
Human Moral Obligations towards Non-human Animals

Part 1

Introduction

The relationship between humans and non-human animals¹ (NHAs) is an evolving relationship that has changed significantly as human societies have progressed and as humans have directly affected NHA evolution through the domestication of selected NHA species. Because of the often intimate relationships among humans and NHAs, philosophers have spent a considerable amount of time assessing humans' moral obligations towards NHAs. In fact, many famous philosophers have theorized about desirable human relationships with and obligations towards NHAs. For example, Descartes described NHAs as *automata*, as machines, lacking feelings or emotions (Gruzalski 2004). Although most humans today would not agree with Descartes, his view of NHAs as *automata* has had a pervasive impact on Western attitudes towards the treatment of NHAs. In contrast to Descartes, Kant believed that NHAs can suffer. Kant acknowledged that NHAs have emotional and physical needs (Baranzke 2004). Yet he required humans to have only very limited moral obligations towards NHAs, and those obligations were based on the fact that NHAs are alive and can feel pain (Baranzke 2004).

¹ I will restrict my usage of the word "animal" to references of animals in general, including humans. I will use NHAs when I am referring to all animals excluding humans. Although many, if not all, philosophers offer the caveat that they will use the word "animal" to refer to NHAs as is customary in the English language, I have chosen not to do that because reinforcing the shorthand of referring to NHAs as animals encourages humans to compartmentalize ourselves as a group distinct from other animals.

However, Kant believed that humans should generally avoid causing unnecessary harm to NHAs because he thought that unnecessary cruelty towards NHAs was correlated with unnecessary cruelty towards other humans; an individual that was cruel towards NHAs was more likely to be cruel to humans (Aaltola 2004, Baranzke 2004).

The theoretical foundations of humans' moral obligations towards NHAs as proposed by Descartes and Kant have influenced Western thought with regard to human treatment of NHAs, but other factors, such as Christianity and capitalism, have also had a significant impact on the dominant paradigm of human relationships with NHAs. In Western cultures, the dominant paradigm on humans' moral responsibilities toward NHAs is one of domination; humans dominate NHAs. The extent to which humans in Western cultures believe that they dominate NHAs varies among individuals, and the feelings of domination often vary among NHA species. This has led to a situation in which many humans in Western cultures have a schizophrenic view of humans' moral obligations towards NHAs (Pollan 2006). Many humans feel a deep emotional bond with NHAs, particularly companion NHAs. Yet the intensification of agricultural practices including industrialized agriculture – which I will refer to as factory farming – has led to an ever-increasing objectification of NHAs, particularly those NHAs that humans eat or whose reproductive products (e.g. milk and eggs) are eaten. As a result many humans feel a strong moral obligation to consider the desires of companion NHAs but do not feel morally obligated to consider the desires of NHAs that are “used” in agriculture.

Of those humans who feel morally obligated to consider the needs and desires of factory farmed NHAs, there are very few options through which to fulfill those obligations. Farming has become a highly specialized and industrialized system that has limited visibility to

the general public. For example, 98% of eggs produced in the United States are produced under factory farming conditions (National Agricultural Statistics Service 2006). The egg-laying hens are “housed” in small wire mesh cages that are stacked in multiple tiers within large buildings. This system maximizes the total number of eggs produced due to increased hen density even though the productivity of individual hens is reduced due to the extreme physical and mental stress that is placed on the birds. Because almost all eggs that are available to consumers are produced in factory farms, a human who feels morally obligated towards the egg-laying hen is not easily able to buy non-factory farmed eggs. This inability to fulfill one’s moral obligations can lead to strong internal tension within those humans who believe that NHAs deserve moral consideration (Pollan 2006).

As a means of rebelling against the increasing objectification of NHAs, the animal rights movement² organized as a grassroots social justice movement. The animal rights movement gained greater awareness from the general public in 1975 when Peter Singer published *Animal Liberation*. In *Animal Liberation*, Singer developed a philosophical argument that laid the foundations for human moral obligation towards NHAs, particularly NHAs used in factory farming. *Animal Liberation* historically was and currently remains the germinal philosophical argument of the animal rights movement. The philosophical argument developed by Singer, which will be discussed in greater detail below, is utilitarian and emphasizes the importance of reason and the individual in determining human moral obligations towards NHAs.

