

CAN THE TREATMENT OF ANIMALS BE COMPARED TO THE HOLOCAUST?

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ABSTRACT

The treatment of animals and the Holocaust have been compared many times before, but never has a thoroughly detailed comparison been offered. A thirty-nine-point comparison can be constructed, whether or not one believes that animals are oppressed. The question of whether or not the comparison ought to be expressed merely brings into question whether animal liberationists have liberal-democratic rights to express themselves, which they surely do. Four objections are considered: Is the comparison offensive? Does the comparison trivialize what happened to the victims of the Nazis, overlook important differences, or ignore supposed affinities between animal liberationists and Nazis? These four lines of attack are shown to fail. The comparison stands to help us to reflect on the significance of how animals are treated in contemporary times.

I. INTRODUCTION

The comparison of animal treatment and the Holocaust recently came into the public eye with People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals' "Holocaust on your Plate" exhibit, with large photos comparing

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how animals are treated and how Jews were treated in the Holocaust. It is not often known that the very term, "Holocaust," intrinsically involves a comparison to animal exploitation. Boria Sax points out that the term, "Holocaust," originally denoted "a Hebrew sacrifice in which the entire animal was given to Yahweh [God] to be consumed with fire" (Sax 2000, 156). In a twist of history, then, a form of animal exploitation became a metaphor for what happened to the Jews at the hands of the Nazis. It is asked if the Holocaust can be compared with animal exploitation, even though the very term involves such a comparison, albeit metaphorically. However, we are inquiring to see if the Holocaust can be compared to contemporary forms of animal exploitation more generally.

Although nothing occurring in the realm of oppression is ever quite the same as anything else, I hold that, in certain relevant respects, both broad and detailed comparisons can be made between the Holocaust and what I refer to as the oppression of animals. The real issue is not whether the comparison can be made, in fact, because I offer a thirty-nine-point comparison to prove that it *can* be made: the real question is whether we should dare to make the comparison, or to voice our opinions that there are chilling similarities between how Jews were treated in the Holocaust and how animals are treated in the present day. This is perhaps equally a matter of ethics pertaining to humans as it is of ethics pertaining to animals, since the comparison involves treating Holocaust victims in a certain way, that is, as comparable to nonhuman animals. Some might say that it is even *chiefly* a matter of human-centered moral concern, if they hold that the comparison wrongs human beings, who are usually assumed to be of superior moral significance relative to nonhuman animals. Indeed, some would say that only human beings have moral standing (i.e., deserve basic practical respect), in which case the comparison almost entirely constitutes an offense against people. However, we will not make any assumptions about these philosophically moot points, and in any event resolve to take seriously the comparison itself.

The comparison between the Holocaust and the treatment of animals is especially dramatic when offered by culturally eminent Jews, or else actual Holocaust survivors. One of the most often-quoted writers who voices the comparison is Isaac Bashevis Singer, who writes: "In their behavior towards creatures, all men [are] Nazis" (Singer 1990, 84). This is an emotionally-charged statement, and that is what it is meant to be. No one could lucidly maintain that everyone is oppressive towards ani-

mals, and furthermore, it is obviously not suggested here that anyone who is a speciesist is also a racist (nor, indeed, that it is only “men” who oppress animals). All that is truly being indicated, I think, is that severe oppression is equally present on both sides of the comparison.

Mark Gold relates the perspective of Edgar Kupfer, a survivor of the Dachau death camp. Kupfer was moved, after his liberation, to “furtively scrawl” the following message on the wall of a hospital barrack:

I refuse to eat animals because I cannot nourish myself by the sufferings and by the death of other creatures. I refuse to do so, because I suffered so painfully myself that I can feel the pains of others by recalling my own sufferings. (Gold 1995, 25)

Others, of course, may have developed a hardened view of the world as a result of their sufferings, but Kupfer, instead, empathetically could relate to the suffering of animals. Gold also notes that a group of Warsaw ghetto survivors formed the Tivall company in Israel. It was founded in the Kibbutz Lochene Hagetaot (which means “survivors of the ghetto”). The founders “came to believe that the animal market and abattoir were uncomfortably reminiscent of their own experience” (Gold 1995, 25). These survivors, too, were moved by an extraordinary empathy for non-humans who suffer under routine forms of exploitation. We know that these Jews make the analogy with utter seriousness, and that they, at least, in no way feel slighted by the comparison. Still, we need to examine the comparison for adequacy. Have these survivors developed a form of false consciousness—or not?

I myself take the comparison very seriously. I am a child of a Holocaust survivor. My family on my father’s side, in a very dark hour in 1939, had good enough sense to flee the town of Zamosc, in eastern Poland, literally just as it was being bombed by Nazi planes. They knew that this latest wave of anti-Semitism was in deadly earnest. My father’s sister recounts holding my father’s hand, when he was little more than a toddler, running with desperate speed through a field to flee from the explosions. They left virtually everything behind as they ran into the woods. Many relatives were also left behind. They are presumed lost. My father’s father’s brother was very exceptional in that he was taken captive to a concentration camp, and then escaped, after being mistakenly presumed dead under a pile of corpses. The flight of my father’s family was not from any sort of paradise, either, since the family’s small grocery store was said

to have been boycotted by Poles out of growing anti-Semitic hatred. My grandfather had to rely more and more on his custom-tailoring in order to eke out a living for his family. Needless to say, I contemplate the Holocaust itself with the utmost gravity. Certainly, it has had and will continue to have very significant implications for both me and my family. I would never lightly compare the Holocaust to anything else, and will always be respectful that *there is, and never could be, anything else quite like it*. Even if anything can be compared to the Holocaust in some respects, nothing can be *equated* with this historical phenomenon.

I am deliberately keeping the sense of “animal liberation” broad, because negatively criticizing the comparison in question is presumably said to count against any variety of such liberationism: whether based in the works of Singer, Regan, Rollin, Sapontzis, Pluhar, certain ethics of care feminists, and so forth (Singer 1990; Regan 1983; Rollin 1992; Sapontzis 1987; Pluhar 1995; Donovan and Adams 1996). I will also keep the sense of “oppression” broad, since the authors who are objected to, and also the objectors, may have different notions of discriminatory oppression, in particular. “Speciesism” is alleged to be a form of unjust discrimination on the basis of species membership, or perhaps characteristics associated with a given species, such as rationality, autonomy, language usage, and so forth. These characteristics are said, by animal liberationists, to be just as morally arbitrary and irrelevant as skin color. However, whether or not such attributes are morally relevant is not at issue in this paper. All that is needed here is a sufficiently broad understanding of discriminatory oppression, for the purpose of this analysis. It seems fair to say that discriminatory oppression involves a willingness to harm a given class of beings, on the basis that those individuals are *different* in some specified way. Some anti-oppression theorists might indicate that the harm can be of any sort, although not all forms of harm need be equally severe. Others might specify only certain kinds of harm, including, but not only, insults to autonomy, freedom, or perhaps the infliction of unnecessary suffering. However that may be, it is sufficient to distinguish that discriminatory oppression involves harm—however specified—on the basis of an allegedly irrelevant criterion.

