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OF PIGS AND HUMANS: REGARDING AN INHERENT TENSION IN HOW WE TREAT ANIMALS

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::ABSTRACT

According to Cora Diamond, our conception of animals as fellow creatures is labile. We eat animals in spite of the empathy we feel for them. In general, as in the famous duck-rabbit image, we do not perceive the two states of the animal *at the same time:* the spaces in which the animal exists as a fellow creature are separate from those in which we perceive it as a thing to be eaten. However, factory farming represents an exception to this rule. The author draws on two studies in the social psychology conducted in the pork industry in Quebec and France. Although the processing of industrial animals depends on the humans who work with them, this investigation shows that, in the public debate over the treatment of animals, factory farm workers are not recognized as moral agents. The public debate over the well-being of industrial animals – or, more radically, over the justification for their existence – thus has a blind spot that is quite troubling once we become aware of it: it is built on a lack of care for the humans who work with animals. The following article presents the results of this study by shedding light on what factory farm workers call an "upside-down world" (a world in which more attention is paid to animals than to them) and on the moral disarray of researchers and the disagreements between their interpretations. It shows that recognizing the lived experience and perspectives of factory farm workers, as well as the particularity of their moral point of view, implies that one has formulated one's own moral point of view – that is, that one has thought through the anxiety that the miserable life of an industrial animal provokes in us. More broadly, this experience calls into question the defensive dimension of moral theories and their role in denying "difficulties of reality" and the affects that these difficulties mobilize.

Key words: pork industry, psychodynamics of work, empathy, care, extermination of humans, slavery

POVZETEK

O PRAŠIČIH IN LJUDEH: O INHERENTNI NAPETOSTI V NAŠEM RAVNANJU Z ŽIVALMI

Po Cori Diamond je naše dojemanje živali kot naših spremljevalcev vprašljivo. živali uživamo, kljub temu, da smo z njimi sočutni. V splošnem obeh stanj živali ne dojemamo hkrati, *podobno kot je to primer v slavni risbi raca-zajec: prostori, v katerih žival obstaja kot spremljevalec so različni od tistih, v katerih jo dojemamo kot stvar prehrane. Toda industrijska reja predstavlja izjemo tega pravila. Avtorica črpa iz dveh študij s po-*

dročja socialne psihologije, ki sta bili izvedeni v svinjerejski industriji v Quebecu in v Franciji. Čeprav predelava industrijskih živali temelji na ljudeh, ki delajo z njimi, ti raziskavi pokažeta, da v javnih debatah o odnosu do živali delavci v tej industriji niso prepoznani kot moralni akterji. Javna debata o dobrobiti industrijskih živali – ali, bolj radikalno, o upravičenosti njihovega obstoja – ima zato slepo pego, ki postane precej problematična, ko se je ovemo: sestavlja pa jo manko skrbi za ljudi, ki delajo z živalmi. Prispevek zato prikazuje izsledke teh študij tako, da vrže luč na to, kar ti delavci imenujejo »narobe obrnjeni svet« (svet, v katerem je več pozornosti namenjene živalim kot njim) in na moralno zmedo raziskovalcev ter na razhajanja med njihovimi interpretacijami. Pokaže nam, da prepoznavanje živete izkušnje in perspektive teh delavcev, vključno s partikularnostjo njihovega moralnega stališča, implicira, da smo že izdelali naše moralno stališče – to pomeni, da smo že premislili stisko, ki jo mizerno življenje industrijske živali v nas izzove. Širše lahko rečemo, da to izkustvo postavlja pod vprašaj defenzivno dimenzijo moralnih teoretikov in njihove vloge v zanikanju »težav stvarnost« ter afektov, ki jih te težave mobilizirajo.

Ključne besede: prašičja industrija, psihodinamika dela, empatija, skrb, iztrebljanje živali, suženjstvo

Two articles by Cora Diamond, "Eating Meat and Eating People" and "Experimenting on Animals: A Problem in Ethics" have allowed me to extract myself from a moral quandary that had inhibited my thinking. By facing up to this quandary and putting it to work, I have managed to give what I hope is intelligible form to what happened to me over the course of my fieldwork – something I think can only be described as a "loss of concepts."