² Although the animal rights movement is the common name of the movement, the use of the word “rights” in the name suggests that NHAs have rights, which is a position that not held by the majority of philosophers of the animal rights movement, including Singer and many ecofeminists. I will refer to the “animal rights movement” when referring to the establishment of the movement but will use the term “NHA advocacy movement” and “NHA advocacy” in subsequent portions of the paper.

Because the animal rights movement has become a well-known social justice movement among the general public and within academia, numerous individuals have critiqued the argument of Singer and have proposed alternative approaches to addressing human moral obligations toward NHAs. One group of individuals that have proposed an alternative approach are ecofeminists. Ecofeminism is a subdiscipline of feminism that believes that feminist theory should be informed by ecology and emphasizes the parallels between the effects of male biases on women and the environment, including NHAs (Howell 1997). Ecofeminists generally oppose Singer's emphasis on reason as the only means of determining who and what deserve moral consideration, and they believe that Singer's argument is inadequate and suffers from a male bias that is common in Western cultures. Ecofeminists contend that emotion and contextual relationships, in addition to rationality, are necessary in order to more fully understand the world (Donovan and Adams 1996). Not all ecofeminists explicitly address humans' moral obligations towards domesticated NHAs, but a few notable ecofeminists have, including Carol Adams, Josephine Donovan, Victoria Davion, and Karen Warren. I will specifically focus on an argument developed by Warren.

In this essay, I will summarize the arguments of Singer and Warren with regard to human moral obligations towards factory farmed NHAs and will directly compare their arguments using a concrete example, eating factory farm produced eggs. Based on this comparison, I will select the components of both arguments that I most strongly agree with and will use those components to construct my own argument for human moral obligations towards factory farmed NHA.

Part 2

Arguments for NHA Advocacy

Singer's Argument

As previously mentioned, the most eminent philosophical argument in advancing the NHA advocacy movement is that of Singer. Singer is a utilitarian; he believes that the morality of an action should be determined based on the consequence that the action has on the individuals involved, with the action that provides the greatest net benefit to all individuals involved as the preferred action. Utilitarianism does not require that all individuals are treated equally, only that the interests of all individuals are considered equally. For example, one would not need to consider the interests of a man's desire to undergo an abortion or of a pig's desire to vote even though one would be morally required to consider the interests of a woman in both of these examples.

Singer also emphasizes that humans are not equal in any objective sense. For example, within the human species there are multiple races, different sexes, different levels of intelligence, different eye colors, etc. Yet it is currently a societal norm in Western cultures to acknowledge that although there are differences among humans, all humans deserve equal moral consideration. Most humans in these cultures believe that it is morally wrong to provide lesser moral consideration towards another human because of her race or gender which are referred to as racism and sexism, respectively. This equal moral consideration is not based on the fact that a woman and a man are equal in all respects; a woman can bear children whereas a man cannot. It is based on equality as a moral principle. Societal norms in Western cultures state that it is morally right to treat all humans with equal moral consideration in spite of the fact that humans are not objectively equal. Just as considering the interests of one's own race

above those of another race is racism, Singer proposes that considering the shared interests of one's own species above those of another species is speciesism.

Singer argues that it is a societal norm in Western cultures that racism and sexism are wrong. All humans deserve equal moral consideration in spite of innumerable objective differences among humans. However, there is no characteristic that is common to all humans that is not shared by at least some NHAs, except for the species to which humans belong. For example, some NHAs are more intelligent than severely mentally retarded humans. If humans have a moral obligation to provide equal moral consideration to a mentally normal and a severely mentally retarded human, it is inconsistent to not provide the same moral consideration to NHAs that are at least as intelligent as the severely mentally retarded human. The failure to provide equal moral consideration to those NHAs is speciesism, which is analogous to racism and sexism. Because racism and sexism are wrong, speciesism is wrong.

A characteristic that is common to all humans and many NHAs is sentience, which Singer defines as the ability to suffer and/or experience enjoyment and happiness³. Additionally, Singer considers sentience as the baseline characteristic that an organism must possess in order to have interests, and having interests is a prerequisite for warranting moral consideration. Therefore, all sentient organisms deserve equal moral consideration, and all non-sentient organisms do not require any moral consideration.

