals in View." These three views all reject industrial animal farming—for different reasons—and there are parts of each of them that appeal to me. In this chapter, the first three sections will introduce and explain the arguments in the three papers I listed above. The fourth section will describe some of the main differences between the three views. The fifth section will contain my responses to each view as well as how they connect to my own view. Finally, the last section will describe how these analyses will connect to the rest of my thesis.

Since this chapter focuses on industrial animal farming, I will explain what specifically I take that to mean here. My understanding of industrial animal farming is that it is meant to be a cheap way to create more animal products. Therefore, industrial animal farms tend to be densely packed with farm animals, oftentimes in unclean conditions and with little space to move. By packing farm animals into small spaces, farmers are able to grow more food while spending less money and time on them, therefore making more money overall. Industrial animal farming often involves choosing cheaper options in order to make more money, which often leads to other concerning consequences. For example, a typical chicken on an industrial farm would be closely packed into cages with other chickens in order to save space. However, this proximity makes the chickens stressed, which leads to pecking. In order to avoid pecking, the chickens are debeaked.[1] Additionally, keeping the chickens together makes it easier for diseases to spread among them,

[1] Barnhill et al 2016, 323.

prompting farmers to treat the chickens with antibiotics. In turn, these antibiotics in our food contribute to antibiotic resistance.[2] Additionally, the typical chicken is often the result of careful breeding which creates chickens with more meat and which grow very quickly. The result is that the typical chicken's body cannot comfortably support its weight.[3]

Industrial animal farms also often prevent their animals from being able "to engage in natural behaviors."[4] These natural behaviors often require space between the animals and also space outside, which industrial animal farms do not often allow for since these practices would cost the farms more time and money. Therefore, industrial animal farms have fewer regulations for the wellbeing of the farm animal than non-industrial farms do. In his paper, "All Animals Are Equal," Peter Singer discusses industrial animal farms which cause more suffering than good. The suffering here refers to the suffering experienced by the farm animals and the good refers to the good experienced by humans as a result of industrial animal farming. It is not necessarily a condition for industrial animal farming to cause more suffering than good, since it is possible for there to be industrial animal farms which cause equal suffering and good or more good than suffering. Therefore, it is important to note that, when *I* mention industrial animal farms, I am including industrial animal farms that don't cause more suffering than harm. However, when I share Singer's view, industrial animal farming will only refer to ones which *do* cause more suffering than good.

**1.2 Peter Singer**

In his paper, "All Animals Are Equal," Peter Singer approaches the issue of industrial animal agriculture as an anti-speciesist and a utilitarian, and uses both of these to ultimately

[2] Barnhill et al 2016, 323.
[3] Ibid, 328.
[4] Ibid, 328.

reject industrial animal agriculture. Singer defines speciesism as the prioritization of the interests of one's own species over the interest of another species simply because it is their own species. In order to start understanding why one might defend speciesism, it is important to define equality and to consider who should be equal to whom. One way to think of equality has to do with equal rights in laws. An argument against the statement that "all animals are equal" has to do with differences in abilities. For example, non-human animals should not have the right to vote because they don't have the ability to vote in the way that humans do. Therefore, one might want to say that, because humans and non-human animals have different abilities, they are not equal. However, Singer points out biological differences between cisgendered men and women which don't lead us to conclude that they are not equal. Singer writes, "many feminists hold that women have the right to an abortion on request. It does not follow that since these same feminists are campaigning for equality between men and women they must support the right of men to have abortions too."[5] Instead, since equality doesn't seem to require equal abilities or equal treatment, Singer suggests that equality requires "equal consideration," which does not necessarily mean equal treatment or equal rights.[6] Singer argues that any desire to cite factual differences or similarities between beings to identify who is equal to whom is irrelevant because, according to him, equality is a "moral idea" rather than an "assertion of fact."[7] The important point in this premise about equality is that differences in abilities between people don't justify "any difference in the amount of consideration we give to their needs and interests."[8]

Singer uses these explanations and extends them to equality between species. In the same way that the differences in ability among humans shouldn't affect the consideration we give

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[5] Singer 1975, 2.
[6] Ibid, 2.
[7] Ibid, 4.
[8] Ibid, 5.

them, the differences in ability between humans and non-human animals also shouldn't affect the consideration we give them. In other words, the "equal" of "all animals are equal" is equal consideration: despite the differences between humans and non-human animals, all animals deserve equal consideration of their needs and interests.

Singer's argument against industrial animal farming is also necessarily based on his acceptance of utilitarianism, which determines the moral permissibility and impermissibility of actions based on the overall good and/or suffering they would cause. In other words, according to utilitarianism, an action is morally good if it causes more good than suffering, and an action is morally wrong if it causes more suffering than good. Singer has two arguments; here is a reconstruction of the first one:

P1) An action that causes suffering is justified only if it causes more good than suffering.

P2) Industrial animal farming does not cause more good than suffering.

C1) Therefore, the suffering caused by industrial animal farming is not justified.

So, with the argument for utilitarianism rejecting industrial animal farming and his argument against speciesism, Singer also argues this:

P3) Speciesism should be rejected.

P4) It is speciesist to accept farming non-human animals but not humans.

C2) We should not farm non-human animals unless we would also farm humans.

It is important to stress that, according to Singer, differences in suffering *are* important when considering how *morally wrong* it is to hurt one animal or another. For example, there is a moral difference between killing a human (with ordinary cognitive abilities and sense perception) and killing a clam. The human would experience more pain and suffering than the clam, and because of Singer's utilitarianism, this means that it is morally worse to kill the

human. Additionally, this commits Singer to say the same about humans. In other words, there is a moral difference between killing a human with regular cognitive abilities and sense perception and killing a human without the same abilities. However, the difference in moral permissibility or impermissibility based on suffering should not affect Singer's argument for equal consideration. According to Singer, even though it may be worse to kill one being rather than another, that does not mean that they don't deserve equal consideration.

Singer's paper—and entire book—condemns industrial animal agriculture for a few main reasons. First and most noticeably, the current state of industrial animal farming creates an immense amount of suffering that can't be justified by anyone, not even utilitarians like Peter Singer. Additionally, our industrial animal farming practices violate anti-speciesism (which we should accept) and violate Singer's principle that we should give all beings equal consideration. An important part of Singer's argument is that if we would not treat fellow humans in the same way that we treat animals on farms or in labs, then we are going to have serious trouble defending our current animal farming practices.

### 1.3 Tom Regan

Tom Regan begins his essay, "The Case for Animal Rights," by stating that, although many people do agree that things like industrial animal farming and cosmetic testing on animals are wrong, those people contradict themselves when they also support non-industrial animal farming (NIAF) and animal testing to advance medicine. Regan acknowledges the popular view that what is wrong with animal farming has to do with pain, suffering, or deprivation, and he rejects it. Instead, he says that what is fundamentally wrong with the way animals are treated is using them as renewable resources for ourselves.[9] To consider humans' responsibilities towards

[9] Regan 1985, 179.

non-human animals given his view of what is fundamentally wrong, he discusses and analyzes contractarianism, the cruelty-kindness view, and utilitarianism. He ultimately rejects these and instead offers a different view which he calls the rights view. At the end of the paper, Regan concludes that the only way to right the fundamental wrong with treatment towards animals is to get rid of commercial animal farming completely. While Regan doesn't clearly define commercial animal farming, I take it to mean any kind of animal farming in which the animal products are sold for money. Therefore, commercial animal farming seems to be broader than industrial animal farming.

Contractarianism:

Regan explains morality under contractarianism to be many contracts made between people that commit those people to certain duties. If you have broken a contract, you've done something wrong, and if you haven't, you haven't done anything wrong. More specifically, Regan describes contractarianism and what it commits us to regarding non-human animals like this:

> P1) Morality consists of a set of rules that individuals voluntarily agree to abide by (like a contract).
>
> P2) Those who understand and accept the terms of the contract are covered directly.
>
> P3) Beings who lack the ability to understand morality and so cannot sign the contract themselves lack rights, but can be protected by others who love or cherish them and *can* sign contracts.
>
> P4) We have duties involving these beings, or regarding them, but we have no duties *to* them.

P5) If beings who lack rights are not protected by others who love or cherish them, then we have *no* duties involving them, regarding them, or to them.

P6) Farm animals often fall under the category of beings who lack rights and are not protected by others who love or cherish them.

C) Therefore we have no duties involving, regarding, or to those farm animals.

P2 refers to the fact that, if you have the ability to understand morality and the contract and can accept it (or sign it), then you are protected very simply under contractarianism. If you have that ability, then you have rights. I, for example, am able to read, understand, and sign a contract, and therefore I can have rights and am directly protected by the contracts I'm part of.

In contrast, P3 says that if I were a child and didn't have the ability to read, and/or understand, and/or sign a contract, I wouldn't have rights and I couldn't be directly protected by contracts. However, my parents who love and cherish me would be able to make contracts *about* me which would protect me. Those contracts would commit people to duties involving me and regarding me, but not directly to me. For example, if someone hit me, this wouldn't be wrong because they hurt *me*—it would be wrong because they hurt someone/thing my parents love and cherish. Additionally, beings like pets or animals that are widely cared about (Regan names whales, baby seals, and the American bald eagle) can also be protected under other people's contracts but do not actually have rights—like children—because they can't understand or agree to contracts.

P5 and P6, however, explain that there are some beings—often non-human animals—that are cared for less and less and therefore are essentially no longer protected by other people's contracts. Since they're not protected, we have no duties involving or regarding them at all, not just *to* them. The duty to not hurt someone without rights—even if it's just because we have to

respect whoever protects them—does not apply to these beings because there are no contracts about them. And if there's no contract to break or follow, then hurting those beings is not wrong. Regan explains that the beings that tend to fall under this category are farm animals or sometimes lab rats, and he says that "the pain and death they endure, though real, are not wrong if no one cares about them," which explains C.[10]

Regan first responds to P1 by suggesting that, under contractarianism, contracts are limited to people who are asked to sign and have access to making contracts with others—not just people who can read and sign and understand the contract itself. He says that only specific people would be asked to sign contracts, and that "the result is that this approach to ethics could sanction the most blatant forms of social, economic, moral, and political injustice, ranging from a repressive caste system to systemic racial or sexual discrimination."[11]

Additionally, Regan rejects P3 because he believes that we do have direct duties to beings who do not have a sense of justice and wouldn't be able to directly participate in contractarianism. He says that, "it seems reasonably certain that, were we to torture a young child or a [r-word] elder, we would be doing something that wronged him or her, not something that would be wrong if (and only if) other humans with a sense of justice were upset."[12] Furthermore, Regan says that if it would be wrong for humans, then it should also be wrong for non-human animals.