"There is, you could say, a built-in tension in our modes of treatment of animals. From childhood on, we are familiar with animals treated sometimes within the sphere of morality, and sometimes as mere things, sometimes as companions, sometimes as lamb chops on the hoof – and so on" (Diamond 1991, 347-8). Diamond's insight here is fundamental: our conception of animals as fellow creatures is labile. *We eat animals in spite of the empathy we feel for them*. In general, as in the famous duck-rabbit image, we do not perceive the two statuses of the animal *at the same time*: for us, the spaces in which the animal exists as a fellow creature are separate from those in which we perceive it as a thing to be eaten. However, industrial farming represents an exception to this rule. Drawing on a study of the pork industry I conducted in Bretagne (France) and Québec in 2006 and 2007, I will show that the moral question raised by the treatment of industrial animals presented itself and was experienced in the form of *a blurring of empathy* that disorganized my thinking. It became impossible to escape the analogy between humans and pigs, and difficult to simultaneously feel pity for the animals and give consideration to the people who work with them. In other words, it was difficult to be attentive to the fate of industrial animals, to *care* about

them, and to continue to give full attention to the needs expressed by workers in the pork industry. How can one care about animals without caring about those who look after them? And, inversely, is it possible to take into account the suffering that employees in the pork industry experience at work while remaining indifferent to the suffering of the animals? The experience I describe here was shot through with tension between care and concern for humans and care and concern for animals.

Studies have shown that across the board, the best experts on work are those who actually do it – in contrast with the "human factor" principle of engineering, which states that humans represent the Achilles' heel of organizations and that, therefore, they must be supervised, guided, and controlled from above. Although the processing of industrial animals depends on the humans who work with them, my investigation shows that, in the public debate over the treatment of animals, industrial farm workers are not recognized as moral agents, or even simply as human beings who merit our care and attention, who deserve our interest in them as people who matter and whose point of view has something to teach us. The public debate over the well-being of industrial animals – or, more radically, over the justification for their existence – thus has a blind spot that is quite troubling once we become aware of it: it is built on a lack of care for the humans who work with animals.

The following article presents the results of my study by shedding light on what industrial livestock workers call an "upside-down world" (a world in which more attention is paid to animals than to them) as well as on researchers' moral disarray and their conflicting interpretations. It shows that recognizing the lived experience and perspectives of industrial livestock workers, as well as the particularity of their moral point of view, implies that one has formulated one's own moral point of view – that is, that one has thought through *the anxiety that the miserable life of an industrial animal* provokes in us. This anxiety often takes the form of a cumbersome – although, in the West, inevitable – comparison between industrial livestock production and the mass extermination of humans in Nazi concentration camps. Such a comparison prevents us from taking into account the complex relations between humans (as producers and consumers) and animals; recognizing this complexity leads to a form of moral humility. More broadly, my experience calls into question the defensive dimension of moral theories and their role in denying "difficulties of reality" and the affects that these difficulties mobilize.

::METHODOLOGY

I will discuss two studies I carried out with Jocelyn Porcher on the psychodynamics of work in the pork industry in Bretagne and Quebec in 2006 and 2007.[1] The psychodynamics of work may be defined as the analysis of pleasure and suffer-

[1] Michel Vezina and Sébastien Mouret also participated in the study in Quebec.

ing within the context of work.[2] Jocelyne Porcher, a specialist on work in traditional, industrial, and organic livestock agriculture, contributed her expertise on this occupational milieu.[3] As a psychologist, I contributed my familiarity with a methodological apparatus that can be used to understand social and psychological difficulties at work.

Our studies strove to give those who are in daily contact with animals the chance to express themselves, and we sought to understand what these men and women experience every day – the suffering that work causes them as well as the pleasure they take in it. Jocelyne Porcher based herself on the premise that the working conditions imposed by the pork industry are harmful to both workers and animals, and that these two groups must "liberate themselves together," via *a convergence of more dignified work and improved animal well-being*. The farmers' associations that allowed us to carry out these studies hoped that our analysis of workers' lived experiences would allow them to better understand why the pork sector has such difficulty recruiting and retaining workers.

I will begin by providing a few brief methodological elements of the research apparatus we used.

It is not easy for people to express the difficulties they face in their work; in general, people protect themselves from such difficulties by avoiding thinking about what causes them suffering, and thus do not talk about it. To help people overcome their defenses and speak a bit more freely about what bothers them and causes them to suffer at work, researchers have created a tool called a "study of occupational psychodynamics." It consists in *bringing together* people who usually work together or who have the same jobs and who are willing to speak about their work experiences during several sessions lasting a few hours each. The restricted timeframe of the study acts as a constraint: only what is said during these few hours will be taken into account, and one cannot go back and add to or modify what was said. The collective dimension of the exercise guarantees that participants will not avoid the subject but will remain focused on what is important in their work. It is in participants' interest to overcome their reticence to speak, for their participation impacts the quality of the study, which is not intended merely to expand the field of knowledge on work or subjectivity, but, in keeping with the action research paradigm, will be used to improve the organization of their work.

In contrast to other, more traditional research frameworks, here, researchers' subjectivity is not a confounding variable, but is rather one of the main tools of interpretation. I will not address here issues regarding the scientificity of such an apparatus, which stem from the central question of the role granted to the particular

[2] For more on the psychodynamics of work, see Dejours 2008, Dessors 2009, and Molinier 2006.