My own comparison will deal especially with how Holocaust-era Jews were treated by Nazis, on the one hand, and how animals are treated in modern-day intensive confinement, mass slaughter, burgeoning animal

experimentation industries, and so on, on the other hand. Although the comparison is hardly the same in every detail, nonetheless, the concept of oppression as such can intelligibly be applied alike to both cases. Reality is composed of details, so a specific comparison seems to recommend itself, although I do not see how it would be possible to make any sort of “exhaustive” cross-comparative analysis, or even to understand the meaning of such a term in this context. An illustrative portrait on both sides of the comparison will have to suffice.

After my own analysis, which above all seeks to convey a sense of the many different aspects that can be compared, I will duly ask, in particular, whether that comparison: (a) is a moral offense against victims of the Holocaust and humanity in general; (b) trivializes the overwhelming significance of the Holocaust; (c) obliterates important differences between Holocaust victims and animals; (d) ignores the allegation that it is animal rights proponents, rather, who can be said to be Nazi-like in their promotion of vegetarianism, anti-vivisection, and use of propaganda. The first objection is most important, and has led to fever-pitched emotions on virtually all sides of the debate. Rather than tread on such territory, people have chosen to allow the matter to remain remarkably underdiscussed. Some would have it that people should not feel free to speak about the comparison even though, as I substantiate, the comparison can be made.

II. THE COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

There is a paucity of systematic, point-by-point comparisons between animal liberation and the Holocaust. Even a recent book by Charles Patterson, *Eternal Treblinka*, (Patterson 2002) does not simply investigate how many points of comparison can be made. Nor does it directly respond to many objections that have been made against offering the comparison. It is a valuable book, but is often indirect in its approach, offering a contextualized study of oppression throughout history, such as that faced by black Africans, Indians massacred by the Spanish, a study of eugenics, a study of Chicago slaughter practices and how they inspired Jewish slaughter. He also offers a biography of Jewish activists who have backgrounds related to the Holocaust, and biographies also of German animal rights activists who lived through Nazi Germany. Most of the comparison focuses on how animals are slaughtered for food, with incidental mentions of how Jews were experimented upon by Nazi doctors.

Peter Singer, in *Animal Liberation*, offers a more extensive discussion of how the Nazi experiments are like experiments done on animals. However, Patterson's book is well-documented, and ground-breaking for a book-length focus on what has been considered a "taboo" topic.

As well, there is no shortage, in the animal liberationist literature, of haunting references to the German genocidal campaign against the Jews and others, including, but not only, gays, gypsies, the mentally challenged, and political objectors. Animal liberationist writers in general make use of the comparison. Michael W. Fox, for example, refers to "the holocaust of the animal kingdom" (Fox 1990, 242). Tom Regan, self-conscious of the gravity of making the comparison, which offends many people, asks: "Do we dare to speak of a *Holocaust for the animals*? May we depict the horror they must endure, using this fearful image of wanton inhumanity, without desecrating the memory of those innocents who died in the death camps?" (Regan 1987, 76–77). He replies to this rhetorical question in the affirmative, citing yet a different I. B. Singer quote than that which I reproduced above: "for the animals it is an eternal Treblinka" (Regan 1987, 76–77). (Obviously this last quotation was the inspiration for Patterson's book title.) Sue Coe, who authored a book which features artistic depictions of what she viewed in slaughterhouses and stockyards throughout North America, also compares this treatment of animals to the Holocaust (Coe 1995, 72–73). Jim Mason, one of the early expositors of the facts concerning "factory farming" (which he chiefly drew from agricultural trade journals), writes that to "a growing number of people, [our way of dominating both nature and each other] looks like a global suicide course with a nonhuman holocaust thrown in for good measure" (Mason 1993, 48).

It seems that the particular practices which most invite this controversial comparison are the oppression of animals in laboratory experiments, intensive farming, and the so-called "pet" industries. I will discuss these areas of practice in the order just given. Gold laments that "German Nazi doctors considered Jews, gypsies, communists and mentally handicapped people as suitable subjects for painful experimentation in much the same way as animals are used now" (Gold 1995, 37). Deborah Blum reflects on the use of monkeys and other animals in research. She cites a relevant comment from Roger Fouts, a researcher of primates who is known for his work with chimpanzees who speak through Amer-

ican Sign Language, and also advocacy for protections for primates. He notes the practice of not identifying by name the millions of animals used in experimental research every year. Rather, numbers are displayed on tags around the neck, or are tattooed onto the skin. States Fouts: "Without names, they become faceless, lose their identity. It's extreme exploitation, the same as in the labs of Nazi Germany" (Fouts in Blum 1994, 6). Even though the animals themselves might retain some shattered form of identity, animal liberationists would say that it is certain that the researchers in question do not deeply identify with the experimental subjects in any meaningful sense.

Certainly, too, the rationale for using animals in laboratories is comparable to that which was used for subjecting Jews and others to "scientific" experimentation. As Richard Ryder notes, Nazis, like animal experimenters, also pointed to the many potential benefits that might result from the knowledge gained by such research (Ryder 1991, 40). However, as Lawrence and Susan Finsen warn, "we do not reject the Nazi experiments on unwilling concentration camp victims as a model for procuring future experimental subjects solely because the Nazi experiments were scientifically unsound" (Finsen and Finsen 1994, 279). In fact, it is quite conceivable that scientifically, many objectively-based medical benefits could result from ruthless investigations with human prisoners (which would not have the disadvantage of profoundly different results in nonhuman species). For a discussion of the difficulties of cross-species comparisons in medical research see Robert Sharpe's excellent book, *The Cruel Deception* (1988). In any case, the quest for knowledge is not the sum total of the rationale for treating Jews, and others, in this horrific manner. Also, "Nazi doctors did practice vivisection on Slavs [and others] partly on the theory they were like animals . . ." (Watson 1992, 110). In other words, the Nazis objectified their victims in the way that nonhuman animals are often conceived.

Singer notes how widespread was experimentation on the Nazis' human prisoners, and how no German scientists uttered even a murmur of protest, perhaps from fear of the deadly retribution of the Nazi juggernaut:

Under the Nazi regime in Germany, nearly two hundred doctors, some of them eminent in the world of medicine, took part in experiments on Jews and Russian and Polish prisoners. Thousands of other physicians

knew of these experiments, some of which were the subject of lectures at medical academies. Yet the records show that the doctors sat through verbal reports by doctors on how horrible injuries were inflicted on these 'lesser races,' and then proceeded to discuss the medical lessons to be learned from them, without anyone making even a mild protest about the nature of the experiments. (Singer 1990, 83)

Again, the Nazis viewed their human prisoners all too much like objects, thus seeking to eliminate any conceivability of identifying with them. We see this reflected in the dispassionate language of Nazi decomposition experiments (which are still practiced on nonhuman animals):

After five minutes spasms appeared; between the sixth and tenth minute respiration increased in frequency, the TP [test person] losing consciousness. From the eleventh to the thirtieth minute respiration slowed down to three inhalations per minute, only to cease entirely at the end of that period. . . . About half an hour after breathing ceased, an autopsy was begun. (Singer 1990, 84–85)

The same sort of indifferent language is used for the detailing of animal experiments, many of which involve extremes of suffering, and are published in learned journals.