Cruelty-kindness view:

Regan discusses the cruelty-kindness view to consider an ethical theory which "recognize[s] that we have some duties directly to animals, just as we have some duties directly

[10] Regan 1985, 182.
[11] Ibid, 182.
[12] Ibid, 183.

to each other," unlike with the contractarian view.[13] Those direct duties, according to the cruelty-kindness view, are to be kind, and not cruel, to animals. Kindness here has to do with kind rather than cruel *intentions*, which he says makes the view complicated and not specific enough. For example, there are cases where someone acts in a way that *seems* kind, but really their intentions are cruel. And there are also cases where someone acts in a way that *seems* cruel (or perhaps more generally harmful), but their intentions are kind. For example, if a racist white person acts generously, but only towards other white people, their generosity is not kind because their intentions are cruel. Regan also gives this alternate example: "The absence of cruelty does not ensure that he or she avoids doing what is wrong. Many people who perform abortions, for example, are not cruel, sadistic people. But that fact alone does not settle the terribly difficult question of the morality of abortion."[14] Regan concludes that the cruelty-kindness view does address the fact that we have direct duties towards beings that lack the ability to understand morality, like non-human animals. However, since the cruelty-kindness view is concerned with cruel and kind *intentions*, and intentions don't necessarily determine the cruelty or kindness of actions, the view ultimately isn't specific enough about what exactly our duties to animals are.

Utilitarianism:

Regan introduces utilitarianism, which says that

P1) Everyone's interests matter equally no matter their race, species, etc.

P2) You should do the act that will bring about the best balance between satisfaction and frustration for everyone affected by the outcome.

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[13] Ibid, 183.
[14] Regan 1985, 183.

P3) Killing and eating animals will bring about the best balance between satisfaction and frustration for everyone affected by the outcome.[15]

C) Therefore, we should kill and eat animals.

While Regan accepts the egalitarian-ness of P1, he ultimately rejects P2. In his argument against it, Regan says that utilitarianism seems to only see value in the interests of beings as opposed to seeing the inherent value of the beings themselves. While P3 and C are commonly shared opinions about farm animals, it becomes a little easier to think about when you consider what it could mean for humans. Take the case of Regan's very old Aunt Bea who also happens to be very rich. Regan plans on donating a big chunk of the money he will inherit from her when she dies to a local children's hospital. However, if he waits for her to die, this donation might never happen. If he killed her, which he explains he could easily get away with, he could donate the money now, which would obviously benefit a lot of people. According to utilitarianism, in this case, there would be nothing wrong with Regan killing his Aunt Bea if it turned out that it would bring about the best balance between satisfaction and frustration for everyone affected by the outcome. In fact, if we were to accept utilitarianism, then Regan *should* kill his aunt, according to P2. Regan says that it *is* wrong to kill someone for the good ends of someone else, and that "a good end does not justify an evil means."[16] This seems to be a basic principle for Regan and he concludes that utilitarianism can't satisfy it.

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[15] While Singer argues that industrial animal farming causes more suffering (frustration) than good (satisfaction), P3 does not necessarily refer to industrial animal farming. Therefore, Singer may actually agree with P3 since it is more generally about killing and eating animals and it may be true that, in a non-industrial animal farm, killing and eating animals causes more good than suffering.

[16] Regan 1985, 185.

Rights View:

Instead, Regan defends the rights view, which says that all individuals have *inherent* value— as opposed to the utilitarian view, which says that value is in the interests of individuals. Regan writes that each being's value is independent of their usefulness to others, and "for either of us to treat the other in ways that fail to show respect for the other's independent value is to act immorally, to violate the individual's rights."[17] Additionally, Regan states that humans and non-human animals have equal inherent value. The practical conclusion of Regan's rights view is that we should eliminate farming for commercial purposes, among other things like hunting and trapping.[18] According to Regan, farming animals for commercial purposes violates the inherent value in non-human animals by using them as renewable resources. Therefore, if we accept his rights view, we should accept that farming animals for commercial purposes is immoral.

What remains unclear in Regan's paper is what exactly farming for commercial purposes means, how it might differ from industrial animal farming, and what kind of farming it excludes. As I understand it, commercial animal farming would be broader than industrial animal farming, and may include farms like the ones I call "ideal animal farms" in the next chapter. In other words, commercial animal farming may include non-industrial animal farms, but it is not clear whether family farms which do not sell their animal products are also included. Perhaps the significance of specifically commercial animal farms for Regan is that there is some additional morally wrong thing that happens when animal products are sold for profit or for money in general. However, if that were true, a defense or explanation of that view would be required in Regan's paper.

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[17] Regan 1985, 186.
[18] Ibid, 188.

Regan's rights view solves many problems because it identifies something inherently wrong in hurting any kind of animal, including humans. It suggests that there is simply something morally bad that happens when we hurt living beings because every living being has inherent value. It suggests that there is no need to look at whether we had previously made some contract saying not to hurt that being (like with contractarianism) or to look at the amounts of good and suffering that were caused by hurting the animals (like with utilitarianism). Instead, the right's view identifies that there is something bad that happens even when we haven't made contracts or when the action causes more good than suffering.

**1.4 Christine Korsgaard**

In Christine Korsgaard's paper, "Getting Animals in View," she addresses the issues with how we perceive non-human animals when we're deciding their moral status. She considers possible arguments from several philosophers including Immanuel Kant, J. M. Coetzee, Peter Singer, and Jeff MacMahan, though she eventually rejects them and offers her own view about importance.

Korsgaard begins her paper by noting the differences between how we view our treatment of non-human animals and humans. She explains that we often use animals as a reference point when we are being treated badly, like when we say we're being "treated like an animal." Korsgaard says that when we compare ourselves to animals in this way, we're acknowledging that they *are* treated badly. However, the clear distinction is that with animals, it's okay, and with humans, it's not. Korsgaard asks whether the distinction between who we can and can't treat badly is necessary, and uses this question to introduce Kant's view, which says that the distinction *is* necessary. He writes,

> Man should not address other *human beings* in the same way as animals, but should regard them as having an equal share in the gifts of nature… Thus man had attained a position of *equality with all rational beings*, because he could claim *to be an end in himself*… and not to be used by anyone else as a mere means to other ends.[19]

According to Kant, this distinction between the treatment of humans and non-human animals is crucial because humans are rational beings while non-human animals are not. Among humans, it would be morally wrong to use each other as "mere means" *because* of our shared rationality. However, because non-human animals are not rational beings and therefore are not "ends in themselves," humans don't have the same moral responsibilities towards them, and it would not be morally wrong to use them as "mere means." I take "mere means" to mean being used only as a resource to serve the ultimate needs and purposes of others. According to Kant, an animal is a "mere" means because it can only ever be used as a resource to serve the needs of humans. Humans are "ends in themselves" because they have an inherent right to not be used and to use non-human animals to serve their purposes. An "end in oneself" should never be a "mere means," and a "mere means" can never be an "end in themselves." Additionally, non-human animals are included in "the gifts of nature" which humans have equal share in. Therefore, non-human animals are available to us to use as means.

Korsgaard responds to Kant by asking why animals shouldn't be treated as ends in themselves in the way that humans are. To begin answering that question, she quotes Coetzee, who says, "it is licit to kill animals because their lives are not as important to them as ours are to us."[20] Korsgaard explains that when we have things that we claim are important because they are

[19] Korsgaard 2016, 367.
[20] Korsgaard 2016, 368.

important to *us*, we treat them as important *absolutely*, and they do become important absolutely, meaning they become important in general and not just to us. Her argument seems to be that, since the things which are important to us are also important in general, and our lives are important to us, then we ourselves also become important in general. Coetzee uses this argument and says that, since non-human animals' lives are not as important to them as ours are to us, then their lives are less important in general too, making it more morally permissible to kill them.

In response, Korsgaard says that animals also pursue things that are important to them. For example, she writes that certain bonds are important to non-human animals, and that "relationships, families and larger social groups persist over time."[21] Their long term maintenance shows that their existence is important to the animals which are a part of them. Therefore, she asks "Why then should we think they must be less important to themselves than we are to ourselves?"[22] She gives two possible answers to this question. The first says that animals are not conscious, or that their consciousness is so "fleeting" that nothing they do could matter to them in the same way that what we do matters to us. She seems to think this claim is not believable and moves onto the next possible answer, which says that "animals live so thoroughly in the moment that their deaths are not regrettable, although their suffering is."[23] In both cases, the arguments appeal to non-human animal minds. Whether a non-human animal's consciousness is fleeting or it only lives in the moment, these arguments rely on the assumption that non-human animals do not have the cognitive ability to have things which are important to them in the same way that humans do.

In response to the second possible explanation, she asks why living in the moment should make animal deaths less regrettable. Here, Korsgaard quotes MacMahan, who claims that human

[21] Korsgaard 2016, 369.
[22] Ibid, 369.
[23] Ibid, 369.

lives "typically have a narrative structure that may demand completion in a certain way."[24] Narrative structure seems to mean the sort of hoping and planned sequence of events which tend to occur in human lives. Our hopes and the things which are important to us prompt us to plan our futures, creating a narrative structure with completion of different goals. MacMahan's argument, then, is that non-human animals' lives don't have a narrative structure which demands completion, and the lack of narrative structure means their lives are basically the same every day. Korsgaard explains that, according to this argument, killing a human would be worse than killing an animal because humans have the potential for narrative structure and animals don't. This means that, by killing a human you would be interrupting their narrative that demands completion, while if you kill an animal, you would just be interrupting "more of the same."[25]

Korsgaard responds to MacMahan's claim by stating that human and non-human animal lives are more similar than we might think. Both are influenced by seasons, migration, their families, and more, creating a sort of rhythm. Korsgaard writes that, "many mother animals raise new young every year or so… [I]n some social animals, the bonds that result from family ties are permanent and important," and she argues that there is a narrative structure for some animals.[26] Additionally, she writes that, "human lives also have established rhythms set by the seasons of the year and the age of breeding, and that many human lives, especially when you look at the species historically…have been pretty much the same every day."[27] Korsgaard's suggestion with these examples seems to be that, perhaps human day to day lives are more monotonous than we might think, and non-human animal lives might also have more narrative structure than we might

[24] Ibid, 369.
[25] Korsgaard 2016, 369.
[26] Ibid, 369.
[27] Ibid, 369.

think. Her response to MacMahan puts humans and non-human animals on the same plane in terms of the importance of their lives (to them and in general), rejecting his argument.