[3] Jocelyne Porcher has written numerous works, including *Éleveurs et animaux, réinventer le lien* (Paris: PUF, 2002); *Être bête* (with Vinciane Despret) (Arles: Actes Sud, 2007); *Une vie de cochon* (with C. Tribondeau) (Paris: La Découverte, 2008); *Des cochons en or* (Paris: Éditions de l'INRA, 2010).

(both in terms of what is studied and who does the studying) within the domain of sciences that are based on the quest for the universal.

Understanding the suffering of others requires:

- Being attentive to the totality of details of a situation, reading body language: body positions, gestures, and expressions; glances exchanged or avoided, signs of agitation, etc.
- Listening to what people say as well as – and this is crucial – what they prevent themselves from saying. Here again the collective dimension is important, since it allows us to understand what is generally agreed upon through what people avoid saying.
- Being sensitive to people's suffering – that is, to the aspect of affects, mood, and the affective tonality of individuals and the group. This is something most of us do in ordinary life in order to understand others; in a study like ours, we simply do it in a more conscious and focused way. And one can only feel the suffering and affects of others on the basis of one's own affects, one's own corporeity. We must therefore feel the feelings others provoke in us: depression, fear, disgust, or anger, for example. Everything that researchers experience in the situation of study belongs to this intersubjective field that must be analyzed as an *experience*. In other words, the situation of study is a dynamic field in which researchers are fully implicated; it is an adventure to which they must make themselves available, and in which they are exposed, transformed, and lose themselves. The study becomes *their* experience, becomes part of their life and continues to raise questions for them, to work its way through them and affect them, well after it is over.

::AN UPSIDE-DOWN WORLD

In our study, industrial livestock workers did not respond exactly as Jocelyn Porcher anticipated. The suffering they expressed did not come from the "unhappiness" they caused animals, but rather from a fear that the animals would fall prey to an epidemic and have to be slaughtered on a mass scale. It also stemmed from their resentment toward their fellow citizens. In both France and Quebec, these fellow citizens, while consuming industrial pork in vast quantities, expressed more compassion and concern for the pigs than esteem and recognition for those who produce the main ingredient of ham and sausage, accusing them of torturing animals and polluting rivers.

The industrial pork workers we met suffered from being stigmatized for doing "dirty work" – whereas they themselves liked their work, were proud of their performance and the meat they produced, and considered their salaries and working conditions to be far better than those of their parents, who were condemned to spend their lives "behind a cow's ass." Thus, industrial livestock production is experienced as a form of social progress for peasants and the quest for excellence as an

exhilarating "passion," even if the latter can sometimes verge on alienation, when it leads to the demand to always produce more and more, more than can be consumed – implying a possible collapse of the market (see Molinier & Porcher 2006).

Industrial livestock workers feel that they are victims of a moral prejudice. "Animals are better off than people." "More importance is given to pigs; it's the world upside down." They complain that the well-being of pigs is of greater concern than their own – as if producing, selling, and consuming meat in a "politically correct" manner means considering only how animals are treated. For them, it is unacceptable to seek to improve the lives of industrially raised pigs to the detriment of human lives, something that happens when certain animal welfare practices – for example, restraining animals less – end up making their work more complicated. The moral universe of these pork workers is not the same as that of some defenders of animals, which workers strikingly refer to as an "upside-down world." In this "upside-down world," pork workers have the feeling that they are treated *worse* than animals. They are either forgotten or stigmatized as monsters.

On the basis of data we gathered, we found that the fate of industrially raised animals is not workers' primary concern, and that they are relatively indifferent to pigs' quality of life. Whence Jocelyn Porcher's disappointment, which she expressed in a radical manner following our studies:

> In contrast to the powerful ethics around working with animals historically found in livestock farming, the vacuum of thought and moral sense in industrial systems leads to the self-produced and voluntary development of a system that it is difficult not to compare to the system of Nazi thought. (Porcher 2005, 19)

I did not feel any anger toward the industrial livestock workers. Although Porcher and I shared the same experience, when it was time to take stock of it, we found that we each understood it differently, and that we no longer shared the same world of meanings and affects. And yet, we agreed on most of the other points in our analysis. Here I don't want to pursue a personal controversy with a colleague whose work I respect and admire. I mention this disagreement because I am convinced that the conflicts (or difficulties) existing in reality are replayed in the research teams. Hence, the analysis of these co-workers conflicts is part of the effort of elucidation, even if this requirement can be painful, because the arguments of the other, which were constructed to understand the *same* reality, cannot be easily dismissed. If I choose not to erase this controversy, this is precisely because it put me to work and forced me to take a moral stance. After this process of self-reflection it became clear that axiological neutrality is impossible in a similar way that the body and the affects of the researchers cannot be extracted from their theories. This is why serious analysis has to account for them as best as it can. This means that the conflicts of interpretation are not only inevitable, but are also the driving force of conceptual work.