Singer is careful to qualify the comparison here. Neither he nor I wish to imply that ordinary people, today, are just like Nazis:

[O]ur sphere of moral concern is wider than that of the Nazis, and we are no longer prepared to countenance a lesser degree of concern for other human beings; but there are still many sentient beings for whom we appear to have no real concern at all. (Singer 1990, 84–85)

When he claims that many have no “real” concern for animals at all, we may interpret that he means no *adequate* form of direct concern. After all, those who would use animals for various standard purposes may still express “real concern” that certain kinds of aggravated forms of suffering not occur. Nonhuman animals are also *indirectly* cared for as property, or as entities that people affectionately or otherwise care about, such as pets, zoological curiosities, charismatic species members, “practicing dummies” for developing moral virtues, and so on. Much more to the point, some *direct* moral concern for many animals, and not just apes and dolphins, may be accorded—although to a lesser degree—by people who hold a human-centred ethic. In any case, following former animal exper-

imenter Don Barnes, Singer calls both Nazis and animal experimenters “victims of conditioned ethical blindness” (Singer 1987, 42).

As for intensive farming, Mason draws an evocative comparison based on observations that he made in Dubuque, Iowa:

Every few miles, [along U.S. route 20] the road is shrouded in a breath-stopping, rancid smell from some nearby animal factory. It is a sickly, deathly smell (if you have been around healthy animals fed on hay or pasture you know the difference), like the smell of a concentration camp. Which, of course, the factory farm quite literally is, because it concentrates a large number of animals indoors and feeds them a steady diet of grain concentrates (the agribusiness word for corn, soybeans, and energy-rich seed parts of other plants). In addition, it is a factory in which energy and nutrients from the sun and soil are concentrated by animals and turned into meat, milk, and eggs. (Mason 1993, 118–119)

He calls “factory farms” *literal* concentration camps, which are comparable to Nazi concentration camps. Mason is not alone in his mode of viewing these large-scale facilities. In an interview, Ingrid Newkirk, co-founder of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (the largest animal rights group in the world, with more than half a million members), recounts the following:

The memories of one Maryland chicken slaughterhouse will always be with me. It was summer, 90 degree heat, humid, no shade, and the chickens were in stacked crates. As we walked in, we were breathing the palpable stench of warm, dying bodies. It soaked through our clothes and skin. We took some birds out of the crates, and they tried to drink melting ice from our hands. They were too weak to keep their heads up. They would have stayed there until the next morning, dying of heat prostration, respiratory failure and so on. We made the security guards call in the manager to finish them off. It's the closest I've ever been to Auschwitz. (Newkirk in Schleifer 1985, 63)

Anyone who has seen films of the emaciated bodies of starving, heat-stroked, frozen, or otherwise physically traumatized victims of concentration camps, in Nazi Europe, should be able to relate to the imagery that Newkirk offers us here. Hence, Sapontzis concurs that much of our treatment of animals “resembles that which has faced those who liberated concentration camp victims and other human victims of severe physical and psychological deprivation and abuse . . .” (Sapontzis 1987, 86).

Let us now briefly consider the “science” of factory farming: an attempt to perfect, or to make more efficient, the old ways of animal husbandry. The Nazis, for their part, were obsessed with perfectionism, efficiency, and utilizing technology towards these ends. Unrestrained scientific pursuits certainly have their critics in animal liberationist quarters, including Brigid Brophy: “Sometimes we are even told we mustn’t resist [factory farming] because it is an ‘advanced’ method—a theory on which we ought to have welcomed Auschwitz as a great step forward in gas technology” (Brophy in Wynne-Tyson 1989, 29).

Our treatment of so-called “pet animals” also reminds various commentators of a time not too long ago. A particular raid on a dog dealer is described in just these terms. A 1966 raid by the Maryland State Police on a dog dealer’s facilities was described by *Life* magazine with the caption, “Concentration Camp for Dogs.” The dealer collected stray dogs in order to supply animal research laboratories, both university-based and pharmaceutical (Jasper and Nelkin 1992, 61). Note that the event just related took place four years before the term “speciesism” was even invented by Richard D. Ryder (1998, 320). One does not need to coin a special label for the oppression of animals in order to draw relevant parallels here.

Even the language that is often used in reference to “pet overpopulation” may seek to blame the victim, as Rollin implies with the following:

In actuality, talking about the ‘pet problem’ is another piece of verbal lubrication, legerdemain that serves to suggest that here is something intrinsically problematic about these creatures, as when the Germans spoke of the ‘Jewish question.’ The problem is not with the dogs and cats, of course; it is with human beings. (Rollin 1992, 216)

Mason provides an example of the “pet trade” which may remind us of the Nazis’ obsessive drive for the “perfect” breed of human being. The author and lawyer notes how animal breeders refer to “purity” of blood, perfect purebreds, and how they express contempt for mongrels and mutts, who are labeled “junk” by pure-breeders:

[Racist hatred] draws on the breeder’s ideologies of bloodline and purity, as it did in Nazi Germany and the segregated South; as it still does today among neo-Nazis and white supremacists. The rhetoric of all these racists speaks of the breeder’s obsessions, and the extremity of their actions speaks of the depth of their fear and hatred of ‘lower’

nature: The Nazis ranted against Jews, gypsies, Poles, and other ‘mongrel races’ and then methodically tried to exterminate them. Southern segregationists preached against ‘race mixing’ and used lynchings, mob violence, and terrorist campaigns to keep people of color ‘in their place.’ (Mason 1993, 218–219)

Discriminatory oppression has a common element of favoritism. Certain kinds of beings are preferred even more in their allegedly “pure” form. Prejudicial favoring of human over nonhuman beings leads to forms of exploitation, degradation, and horror that can arguably be compared to the Holocaust. J. M. Coetzee also likens what occurs to animals in laboratories and factory farms to what Jews endured in concentration camps, and compares those who live near such facilities with ordinary Germans who lived near the camps (Coetzee 1999, 19–22). While isolated sketches effectively serve to hint at this comparison, I wish to show that an intelligible comparison can be made in many different aspects between the Holocaust and animal treatment.

III. THE HOLOCAUST COMPARED TO OUR TREATMENT OF ANIMALS

How might an animal liberationist make the comparison that can be made, if we dare to do so? We shall make a systematic comparison, in terms of comparable (A) degradations and destructions, (B) apparatus for the implementing of these, (C) forms of agency involved, and (D) associated worldviews and discourse. The aspects of the comparison stand on their own, but especially in concert, where the large numbers of overlap suggest a strong pattern of similarity. However, comparing and *contrast-ing* different things is in order, otherwise they would not be truly different.