Korsgaard *does* say that MacMahan's argument is right that there is something different about the way that humans live their lives compared to non-human animals. What gives human lives narrative structure is specific to humans—we have the ability to judge ourselves and think about whether we are good or bad, loveable or unloveable, etc., prompting us to create projects for ourselves which we can succeed or fail at. Korsgaard writes that, "the possibility of success or failure is what gives human life the kind of narrative structure that MacMahan describes."[28] She goes on to say that this does show that human life is important to humans in a way that animal life is not important to animals, but not that one is more important than the other.

Korsgaard concludes by saying that, when we think that human life is more important than animal life because of the things we are able to enjoy, it is a result of seeing animals from the wrong perspective, and from comparing them to ourselves in an unproductive way. It is true that human life is important to humans in a different way than a pig's life is important to it. However, this is not enough to conclude that human life is more important *in general*. Korsgaard explains that it doesn't make sense to base the importance of a non-human animal's life on our own interests—since non-human animals are simply different, we should not use our own lives as a point of comparison. She ultimately says that both humans *and* non-human animals have the same "ultimate foundation" for being ends in themselves.[29] This conclusion has serious implications for industrial animal farming at the very least (though perhaps Korsgaard might also include other kinds of animal farming). Industrial animal farming necessarily uses non-human animals as mere means, which Korsgaard objects to, committing her to the rejection of industrial

[28] Korsgaard 2016, 370.
[29] Ibid, 371.

animal farming. It would be plausible for her to also include non-industrial animal farming, since other kinds of animal farming might also use non-human animals as mere means. I will talk more about why this might be the case in Chapter 2.

**1.5 The Similarities and Differences**

The main similarity between Singer, Regan, and Korsgaard which I am concerned with is their rejection of industrial animal farming (and perhaps other kinds of animal farming too), though they approach their rejections in different ways. Singer's argument focuses on rejecting speciesism and it ultimately uses anti-speciesism and utilitarian principles to show how the sheer scale of suffering caused by industrial animal farming does not justify the good it causes, making it morally wrong. Regan appeals to the inherent value in non-human animals which makes using them as a resource morally wrong. Korsgaard rejects arguments saying that human lives are more important than non-human animal lives because they wrongly use human lives as the standard, and she ultimately argues that the importance of animal lives makes it morally wrong to use them as mere means.

Other than these differences I've mentioned in their approaches to rejecting industrial animal farming, the main differences I'm concerned with are the extent to which they reject animal farming in general. Singer's utilitarian argument is necessarily concerned with the amount of suffering caused versus the amount of good caused. Industrial animal farming as it exists now often causes more suffering than good, making it Singer's main focus in his paper. Singer's view allows for a farm which is not speciesist and also does not violate utilitarianism, and it seems like it wouldn't be very hard to create or find farms which are morally permissible. This makes Singer's view the most conservative of the three in this respect.

Meanwhile, rather than focusing on amounts of suffering, Regan's view uses inherent value and the moral wrongness of using an animal as a resource. This broadens the amounts of animal farms which would be considered morally impermissible. Industrial animal farming seems to be an obvious case where non-human animals are used as resources, but, as I will do in Chapter 2, there are views which argue that using non-human animals as a resource is a fundamental aspect of animal farming.

Lastly, Korsgaard's view about the importance of non-human animal lives and the moral impermissibility of being used as a mere means is somewhat similar to Regan's view. Again, industrial animal farming seems to be an obvious case where non-human animals are used as resources, but the lack of clarity about when you are treated as a mere means and when you are not opens Korsgaard's view to the possibility of rejecting many more kinds of animal farms. Ultimately, Regan and Korsgaard's respective views are the most broad and seem to reject more than just industrial animal farms. Additionally, they both see something fundamentally wrong about using other beings for your own needs, even if using the being creates more good than suffering.

## 1.6 My Responses

### Singer:

As a reminder, this is Singer's basic argument against industrial animal farming, using utilitarianism:

P1) An action that causes suffering is justified only if it causes more good than suffering.

P2) Industrial animal farming does not cause more good than suffering.

C1) Therefore, the suffering caused by industrial animal farming is not justified by the good caused by it.

This is the anti-speciesist part of his argument:

P3) Speciesism should be rejected.

P4) It is speciesist to accept farming non-human animals but not humans.

C2) We should not farm non-human animals unless we would also farm humans.

And his argument allows for this extension:

P5) It is sometimes permissible to farm animals (when it does not violate utilitarianism or speciesism).

C3) It is sometimes permissible to farm humans (when it does not violate utilitarianism or speciesism).

My problem with Peter Singer's argument is that it commits him to accept a situation where, cumulatively, humans are saved more than non-human animals even if we're not speciesist. Imagine a situation where you're forced to choose to save the life of either one human or one non-human animal. You can assume that (a) you have no connection to either being, (b) they have equal capacities for suffering, (c) the situations will have equally good outcomes that justify the suffering they cause, and (d) you're not speciesist. You decide to choose the human. According to Singer, this decision is perfectly fine. Now imagine you're made to make the same decision a million times, and each time you make the same choice. Singer is also committed to accepting this possibility. So his argument can be further extended to include:

P6) If speciesism is wrong, then choosing to save a human is morally the same as choosing to save a non-human animal (with the same capacity for suffering).

P7) If choosing to save a human is morally the same as choosing to save a non-human animal (with the same capacity for suffering) on one occasion, then it is morally the same an infinite number of times.

C4) It is morally the same to choose to save a human over a non-human animal (with the same capacity for suffering) an infinite number of times.

This conclusion creates an odd scenario that Singer has to accept: you could be speciesist and someone else could be anti-speciesist, and you could both be forced to make the decision in the situation above. Both of your situations could have the exact same outcomes, but Singer would accept one and reject the other because one of you is speciesist and the other isn't. It seems extreme for one of these to be perfectly fine and for the other to be completely wrong.

While much of this is implied from Singer's more explicit arguments, I find it hard to agree that there is nothing wrong with killing a non-human animal over a human a million times as long as the outcome creates more good than suffering and as long as the decision isn't motivated by speciesism. Additionally, I generally disagree with utilitarianism in general because I don't believe that harming one being for the benefit of another is justified, since exploitation is often morally wrong for its own reasons (which I will talk more about in Chapter 2). The moral wrongness of exploitation (in many cases) also means that something morally wrong is happening on more than just industrial animal farms, meaning that the conclusion of Singer's main argument is also too conservative for me. The part of Singer's argument which I agree with the most, and which I will use as a principle in my own argument later on, is his rejection of speciesism. I will also further defend that principle against possible objections in the next chapter.

**Regan:**

Regan's argument gets closer to my own view than Singer's, in particular when he says that using an animal as a resource is the real moral wrong in animal farming. However, I ultimately take issue with the vagueness of commercial animal farming and it remains unclear what kinds of farms that term includes. Based on his rejection of using animals as a resource, it seems that his conclusion about the dissolution of animal farms should refer to any kind of animal farm. It seems to me that using non-human animals as resources is a crucial aspect of any kind of animal farming. However, adding the term commercial seems to limit his conclusion to animal farms which sell their products. While that is probably true about most animal farms, I can imagine a farm run by a family which only uses the products the farm produces for itself and which does not sell the animal products. Regan doesn't make a clear statement about a case like this, but I think his argument may commit him to rejecting those kinds of non-commercial farms as well. Therefore, although Regan's conclusion goes farther than Singer's, it doesn't outright commit itself to quite as much as I'd like it to.

As far as his Right's View, I think he is right in suggesting that both humans and non-human animals have inherent value, and that this inherent value on its own can explain why something morally bad happens when a human or a non-human animal is hurt. Additionally, I don't think there are strong enough differences between humans and non-human animals to argue that humans have inherent value but non-human animals don't. Or, alternatively, there aren't strong enough differences to argue that we should only respect humans' inherent value and not non-human animals' inherent value. In the next chapter, I will explain why these differences are not compelling enough to argue that we have moral responsibilities to humans but not non-human animals.

**Korsgaard:**

Korsgaard's strategy in her paper is to argue that non-human animals' lives are as important as human lives, and to use this equal importance to say that both non-human animals and humans are "ends in themselves" and not "mere means." Ultimately, she seems to argue that there is something morally wrong with treating someone who is an end in themself as a mere means, meaning that it is morally wrong for humans to treat non-human animals as mere means. While I like this aspect of her argument, and I think it is arguing something similar to what Regan's paper is arguing, she does not thoroughly explain which cases are cases where someone is being treated as a mere means and which ones are not. Much like Regan's argument, Korsgaard's conclusion seems to commit her to rejecting all kinds of animal farming, which I would agree with, but her lack of clarity makes it hard for me to fully accept this part of her argument. Therefore, I think her conclusion should either be extended to include all animal farming, or she should specify why it should not include all animal farming.

On the other hand, her overall point that it is irrational to use human lives as a reference point when we consider the importance of non-human animals' lives is true. If I were trying to figure out if someone else was happy, it wouldn't make sense to use the things that make me happy as a reference, and then conclude that the other person is unhappy because their life lacks those things, because we are different people. Similarly, humans and non-human animals are very different, so we shouldn't be comparing their lives to ours.

## 1.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I looked at three well-known arguments in animal ethics which reject industrial animal farming (and sometimes more). I first looked at Peter Singer's argument in "All

Animals Are Equal," then Tom Regan's argument in "The Case for Animal Rights," and finally Christine Korsgaard's argument in "Getting Animals in View." After introducing and describing each view, I explained the main similarities and differences between the arguments. Then, I offered my own thoughts on each view, explaining why I don't completely accept any of them. Through my reviews of these papers, I've highlighted aspects of their views which I agree with and which ones I disagree with, and I will use the parts I agree with most as premises in my own argument in the next chapter. Most specifically, I will use the anti-speciesism from Peter Singer's paper, and a combination of Tom Regan's rejection of using animals as resources and Christine Korsgaard's rejection of using animals as mere means, connecting them to exploitation.

# Chapter 2: Non-Consensual Exploitation

## 2.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I will introduce and defend my view that, if we think that farming humans is morally wrong, then we should also think that farming non-human animals is morally wrong (in most cases). I will first offer a charitable definition of animal farming, which I will call the ideal animal farm. With the ideal animal farm in mind, I will then give my main argument in premise-conclusion form. My argument will combine aspects of the views I discussed in the previous chapter with my own views. More specifically, I will focus on Peter Singer's rejection of speciesism, Tom Regan's focus on exploitation and treating animals as resources, and Christine Korsgaard's view of using animals as mere means. I will attempt to reject some of the most compelling arguments in favor of speciesism in order to create a foundation for the rest of my argument. My main contribution in this chapter will be discussing exploitation and consent as crucial factors when considering the ethics of ideal animal farming, which I will define in the next section. I will define both exploitation and consent and I will explain the moral significance of specifically non-consensual exploitation and how it can help us reach conclusions about the ethics of ideal animal farming. Finally, I will revisit the main points I made in this chapter and I will explain how this discussion will continue in my final chapter.