Warren's Argument

Warren, as mentioned above, is an ecofeminist and has written a number of works discussing multiple aspects of her ecofeminist philosophy. Because the purpose of this paper is

³ The ability of an organism to suffer, according to Singer, is based on whether or not the organism can feel pain. Although it is possible to find some individuals that do not believe that NHAs can feel pain, a vast body of scientific literature supports the claim that animals do feel pain.

to compare her argument of NHA advocacy to that of Singer, particularly her argument addressing eating NHAs, I will focus my summary of the argument Warren develops in Chapter 6 of her book *Ecofeminist Philosophy: A Western Perspective on What It is and Why It Matters* (2000), “Must everyone be vegetarian: Ecofeminist philosophy and animal welfarism”. One major difference between Chapter 1 of *Animal Liberation* and Chapter 6 in *Ecofeminist Philosophy* is that Singer was the pioneer in articulating an argument for NHA advocacy, whereas, Warren is developing her argument within the context of the literature that has come before her, including Singer and other ecofeminists, in addition to her new contributions.

Many of the dominant arguments with regard to NHA advocacy, including Singer’s argument, require that all humans ought to be vegetarians under all circumstances and at all times, which Warren refers to as “universal moral vegetarianism”⁴. Warren is opposed to universal moral vegetarianism and believes that “contextual moral vegetarianism” is more appropriate. Warren has three pertinent objections to the positions of those that advocate universal moral vegetarianism. First, she objects to the moral extensionist position towards NHAs, which includes Singer’s position. This position extends moral consideration to NHAs based on characteristics that the NHAs share with humans, such as sentience. Warren objects to the extensionist position because it is based on a moral hierarchy and encourages the dualism of humans versus nature rather than humans as part of nature. Second, Warren disagrees with the male physiological norm inherent in the supposition that vegetarianism is

⁴ Although not all NHAs are currently believed to be sentient (such as jellyfish and possibly shrimp), in the 2002 addition of *Animal Liberation* Singer advocates that humans should err on the side of caution and always be vegetarian. In the 1975 version of *Animal Liberation* Singer drew the line between sentient and non-sentient organisms at shrimp – he considered shrimp to be non-sentient. Therefore, it was not morally objectionable for humans to eat shrimp. By the 2002 edition, however, Singer noted that he was uncertain whether shrimp were sentient or non-sentient and therefore chose to not eat them.

appropriately healthful for all humans, which Warren argues is not true for some groups of humans such as some infants, adolescents, and lactating women. Finally, Warren opposes positions that advocate universality because these positions result from the absence of contextual knowledge which is needed to assess the moral obligations of the individuals involved. The contextualization of situations is of central importance to Warren.

Contextual moral vegetarianism does not contend that all humans have a moral obligation to be vegetarian; whether or not an individual is morally obligated to be vegetarian is *highly* dependent on the situation, or context, within which the individual is embedded.

Warren posits that in Western cultures many humans ought to be vegetarians because most of the NHA products consumed in Western cultures are produced via factory farms, and these systems often reinforce the Up-Down system of domination. The Up-Down system of domination occurs when the individuals with power, the Ups, use their power to oppress the individuals without power, the Downs. Warren does not, however, state that humans are morally obligated to abstain from consuming NHA products produced from factory farms; she states that eating factory farmed NHAs should be “avoided”⁵.

In order for an individual to determine whether she is morally obligated to be vegetarian in a given situation, Warren proposes using the “care sensitive approach” (CSA) which she developed. According to the CSA approach an individual must assess her actions based on three main processes. The first process is “caring about” an individual which includes being attentive to the individual. The second process is “taking care of” an individual. In order

⁵ Because Warren believes that raising NHAs in factory farms is morally wrong, it would follow that eating factory farm raised NHAs should also be wrong, but as will be discussed later – in the assumptions section – Warren believes that human interests should often be placed above those of NHAs. In some situations eating factory farm raised NHAs may be of enough benefit to the human eating the NHA that the act may not be morally wrong.

to take care of an individual, the human has responsibilities towards acting in the best interest of the individual. The third process is “care giving” which involves engaging in practices that contribute to the well-being of the individual. With regard to the application of these processes, Warren emphasizes that “again, it is not possible to say ahead of time and independent of context, when and how these [processes] of care actually occur. That is what makes contextual moral vegetarianism contextual rather than universal” (pg 142). If an individual determines that her actions are consistent with the processes described above, Warren would contend that the action is morally sound.