What bother me about Porcher's arguments is not that in comparing the industrial processing of animals to the extermination of human beings, she was trying to demean the latter, for she adds:

> How can we make contemporary reality available for thought without immediately being accused of having the worst intentions on the pretext that the victims of barbarity are animals – that is to say, for many, are *no more than* animals? (Porcher 2005, 19)

Thus, in using this analogy, her intention, like J.M. Coetzee's in *Elizabeth Costello*, is to raise the status of animals and to radically call into question the industrial system of meat production – a project I could support. But what seemed to me unjust and disproportionate was that workers in the pork industry were compared (implicitly) to Nazis or considered (explicitly) as alienated individuals, devoid of any moral sense.

"What is important in moral perception is not agreement and harmony, but rather the (sometimes violent) perception of contrasts, distances, and differences, and their expression. The moment when, as Cora Diamond says, there is a 'loss of concepts'; when it doesn't work anymore" (Laugier 2005a, 336). Let us say, to begin with, that the comparison of workers in the pork industry to Nazis or to immoral brutes did not correspond to what I "felt," even if I had a great deal of difficulty justifying my feeling (because – thanks to Jocelyne Porcher – I found the pigs' lives to be truly "miserable" in comparison to the lives they could have lived outdoors, in the fresh air). Thus, I found myself in a situation of critical perplexity, one that came close to Cora Diamond's example of experiences in which one finds that others' arguments don't "stick" (for example, writes Sandra Laugier, when one hears someone speak and without necessarily being able to formulate arguments against them, *knows* that what they say is a "seriously comical or repugnant absurdity" (Laugier 2005a, 338.) Reading Cora Diamond encouraged me to trust my experience – even though, in contrast to my colleague, I am not an expert on pigs, I too had an experience.

::A FANTASY IN PIGSKIN

In discussing Emerson's essay "Self-Reliance," Sandra Laugier writes: "My perceptions are more trustworthy than my thoughts, for they are *fatal*, independent of my will to grasp the world: it is on the basis of perception, as absorption and receptivity, that we can invent non-*conceptual* categories…It is not a matter of abandoning experiential knowledge in favor of trusting our human nature, but rather of returning to the particularity of the experience itself" (Laugier 2005b, 161). "Regaining contact with experience, and finding a voice to express it" or "All I know is reception" – I have returned to what was most corporeal in my experience and, in that sense, most fatal: disgust.

I found it disgusting that litters of piglets are reorganized at birth, for example according to weight: the smallest ones are grouped together so that the bigger ones do not feed at their expense. As a result, the sow nursing a piglet might not necessarily be its biological mother; some sows were even sent to the slaughterhouse after giving birth. Other techniques of maximization include sacrificing the smallest piglets, either letting them die in their pens or killing them. "Wall therapy" was described as a technique used to fracture a piglet's skull and kill it in one fell swoop. Thanks to genetic selection techniques, sows commonly give birth to 20 piglets in one litter (rather than 8 to 10), so in any case, methods must be found to wean extra piglets, for there are no sows with more than 14 udders. "We juggle," the workers said, but instead of balls, they juggle sows or piglets destined to live or to die (more quickly).

I encountered an obstacle in suspending moral judgement in order to enter into the lived world of our interlocutors: disgust is not a moral sentiment in the sense of an already developed form of sensibility. Rather, it is a bodily experience that becomes somatic *without mediation*, as nausea, dizziness, or other discomforts that stupefy thought. I was not "judging," but in this absence of judgement, I was physically disgusted. Understanding workers' lived experience implied elaborating on this dis-ease, which cannot be pushed aside since it *is* my understanding, at the same time that it *clouds* my understanding.

It is important to emphasize at this point that many workers, in particular young recruits and women, did not feel "up to" killing animals. They asked other workers to do this "dirty work" – these were usually men, who managed to overcome their revulsion but did not claim to take pleasure in this task.[4]

I recall how sorry one Breton pork farmer seemed as he gave us a tour of his operation. As he was showing us the rows of cages of pregnant sows, he said: "Oh, Pascale, she doesn't like this, no, she doesn't like this…" No, I didn't like it very much, and I responded with a contrite smile, for I felt sympathy for him. But what I was incapable of telling him was that that morning I woke up nauseous with a strange image in my mind. I saw myself surrounded as far as I could see by an immense, undulating, pink pigskin. It looked both as if thousands of pigs had blended into one unending body and as if each ripple were also an individual pig – a bit like looking at the ocean and seeing it as a whole as well as each drop in it.