## 2.1 The Ideal Animal Farm

People often reject industrial animal farming for a few reasons: animal cruelty, contributions to climate change, its effects on human health, etc. Many of these people look towards what I'll call *ideal animal farms* instead for their meat and dairy products. These ideal animal farms seem to offer solutions to everything: they do not cause animals suffering—or at

least they cause substantially less suffering—they contribute far fewer greenhouse gas emissions to climate change, they use fewer (or no) antibiotics which in turn has fewer effects on human health, etc. In this chapter, I'd like to offer the most charitable case of animal farming (the most *ideal* case) against which I'll offer my own argument. This chapter is meant to show how even the most ideal version of animal farming is morally wrong, given how we feel and think other animals (like humans) should be treated. Therefore, I'll dedicate this section to outlining what the ideal animal farm might look like.

Many philosophers have already written about their ideal animal farmers. For example, in his paper, "Eating our Friends," Roger Scruton offers this description:

> Consider the traditional beef farmer, who fattens his calves for 30 months, keeping them on open pasture in the summer and in warm roomy barns in the winter, feeding them on grass, silage, beans and maize, attending to them in all their ailments, and sending them for slaughter, when the time comes, to the nearby slaughterhouse, where they are instantly despatched by a humane killer.[30]

Scruton praises the traditional beef farmer and his lifestyle, and his description captures what I think of as the ideal animal farm. The ideal animal farm would be small enough that the farmers are able to tend to each animal. There is a lot of space for them to graze outside and a lot of space where they sleep inside. There should be no reason for them to experience any suffering, even when they are killed. They are carefully bred to ensure that they are healthy and are compatible with the environment they're being farmed in, meaning farmers often artificially inseminate their farm animals (like cows).

The ideal animal farms of people who reject industrial animal farms are often organic, meaning they must follow certain rules and regulations, like some of the practices I've already

[30] Scruton 2016, 392.

mentioned. Additionally, organic farm animals must be fed organic feed and must have access to safe and sanitary facilities. Of course, organic regulations might not go far enough for some people, and people may have different ideas of what an ideal animal farm should look like, but, in general, they share many of the same core features which I've mentioned in this section. When I refer to the ideal animal farm, I'll be picturing something like what I've described here. It's also important to note that the ideal animal farm might not be totally achievable, and, if it is, very few animal farms would function in an ideal way. However, to give the person in favor of animal farming the benefit of the doubt, I will act as though these ideal animal farms are ubiquitous, and this chapter will not be discussing ethical problems with industrial animal farms, which are in fact more common than the most ideal animal farms.

**2.2 My Argument**

In this section, I will set out my main argument in premise-conclusion form which will structure the rest of this chapter. The following sections in this chapter will attempt to thoroughly explain the controversial premises as well as my conclusion.

P1) We should reject speciesism.
P2) If we reject speciesism, we should not subject non-human animals to non-consensual exploitative behavior which we would not subject humans to.
P3) We should not subject non-human animals to non-consensual exploitative behavior which we would not subject humans to.
P4) There are humans whose cognitive capacities are similar to those of farm animals.
P5) We would not subject those humans to being farmed in non-consensually exploitative ways (even on the ideal farm).

C1) Therefore, we should not subject non-human animals to being farmed in non-consensually exploitative ways (even on the ideal farm).

**2.3 P1 and Rejecting Speciesism**

In order to defend the rest of my argument, I have to first explain why we should reject speciesism at all. Peter Singer defines speciesism as the prioritization of your species over others *because* the members are part of your own species.[31] Since speciesism is necessarily concerned with prioritizing your own species members simply because of their membership in your species, it is crucial to consider *why* it seems to make sense to prioritize a human simply for being a human. Some of the intuitive arguments in favor of speciesism cite biological differences and differences in abilities between humans and non-human animals. For example, humans have greater cognitive abilities than non-human animals. Humans are able to do things like vote, think rationally, make plans, and set goals. However, while it's true that humans overall have greater cognitive abilities than non-human animals, there are certainly individual humans whose cognitive abilities are similar to or 'less developed' than those of a non-human animal. For example, a small child could be cognitively very similar to a farm animal. Or, there are adults who have either suffered accidents or were born with developmental disabilities who are also cognitively similar to small children and some non-human animals. If intelligence and cognitive abilities were the strongest defenses of speciesism, then speciesism would not be an absolute rule. In other words, the prioritization would only apply to humans whose cognitive abilities were greater than those of non-human animals. This proposed difference between humans and non-human animals would only justify the prioritization of adults *without* developmental disabilities (or degenerative diseases like Dementia or Alzheimer's, or adults who have not

[31] Singer 1975, 19.

experienced serious injuries which drastically altered their cognitive abilities, etc.). Everyone else would not have to be prioritized over non-human animals *because of* their cognitive abilities. The serious implication here is that, for example, it would be unjustified for an adult with "greater" cognitive abilities, who I'll call Henry from now on, to be farmed, while it would be justified for someone without "greater" cognitive abilities, who I'll call Richard, to be farmed.

One may want to argue that humans with cognitive abilities similar to those of non-human animals should still be prioritized over other species *because of* the overall greater cognitive abilities of humans. For example, one could say that Richard is simply an exception to the rule that humans have cognitive abilities that are greater than those of a non-human animal, while no non-human animal could ever reach the cognitive abilities of most humans. Despite Richard and other people who have cognitive abilities similar to his, it is still on average true that humans have cognitive abilities that are greater than those of non-human animals. One could say that this difference between humans and non-human animals is especially important when we consider that there are no non-human animals who have cognitive abilities similar to those of Henry. To respond to this argument, we could entertain the idea of extending the prioritization of humans to Richard. However, if we extended that prioritization to include Richard—while also citing the intelligence and greater cognitive abilities of humans to explain why we should be speciesist—then the true reason for prioritizing Richard over a non-human animal would simply be because of his species membership. Since Richard himself would not meet the requirement of having greater cognitive abilities than a non-human animal, if we were to prioritize him, it would be because of his relation to other humans (i.e. his species membership) who *did* have greater cognitive abilities.

So, one of the main alleged differences between humans and non-human animals that is cited is the difference between their cognitive capacities. As I explained above, this difference is not sufficient to support speciesism. Additionally, I mentioned that some other differences between humans and non-human animals are that humans make plans and set goals. One may want to argue that it is worse to farm a human than to farm a non-human animal because the human would be robbed of plans they had made for themselves, while the non-human animal does not have this ability, so this is not a loss for them. However, I think that future plans and setting goals also fall under the category of the differences between our cognitive abilities, and we would be met with the same problems. Again, Richard is not able to make plans and set goals in the way that Henry can, and using planning as a defense of speciesism would also make it permissible to farm Richard.

Someone might want to say that Richard is simply the exception to the rule, and we shouldn't exclude him from protection just for being the exception. We could think of greater human intelligence and cognitive abilities as a general truth which Richard would be protected by because he is also human. However, I think that, if we were to accept this and still prioritize Richard, then we wouldn't be prioritizing him because humans have greater intelligence and cognitive abilities. Instead, we would be prioritizing him simply because he is human and therefore because of his species membership (a conclusion which we reached earlier, too).

The reason why arguments in favor of speciesism don't seem to be able to offer concrete explanations for why humans should be prioritized over other species is because humans are so different from each other. It is hard to find things that are universally true about humans because we have differing capacities and characteristics. In fact, it seems like the only thing which humans do share with each other and not other species is the fact that they are humans and other

animals are not. In other words, the only thing specific to humans is our specific species membership. One would then have to argue that there is simply something inherent about humans which justifies prioritizing us over non-human animals. I don't know what this inherent quality might be and I haven't heard of one that does not rely on claims about reasoning or rationality or cognitive abilities, which I have already addressed. Without an identification and explanation of this inherent quality which justifies prioritizing humans over others, species membership on its own is not enough to defend that prioritization. Therefore, since there are no absolute reasons for defending speciesism other than species membership, and species membership is too weak a reason, there are simply no compelling reasons to prioritize humans over non-human animals.

**2.4 Kinship**

An alternative argument in favor of speciesism—rather than attempting to cite differences between humans and non-human animals—argues that we have moral obligations to those who are closest to us, including family members and other humans, who are more like family to us than non-human animals are. I think most people would agree that a parent has more of a moral obligation to care for their own child than to care for someone else's child. Similarly, humans are closer and share more with each other (e.g., culture, language, customs, etc.) than non-human animals do with humans. Therefore, one might want to conclude that, similar to the moral obligations parents have to their children, humans have moral obligations to each other which are stronger than our moral obligations to non-human animals. In other words, couldn't our moral obligations be limited to our own species?

I think this is a strong argument, but imagine a case where someone has no children or immediate family and lives alone with their beloved pet dog. What if this person felt that, if it

came down to it, they would save their dog over an unknown human? Many people might find this response concerning, but I'm not convinced that she has more of a moral responsibility to an unknown human than to her own dog. In fact, I find this case to be very similar to the argument saying that you have a stronger moral obligation to your own child than to someone else's child. In this case, the dog is her family—and many people consider their pets to be a part of their family. I think it could be possible to love a pet as much as someone loves a human member of their family, and I would agree that we have moral responsibilities to those who are close to us, so I'm not convinced that this moral responsibility would exclude non-human animals. Additionally, we can imagine cases of adoption where someone would say that they would save their adopted child over someone they were related to by blood. This reaction wouldn't seem absurd or at all controversial to me, implying that genetic similarities don't necessarily relate to our moral responsibilities.

Another possibility is that, instead, the moral responsibility has to do with some evolutionary moral responsibility which says that we have a responsibility to protect members of our own species out of an evolutionary desire to maintain the survival of the species. I can see why evolution can explain our instincts which tell us to protect the stranger's baby rather than the woman's own dog. However, I'm not convinced that moral obligations necessarily stem from evolutionary instincts or obligations. On the topic of maintaining the survival of a species, it is also an evolutionary instinct to choose mates who have specific characteristics—like strength, height perhaps, and other physical characteristics. However, this does not make it *unethical* to choose a mate who does not have those physical characteristics over one who does. Therefore, I'm not sure that the evolutionary argument is enough to explain why we should choose to

prioritize humans over non-humans, since our other evolutionary instincts do not necessarily equate to moral obligations.