[Assumptions of NHA Advocacy Arguments⁶](#)

Singer and Warren’s arguments share some assumptions whereas other assumptions differ between their arguments. One shared assumption that is a prerequisite for any discussion of human moral obligations towards NHAs is that NHAs deserve our moral consideration. Unlike Descartes, both Singer and Warren agree that NHAs have intrinsic value and because of this, humans have moral obligations towards them. Another basic assumption that is shared is that NHAs can experience their environment in a similar way to humans, of primary importance is the ability of most NHAs to feel pain. Because most NHAs can feel pain, humans are obligated to not inflict unnecessary pain on NHAs.

Another shared assumption is that humans are not set above the non-human world because of divine power. Singer clearly includes humans along a continuum of organisms, which is evident from the fact that he believes that classifying NHAs as distinct from humans is

⁶ In identifying and developing the following assumptions, I consulted with Kate Morrissey, my twin sister who has read *Animal Liberation* and has studied ecofeminist philosophy. Therefore, the assumptions presented here are the result of collaborative work between the two of us.

speciesism. He generally believes that there is a hierarchy among species, which will be discussed in more detail below, and his hierarchy makes a clear distinction between sentient and non-sentient organisms with sentient organisms being higher in the hierarchy than non-sentient organisms. Warren's position with regard to the status of humans, however, is less clear than that of Singer because Warren appears to place human interests above those of NHAs. For example, Warren states that advocating universal arguments often leads to "being judgmental" rather than making "a value judgment" for oneself (pg 129). In the case of universal moral vegetarianism, this can lead to being "morally judgmental of the eating practices of others [humans]" (pg 130). She believes that judging the eating practices of other humans is wrong, which indicates that the NHAs that are being eaten are less important than humans. The primary reason why human interests are often placed above those of NHAs is because we are humans, and we often care more about groups of individuals with whom we share deep emotional relationships. One of Warren's main claims for her contextual moral vegetarianism is that "reasons for moral vegetarianism as a practice in a given circumstance will be affected by contexts of *personal* relations, gender, ethnicity, class, geographic location, and culture" (emphasis added, pg 133). Although it is not explicitly stated, this claim appears to consider mostly human characteristics. It would be consistent with Warren's argument, however, for a human to have a deep emotional relationship with a NHA and place the interests of that NHA above those of some humans.

Finally, both arguments place intrinsic value in a conception of justice although the type of justice that each argument values is different. Singer believes that justice is an abstract concept that can be objectively determined and applied uniformly. This type of justice,

therefore, is universal. Warren, on the other hand, does not believe that one can determine whether an action is just outside of the context in which the action occurs. An action that may be just in one situation may not be just if it occurs within a different context.

Although there are some commonalities between the assumptions of Singer and Warren, differences in their assumptions contribute to the strong divergence between the arguments. I will discuss three assumptions that I feel are among the most important in leading to differences between the arguments. First, the goal of the authors in developing their arguments is drastically different. Singer developed his argument as a call to activism; his argument is highly prescriptive. In the preface of *Animal Liberation*, Singer explains to the reader a problem that he observes and is challenging the reader to act to change the problem.

“The aim of this book is to lead you to make this mental switch in your attitudes and practices toward a very large group of beings: members of species other than our own. I believe that our present attitudes to these beings are based on a long history of prejudice and arbitrary discrimination. I argue that there can be no reason – except the selfish desire to preserve the privileges of the exploiting group – for refusing to extend the basic principle of equality of consideration to members of other species. I ask you to recognize that your attitudes to members of other species are a form of prejudice no less objectionable than prejudice about a person’s race or sex” (pg v).

The reverse is true with Warren’s argument. Warren’s impetus for developing her argument is largely academic; she is an ecofeminist philosopher in academia. Her argument is explicitly non-prescriptive; she is not calling her reader to activism. In fact, Warren repeatedly mentions

that the contextual dependence of her argument prevents it from being prescriptive. Their differences in goals are closely related to Singer and Warren's relationship to the reader. Singer is trying to be an expert; he is telling the reader what she should do. He identifies a problem that he has observed, is educating the reader about the problem, tries to convince her that the problem exists by developing his philosophical argument; and in subsequent chapters of *Animal Liberation* tells the reader what she should do to mitigate the problem. Warren is not trying to convince the reader of actions that she should take. By developing her CSA, Warren is providing the reader with tools through which she can evaluate different situations. The reader is encouraged to determine how she thinks that Warren's argument should apply to her life.