This mental image was the first conscious expression of my bodily discomfort – that is, my disgust at the process of *de-animalization* to which industrially raised pigs are subjected. In the words of Ignace Meyerson, mental images are the lan-

[4] This repugnance is undoubtedly a factor in high worker turnover. Moreover, someone who openly takes sadistic pleasure in killing animals would be rejected by this occupational milieu, where putting down animals (in particular large animals) must be done quickly and painlessly if possible. On this, see Sébastien Mouret's article written on the basis of our studies (Mouret 2010). Achieving precision in the act of killing implies an elaborate deployment of sadism (its sublimation), something not possible for everyone, and of which our studies did not find much evidence.

guage of our particular experience. They have a capacity to articulate that can unify the real and the symbolic, sensibility and cognition, and they play such an important role in psychic life (in the great semantics of the imagination) – and in creation, including scientific creation – that there is no reason not to give them pride of place in interpretations.

The image of the pig-sea expressed my anxiety in the face of the *indeterminate* – the pigs are all unique yet appear to all be identical – the *liminal* – smooth pig skin is reminiscent of human skin – *techniques for maximizing life* (artificial insemination, genetic selection, the sorting of sows and piglets: a proliferating multiplicity, etc.) and the *ethical uncertainty* that the "miserable life" of industrial pigs provoked in me. This ethical uncertainty stemmed from the fact that in spite of observing this miserable life, I could not manage to consider workers in the pork industry as torturers.

I allowed myself to feel disgust as dis-ease, and even sharpened my perception of it, instead of protecting myself from it. These complicated and unpleasant affects alerted me not to try to rush to understand, and convinced me that I was missing something, that I didn't know where all this would lead – perhaps nowhere, scientifically speaking. I focused on what I know how to do: I tried to access workers' moral views. The process of doing so gave me the tools I needed to better orient myself within my own doldrums.

::AND PRESTO, SAUSAGE! THE MORAL VIEW OF PORK INDUSTRY WORKERS

Although the suffering expressed by workers was not that of inflicting suffering on animals, they did willingly acknowledge that the life of an industrially raised pig is not an enviable one: "The sows are not happy all alone in their cages, but we can't do things any differently, as long as they're not abused." This argument borrows from both the first and second views of animals that, according to Cora Diamond, clash with one another when it comes to thinking about experiments on animals (Diamond 1991, "Experimenting on Animals"). The first view is that we have a right to make use of animals, as long as "certain minimal standards are met" (Diamond 1991, 344) and "certain kinds of abuse…are avoided" (340). The second view is that the life imposed on laboratory animals as sensory creatures capable of living independent lives is "miserable" – something the pork industry workers expressed when they said, "the sows are not happy." This means that the moral perspective of workers might initially appear irrational or contradictory, or at least "unclear." But Diamond emphasizes that most people who adopt one view or the other do not develop extreme versions of them. What I would like to demonstrate regarding industrial livestock workers is that if one opens oneself up to the situations in which they live and work, it is perhaps not possible to have a "clear" moral point of view, unless it is constructed defensively.

In the minds of pork industry workers, industrial pigs exist to be raised to reach a reasonable weight for slaughter. As one worker put it in order to express the brutality of the choice that is imposed when a sow can no longer profitably participate in this cycle, "and presto, sausage!" I laughed when he said this. I shared this defensive moment and I extended it within my own private space. Since that moment, the expression has come to circulate among my friends and family as a sort of inside joke – when one of us wants to quickly be done with a troublesome problem, we say "and presto, sausage!" Of course, I do not want to be turned into sausage, but I accept that this can be done to a sow who has been locked in a cage and is exhausted from delivering litter after litter of piglets. If I did not accept that, I would not laugh; I would find it odious. My laughter, my affect, know more than I do about my moral position, and have since the beginning. There is a limit to my compassionate identification with the sow. I am not capable of feeling that the life of a pig could be *entirely* equal to that of a human being, that it could have *exactly* the same value as my own. I can make all the intellectual effort in the world, and presto sausage! I laugh. I do not claim that humans have the right to unlimited power over animals, and I would disapprove if someone were to beat an animal with a stick, but I laugh at the moral bankruptcy to which the fact of *eating animals* condemns us. Not being vegetarian, I have certainly enjoyed sausage and pâté made of sows deemed unfit for service and discarded. It was on the ground of such complicity that my interlocutor "came and got me," so to speak – me the meat-eater, in the register of the satisfaction of drives.