**2.5 Exploitation**

In P2 and P3, I mention "non-consensual exploitative behavior." At this point it's important to explain what exploitation means as well as the difference between exploiting someone and using them as a resource. The definition of exploitation which I'll explain here is inspired by Regan and Korsgaard's discussions of using a being as a resource and/or as a mere means, respectively. I will stick with Regan's wording, since I find it to be more specific and more straightforward than Korsgaard's. I take using someone (a human or non-human animal) as a resource to mean using them in order to receive something they produce naturally or through work. For example, a farm animal might be treated as a resource because it is being farmed for something the animal produces naturally, like dairy. However, it could also be used as a resource because of the work it does on the farm, like how horses and oxen are often used. Additionally, a person might use another person as a resource because they are using them for their labor rather than for something the person produces naturally—a person who works in a sweatshop is being used as a resource because they are used for their work. It's important to note that, here, treating someone as a resource on its own is not morally wrong. To me, using someone as a resource is necessary for exploiting them, but using someone as a resource is not sufficient for exploiting them. According to my definition of exploitation, there are two added factors which make using someone as a resource exploitative—so three conditions in total:

1) As I mentioned, a living being must be treated as a resource.
2) There must be involvement of an agent who is manipulating the situation to the agent's advantage.

3) The agent involvement must be manipulating the situation in a way that is not necessary for the animal's wellbeing.

I'll give some examples to explain these conditions in context.

First, take the case of a typical dairy cow whose pregnancies have all been a result of artificial insemination by farmers (or people who work for the dairy farm). In this case, the dairy cow is being treated as a resource in that it is providing dairy to farmers, and the artificial insemination is manipulating the situation in order to control the production of dairy (to the farmer's advantage). Artificial insemination is a way for dairy farmers to control the pregnancies of a dairy cow for a few reasons, including for controlled breeding and also for controlled timing. Without a calf, a dairy cow would not produce milk; therefore, artificial insemination is a convenient way to ensure the birth of a calf and also to ensure the production of milk. If the cow is not being artificially inseminated, the act of milking—as well as other strategies like specific feedings, etc.—still manipulates the situation to the farmer's advantage. Dairy farmers understand that particular milking practices can lead to higher yields of milk from dairy cows, meaning they are able to manipulate the situation to their advantage.[32]

As for the third condition, if we are considering a case of where a dairy cow is artificially inseminated, the artificial insemination is not necessary for the cow's wellbeing, since many cows become pregnant without artificial insemination. Additionally, the controlled rate of pregnancy is not necessary for the cow's wellbeing either. If we consider the case of the dairy cow that is not artificially inseminated, the milking is also not necessary for the cow's wellbeing. The typical practice in dairy farming is to separate a dairy cow from her calf soon after the birth of the calf, ensuring that the milk she produces will be available for dairy farmers. Additionally,

[32] Allen et al 1986, 1441.

according to articles written by the New York Times and The Guardian from 2020 and 2019, respectively, even when dairy cows are allowed to stay with their calves, the calves are eventually weaned from their mothers' milk, and the remaining milk is for the farmers to sell.[33] However, from what I understand, milking dairy cows is not necessary for their wellbeing if their calves are allowed to continue drinking their mothers' milk without being weaned off by farmers. My understanding is that, much like humans, if a calf were not weaned off of its mother's milk, a dairy cow would produce milk until the calf stopped drinking milk on its own. Therefore, milking dairy cows does not seem to be necessary for their wellbeing, because weaning calves off of their mothers' milk is also not necessary for their wellbeing. Therefore, the case of the typical dairy cow meets all three of my conditions, and I would conclude that it is a case of exploitation.

Similarly to the cow, the sheep who is farmed for its dairy is being exploited for the same reasons as the dairy cow. However, take the case of the sheep who is only being farmed for its wool, and whose wool is sheared by a farmer every spring (or more often). The sheep is being treated as a resource in that we use it for its wool, so this case meets the first condition. However, as far as I know, it's not possible for human involvement to manipulate the sheep's growing of wool. In other words, sheep grow wool totally independently of humans, and there is nothing humans can do to manipulate the sheep's process of creating wool—other than through careful breeding, perhaps.[34] Therefore, the second condition of exploitation already fails. As for the third condition, it is important to understand that the interaction between sheep and humans led to drastic changes in the way sheep produce wool. Before interactions with humans, sheep generally had two coats and would shed their wool annually. Now, the sheep we see on farms

[33] Jacobs 2020, Levitt 2019.
[34] However, I am less concerned with the manipulation of an entire species, and more concerned here with the manipulation of individual animals.

have one coat and the hairs grow continually, meaning they don't shed.[35] Therefore, most sheep rely on humans to rid them of their wool with shears. If there is no human involvement, a sheep's wool will continue growing *until* it is sheared, and the weight and continued growth of the wool affects the sheep's wellbeing. Therefore, shearing sheep's wool is necessary for its wellbeing, and the third condition for exploitation also fails, meaning that this is not a case of exploitation.

Now we might wonder whether cases which meet these conditions for exploitation are always morally wrong. Let's consider the case of a child, Mylie, whose parent, Amy, forces Mylie to cook for her every day. Amy would be (1) treating Mylie as a resource, (2) manipulating the situation for her personal benefit, and (3) manipulating the situation in a way that is not necessary for Mylie's wellbeing. Therefore, it seems that this case would meet all the conditions, and I think most people would agree that Amy is exploiting Mylie. We might also assume that Mylie is totally against this exploitation: she finds it really unfair and she hates having to cook every night after getting home from afterschool. This might add to the moral wrongness of the exploitation. However, what if Mylie was totally fine with cooking for her parent every day? She loves cooking and when Amy says, "Mylie, get in the kitchen and make me some coq au vin," Mylie is totally on board. Is this still exploitation? Or, if it is, is it still morally wrong?

To help answer this question, I'll offer an additional case. Maybe Mylie is 18 and she works in a sweatshop all day, everyday, and has been working there since she was very little. We would normally agree that this is a case of exploitation, and it is morally wrong. However, what if Mylie really enjoys the work she does and it's fine with her when the person running the sweatshop, Amy, demands that she work there all day, everyday? In other words, Mylie is consenting to working in the sweatshop. I would still consider this case to be one of exploitation.

[35] Jackson et al 2020, 2.

This complicates the case, and it's unclear to me whether an action can be morally wrong if the recipient is fine with it, or even enjoys it. However, it seems very straightforward that, if Mylie did not consent to cooking everyday for Amy or to working in the sweatshop, then the exploitation of Mylie is definitely wrong. Therefore, the consent or lack of it is not a necessary condition for something to be exploitation, but consent is important when we start to consider whether the exploitation is morally wrong or not. To restate, when Mylie consents to exploitation, it is unclear whether something morally wrong is happening. However, when Mylie doesn't consent to it, it seems to clear to me that the exploitation *is* morally wrong. Therefore, based on my conceptions of exploitation and consent, I will argue that exploitation is morally wrong when it is non-consensual. This idea of consent and how it connects with exploitation will be what I focus on in the next few sections.

**2.6 P5 and Consent**

P5 says, "we would not subject [Richard] to being farmed in non-consensually exploitative ways (even on the ideal farm)." The particular wording and specification of cognitive abilities in P5 is important for a few reasons. It might seem obvious that we would not subject both Richard *and* Henry to being farmed, though for different reasons. In the case of Henry, the moral wrongness of keeping him on a farm seems clear, since many of us can think of why we would not like to be kept on a farm. Humans have a capacity for planning and developing hopes and dreams which farm animals don't have. For example, I have hopes and dreams which include going to graduate school and getting a PhD, and I can make plans which focus on those goals. Being able to plan and also achieve the things I hope to achieve is a crucial part of my happiness and those hopes and dreams give purpose to my life. Meanwhile, a farm animal does not have the same abilities to plan and hope and dream, nor does it have the same

ability to achieve those hopes and dreams. Based on the description I've given of an ideal animal farm, having Henry on that farm would not subject him to *physical* suffering, but it *would* mean depriving him of his natural desire to plan his future and achieve his goals. Additionally, not only would keeping Henry on a farm deprive him of these desires, but since we can assume that—because his desires aren't being fulfilled—he doesn't want to be on the farm. Therefore, Henry would be actively not consenting to being farmed. The violation of his consent in itself is an injustice and, in addition to the deprivation of his desires, it would mean that he would experience *mental* suffering (rather than physical suffering) on the ideal farm.

These are straightforward reasons for why we would object to farming Henry. However, as I've noted, non-human animals lack both of the factors which would cause mental suffering on an ideal farm. Farm animals have neither the ability to plan their futures nor the ability to consent, therefore they do not suffer *mentally* on ideal farms.[36] Here, an explanation of what I mean specifically by consent would be helpful. The basic explanation seems to be that, when someone gives consent, they are giving permission or agreeing to an action or event. On the other hand, there are a few ways *not* to give consent. One way is to just be unable to verbally communicate your desires. Maybe there is a second version of Henry who became unable to speak, but his cognitive abilities and desires are still the same. Therefore, if he *could*, he would say he didn't want to be farmed, but there is something holding him back from physically being able to verbally communicate. In this case, however, Henry might still be able to physically resist the work he does on the farm without verbally communicating, and I think this would still be an expression of non-consent. We can also imagine a third version of Henry that can neither

[36] In her paper, "Getting Animals in View," Christine Korsgaard actually argues against the first point, and says that non-human animals *do* have the ability to plan their futures. However, this doesn't seem to be a common view and, for the sake of the argument, I'd like to stick with common assumptions or ideas about what humans and non-human animals can do, especially since my argument does not crucially depend on this assumption.

verbally nor physically consent but still does not want to be on the farm—maybe he's being sedated. This third version of Henry gets closer to what I mean by being unable to consent, but this version would still experience mental suffering—Henry 3.0 would still suffer mentally because his desires are not being fulfilled, and perhaps additionally because he is unable to express his non-consent.

The kind of inability to consent that I'm concerned with happens when the agent does not have the cognitive ability to even understand the situation they're in, therefore, even if they could verbally or physically communicate, they wouldn't be able to consent. Some people who fall under this category are small children, people with severe Alzheimer's or other forms of dementia, patients who have suffered extreme accidents which have altered their cognitive capacities, and many more people, including our example, Richard. Richard's inability to consent is particular and is the same inability to consent that is experienced by non-human animals. It's also important to add that, if he were farmed, Richard would not feel that he was being deprived of any desire to fulfill his hopes and dreams. Therefore, Richard, like non-human animals, would experience neither *physical* suffering nor *mental* suffering on the ideal farm. This specification in my argument is important, since it puts the amount of suffering experienced by Richard on the ideal farm on the same level as the suffering experienced by farm animals on the ideal farm. This then does not allow for additional arguments saying that if Richard were farmed, he would experience other kinds of suffering, and therefore it would be morally worse to farm Richard than to farm a non-human animal.