A. Comparable Degradations and Destructions

1. *Vivisection*. Scientists often tend to regard animals as objects, and this parallels the objectifying language of the Nazi scientists, as in Singer’s earlier-cited example. Such a manner of speech conduced to the using not only of animals, but also Jews, in medical experimentation, as we see in the following example offered by Hitler’s biographer, Alan Bullock:

Among the other uses to which concentration-camp prisoners were put was to serve as the raw material for medical experiments by S.S. doc-

tors. None of the post-war trials produced more macabre evidence than at the so-called 'Doctors' Trial. All the experiments were conducted without anaesthetics or the slightest attention to the victims' sufferings. Amongst the ordeals to which they were subjected were intense air pressure and intense cold until the 'patient's' lungs burst or he froze to death; the infliction of gas gangrene wounds; injection with typhus and jaundice; experiments with bone grafting; and a large number of investigations of sterilization (for 'racial hygiene'), including castration and abortion. According to a Czech doctor who was a prisoner at Dachau and who personally performed some seven thousand autopsies, the usual results of such experiments were death, permanent crippling, and mental derangement. (Bullock 1962, 700)

Just as many scientific experiments carried out on nonhuman animals are done out of curiosity, without any practical benefits in mind, so useless experiments were visited upon people who were considered disposable, for example, gypsies were tested to see how long they could live on sea water (Shirer 1960, 1275). Even aside from the abhorrent nature of such a procedure, it was already well known that sea water is never a viable option for satisfying human thirst.

2. *Genetic engineering.* A Nazi obsession with genetic engineering and eugenics mirrors the way nonhuman animals are extensively exploited for such purposes now, along with the related obsession concerning the finding of "pure breeds." Currently, there is an interest in experimenting with animal genes for medical purposes, and also for the end of producing more useful species of animals. For example, farmers dream of enormous meat animals that can better endure intensive, disease-ridden farming conditions, although the random and unpredictable injection of genes of current experiments often results in dysfunctional, painfully deformed, mutated life forms (Rifkin 1998; Fox 1999; Rollin 1995).

3. "*Vermin.*" Jews were exterminated from Europe, even as so-called "vermin" animals, in general, are the object of human lethality. For example, Hitler refers to Jews as "maggots," "scum," among other things, in *Mein Kampf* (Hitler in Shirer 1960, 47–48). A school essay printed in readers' letters to *Der Stuermer*, January 1935, also brings this point home. The letter states: "Unfortunately, many people today still say, 'God

created the Jews too. That is why you must respect them also.' We say, however, 'Vermin are also animals, but we still destroy them' " (Schoenberner 1985, 10).

4. *Hunting*. Refugees were hunted down by heavily armed Nazis, or their collaborators, just as animals are preyed upon by people who are unfairly armed with lures, automatic weapons, and more. Kuper asks, "Who would have believed that human beings would send out mobile killing units for the slaughter of unarmed men, women and children in distant lands?" (Kuper 1981, 121). Here we can draw certain parallels with safaris, although the latter seem casual and leisurely by contrast. Yet, who is to say how racist killers viewed their "duties," or how obsessive trophy hunters regard their kills? Whatever the views of the hunters, the consequences for the hunted is, very often, devastation.

5. *Skinning*. Some Jews' skins were preserved by the Nazis, for example, to be used for lampshades (Shirer 1960, 1280). Obviously, animals are themselves skinned for furs, feathers, and leather.

6. *Hair*. The hair of many Jews was collected and used as pillow stuffing, and many animals' parts, including down, lanolin, and so on, are used in comparable ways.

7. *Tallow*. The Jews' remains were sometimes melted down as tallow, to be used as soap, and this is true of the remains of nonhuman animals. My father, in a German refugee-relocation camp after the war, recalls the local discovery of a crate of soap bars made from human remains. The refugees buried the container by performing Jewish rites for the dead.

8. *Parts used or "wasted."* Jews' teeth were mined for gold. Gold fillings, and other valuable objects, such as wedding rings, were taken from Jews, and were supposed to be delivered to the German Reichsbank. "Who would have believed that human beings . . . were capable of organizing, on the model of a modern industrial plant, killing centres which processed their victims for slaughter, as if on a conveyor belt; eliminated waste, gathered in, with careful inventory, their few possessions, their clothes, gold teeth, women's hair, and regulated the distribution of these

relics?” (Kuper 1981, 121). Similarly, any animal parts of value are not generally—or “ideally”—discarded in slaughtering and rendering houses. At the same time, there is also arguably much “waste” of remains, from the points of view of Nazis and animal exploiters, respectively, on both sides of the comparison. For example, seal penises and other wild animal parts, such as rhinoceros horns, and the tusks of elephants, are often hacked off, and the rest of the body is left to rot where it was felled.

9. *Slave labor.* Jews were enlisted for slave labor, even as many animals are forcibly pressed into the service of humans, as in cart horses.

10. *Entertainment.* A selection of Jews were coerced into entertaining their tormentors, just as many animals are now compelled to perform for human amusement with unnatural behaviors induced by negative reinforcements (you can be sure that circus elephants do not enjoy standing on their heads, and that many abuses of these and other animals, including in aquaria which keep sea mammals, have been well documented).

11. *Displacement from homes.* Jews were systematically expelled from urban settings, villages, and rural areas even as nonhuman animals are typically made unwelcome especially in our cities, or are otherwise excluded from their own habitats when they come into apparent conflict with our own:

‘Resettlement’ was a constantly recurring procedure. As the latest ghetto was established, the first ones were already being broken up and combined in the next, larger town of the district, until finally the last journey began. At the time when the ghettos in the big towns were still temporarily in existence, in the country whole Jewish communities were already being transported to the death camps. (Schoenberner 1985, 46)

12. *Nowhere to go.* Jews who fled Germany by boat were often turned away by other countries, just as animal refugees are often adrift, in need of a home, but are denied shelter, habitat, and sustenance even by affluent humans, or their societies, which hold that they invariably have much higher priorities.

13. *Concentration and degradation.* There was crowding, confine-

ment, rampant diseases, and filthy conditions in concentration camps. For example, at Krupp armament factories, enslaved Jews were often forced to go to work without shoes, medical care, with a lack of rest, food, water, and with filthy lavatories (Shirer 1960, 1238). This treatment parallels how many animals are treated in factory farms, and so-called “puppy mills,” operated by ruthless breeders who raise sickly animals under woe-ful conditions of deprivation and squalor.