Does the fact of eating meat – or even of living among meat-eating humans – condemn us to a sort of *moral humility*? I love animals, I regret that they are killed, I don't like to think about it, but I eat them, and, like most people on this planet, I live with this contradiction. "And presto, sausage" expresses, in a humorous fashion, this kind of moral humility. This language game does not make fun of the animal, but rather of the person who decides the animal's fate – the sow will be eaten – and designates a moral territory where conventional ethics do not apply. It is not fair to declare a sow unfit for service and discard her – justice plays no role in this. Nor is it a form of "caring for" the sow – which would imply, at a minimum, sparing her from cruelty and pain at the moment of slaughter, but that is not the issue here, and all the problematic stages of that process are made to disappear as if by magic, and presto! That's what we wanted, isn't it? It's so annoying to have to kill animals in order to eat them! But pigs taste good…and they're so cheap! Laughter reveals the teeth of carnivorous pleasure.

The joke also plays on the proximity between humans and animals, a register where identification cannot be so easily undone: are we in part laughing out of relief, at the fact that we ourselves do not run the risk of being turned into sausage? Or are we laughing at the phantasmatic omnipotence that consists in expressing the wish to turn all those who bother us into sausage? It seems to me that the joke neither affirms that the life of a pig is worth nothing, nor skips over human cruelty or

the proximity between humans and animals. Even if animals count less than human beings, and even if one would not do to a human what one does to animals (although one might jokingly threaten to[5]) this does not mean it is completely anodyne to do it to an animal; otherwise, we would not even talk about such things, and there certainly would not be a joke appropriate to the circumstance. The joke creates an "in-between" that is spontaneously felt rather than intellectually understood: animals are both creatures like us and things that can be eaten.

::FELLOW CREATURES OR THINGS TO EAT?

Industrial livestock production fits within a scientific and technological imaginary where, from birth until death, animals are defined as "things to eat." They do not have other functions, either aesthetic or ludic, or any other utility (for example, when I was small, people said that chickens keep snakes away from the house), and they are not supposed to have any individual characteristics. The animal is already programmed ham, which tends to reduce the distinction between a living animal and meat – or, to use Cora Diamond's terms, between fellow creature and thing to eat. The terror I felt at techniques for maximizing life and my mental image of the infinitely proliferating undulating skin fall within this symbolic gap or in-between: the industrial animal is *already* a state of meat – it is the raw material for meat – while also being an animal *nevertheless*.

In analyzing the poem *Titmouse* by Walter de la Mare, Diamond emphasizes that through the image of the "tiny son of life," the poet refers to a conception of life that is not the biological life to which theories of animals rights refer, but rather is based on a conception of human life, a life lived and perceived as vulnerable and as precious in and by its very vulnerability (Diamond 1991, "Eating Meat and Eating People"). This experience of being alive, which we share with all living beings, allows us to imagine, according to Diamond, what it is like to be a bat.

::THE INTERMITTENCES OF EMPATHY

Diamond's idea that our conception of animals as fellow creatures is labile is fundamental. In the Western view of animals, animals can be seen as either similar to oneself or as other, depending on the circumstances.[6] The relation is by definition labile, and this lability is linked to the anthropological fact that *we eat animals in spite of the empathy we feel for them*, an empathy that defenders of animal rights ig-

[5] Such uncertainty nevertheless constitutes a titillating perspective: sadistic impulses are always involved when it comes to eating meat.

[6] In precolonial understandings of relations to animals, for example, humans and animals constantly metamorphosed into one another; the aspects of othering and hierarchy were completely different. What effect did this have on animals as food?

nore by limiting themselves to the register of rights. Animals are both *fellow creatures* and *things to eat*. Whether it is a matter of industrial agriculture or experiments on animals, one must be either very defensive or of bad faith not to perceive animals as creatures *at all*: "the sows are not happy."

In general, as with the famous image of the duck-rabbit, we do not perceive both statuses of the animal *at the same time* – to the contrary, the two are carefully split. We do not usually experience the lability of our relationship to the animal, since for us the spaces in which the animal exists as a fellow creature are separate from those in which we perceive it as something deliciously prepared in the form of a roast or a sausage. If we learn to "see" in a moral sense, what is particularly troubling about the industrially produced animal, what we are not educated for but where we are caught by anxiety, is that we perceive it almost simultaneously as a fellow creature and as a thing to eat. This perception of the lability of the animal presence de-structures the mental split that characterizes our usual relationship to animals. This gives industrial animals a status different from that of other animals, both domestic and wild – a *liminal* status between the animal as a unique and fellow creature (which it remains) and a mass-thing to be eaten (which it already is). We see the duck and the rabbit at the same time, so to speak, which is impossible, and thus, unrepresentable – except in the form of images such as the rippling pigskin where each ripple is also a pig, or jokes with strong defensive connotations. For me, a pig is "sausage on legs," as one of the Breton participants put it – this time, without laughter and with undeniable aggressiveness.[7] We also find this lability in the two semantic registers the workers use to talk about the animals. Sometimes the animals are "pigs," "piglets," "sows," or "boars," as they would be in traditional agriculture. But sometimes they are "living beings," "living material" "porcine material," "a number," "a number in a series." In Quebec, pigs being fattened are called "*charcutiers*" – they are already charcuterie. Humor generally serves to explode the divide. To go back to the phrase "and presto, sausage": we may find in it an expression of lability in the sense that one goes from the duck to the rabbit without warning. "And presto, sausage" makes fun of this lability, and that is why there is an element of self-derision in it, which is difficult to grasp at first – but it is indeed a matter of de-dramatizing, through humor, the tragic relationship we maintain with this lability.