Differences between the prescriptive and expert versus non-prescriptive and facilitator assumptions of the arguments are also closely related to differences between the arguments with regard to the appropriateness and importance of hierarchies. Singer clearly believes that hierarchical relationships exist and are important. One hierarchy supported by Singer is placing sentient organisms above non-sentient organisms, as mentioned previously. A second hierarchy implied in *Animal Liberation* is the role of Singer as an expert and the reader as a learner; the expert educates the learner. Although Singer's argument assumes that hierarchical relationships exist, he does not explicitly address the hierarchies. Warren directly addresses the prevalence of hierarchies and the problems that she believes arise from them. In the case of Singer's argument, Warren states that his hierarchical position is problematic because it "place(s) nonhuman animals with humans over and against the rest of nature... and ecological 'wholes' are inappropriately omitted from moral consideration" (pg 127). She thinks that hierarchical relationships are inappropriate and detrimental to oppressed groups of individuals.

As an ecofeminist, Warren believes that oppression of various groups including women and the environment is pervasive, which is evident in her objection to the male physiological norm. She does not think that world should be divided into hierarchies, including relationships among humans and NHAs. The relationality among individuals, which Warren refers to as “relational selves”, within a given context is most important.

The definitions of truth assumed in the arguments differ. Singer believes that there are universal Truths⁷ that can be determined. Relating Truths to the previously mentioned assumption of hierarchies, Singer believes that there is one form of sentience and that all sentience is equal. Singer refers to sentience as “the only defensible *boundary* of concern for the interests of others” (emphasis added, pg 9), suggesting that there is a definite line between sentience and non-sentience. If truths are not absolute, then sentience may not be one common phenomenon that can be described as completely present or absent from all organisms. If sentience cannot be compartmentalized into two discrete groups, then it would be impossible to universally determine which organisms deserve moral consideration. The truths proposed by Warren cannot be absolute because they are always contextual; truths are created by a given situation. The lack of Truths in Warren’s argument contributes to the lack of prescriptiveness inherent in her argument. Because of the differences between the arguments and assumptions of Singer and Warren, the application of their arguments to a discrete situation results in different scenarios regarding the required human moral consideration towards NHAs.

⁷ The capital “T” used on the word Truths is intentional and is used to emphasize the absolute nature of the Truths used by Singer. Truths with a lower case “t” are used to express the idea of truths that are not absolute; they are contextually dependent.

Part 3

Eating Factory Farm Produced Eggs

As a means of demonstrating the differences between the two arguments, I will compare the arguments based on their application to a commonplace example, eating eggs that were produced in factory farms⁸. Eating eggs is the final step in a multi-step process that involves numerous individuals. I will assess Singer and Warren's arguments by considering seven types of individuals that I feel are important actors⁹ in the process of eating eggs. These actors are: factory farm owners, factory farm workers, egg-laying hens, male "egg-laying" chicks¹⁰, eggs, retail purchasers of eggs, and egg eaters.

Singer's Argument

As a non-speciesist utilitarian, Singer believes that all sentient individuals deserve equal moral consideration. Of the previously mentioned actors, all are sentient individuals except eggs. Eggs produced by egg-laying hens in factory farms are not fertilized, cannot grow to become chickens, and therefore are not sentient¹¹. Of the individuals that deserve equal moral consideration, it is important to determine what is meant by equal consideration. As discussed above, Singer differentiates between equal consideration and equal treatment. In the situation of eating an egg, equal consideration must first be addressed by the fulfillment of the most basic and shared characteristics among all organisms – the ability to suffer. The action that

⁸Throughout the rest of the paper, I will refer to "factory farm produced eggs" as "eggs" even though not all eggs are produced in factory farms, as will be discussed later in the paper.

⁹ The term "actors" is used to refer to the seven groups of individuals described here.

¹⁰ Chickens have been bred so that the chickens that are used to produce eggs, egg-laying chickens, are different from chickens that are consumed for food, broiler chickens. The varieties of chickens that have been bred to have females maximize egg production do not gain weight as quickly as the broiler varieties of chickens. Therefore, male "egg-laying" chicks are thrown away shortly after hatching because it is not cost effective to keep them alive.