Now, let's return to P5: "we would not subject Richard to being farmed (even if he were on an ideal farm and would not experience suffering)." Given the fact that we do not tend to put people like Richard on farms, it seems safe to assume that most of us would not be okay with

keeping Richard on a farm to work, even if we knew the ideal farm would not cause him physical or mental suffering. Farming Richard would be a clear case of non-consensual exploitation, and would therefore be morally wrong. First, to farm Richard would be to treat him as a resource because we would be using his work—or whatever he was being farmed for—to serve our own purposes. Second, there would be agent involvement that would be manipulating the situation to the agent's advantage because Richard on his own would not be doing the work he was being used for. Unlike a sheep and its wool, Richard does not do work naturally on his own. Instead, for Richard to do the work, there must be an agent that is manipulating the situation. Finally, the agent's involvement and manipulation of the situation would not be necessary for Richard's wellbeing. Therefore, farming Richard would meet all the conditions for exploitation. When combined with my rejection of speciesism, this then leads us to the conclusion that we should not be morally okay with keeping non-human animals on farms when they are being non-consensually exploited either.

**2.7 P2 and Non-Consensual Exploitative Behavior**

P2 says, "if we reject speciesism, we should not subject non-human animals to non-consensual exploitative behavior which we would not subject humans to." In this section I will explain the specific wording of this premise as well as its moral significance. I could have, instead, written P2 as, "if we reject speciesism, we should not subject non-human animals to non-consensual behavior that we would not subject humans to." The non-consensual behavior that we would not subject humans to relates back to section 7 where I talked about consent and why we would not want to keep humans on farms. However, this alternate wording prompts questions about the moral significance of simply acting without consent, specifically regarding someone like Richard.

Is it always necessarily true that acting without consent is morally wrong? Imagine that Richard is a child, and he is old enough to consent and not consent to some things (though probably not everything). Richard's dad takes him to the doctor's office to get his yearly flu shot and Richard is upset about this, and keeps saying that he doesn't want to get the flu shot. Richard's dad knows that Richard needs the shot so he doesn't get sick, so he makes him get the shot anyway. It does not seem morally wrong for Richard's dad to make Richard get the flu shot, even though he said he didn't want to get it. Additionally, we can imagine the same case, except Richard is less than a year old and can't speak and doesn't understand what is happening when his dad takes him to the doctor's office for the flu shot. Here, Richard doesn't give consent either, but it's also not wrong for his dad to make him get the shot. This is to say that acting without consent is not always morally impermissible.

I'm necessarily concerned with the case of the ideal farm, which, as I showed in section 6, often involves exploitation. More specifically, the ideal farm involves cases of non-consensual exploitation. And, again, as I explained in section 6, non-consensual exploitation seems to always be morally wrong. Therefore, the wording in P2 is important because if I were to simply say "non-consensual behavior which we would not subject humans to," then it would not be necessarily true that we would not subject humans to any non-consensual behavior. There are many cases, like the ones I noted with the child and the flu shot, where doing something without consent is not morally wrong. Therefore, the aspect of exploitation must be added to this premise in order to be specific about when acting without consent is morally wrong.

Additionally, I could've written P2 as, "if we reject speciesism, we should not subject non-human animals to exploitative behavior which we would not subject humans to." As I argued in section 6, this wording is also not specific enough because it is not clear whether

exploitation is always morally wrong, no matter what. For example, it is unclear to me whether it is always morally wrong to exploit someone who consents to being exploited. Recall the case of Mylie and her mom, Amy: If Amy has Mylie, her young daughter, make her coq au vin every night, it would seem to satisfy the requirements for exploitation which we set out in section 6. However, if Mylie is totally fine with making coq au vin for her, is it morally wrong? One might be inclined to argue that, if Mylie consents to making coq au vin every night, it's not exploitation anymore. I'll offer the other Mylie example now, which might still seem like exploitation despite Mylie's consent: Mylie consents to working at a sweatshop which she has been working at since she was a child. Working at a sweatshop seems to meet the requirements for exploitation, even if Mylie consents to it. However, is it morally wrong? If we agree that the first Mylie/Amy case is still a case of exploitation, it might seem easier to say that it is morally permissible than it would be for the Mylie Sweatshop case. Either way, it seems unclear whether simply saying "exploitative behavior" is specific enough. What *is* clear to me is that exploitation is morally wrong when there is no consent, which happens to be the kind of case I'm concerned with. Therefore, it is necessary to specify that the exploitation is non-consensual.

Although my view is closely related to Tom Regan's view of using animals as resources and Christine Korsgaard's view of treating animals as mere means, my view instead reaches further and explicitly describes what kind of farming is morally wrong. By identifying the conditions for exploitation, I'm able to also specifically identify when animal farming is exploitative. I think that Regan's view correctly identifies that using animals as resources is true for any and all kinds of animal farming. It is necessarily true that a farm animal is being treated as a resource when we are growing them in order to use products for our own purposes. However, I think it is important to create a distinction between using an animal as a resource and

exploiting the animal, since exploitation is not always a feature of animal farming (as we saw with the case of the sheep that is farmed for its wool). Additionally, discussing consent and lack of consent helps to see which cases of using animals as resources and exploiting them are morally wrong and which ones are morally permissible.

**2.8 Conclusion**

My argument largely relies on the assumption that we do not think it would be morally permissible to farm Henry, even on an ideal farm. If we can assume that, then we can assume that it would not be permissible to farm Richard either, since differences in cognitive abilities are not enough to make it morally permissible to farm Richard and not Henry. Additionally, I think most people would intuitively already think it would be morally wrong to farm Richard. Moreover, I spent sections 4 and 5 rejecting speciesism, and arguing against some of what I think are the strongest arguments in favor of speciesism. If we are to reject speciesism, as I've argued we should, then we should not think that there are differences between humans and non-human animals which warrant farming one and not the other. Here, the example of Richard allows us to carefully look at the argument in favor of speciesism which cites cognitive differences between humans and non-human animals in order to allow the latter to be farmed but not the former. Richard allows us to see the cognitive abilities which we might want to say that animals have, and his example lets us see how we would feel about those cognitive abilities if they were in a human, rather than a farm animal. Our intuitive feelings about Richard—when combined with our conclusions rejecting speciesism—should then prompt us to think about our feelings towards farm animals, and why we might feel that a farm animal is more deserving of being farmed than Richard is. Unless there are other reasons I haven't thought of or thoroughly explored in this chapter for why we should accept speciesism, these assumptions should lead us to conclude that,

since we think it would be morally wrong to farm Richard, then we should think it is morally wrong to farm non-human animals.

In this chapter, I first gave my account of what an ideal animal farm might look like, and I used this description to show that my argument's conclusion works even when we use the most charitable case for animal farming to argue against. Then, in section 3, I laid out this chapter's main argument in premise conclusion form. Sections 4 and 5 were dedicated to defending my first premise, which says that we should reject speciesism, and I offered responses to the strongest arguments I could think of in favor of speciesism. In section 6, I gave an explanation of what I meant by exploitation, and I offered 3 conditions for exploitation. Additionally, I discussed whether exploitation is always morally wrong, and I concluded that there may be cases where consensual exploitation is morally permissible, but that exploitation is always wrong when it is non-consensual. In section 7, I explained why specifying the cognitive abilities of Richard in my argument is important. I also explained the different kinds of inabilities to consent, and I discussed the importance of the kind of inability to consent that Richard and non-human animals have. Finally, in section 8, I finished explaining the significance of specifying non-consensual exploitation in my argument, which I started talking about in section 6. Through the discussions in each section, I was able to defend my view that the ideal farming of non-human animals is morally wrong as long as it is non-consensually exploitative and as long as we think that the ideal farming of humans is morally wrong.

# Chapter 3: Possible Objections

## 3.0 Introduction

Now that I presented my view in Chapter 2, I will use this chapter to answer some hard questions left over which may not have had a natural place in the previous chapter. I hope that my responses will show how these are compelling questions and counter arguments worth taking time and space to answer while also strengthening and effectively defending my own arguments. Many of the possible counter arguments I'll address in this chapter will ask about the practical implications of my view as well particular cases which seem to complicate my view.

## 3.1 Farm animals exist for a very specific reason and they have been domesticated and bred for the specific purpose of being farmed. To condemn animal farming would be to see farm animals as they once were: able to survive in the wild genetically completely different. We should continue to use them with their purpose in mind.

Condemning animal farming leads to other questions about the practicality of animal lives outside of farming. However, to consider this objection, it's important to think about whether we are obligated to treat someone in the way they were created to be treated. Just because you exist for a purpose, does that limit you to having that lifestyle forever? Imagine a wild undomesticated animal being kept in someone's home as a pet; this would raise objections and there seems to be something wrong with forcing the animal to do something that goes against its nature. In the same way, modern cows' nature is to live on a farm. To force them to live in the wild would be the same as subjecting the wild animal to living in someone's home. Are they not bad in the same way? In the same way that the wild animal should remain in the wild, shouldn't the dairy cow remain on the dairy farm?

A possible response to this argument would be to imagine a situation where a child was born for the purpose of raising it to work in a sweatshop, and from the time the child could walk and perform tasks, it has been doing just that. This child has never known anything outside of working in a sweatshop and their only skills are the labor they do in the sweatshop. Additionally, it's probably important to add that, since the child doesn't know life outside of the life they're living, they don't ever object to the work they're doing and they do it very effectively. Do we have an obligation to keep the child in the sweatshop since that's what they were made for? Of course the main difference between the dairy cow and the child is that the dairy cow has been systematically bred to make it most effective at being a dairy cow. However, since I am more concerned with individual lives rather than entire species, it seems that if we wouldn't keep the child in the sweatshop, we wouldn't keep the dairy cow on the farm either— even though the sweatshop and the farm were where they were made to be—because the sweatshop and the dairy farm are both exploitative. So, the thing you're made for isn't necessarily what you should be made to do, because what you're made for is also not necessarily what is best for you.

There are some cases where it is necessary for the health and happiness of an individual animal to do the thing it was bred to do. For example, it is important for the mental happiness of a sheepdog (and to prevent frustration, as far as I understand) to be able to herd animals, or at least to practice herding in some way. However, this is a complicated case because, if it is necessary for a sheepdog's wellbeing to herd animals, does that allow us to keep farm animals so that the sheepdog can continue herding? Perhaps there is some way for sheepdogs to exercise their need to herd. However, since I don't know what this would look like, we can just consider the case of a regular sheepdog and compare it to the conditions for exploitation. First, in some ways, it would satisfy the requirement of being used as a resource because sheepdogs often work

for their owners. On the other hand, there could be an aspect of the relationship between the sheepdog and its owner in which the sheepdog is not used as a resource. However, since the dog does work for its owner, I will simply say that the case meets the first condition. Second, as far as I understand, this wouldn't be a case where there was agent involvement that was manipulating the situation to the agent's advantage. It seems to me that the ability to herd is a natural ability that the sheepdog has, meaning there is no need to manipulate the situation to the owner's advantage at all. There could be a case where the owner was abusing the sheepdog and wouldn't give it any breaks—and would therefore be manipulating the situation to the advantage—but I am assuming that there are sheepdog's that are not treated in that way. Therefore, the case doesn't meet the second condition. Finally, it would be necessary for the sheepdog's wellbeing to herd animals. Therefore, in the case of the sheepdog that herds farm animals, only two of the three conditions are met, meaning it is not a case of exploitation. If there were a case where someone owned a sheepdog and the sheepdog was able to exercise its desire to herd, I think the case wouldn't meet the first condition of being used as a resource either (though I will address this point more later on).