::REVISITING THE COMPARISON BETWEEN LIVESTOCK FARMING AND CONCENTRATION CAMPS

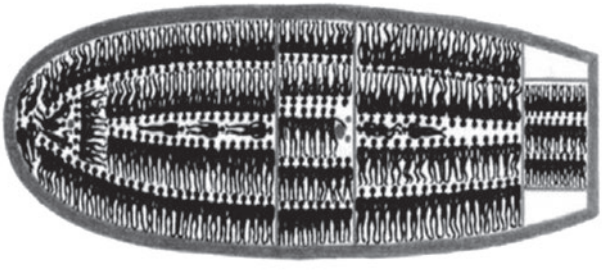
If our starting point is a pig living out in the open, its ears flapping in the breeze in a meadow, it is clear that industrial production confines it to a miserable exist-

[7] One could say that this worker reverses the ethical chain: she would make sausage, but she would not raise pigs. Her aggression, like the joke cited above, targets the sadistic orality of her interlocutors (in this case, the two researchers), as a kind of provocation, as if to say: Look at the cost of what you want to eat.

ence. Even when the animal is not subject to torture, this reduction of its life constitutes the main form of industrial mistreatment. From this point of view, it doesn't matter much whether a piglet is nursed by its biological mother, another sow, or a worker's bottle – *it affects me*, *myself*, just as it affects me that piglets are killed in "gas chambers," even if this is one of the least cruel methods of killing them, less cruel than "wall therapy" or letting them die of hunger or thirst. But to go from that to conflating the concentration of pigs in industrial pork production with the concentration of humans in Nazi camps? The problem is that the comparison holds *phantasmatically*, down to the image of an undulating surface made of pigskin – an image that for me is tinged with the terror I felt as a child when I learned that the Nazis made lampshades out of human skin.

Industrial pigs have smooth, pink skin that evokes the skin of Caucasian humans. Their numbers are marked on this skin. Pink skin marked with an ID number that replaces personal identity evokes Nazi camps. The engine driving the terror that the treatment of industrial animals creates is not the fear that we might be treated like animals; it is the thought that we are treating animals *as humans have already been treated*. It is the recollection of human vulnerability through the vulnerability of the animal that introduces the vision of the camps into the industrial meat system. Industrial livestock production de-animalizes animals, in keeping with an industrial logic that may well be criticized, but is not the logic of the camps. There is no hatred of pigs or desire to wipe them off the surface of the earth.

Figure One
Diagram of a boat designed to transport the maximum number of slaves.
19th-century lithograph.



Nevertheless, the processes of rationalization used on pigs are related to techniques or apparatuses of rationalization that have long been used when dealing with humans, in particular in order to maximize space on slave ships. In truth, to the extent that it is a matter of maximizing production and raw material, the connection between industrial livestock farming and slavery is much more direct than the connection between the former and Nazi camps. It is worth noting that until the 19th century, slaves and animals were advertised for sale in the same classified sections

under the heading "animals for sale." However, the rationalization of humans within the system of slave production is often "forgotten." This is not the phantasm that comes to mind; that of the camps does. But slaves occupied a *liminal* position between the human (everyone knew slaves were human) and the animal (it was justified to treat them as such). If the life of industrial pigs phantasmatically evokes the camps, historically we may wonder if it does not rather constitute a continuation of slavery. Humans were sold, exploited, selected for reproduction, and killed when they were not useful; they were made to work in fields or decked out in fancy clothes and used as companion animals. The positions of humans and animals cannot be made equivalent or assimilated to one another, but there is a destiny they share, one in which humans and animals enter into a register of reciprocal convertibility.

Figure 2
Classified ad from a Cuban newspaper

PARTE ECONOMICA.

Ventas de animales.