¹¹ I do not know whether Singer would consider fertilized eggs to be potentially sentient, but because I am focusing on unfertilized eggs, this is not an issue.

produces the least amount of suffering among all individuals involved in eating – or not eating – eggs is the morally preferred action.

Of the seven actors that I am focusing on, factory farm owners do not suffer any immediate physical harm whether or not eggs are eaten by humans. An owner may suffer financial loss and possible mental stress, but Singer considers potential minor mental suffering as less important than immediate physical suffering. A farm worker may or may not suffer from human egg eating. The working conditions on most fowl factory farms are likely detrimental to the physical and mental health of the farm workers, but Singer may argue that not having the job would cause greater mental suffering. The effects on factory farm workers, however, are not as acute or extreme of an example of suffering as those of subsequent individuals thereby making the effects on the factory farm workers a minor factor in determining human moral obligations.

Egg-laying hens are a clear example of individuals that experience extreme physical and emotional suffering throughout their life on a factory farm. Physical suffering of the hens include standing on wire mesh which causes foot abnormalities, being over-crowded which prevents movement, laying exponentially more eggs than they evolved to lay leading to bone loss and uterine prolapse, being debeaked¹² which causes infections and makes eating and drinking difficult, experiencing forced molting which is up to 18 days of starvation to induce egg laying, and being exposed to extreme levels of ammonia due to high levels of excrement (Compassion Over Killing 2006). Egg-laying hens also experience extreme emotional stress because of the inability to perform evolutionarily programmed behaviors such as developing a

¹² Debeaking is a process whereby the top portion of a bird's beak is sliced off to reduce the ability of one bird to physically attack another bird.

pecking order, flying, perching, and dust bathing (Compassion Over Killing 2006). The suffering of egg-laying hens is chronic and lasts from one to two years (National Agricultural Statistics Service 2006). Male “egg-laying” chicks also experience physical suffering, but their suffering is on a much shorter time scale. The male “egg-laying” chicks suffer when they are discarded and left to die from starvation, from being gassed, from being crushed, or from being asphyxiated (Compassion Over Killing 2006).

Once the eggs are produced by the hens, the eggs are sold to retailers who then sell the eggs to consumers. The retailer does not experience immediate physical suffering regardless of whether or not eggs are purchased. As was described with factory farm owners, retailers may experience financial losses if eggs are not purchased which may translate into some mental stress. The magnitude of this potential mental stress is not considered equally with that of the chickens’ extreme immediate suffering. The egg eater may be negatively affected by not purchasing eggs because the individual may use eggs as a protein source and may enjoy eating eggs, but it is unlikely that not eating eggs will cause the individual extreme physical or emotional suffering.

As I described above, eating eggs imposes great amounts of suffering on the egg-laying hens and the male “egg-laying” chicks, and it does not relieve great amounts of suffering among any of the other involved actors. The net amount of suffering experienced among all actors involved in the process of eating eggs is great, and because the interests of all of the individuals involved in eating eggs must be considered equally, an individual is morally obligated to not eat eggs according to Singer’s argument. This moral obligation to not eat eggs

can theoretically be applied to all humans, although Singer's argument is specifically addressed to humans in Western cultures.

Warren's Argument

In contrast to Singer, who advocates that all humans (in Western cultures) become vegan¹³, Warren's argument is better thought of as guidelines that an individual should evaluate when purchasing animal products, including eggs. Additionally, the individual should reevaluate her purchasing choices frequently as her situation changes. One way to use Warren's argument as a guide is within the context of the three processes of her CSA. In the context of eating eggs, "caring about" would encourage the consumer to determine whether eating eggs is being attentive to the involved actors. In the second process, "taking care of", the consumer would have to determine if eating eggs was acting in the best interests of the involved actors. "Care giving" would include engaging in processes that benefit the well-being of all involved actors.