14. *Separating parents from offspring.* One of the most poignant images from Holocaust history is that of a Nazi doctor, such as Dr. Josef Mengele, standing before a seemingly unending column of people, ushering some to the left, and some to the right. He had no explanation to those staggering before him, just arrived from the cattle cars. However, he did mandate death by shooting, gassing, or cremation for one group, and slave labor until physical exhaustion and death for the rest (Shirer 1960, 1260). Children were not allowed to stay in German camps, except in ghettos (Goldhagen 1997, 308). The significance of tearing parents from children in this murderous way cannot be overestimated. Male dairy calves, for their part, are sent off to auction a day old, barely able to stand, with part of the umbilical chord still attached (Robbins 1987, 112). If it is doubted that animals are attached to their offspring, consider the statement by Dr. Jack Albright, Professor of Animal Science at Purdue University, and consultant to the veal industry, which argues that it is important that calves not be allowed to bond with their mothers. Otherwise, “the cow will cause a great deal of trouble and even try to break down fences to be with her calves” (Robbins 1987, 114).

15. *Death by starvation.* Jews of the Holocaust were often allowed to starve to death under varying circumstances, as are animals in various experiments, or on the traplines.

16. *Voicelessness and disenfranchisement.* Animals as victims are often “voiceless,” with little or no attempt by others to advocate on their behalf. Historically, the Jews, for their part, were often silenced, ignored, and disenfranchised.

17. *Mass graves.* After Jews were killed, their remains were com-

monly interred in mass trenches (Bullock 1962, 702). This mirrors, in a sense, the purely pragmatic concern for the disposal of nonhuman animal remains. Animal remains are often sent to rendering plants, or are treated as garbage. On mink farms, killed mink are fed to those mink who still live.

18. *Seemingly unending numbers.* It may be suggested that unimaginably large numbers of violated, suffering, and murdered beings are involved both in the Nazi Holocaust and what is visited upon nonhuman animals. The overwhelming numbers involved in the Holocaust include an estimated 6 million dead Jews, out of 8.3 million who stayed in German-occupied Europe after 1939 (Kuper 1981, 124). In other terms, 72% of the Jews of Europe were wiped out. This makes the Nazi genocidal campaign dangerously “successful.” Literally billions of animals are killed each year for the sake of human enjoyment and convenience alone, although the exact toll is not known, for lack of precise record-keeping.

19. *Genocide.* Hitler aimed for a genocide of the Jews. Humans, through hunting, capturing, and habitat destruction have already ensured de facto genocides of countless species of animals around the world. Consider that a 1999 World Wildlife Fund report presents an estimate that the world has lost 30% of its biodiversity in the span of a generation, 1970 to 1995 (Wood, Stedman-Edwards, and Mang 2000, 2). It is impossible to imagine or to conceive how many forms of species life have been lost to the world, and how many more will be consumed as a result of unfettered human growth on this planet.

B. Comparable Apparatus

20. *Secrecy.* The Holocaust was kept very secret, and this may well remind one of the high security and exclusion of public scrutiny concerning slaughterhouses and animal laboratories, where, arguably, some of society’s most systematic and heinous injustices against animals occur.

21. *Namelessness.* Nonhuman animals and Jews caught in the concentration camp system often remain nameless, in order to maintain a distance from the objects of exploitation and/or destruction:

The Germans almost never took pains to learn the names of a camp’s inmates; in Auschwitz, they denied the very existence of a prisoner’s

name—this mark of humanity—tattooing each with a number which, with the exception of some privileged prisoners, was the only identifying label used by the camp’s staff. In Auschwitz, there were no Moshes, Ivans, or Lechs, but only prisoners with numbers like 10431 or 69771. (Goldhagen 1997, 176)

Goldhagen theorizes that “[d]ehumanizing each person by robbing him of his individuality, by rendering each, to the German eye, but another body in an undifferentiated mass, was but the first step towards fashioning their ‘subhumans,’” (176) which is how the Nazis conceived of the Jews. It is harder to empathize with a nameless person than one with a definite, particular individual whom one can more easily single out and relate to.

22. *Bureaucratization.* Animal exploitation is now so institutionalized that it has long been substantially bureaucratized, for the purposes of state sanctioning, regulation, and the management of resources. The Nazi mass murders, for their part, embodied an almost Kafkaesque spectacle of bureaucracy. Leo Kuper observes that “to use bureaucratic planning and procedures and regulation for a massive operation of systematic murder throughout a whole continent speaks of almost inconceivably profound dehumanization” (Kuper 1981, 120). There was a distancing from the victims, and a concern, instead, for procedures, and the language in which they were to be formulated:

Though engaged in mass murder on a gigantic scale, this vast bureaucratic apparatus showed concern for correct bureaucratic procedure, for the niceties of precise definition, for the minutiae of bureaucratic regulation, and for compliance with the law. The law was, of course, no obstacle, but an instrument of policy. . . . (Kuper 1981, 120)

23. *Quiet complicity in the education system.* The Nazification of the education system was virtually complete, and it is noteworthy that, although the treatment of animals is a vital topic to debate, it is generally not part of the public school curriculum. Out of sight, out of mind—one might say that thus is a form of oppression kept “invisible.”

24. *A mockery of justice.* The Nazis had “Kangaroo Courts,” and animal rights activists sometimes protest that they are often brought up under false or trumped-up charges for their acts of protest against aspects of the social order which support animal oppression (Montgomery 2000, 29–36). Also, animals are often treated in exceedingly cruel ways that go

unpunished—I speak here not only of sadists but, for example, the billions of animals who languish on factory farms.

25. *Efficiency of killing.* The Nazis switched to gassing their victims of genocide, because bullets were deemed to be too valuable and expensive (they used Zyklon B, made from prussic acid crystals) (Litvinoff 1988, 360). Moreover, “[f]or a time there was quite a bit of rivalry among the S.S. leaders as to which was the most efficient gas to speed the Jews to their death. Speed was an important factor, especially at Auschwitz, where toward the end the camp was setting new records by gassing 6,000 victims a day” (Shirer 1960, 1260). Kuper recounts: “Industry’s influence was felt in the great emphasis upon accounting, penny-saving, and salvage, as well as in the factory-like efficiency of the killing centres” (Kuper 1981, 121). Similarly, “humane slaughter” is often denied to animals because the machinations would be too expensive (Singer 1990, 153).

26. *Profiteering.* The lucrateness of the Nazis’ stealing of Jews’ funds and pillaging of their property compares, in some fashion, with the inestimable profits made from exploiting animals in multifarious ways.

27. *Cattle cars.* Jews were transported via “cattle-trucks,” and then cars on railways, to slaughter at the death camps. Other unfortunate people were also “resettled” in a like manner from the Warsaw ghetto (Litvinoff 1988, 364) and other locations. Cattle-cars are still a common means of transporting animals to killing sites, so that they may there be reduced to “meats.” In both cases, those transported endure(d) extremes of exposure to the weather, crowding, filthy conditions, and protracted periods without food or water.

C. Comparable Forms of Agency

28. *Ordinary perpetrators.* The Holocaust was carried out largely by “ordinary” people, even as speciesism is massively favored by human populations of the present day. On July 31, 1932, 14 million ordinary Germans, or 37.4% of voters, buoyed Hitler into the office of Chancellor, as he had the largest share of the votes. On March 5, 1933’s vote, his supporters expanded to 17 million, or 43.9% of the vote, even after the Communist party was banned by the Nazis, and violent intimidation of

their opposition became widespread (Goldhagen 1997, 87).