I suspect that there are many cases where certain animals need to do the thing they were bred to do in order not to suffer (physically or mentally). However, these animals would not meet the conditions for exploitation, because they would fail the third condition (at least) since the act would be necessary for the wellbeing of the animal. The case of the dairy cow seems different to me because, although dairy cows have also been carefully bred and have been domesticated for a particular purpose, there does not seem to be anything particular about dairy farming which is necessary for the wellbeing of a dairy cow, other than the general comforts of ideal dairy farms (like a warm place to sleep and good food and water).

**3.2 Is this a slippery slope? What does this mean for other forms of life or even things that aren't living? If we should stop farming non-human animals, why shouldn't we stop farming vegetables too? If it's wrong to exploit animals, is it wrong to exploit vegetables? They can't consent either, so should we stop farming and eating them?**

This is also a great question and I think the moral distinction between the treatment of plants and animals has to do with their different biologies. First though, we can use the case of a normal garden fruit or vegetable (like a tomato) and look at it using the conditions for exploitation. First, the tomato is certainly being used as a resource (food is one of the most basic things we consider to be a resource). Second, when a tomato is farmed, there is the involvement of an agent (the farmer) which is manipulating the situation to the agent's advantage. The farmer is manipulating the situation to their advantage because they are deciding how to grow the tomato so that it is bigger, more nutritious, and in general there will be more crop yield. If there were no agent involvement regarding the growth of a tomato vine, the yield might be much lower. The tomato farmer carefully plans how and where to grow their tomato crop in order to best suit their needs. Lastly, we need to consider whether the agent's involvement is manipulating the situation in a way that is not necessary for the plant's wellbeing.

It is hard for me to tell what the wellbeing of a plant might be. For example, maybe manipulating the situation so the tomato has a higher yield is improving its wellbeing. However, I'm not sure one could say that it is always *necessary* for its wellbeing, since a tomato plant might be able to live and thrive without being farmed. This second option seems most likely to me to be true, but I accept that I could be wrong about the wellbeing of a tomato plant. Therefore, the tomato plant meets all three conditions for exploitation. To say that farming a tomato plant is exploitative might seem like extreme wording, but it does not necessarily mean

that it is also morally wrong. In fact, I think that the question of whether it is morally wrong to grow a tomato becomes irrelevant here. My explanation for the moral wrongness of exploitation has to do with the wrongness of non-consensual exploitative actions. The wrongness of non-consensual exploitative actions towards non-human animals depends on the rejection of speciesism, which—as I understand it—specifically discusses *animal* species, as opposed to *any* species. Therefore, I wouldn't be able to argue for the wrongness of exploiting plants with my own argument; I would have to argue for it using a different argument which described the similarities between all species.

Additionally, there is the separate question of whether it makes sense to talk about plants consenting (separate from my argument about consent). I won't be able to give a thorough and adequate explanation for why this is an irrelevant question, but the huge biological difference between plants and animals seems to be a good place to start. The question of consent with animals is significant because most animals have control over their own movements, and when a non-consensual action happens to an animal, the control is taken away. A plant, on the other hand, has very little control over its own movements, and even those movements seem to be because of the nature of the plant rather than because the plant made a decision or had an instinct to do so. For example, when a plant photosynthesizes, it is not because it had an instinct to do so or because it decided to. Similarly, I have no control over my heart pumping blood to the rest of my body—it's not an instinct or a decision, it is simply because that is how my body works. An instinct, on the other hand, is like drinking water when you're thirsty. Animals also have the ability to make decisions (my dog, for example, might like some foods and not others) which implies that they have some control over their actions. This is all to show how animals have control and preferences and plants don't, and I think this may have something to do with what is

at stake when beings act without the consent of other beings. In other words, it doesn't seem that anything is at stake when we act without the consent of plants because acting without their consent does not mean taking away their control or preferences. Either way, I think the result is that it cannot be morally wrong to grow and harvest a plant on a farm, but it might be morally permissible exploitation. I think it would also be important to add that, it might seem ridiculous to even entertain the idea that we could exploit plants or that it could be morally wrong to grow and harvest plants, but I think it's useful to use the definitions and conditions I've already laid out to answer this question.

**3.3 What does this mean for other animals like house pets? Couldn't this thesis mean that keeping pets (like cats and dogs) is also unethical? If we have them for our personal enjoyment and happiness, isn't that exploiting them?**

I'm not sure I have my own answer to this question but I'll offer some possible responses here. Christine Korsgaard addresses this question in her paper, "Getting Animals in View," and she argues that perhaps having pets could be using them as "mere means," to use her words, and therefore it could be morally wrong.[37] The reasoning behind this view is that there is a self-serving aspect about having a pet, and therefore having a pet is always partly treating it as a resource. Unlike the dairy cow, the resource you receive does not have monetary value and is not quantitative. Instead, perhaps the resource has emotional value and supports you in other ways. Of course, there are often non-self-serving aspects of adopting a pet: you are committed to caring for it as a part of your family and giving it a comfortable and happy life. Perhaps the answer to this question could be that there are exploitative *aspects* of these kinds of relationships between pets and owners (or if not exploitative, aspects in which owners use their pets as resources), but

[37] Korsgaard 2016, 368.

maybe that does not necessarily mean that the relationship itself is exploitative. I can accept an argument which argues what I've just said, and I can also accept arguments which disagree and say that it is not exploitative at all to have pets, though I'm not sure which I agree with.

**3.4 Should we even allow these domesticated animals to continue breeding and living?**

A possible result of my thesis is that we should actually stop farming animals completely. However, the question that follows from that is whether we should continue breeding former farm animals and whether we should actively help their species continue. First, if we were to stop farming animals, would they be able to reproduce on their own? Presumably yes, despite the fact that farmers tend to have a hand in farm animal reproduction, farm animals can certainly still reproduce on their own. The important part of the question, though, is whether they can survive on their own in the wild.

There are videos online about farm sheep getting lost in the woods for several months and when they reemerge and find their way back to farmland, they come out their wool overgrown and matted. I would imagine that a feature like that would keep a sheep from being able to effectively survive in the wild. Additionally, animals that have been bred for farming over thousands of years would no longer have the survival/defense skills necessary to fight wild animals. Many domesticated farm animals wouldn't be able to survive on their own in the wild. Therefore, if humans stopped farming animals and put them in the wild, they would risk going extinct (presumably). This, then, leads to the question of whether we should allow farm animals to go extinct if we should stop farming them.

To truly answer that question, I think there I would have to have an understanding of the ecological ramifications of having domesticated farm animals go extinct—which I don't have. If there were no ecological ramifications, though, I think the answer would have to do with whether

our responsibilities are to individual animals or to entire species of animals. Perhaps we don't have a responsibility to an entire species because (in this scenario) they don't serve an ecological purpose and they would naturally go extinct on their own. On the other hand, since humans are responsible for the domestication and lack of self-sufficiency of the species, we may have some responsibility to continue caring for the species or, if possible, maybe we have some responsibility to try to reverse the damage that has been done.

In terms of individual animals within a species, I have a harder time answering this question. If we released farm animals into the wild and they were killed by predators, would it be our fault that the individual animals died? Although we weren't the ones that caused the deaths, we caused their inability to be self-sufficient which then allowed predators to kill them. If the answer is that we should try to avoid these deaths, then I'm not sure whether the answer is that our responsibility is to keep them on farms, where they are safe from predators. Perhaps a solution to this problem would be a long-term project which included un-domesticating animals by breeding current farm animals with breeds which are self-sufficient and more closely resemble farm animals from before industrial animal farming became mainstream. These kinds of farm animals are called heritage breeds. A New York Times article, "Rare Breeds, Frozen in Time," quoted a heritage livestock preservation facility director, who said,

> Heritage breeds have not been continuously 'improved' by humans… They have been shaped by natural survival-of-the-fittest forces and can get along without human intervention. Typically, rare varieties exhibit good birthing and mothering abilities. They can thrive on native grasses and other natural forage, and many know how to avoid predators.[38]

[38] Estabrook 2010.

Perhaps a long-term breeding project like this would allow us to eventually only have breeds of farm animals which are self-sufficient and do not need care from humans to survive.

**3.5 Like sheep, chickens create resources that they have no use for. Hens often lay eggs that are not fertilized, and which they obviously have no use for. Would it be unethical to keep chickens and take their unfertilized eggs for our food? Is using an animal byproduct in this way not an exploitative practice?**

This is another case where, by my account, some kinds of ideal animal farming practices are not morally wrong. We can think of the regular chicken (who is only farmed for its eggs rather than its meat) in terms of my conditions for exploitation. First, the chicken is treated as a resource because we keep its eggs as food for ourselves. Second, at the individual level, there isn't agent involvement which is manipulating the situation to the agent's advantage. While there *is* agent involvement because there are farmers, I don't think there is a way for the farmers to manipulate the situation to their advantage since laying eggs is simply a natural process for the chickens which does not involve humans. Therefore, the case does not meet the second condition. Finally, the last condition is irrelevant because there is no agent involvement which is manipulating the situation in the first place. Since it doesn't make sense to ask whether the manipulation is necessary for the chicken's wellbeing, I don't think this case meets the third requirement. Therefore, farming chickens (for their eggs) does not meet the conditions for exploitation. My account of exploitation (and cases where exploitation is morally wrong) does not entirely reject every kind of animal farming since there are some cases where the animals are not being exploited, like in the case of the sheep in Chapter 2. .