Factory farming, as a form of industrialized agriculture, is a highly capitalistic system that greatly encourages the Up-Down system of domination. It is difficult to generalize to all factory farms whether owners of factory farms are Ups or Downs. Many of the largest factory farms are owned by large corporations in which case the owner would be an Up, but there are still some small factory farm owners that produce eggs that have been pushed into becoming more industrialized due to economic pressures from large processing corporations in which case the owner may not clearly fit into the Up-Down system. Although Warren does not specifically address whether the CSA should be used to evaluate how a product is produced, I

¹³ Veganism is a more strict form of vegetarianism. Vegans do not eat or use any animal products, including eggs.

believe that Warren would encourage individuals to generally avoid supporting large corporations. The factory farm workers are often Downs in the Up-Down system of domination in most factory farms, regardless of the owner of the factory farm. Most factory farm workers are members of oppressed groups, particularly immigrants¹⁴. Egg eaters should consider the farm worker in their assessment of the moral efficacy of their food choices. According to Warren's CSA, the egg eaters should determine whether the needs of the factory farm workers are being attended to, whether the best interests of the workers are being considered, and whether purchasing the eggs benefits the well-being of the workers.

The egg-laying hens on factory farms are clearly Downs because they are powerless against the humans that control every aspect of their life. Additionally, the CSA should also be applied to the needs of the egg-laying hens. In the case of factory farm produced eggs, it seems that none of the processes in the CSA are being met for the egg-laying hens. With regard to male "egg-laying" chicks, the conclusions would be very similar to that for the egg-laying hens. Although Singer's argument explicitly does not require any moral obligations towards the eggs, it is unclear how eggs map onto Warren's argument.

The moral obligations of the egg eater toward the retailer that purchases the eggs is highly dependent on the specific information about the retailer, particularly whether the retailer can be classified as an Up, a Down, or both. If a large retail company purchases the eggs, then the company is largely an Up, and the consumer should generally avoid supporting that corporation. Small, local, and/or family owned retail businesses, however, may be considered Downs.

¹⁴ In the 2001-2002 National Agricultural Workers Survey, more than 70% of farm workers were not born in the United States, and the average hourly salary of these workers was \$7.25/hr (Carroll et al. 2002).

The actor that should likely be of greatest importance with regard to determining whether eating eggs is morally objectionable according to Warren is individual eating the egg. For example, if the consumer is a lactating woman that believes that eating eggs is necessary for her and her baby's nutrition, then eating eggs is morally justified. Additionally, the role that eggs have in the consumer's life is highly important. If preparing and serving eggs are an important part of a cultural or nurturing tradition for the individual, then eating eggs in that situation is morally justified. If there are no exceptional situations that make the consumer believe that she needs to eat eggs, Warren advocates not eating eggs. But this conclusion is one that the consumer must come to on her own.

Part 4

Assessment of Singer and Warren's Arguments

Singer and Warren's arguments advocate that humans have moral obligations towards the different actors that are described above. According to Singer's argument, the actors whose interests must be considered most strongly are those of the chickens, the egg-laying hens and the male "egg-laying" chicks. The chickens' interests must be of primary concern because the most basic, shared characteristic among all of the sentient actors is the ability to suffer, and the chickens are the only actors that experience extreme and direct suffering. The desire of the chickens to not experience suffering overrides the potential mental suffering and monetary or gustatory pleasures of the other actors involved. According to Warren's argument, there is more ambiguity with regard towards whom the egg eater has a moral responsibility. The egg eater may have some moral responsibility towards the factory farm

workers, the chickens, and possibly the retailer. The egg eater herself, however, is the most important actor according to Warren. Her interests should be placed above those of the other actors.

Using the example of eating eggs, Singer advocates that human moral obligations lie principally toward the NHA; whereas Warren's argument suggests that human moral obligations lie principally towards humans, specifically toward the egg eater. In this respect, Warren's argument is much more consistent with the dominant Western paradigm with regard to human moral obligations towards NHAs, which is largely that humans do not have a strong moral obligation toward NHAs whose flesh or reproductive products are eaten; the effects on the NHAs is not a primary concern. The fact Singer's argument advocates a stance that is widely divergent from the dominant Western paradigm is to be expected because Singer wrote *Animal Liberation* precisely because he was trying to persuade individuals that eating factory farmed NHA products is wrong. The conclusion that I deduce from Warren's argument is surprising, however, because according to ecofeminist philosophy in general, and Warren's position in particular, eating factory farmed NHA products should generally be "avoided" and encourages domination of Downs by Ups. Therefore, one would expect that the extension of her argument to a specific example would result in consistent conclusions as her arguments in theory. The flexibility and intentional ambiguity in Warren's argument is the primary reason for this discrepancy between the application of her argument and its theoretical underpinnings.