29. *Disowning of responsibility.* There is frequently a determined denial of personal responsibility for the fates of the victims. At Nuremberg, films allow the many “Nicht schuldig” [Not guilty] pleas of the prominent Nazis on trial to echo down to us today. (*Genocide* 1981) These men often denied that they were guilty, because they “were only following orders.” People often evade responsibility for the animal-based foods that they put on their plates, even just by refusing truly to think about it. Instead, they just go along with the social order, as they perceive it, and let others do the “dirty work”—and the thinking—for them. Making the false claim that we need to eat meat may simply serve to disguise oppressive choices in the matter.

30. *Deniers.* Certain oppressors deny that the Holocaust ever took place. Bernard Lewis writes that the “denial of the Holocaust is . . . a favorite theme of pro-Nazi and neo-Nazi propaganda” (Lewis 1986, 162). Many of those who are sometimes called “speciesists” are keen to nay-say—for perhaps specious reasons—that animals endure any significant, let alone extreme, form of oppression (Carruthers 1992; Frey 1980; Leahy 1991).

31. *Minimizers.* The Holocaust is often minimized by anti-Semites, such as claims that there were Olympic-sized swimming pools at Auschwitz. For his part, Frank Perdue calls his factory farm a “chicken heaven,” (Robbins 1987, 52) when an opposite metaphor might well be more apt. Perdue’s operation “processes” 6.8 million birds per week, and keeps 27,000 of the animals in sheds that are 150 yards in length (Singer 1990, 105–106).

32. *Conditioned indifference.* People are conditioned to be indifferent to the animal suffering that is part of our network of social institutions. This applies not least of all to scientists, who standardly use objectifying language with reference to animals. Certainly, the denial of identifying with victims is a patent part of Nazi rhetoric. For example, Hans Frank, Hitler’s Governor General of Poland, told his cabinet, in 1940 Cracow: “Gentlemen, I must ask you to rid yourself of all feeling of pity. We must

annihilate the Jews” (Shirer 1960, 876). What better way could there be to manufacture psychopaths, or to reinforce that pathology, than to kill any chance of any real identification with potential victims, by openly and systematically denying such a process? S.S. Captain, Josef Kramer, whose “duty” it was to exterminate prisoners with gas, was asked about his feelings regarding his “work”: “I had no feelings in carrying out these things because I had received an order to kill the eighty inmates in the way I already told you. *That, by the way, was the way I was trained*” (Shirer 1960, 876). Lack of empathy was conscientiously ingrained in Nazi officers.

Empathy, as we have already seen from the examples of certain Holocaust survivors, can be a lesson which one learns from the Holocaust. Gerhard Schoenberger offers the following grim meditation, opposite a photographic image of dead, starved, and incredibly emaciated bodies, literally strewn over the grounds of a death camp:

As you view the history of our time, turn and look at the piles of bodies, pause for a short moment and imagine that this poor residue of flesh and bones is *your* father, *your* child, *your* wife, is the one you love. See yourself and those nearest to you, to whom you are devoted heart and soul, thrown naked into the dirt, tortured, starving, killed. (Schoenberger 1985, 193)

It is left as an open question, for the purposes of this study, whether an ethic that encourages respectful empathy would permit our current treatment of nonhuman animals. In any event, both Jews of the Nazi era and animals today are very far from that ideal: they are often quietly excluded from “polite conversation.”

33. *A hypocritical commitment to “humaneness.”* Cattle are routinely and legally branded by hot irons, castrated, tail-docked, and birds are de-beaked all without anesthesia. This makes a mockery of modern practices which lawfully claim to avoid “unnecessary suffering.” Patterson notes how the Nazis’ concern with humaneness was limited to finding ways of killing the Jews which were not so stressful to the killers, since it was observed that S.S. gunning down Jews so that they fall into mass graves were becoming mentally disturbed (Patterson 2002, 131–132).

34. *Compromising moral respect for “marginal humans.”* When rec-

ognizing the moral status of nonhuman animals is in jeopardy, that of so-called “marginal humans” (e.g., senile, mentally challenged, or disturbed people who are often comparably cognitively limited) may also be imperiled. Certainly, the denigrated so-called “races,” species, and marginal humans were all victimized in Nazi Germany. It is clear how Nazis would respond to what is now known as “the argument from marginal cases” (i.e., roughly, if we give full moral consideration to marginal humans, then we must do likewise with animals). In 1939, Hitler gave Reichsleiter Philip Bouhler “the responsibility of ending by euthanasia [sic] the existence within Germany of all mental defectives and the incurably sick” (Litvinoff 1988, 334). By August 1941 alone, 60,000 “mental defectives” had been dispatched by “euthanasia” (Litvinoff 1988, 335). The Nazis ended up killing 70,000 recorded cases of people deemed to have “life unworth living” because of mental infirmity or congenital physical defects, although these killings were ended due to widespread German protests (Goldhagen 1997, 119). The same protests were not made on behalf of Jews. This ambivalence about human marginals occurs in animal ethics, as well. The most ideologically committed advocate vivisectioning human marginals that are cognitively equivalent to animals, on utilitarian grounds, and R. G. Frey is a prominent contemporary example of this idea (Frey 1987, 89). As in the case of the human marginals of the Nazi era, however, most ordinary people balk at the idea of treating these vulnerable humans in this manner, even if it might be more ruthlessly ideologically consistent to do so.

D. Comparable Worldviews and Discourse

35. *Jews as “animals.”* The Nazis often denigrated the Jews as mere “animals,” or “subhuman,” and indeed, the Jews themselves often protested that they were treated like mere “animals,” or as one would expect an animal to be treated. A letter by Holocaust survivor Zlata Visyatskyaya, who witnessed mass murders states: “like pups, they were thrown into cesspools—live children thrown into ditches” (*Genocide* 1981). Leon Kahn witnessed, over a graveyard wall, a mass atrocity of rapes and slayings of Jews in a graveyard. He thought at the time, “Didn’t they know what they were doing? These were *human lives!* These were *people*, not animals to be slaughtered!” (*Genocide* 1981). Richard Dimbleby, a BBC correspondent, voiced the following just after the war: “This

is what the Germans did—let there be no mistake about it—did deliberately and slowly to doctors, authors, lawyers, musicians, to professional people of every kind whom they turned into animals behind the wire of their cage” (Genocide 1981). Elie Wiesel, in his autobiographical essay, *Night*, gives a number of examples of Nazis calling Jews “dogs” (Wiesel 1960, 34). Stating that a being is “only an animal” implies it belongs to a class of beings which may acceptably be harmed, or allowed to suffer. In some instances, the Jews themselves felt like “animals,” in the sense of “lower” beings:

In the wagon where the bread had fallen, a real battle had broken out. Men threw themselves on top of each other, stamping on each other, tearing at each other, biting each other. Wild beasts of prey, with animal hatred in their eyes; an extraordinary vitality had seized them, sharpening their teeth and nails. (Wiesel 1960, 102)

Along the same lines, Wiesel describes his father receiving some hot coffee with “animal gratitude” (Wiesel 1960, 108). Patterson notes comparison of Jews to animals at length in his book (Patterson 2002, 44–48). In spite of these imputations that humans are animals as a form of degradation, in actual fact, humans are animals in a straightforward, biological sense. Indeed, if the Nazi-era Jews were treated in accord with animal rights ethics, there could not have been any Holocaust.

