THE MEAT INDUSTRY

This all leads us to Singer’s obvious conclusion, pleading to “bring nonhuman animals within our sphere of moral concern and cease to treat their lives as expendable for whatever trivial purposes we have.”5 We apply moral concern for household pets (or so I hope) because we have the most experience with them. We’ve [probably] seen them experience joy—the energized tail wagging, panting, and inability to sit still when we get home after work or school—and pain—the sharp “YIPE” from a dog whose tail has accidentally been stepped on. We likely have experience in broadening our “sphere of moral concern” for these animals, so what makes a cow or pig or chicken so much different?

It can’t be because “we eat them.” We can't simply stop there. Does eating them mean it's automatically ok? No. The process of meat production is so far removed from the average citizen’s life. Images of small farmer families and big red barns may fill your mind... But that’s not the reality. The agriculture business keeps their animals behind closed, metal doors. It’s like that for a reason—”animals are treated like machines that convert low-priced fodder into high-priced flesh.”6 Because their “yields” are purely production-based and profit-driven, the consideration for their experience is purposely avoided. “They will be dead soon, what does it matter if they live a good life?”

They will only be dead soon because we’ve asserted our control over them. It is not sufficient to say that because we have been hunting them and eating them for thousands of years, we have the right to continue doing so. This is clearly not a defensible position to take, especially for Camus, who argues that anything done on the basis of history alone is neglecting beauty itself—that absurd chaos through which *anything* is possible. Anything for history’s sake is a denial of freedom in the name of something that once was but will never be again.

If it wasn't obvious, *Animal Liberation*, and indeed, part of the point of this entire project is to teach that, if we really truly care about the beauty of life and death—in hoping to achieve a future of human solidarity—then we too *must* care for the rest of our animal neighbors. Singer brings us to this ultimate point: “[within the structures of capitalism and the corporate incentives thereby guaranteed, then] practically and psychologically it is impossible to be consistent in one’s concern for nonhuman animals while continuing to dine on them.”7 Please, I ask you to hear me out.

The action of eating meat is as pervasive as capitalism itself, especially in the western world. It is a tradition baked into the lifestyles of practically every American. So much so that it is often hard to imagine a lifestyle catered to the exclusion of animal meats. I can tell ya... it is not easy to make the transition. My sister has been a vegetarian for the vast majority of her life. I had harbored a certain empathy for the treatment of farm animals for a while, but never wanted to commit to a life without meat, citing that “it's too convenient of a food source to quit altogether.” Though I tried to pay attention to which companies were particularly torturous to their animals, staying clear of their products, that does nothing for the issue as a whole. As long as I eat meat, I am complacent with the torment and suffering that these animals are put through, including debeaking, severing tails, insufficient living space, wire cages, careless genetic engineering, and so, so much more. I implore you to give Peter Singer’s *Animal Liberation* a read if you are interested in learning about the animal liberation movement. It practically started with him, and there have been marginal wins here and there, particularly in product testing, but agribusiness and experimentation on the basis of scientific discovery are where the real wickedness lies.

The choice to go vegetarian or vegan is inherently individualistic—I can not force you to unearth your whole lifestyle through a single chapter in this dinky essay. So the last we will hear of Singer now will be the takeaway I want you to consider: “You must decide for yourself where you are going to draw the line, and your decision may not coincide exactly with mine.”8 All I ask is that you take the time to consider your actions and beliefs. If you are indeed committed to the lifestyle of equitable compassion, do your actions actually match your beliefs? Are you ok with that?