Although Warren's argument is most consistent with the dominant Western paradigm with regard to human moral obligations towards NHAs, I believe that Singer's argument is more consistent with the dominant paradigm with regard to Western philosophical values. As

described previously, Singer's argument is based on reason and universality. Singer believes that human moral obligations can objectively be determined for all individuals, and extensions of this view are widely accepted in Western cultures. Ecofeminist philosophy, including Warren's argument, contend that the lack of value given to emotions and contextual information are severe inadequacies of rational and universal philosophical arguments, and that explicit or implicit acceptance of these arguments promotes the male bias that they contend is present in Western cultures and lead to the oppression of groups of individuals, specifically women and nature.

Jarchow Argument

Comparison of the application of these arguments demonstrates that the positions held by both Singer and Warren are radical because they describe ways of being that are different from the status quo in Western cultures. The argument that I advocate is a combination of the radical aspects of Singer and Warren's arguments. I agree with Singer that speciesism is wrong and that all sentient animals deserve equal moral consideration. The reliance on universality and reason in the case of these positions is justified. It is important for some positions to be universally right and some positions to be universally wrong. For example, racism is a position that is held by numerous individuals in Western cultures, and the position is wrong. It is not necessary to learn the emotional state or contextual situation of the racist in order to determine whether the position is right or wrong. I make the same argument with speciesism.

In accordance with Warren's argument, I believe that the importance and validity of emotion and contextual information are severely under-valued in Western cultures. I am keenly aware of the lack of valuation of emotional epistemologies with regard to eating NHAs. I

became a vegetarian in the fourth grade when my mother explained to me how the workers at slaughter houses used electric prods to force the pigs to climb the slaughterhouse ramp. I had never thought about the fact that the NHAs were suffering and would prefer to not be eaten, but upon learning about their situation I immediately became vegetarian. I had a very strong emotional reaction, and it was very clear to me that I should be vegetarian (and upon learning more about the egg and dairy industries, I became vegan). I remember reading *Animal Liberation* in when I was in high school and feeling overwhelming joy that my vegetarianism was validated and justified – there was a *real* reason why I did not eat NHAs. It is wrong that I believed that; my strong emotional response was a real reason to not eat NHAs.

The importance of contextual information is also critical, but in contrast to Warren, I believe that the individuals whose context must be carefully examined in the example of eating eggs are the NHAs rather than the humans eating the eggs. I believe that factory farming causes great suffering to NHAs and is wrong. In this sense, I agree with Singer that eating factory farmed NHA products is wrong, but not all farms are factory farms. There is a small minority of farms where NHAs are compassionately raised and great care is taken to kill the NHAs humanely. On farms where domesticated NHAs are provided equal moral consideration as humans, I believe that eating the NHAs or their reproductive products may be morally sound. Additionally, in cultures with vastly different worldviews than that of the dominant Western paradigm where humans are considered to be part of nature rather than dominators over nature, eating NHAs is not based on human objectification of NHAs. I believe that eating NHAs in these cultures is a morally appropriate action.

The argument that I advocate for human moral obligations toward NHA, therefore, is a combination of Singer and Warren's arguments. I believe that NHAs are objectified and suffer greatly in factory farming systems. Objectification and imposing suffering of these animals results from humans believing that they are distinct from and superior to NHAs. This is speciesism, which is wrong. Raising and killing NHAs or eating their reproductive products, however, is not inherently wrong because it does not necessarily cause NHAs to be objectified and subjected to great suffering. The context in which the NHAs are raised and killed is critically important. At the present time, the *overwhelming majority* of NHA flesh and reproductive products are produced via factory farming systems. Therefore, most humans in Western cultures have a moral obligation to be vegan. Because of the scarcity of compassionately procured NHA products, I believe that it is unreasonable to advocate that humans should remain omnivorous but should become aware of how the NHA products that they consume are produced. I believe that this is unreasonable because it lacks the prescriptiveness necessary to ensure compassionate treatment for NHAs, and I have found that it allows humans to all too easily fall back into a way of eating where they no longer question how their NHA products were procured. NHAs deserve equal moral consideration, and the onus is on humans to ensure that the food that we eat is consistent with desirable moral behavior.

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