36. *Demonization*. Animals and Jews are both demonized by oppressors in elaborate propaganda and myth. Goering, on September 10, 1938, refers to “the eternal mask of the Jew devil” (Shirer 1960, 519). More generally, Goldhagen notes: “To the large extent that the subject of the Jews was part of the public conversation of society, German writers and speakers discussed them overwhelmingly in a sinister, if not demonic, light, in the racist, dehumanizing idiom of the day” (Goldhagen 1997, 73). Notions of animals as “violent beasts” are commonplace, and the common imagery of the devil as having horns, hooves, a tail, wings, fangs, serpentine eyes, and so forth, also unduly implicates the nonhuman world in the mythologies of devilry.

37. *Hell*. Nazi concentration camps, intensive farming operations, animal experimentation labs, and other settings for animal usage, are all compared to “hell” by various commentators. Consider the following

account, from Kuper's book, of Auschwitz, 1944. At the time in question, Hungarian Jews were being killed so quickly that the "usual" gas oven processes were supplemented by pits in which the victims burned alive:

The burning had reached a pitch that night. Every chimney was disgorging flames. Smoke burst from the holes and the ditches, swirling, swaying and coiling above our heads. Sparks and cinders blinded us. Through the screened fence of the second crematory we could see figures with pitchforks moving against the background of the flames. They were men from the special squad turning the corpses in the pits and pouring a special liquid so that they would burn better. A rancid smell of scorched flesh choked us. Big trucks passed us trailing a smell of corpses. (Kuper 1981, 123)

Moreover, Elie Wiesel offers the following hellish image, "[Wiesel] had seen his mother, a beloved little sister, and all his family except his father disappear into an oven fed with living creatures" (Wiesel 1960, 8). These images may be compared to the hell imagery in Sue Coe's lurid book of art, reflecting her impressions of the realities of animal transport and slaughter (Coe 1995).

38. *Inspiration from the Bible.* Part of the anti-Semitism which the Jews faced was motivated by Christianity (e.g., Peter addresses the Jews and accuses, in the immortal words of the King James Version, "Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father will ye do.") (John 8:44) Traditional attitudes engendered by the Bible—for example, its notion of a dominion over animals that will cause them to live in "fear" and "dread" of humans (Genesis 9:2)—also motivate much contempt for non-human creatures.

39. *Racism and species discrimination.* Daniel Goldhagen explains that the Holocaust was only possible due to widespread anti-Semitism, (Goldhagen 1997, 9) and it equally can be said that what may be called the "animal holocaust" is only conceivable in the context of a nearly all-pervasive speciesism.

There seems, in short, to be no outright *unintelligibility* about offering many relevant comparisons of detail between the Holocaust, and what animal liberationists consider to be oppressively discriminatory treatment

of animals. It can be contended that harmful treatment results from arbitrarily favoring one group (be it race or species) over another. An obvious question remains as to whether harmful discrimination against animals, in particular, *is* arbitrary, but that is a distinct question from objecting to the comparison *per se*, and therefore goes well beyond the scope of this paper. If grounds could be adduced to show that discrimination against nonhuman animals is fully justified, then presumably those grounds would not intrinsically make any reference to the historical event known as the Holocaust. All of the points of comparison, both verbal and non-verbal, persist no matter what view one takes of the worth of animals, with perhaps one exception: the charge of speciesism, and whether it is justified. Even that, however, can remain in a more muted form, if it is pointed out that people commonly decry forms of oppression when examining the Holocaust and also how animals are commonly treated. That is a matter of sociological fact. Why, then, might anyone put stock in objecting to the comparison itself? Is it not stemming from comparisons of in-some-ways-similar, and in-some-ways-dissimilar matters of fact? It turns out that objections to the comparison proper are rooted in at least four major considerations.

IV. OBJECTIONS TO THE COMPARISON

Objection A. Making the comparison in question is a moral offence against Holocaust victims.

Reply to A. Observers of this debate might ask whether animal liberationists commit a moral offence, in that their position directly leads to comparisons between how animals are treated, on the one hand, and how Holocaust victims were degraded and destroyed, on the other hand. It does not matter whether or not this comparison is explicitly acknowledged by animal liberationists (as it often is), since it seems to be virtually entailed by their views. Is the dignity of Holocaust victims unjustly degraded by animal liberation, or even unduly brought into question? This is the most frequently stated objection to the comparison, and so it deserves some careful attention.

I will first sort out some ways in which this question ought not to be answered. We must not assume from the start that human dignity is violated by the comparison, for that assumption would preclude the entire

debate as to whether or not the animal liberation position—with all that it entails—is morally offensive in the way specified. We also must not make claims that the comparison is offensive because it does not allow the preserving of our memory of Holocaust victims, since the comparison, if anything, calls for a re-examination of the Holocaust in a putatively non-prejudicial light. Nothing in the comparison stands in the way of remembering how humans fell victim to, perpetrated, abetted, or witnessed the Holocaust. Those interested in comparing *and* contrasting, as any realist must be, have no interest in distorting what happened to any human being. Moreover, we are speaking of a possible moral offence, and not a criminal offence, so I do not address the question of whether a religious offence is involved in the comparison, such as might be implied by the phrase “desecration of the memories of victims.” However, if there is no moral offence, there could be no religious offence.

In a free society, people must have freedom of speech and thought, and that means that people must be totally free to be animal liberationists. If people who are animal liberationists are to be tolerated—and they ought to be in a liberal society, especially given that arguments by animal liberationists still await a convincing answer, if any is to be had—then comparisons to the Holocaust also ought to be tolerated, so long as they are offered as respectfully as possible. For comparisons to the Holocaust logically follow from an animal liberationist standpoint. It would be morally and politically offensive, on the contrary, to be intolerant of a philosophical and ethical position that is well-defended and academically established.

However, tolerance works both ways. Animal liberationists must tolerate those people who reject animal liberation, and who consequently value humans far more than animals, and so they must tolerate, accept, and respect that some people will be upset by the comparison. But we must not be one-sided in being considerate of human upset, setting aside just for a moment considering the torments that animals incontestably endure at human hands. Human-centered thinkers must accept the fact that animal liberationists are upset by how animals are treated, in ways that demonstrably *can* be compared to the Holocaust, and are also upset by the fact that infringing freedom of thought, freedom of association, freedom of speech, and academic freedom sometimes arises in debates of comparing animal treatment to the Holocaust. A certain amount of upset

with those who disagree is part of a liberal culture of toleration and respect of differences, and cannot be used as a grounds to silence any given side of an honest debate.