Se vende una negra criolla, jóven sana y sin tachas, muy humilde y fiel, buena cocinera, con alguna intelijencia en lavado y plancha, y escelente para manejar niños, en la cantidad de 500 pesos. En la calle de Daoiz, número 150, impondrán de lo demas. 3|11

Se vende un hermoso caballo de bonita estampa, de seis cuartas tres pulgadas de alzada, de-

• SE ALQUILAN POSESIONES para viviendas. Negras para el servicio de casa. Negros para peones y para todo trabajo, y se dan negritos para jugar con niños. De todo darán razon en la calle de Daoiz número 11. mzo. 21

SANGUIJUELAS superiores acabadas de llegar de la peninsula, se hallan de venta en la

::CONCLUSION

I share Cora Diamond's position that one cannot approach the question of how animals are treated on the basis of their rights, but rather must do so on the basis of our understanding of what counts for us in our relationship to a creature endowed

with senses and a capacity for independent life. The question then becomes: What can I do to this creature without doing harm within my conception of what life is? I can eat it; I cannot eat it; I can eat it as long as I don't have to kill it in order to do so (Diamond gives the example of a lamb that has been killed by a car accident, which defenders of animals might eat), or if it has had a good life (the position held by the organic farmers interviewed by Vinciane Despret and Jocelyn Porcher in *Être bête* (2007); I can separate it from its young; I can confine it if that makes it less dangerous, as the workers we met said…The response varies from person to person, but it is by basing ourselves on a labile conception of animals as both fellow creatures and things to eat – *one does not eat humans* – that we can arrive at compromises that can improve how they are treated within the pork industry and within a world made up of mostly carnivorous humans.

Although I cannot completely identify with a sow, I also cannot completely disidentify from her.[8] Through a process of displacement-condensation between the body of the animal and the human body, two realities – the industrial production of pigs and the extermination of humans – are superimposed on one another in a way that can stupefy thought. In place of thought comes somatization: disgust, dizziness, an uncontrollable dis-ease that secondarily develops into a painful phantasm, that of a white European woman living after the camps. If I had a more geographically or historically distant or external relationship to the camps, or if my skin color were darker, I would not have the same access, or perhaps even any access at all, to such an imaginary. In any case, it is because we perceive pigs as creatures similar to humans in certain respects that their industrial treatment can provoke this kind of confusion or reminiscence – to the point of painfully encumbering interpretations of the suffering workers experience at work and obscuring perceptions of their own moral world.

The comparison between Nazi camps and the ordinary world of work creates major anxiety and has stupefying effects on thought, which does not make it the most convenient access point for reflecting on the problems raised by industrial livestock farming. However, insofar as this is the image that arises (including, sometimes, for workers themselves), we cannot blot it out. The comparison imposes itself in order to give form to the experience of a blurring of empathy that disorganizes thought. In *From Anxiety to Method in the Behavioral Sciences*, Georges Devereux (1967) shows that certain topics of study are so anxiety-provoking for researchers[9]

[8] In particular, with sows. As a mother and a feminist, I have spent a good deal of time and energy thinking about female experiences, which no doubt makes me especially sensitive to manipulations surrounding reproduction. Cora Diamond drew a connection between this remark and Ian Hacking's text "Deflections," in which Hacking – perhaps because of his status as a heterosexual man? – expresses particular sensitivity toward to the fate of industrial male turkeys, whose excessive weight makes it impossible for them to have sexual relations without crushing the female turkey to death.

[9] Devereux refers in particular to the effect that forms of violence against animals in traditional societies had on him.

that they defend themselves against them, and the defenses they mount taint their interpretations to the point that they construct a "defensive science." Devereux's work remains unique within scientific epistemology because it raises the question of the status that should be given to anxiety and to researchers' defenses in constructing so-called objective knowledge.

There is no doubt that the analogy between concentration camps and industrial pig farming belongs to the order of cultural phantasm. By using this analogy as a moralistic rhetorical device, Jocelyne Porcher, at the end of our studies, made it into a defensive tool to avoid thinking through the moral disarray that *we* were thrown into in seeking to make ourselves sensitive to the suffering of workers while at the same time finding the situation of animals truly unenviable. While she defended herself through denunciation, I did so through withdrawal and inhibition; for a long time, I felt I had nothing "scientifically admissible" to say about these studies. Most moral theories forgo this anxiety and do not analyze its defensive destiny. Once again, if I personalize my point, it is to better show (by embodying it) how sensitive the topic of industrial processing of animals is. It divides us, we defend ourselves, and these difficulties guide our ways of conceptualizing. More broadly, it is highly likely that all practices of care, beyond the situations discussed here, generate anxiety. Indeed, these practices focus on living beings understood in terms of their dependence and their vulnerability, such that anyone who takes an interest in them, either as an actor or a spectator, is called upon to take stock of his or her own dependence and vulnerability. Consequently, any theory that takes the importance of care seriously cannot disregard the psychology of affects.

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