**3.6 Growing meat is a more efficient way to feed the world and it is also more nutritious than the alternatives. If we stopped farming animals, wouldn't that have terrible consequences that would exacerbate world hunger?**

I think this seems true given our current systems for agriculture and also food distribution. First, I'll address the question of whether a diet which includes meat is more nutritious than alternative diets. A study published by the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, "vegetarian diets, including strict vegetarianism (veganism), are considered healthy and nutritionally adequate, and can supply people's nutritional needs at all stages of life, as long as such diets are well planned."[39] Therefore, in terms of nutrition, a diet with meat is not necessarily more nutritious than a vegetarian or vegan one. In terms of efficiency, according to a study published by *PLoS ONE*, our current agricultural practices—including current animal farming practices—are not efficient in that we are not producing enough nutritious foods like fruits, vegetables.[40] However, the study shows that, if we were to adjust our agricultural practices to more effectively grow nutritious food for everyone, a vegetarian diet would require more land than a diet with meat. Specifically, they write that, "to meet our needs for protein, the amount of arable land devoted to livestock feed would increase by 57 million [hectares] while land used for plant protein would increase by 20 million [hectares]."[41] Meanwhile, they write that, if we adopted a totally vegetarian diet, the amount of arable land we would need for protein would have to increase by 80 million hectares.[42] Therefore, if we were to replace our omnivorous diets with a vegetarian (or even strictly vegan)

[39] Hargreaves et al 2021, 6.
[40] KC et al 2018, 8.
[41] Ibid, 6.
[42] Ibid, 7.

diet, the amount of arable land we would need in order to grow nutritious for everyone would increase.

This slight increase in the necessary land for a vegetarian diet would be a downside, but the paper cites other problems to argue that a universal vegetarian diet would be unrealistic. They write that, "livestock plays an important role in many agro-ecosystems, 987 million people worldwide depend on raising animals as a key livelihood strategy, and much pasture land is ill suited to crop production."[43] They state that a diet with meat can often improve the wellbeing of people living in rural and poor areas, and that eating meat is often culturally important.[44] On the other hand, the paper argues that, when we consider other factors like the environmental footprint of our current animal farming practices, a drastic—though not total—shift away from animal agriculture is required. Instead of our current practices, a new one which focuses more on receiving protein from plants, algae, fungi, or insects would still be nutritious while also requiring less land and fewer resources.[45]

What I take away from this study is that, either way, our current agricultural practices—especially animal farming practices—are not sustainable and are not providing the most nutritious diets for everyone. Meanwhile, our reasons not to adopt a universal vegetarian diet are not because such a diet would not be nutritious or because it would be impossible to find all the arable land required for a universal vegetarian diet. Instead, it seems that people who currently experience poverty would not necessarily benefit from a universal vegetarian diet, leading me to believe that perhaps a universal vegetarian diet is not impossible, but that other social inequalities (like poverty) would have to be solved in order for the diet to be universally helpful and effective. Of course, considering the way my thesis interacts with other social

[43] KC et al 2018, 9.
[44] Ibid, 9.
[45] Ibid, 10.

problems is crucial for considering how realistic it is, and the answer to the original question seems to be that, perhaps it would be possible to adopt an agricultural system which did not require animal farming, but if it were, it would require drastic social changes and changes to the way our agricultural systems function. In other words, it would take a lot of work for it to be a possible option.

Something else I'd like to note here is that this thesis is not arguing for vegetarianism or veganism; it is simply critiquing farming non-human animals. Many people hunt out of necessity (rather than for sport) and eat meat this way, without the need for farming. This thesis is not critiquing the consumption of meat, and there are certainly ways to do it that do not require farming. Therefore, if we wanted to continue eating meat, my thesis would instead be critiquing the ways in which we might acquire meat.

**3.7 What about cultures that rely on animal farming, such as Argentina?**

This question relates to the study published by *PLoS ONE*, which identified the cultural significance of animal farming and animal-based diets as a reason why we shouldn't completely get rid of animal agriculture.[46] Personally, I grew up in a culture that culturally values animal farming and an animal-based diet, so I understand the source of this objection to my thesis. My family is from Argentina, and one of the most recognizable aspects of Argentinian culture is its animal farming. What does my thesis mean for the culture of a place like Argentina, which relies on its meat and leather production?

The short answer is that I'm not sure how to answer this question. On the one hand, culture and cultural practices are incredibly important, especially as someone who lives far away from most of their family; my grandfather, most of my aunts and uncles, and most of my cousins

[46] KC et al 2018, 9.

live in Argentina. Cultural practices (which include things like food and language) connect me to the rest of my family. Therefore, although it feels easy to reject animal farming at the individual level, it is hard to conceive of the consequences at the global level. This question is hard for me to answer because I don't live in Argentina, so I feel attached to these specific aspects of Argentinian culture which I can hold onto in order to feel connected to this aspect of my family's culture. This is not to say that there is something particular about Argentinian culture which makes the issue of animal farming more complicated than other cultures; I'm assuming that people in the US and other countries feel similarly. The question, then, is whether preserving culture is a strong enough reason to keep certain practices, especially ones we think are morally wrong.

Some people might disagree that animal farming is morally wrong at all, so we shouldn't remove it from cultural practices at all. However, we can consider cases that are more commonly thought to be morally wrong. Take, for example, the *venationes* in Ancient Rome in which exotic animals were brought to celebrations in circuses, theaters, and amphitheaters.[47] In *venationes*, there would be animal fights and staged hunts where animals would fight against each other or with Roman hunters, slaves, or fighters. Even when animals won against their human opponents, they would be killed, meaning that all the animals brought to the events would be killed.[48] *Venationes* became increasingly large and more popular: "in 55 BC Pompey gave *venationes* with 600 lions, 410 leopards, some apes, a lynx, a rhinoceros and twenty elephants… The largest number of animals killed was some 11,000 over 123 days at Trajan's triumph in 108-9 BC."[49] *Venationes* were once an important part of Roman culture, and perhaps many Romans couldn't imagine life without *venationes* in the way that many of us cannot imagine life without animal

[47] Lindstrøm 2010, 311.
[48] Ibid, 312.
[49] Ibid, 312.

farming. However, *venationes*, or similar practices of their scale, don't happen anymore. I don't think an event like the *venationes* could happen now without backlash. What I mean to say with this case is that there are sometimes aspects of cultures which seem like necessary aspects in the moment and which we can't imagine *not* having. However, now we consider many of these practices to be morally wrong and we can't imagine *having* them. Therefore, while I think that culture and the preservation of culture is important, I don't think it is a strong enough reason to keep practices that are morally wrong. Cultures are constantly changing and the practices within them are also constantly changing. Therefore, cultures and identities seem to exist somewhat independently of their practices, or can at least survive changes within them. So, although the loss of animal farming and a meat-based diet might feel like a big loss to Argentinian culture in the moment, I think it is possible for Argentinians in a thousand years to not be able to imagine animal agriculture as a part of the culture.

### 3.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I looked at possible questions and responses to my argument and I attempted to explain why the responses were compelling while also trying to defend my own view which I presented in Chapter 2. I was first able to explain that we do not have a responsibility to keep certain farm animals on farms simply because they were born to be farmed. Additionally, I explain that there are some cases where it *is* necessary for the wellbeing of an animal that has been carefully bred to do the things they were bred to do. Second, I explained why my argument is not a slippery slope and that it cannot be morally wrong to farm plants, although it may be exploitative. Third, I gave possible views on whether it is morally wrong to own pets and whether owning pets for our personal benefit means that we are exploiting them. Fourth, I discussed whether we should allow domesticated farm animals to

continue living if we condemn animal farming, and I argued that we may have some responsibilities to individual animal lives since humans are responsible for their inability to survive on their own. Fifth, I offered another case of a non-human animal that is not morally wrong to farm because it does not meet the conditions for exploitation. Sixth, I discussed whether it would be realistic to get rid of animal farming in terms of efficiently feeding the world nutritious food. I argued that current practices don't efficiently feed the world nutritious food, and that with other current inequalities like poverty, we would not be able to effectively get rid of all animal farming. Finally, I looked at the effect that my thesis would have on cultures in practice, and I explained that the preservation of culture is not a strong enough reason to keep practices that are morally wrong. This chapter has allowed me to see my thesis more practically and to see the ways it is both compatible and incompatible with our current world.

## Conclusion

Since I understand that animal farming is a big part of American culture, I also understand that this thesis is controversial because it rejects an aspect of our lives which makes many of us very happy and comfortable. Exploiting non-human animals is incredibly useful and fruitful and it makes our lives much easier. Therefore, it is uncomfortable to consider the possibility that even some kinds of "ideal" animal farming are necessarily morally wrong. With this thesis, I wanted to deeply consider what the important differences are between humans and non-human animals which might justify this very comfortable aspect of many of our lives. I attempted to present charitable versions of these justifications and I didn't find any of them to be compelling enough. Without a compelling argument for some important difference between humans and non-human animals, I can't imagine why it might be morally permissible to systematically prioritize one over the other. Through this thesis, I hope to have shown how inability to consent and exploitation can come together and complicate the moral permissibility and impermissibility of any kind of animal farming, including ideal animal farming. I attempted to argue that it is a mistake to accept ideal animal farms as ethical alternatives to industrial animal farming because they inherently use animals as resources, which often becomes exploitative. It is a mistake to accept the most ideal version of an action that is inherently morally wrong, like a lot of animal farming. While I believe that there are some kinds of animal farms that are morally permissible—like the ideal sheep farm which farms sheep only for their wool—this thesis is meant to show that a title like "ideal," "organic," or "ethical" cannot ensure the moral permissibility of that certain kind of animal farm.

Animal farming is an interdisciplinary topic which includes agriculture, ecology, biology, philosophy, and more. Ideally, this thesis would include equally thorough research in all these

areas. While I have attempted to do as much research as possible in the areas outside of philosophy in the past year—including taking an agro-ecology course—I was not able to do as much research in those areas as I would've wanted. If I were to continue this project, I would hope to present a more conceivable real-world application of my thesis. As a critique of a widely accepted practice, this thesis would ideally present more of the interaction between my conclusion and its effects on the environment, as well as a more in depth analysis of what exactly would need to change in order for my conclusion to be applied to the real world. However, I think I have made a solid start to what I hope is an ongoing project and I hope I have presented an argument which can encourage people to look more closely at the complicated ethics of actions we are so comfortable with, like farming animals.

In Chapter 1, I looked at Peter Singer's view in "All Animals Are Equal," Tom Regan's view in "The Case for Animal Rights," and Christine Korsgaard's view in "Getting Animals in View." Through my review of their arguments, I showed that, while they ultimately fell short, they introduced ideas which I used in my own argument in Chapter 2. Chapter 2 was dedicated to the introduction and explanation of my argument about the moral impermissibility of non-consensual exploitation and how it should apply to both humans and non-human animals. The three views I presented Chapter 1 allowed me to build up my own view and I presented what I thought was missing from the discussion. In Chapter 3, I further defended my view against possible questions and objections and I was able to begin outlining the practical implications of my thesis. I hope to have shown that the arguments in support of the prioritization of humans over non-human animals seem to fall short and require further explanation, and that the instability of these arguments create a moral problem for ideal animal farms.

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