I also do not deny that there are, indeed, offensive ways of comparing animal treatment to the Holocaust, although perhaps all of these can be avoided. For example, consider: (a) stating that the Holocaust is *less* significant than what animals suffer, because so many more animals are killed, or because the discrimination against animals is much more pervasive; I believe it is best to say that the Holocaust is of the *utmost* moral gravity and of maximal emotional significance, and any comparative numbers cannot change that; (b) making the comparison in a way that dismisses or discounts the unique affective ties that survivors have to family, friends, and loved ones who perished; these ties may well be absent in relation to animals used for social purposes, although that does not straightforwardly, I hold, affect the question of justice, and moreover, animals are often torn from their *own* families and social bonds through our treatment of them; animals undoubtedly can have deep social ties (Masson and McCarthy 1995); (c) stating that, unlike the ill treatment of animals, the Holocaust is in the past, and we should focus instead on the present and the future. History remembered is or should be a lively part of the present. All of these forms of comparison belittle some aspect of what happened to humans in the Holocaust.

Any adequate answer to the charge in question would have to show there is no moral offence in terms of (1) being unduly offensive to actual Holocaust survivors and supposedly “right-thinking” people in general, (2) possibly distorting or perverting the general and monumental *significance* of the Holocaust. The latter is understood as an abstract consideration which goes beyond the contemplation of individuals per se. Notice, too, that this test for moral offensiveness does not raise awkward questions about the welfare of the dead, focusing, as it does, on survivors and also ongoing moral and historical significance. We are also concerned not with whether anyone happens to find it offensive, nor even if whether that is understandable given any given person’s history (that may very well be the case, but is not relevant here). Rather, we are concerned with whether taking offense is justifiable. Whether it is justifiable is a moot point, because the debate over animal liberation is far from absolutely settled.

Richard Watson generally finds “insulting” all comparisons between

human oppression and the alleged oppression of nonhumans (Watson 1992, 119). Similar reactions which have found their way into print are expressed in the writings of Carl Cohen, Steven Rose, and Leslie Francis and Richard Norman, who also find such comparisons to be offensive (Cohen 1986, 867; Rose in Benton 1993, 6; Francis and Norman 1978, 527). However, it comes down to this: extreme forms of harm to animals are noted here, which appear to be visited upon the creatures just because they are *different* in variously specified ways. And it is always implied that animals being different entails a license to harm them, although it is never explained, in all of the philosophical literature on animal ethics, just how that entailment might work. It is right to at least suspect that there is no link between being different and having a license to harm those who are different, yet such a conclusion is always sought: harming animals is standard practice. It is never an “insult” to decry an oppressive practice. All that the liberationists seek to do is to overthrow all oppression—that, at least, it is not intended as an “insult” to anyone, but rather, to preserve whole classes of beings from both egregious and subtle insults. It simply begs the question to allege that any insult is being made, or that there is any “obscenity” in making the comparison. People feel insulted by the comparison partly because they use “animal” as a term of contempt, to refer to beings who may be virtually harmed at will, otherwise they might not be so offended. Yet animal liberationists argue that “animal” should not be a term of contempt, but a term of description, denoting a class of beings who should be treated with respect. However, it may be thought that the comparison makes too much of animals and too little of human beings, which leads to the next objection.

Objection B. The comparison trivializes the Holocaust, and all of the immeasurable suffering that its victims lived through and died from.

Reply to B. This objection works in tandem with the first, for to trivialize someone’s suffering would be morally offensive. Francis and Norman beg the question, repeatedly, in their claim that, among other things, the comparison “trivializes” what they consider to be “real” liberation movements:

By equating the cause of animal welfare with genuine liberation movements such as black liberation, women’s liberation, or gay liberation, Singer on the one hand presents in an implausible guise the quite valid

concern to prevent cruelty to animals. At the same time the equation has the effect of trivializing those real liberation movements, putting them on a level with what cannot but appear as a bizarre exaggeration. Liberation movements have a character and a degree of moral importance which cannot be possessed by a movement to prevent cruelty to animals. (Francis and Norman 1978, 527)

While it is true that the authors of this passage give an argument against animals having moral standing, I would suggest that it can accurately be summarized as simply applying stipulated “social sophistication” criteria of moral standing which nonhuman animals do not possess, and inferring from this that we have a license to harm nonhumans on a routine basis (again, however, the question of moral standing per se does go beyond the bounds of this paper). To deny that the animal liberation movement is “real” or “genuine,” and to call the comparison a “bizarre exaggeration,” then, can be said to beg the question against animal liberationists. Moreover, it is a mischaracterization to state that Singer “equates” the different liberation movements. He neither states nor implies that these movements are the same, but rather distinguishes them, noting that animals, *unlike* humans, cannot advocate for themselves (Singer 1990, v). Instead, Singer *analogizes* the different causes. To insist that animal liberation lacks “moral importance” seems to be nothing more or less than a naked assertion of anthropocentrism.

Robert Nozick asserts that animal rights “seems a topic for cranks. . . . The mark of cranks is disproportionateness. It is not merely that they devote great energy to their issue. . . . They view the issue as far more important than it is, more pressing than others that, in fact, are more significant” (Nozick 1983, 11, 29–30). Sapontzis, in my view, offers an outstanding rejoinder to any attempts to belittle the importance both of what animals, as oppressed beings, endure, and of the corresponding need to liberate them:

If we were to judge by the number of suffering individuals involved, then the animal liberation movement is more serious than any human liberation movement. We kill approximately five billion mammals and birds annually in the United States alone. That is many times the number of women and people of color in the United States. If we are to judge by how fundamental the interests being violated are, then once again, liberating animals is very serious business, since they are routinely tormented and mutilated in laboratories, are denied any sort of

normal, fulfilling life in factory farms, and have their very lives taken from them in a vast variety of situations. Women and minorities do not suffer such routine, fundamental deprivations. If we are to judge by the moral, legal, cultural, and individual life-style changes that would be occasioned by the success of the movement, then, once again, animal liberation is at least as serious an issue as the extension of equal rights to minorities and women. Liberating animals would directly affect our eating habits, clothing preferences, biomedical research industry, sporting business, and land use, thereby changing our current way of life at least as pervasively as have the civil rights and women's liberation movements. (Sapontzis 1987, 84–85)

I would agree with Sapontzis that nonhuman animals' well-being and autonomy are violated more than that of any other sort of being. As he indicates, the radical implications of the animal liberation movement are also far from "trivial." If any trivializing is occurring in this context, it is rather in the objector's trivializing of the interests of animals, and of their ongoing violation. Also, there is a trivialization of freedom of belief, and of argumentative reason, in implying that people ought not to be free to think along animal liberationist lines. Animal liberation could only justly be accused of trivializing human concerns if it were misanthropic, or otherwise offered only a petty consideration of human concerns. However, animal rights views, animal utilitarian views, and animal liberationist ethic of care views all give full moral consideration and respect to human beings, so it cannot be said that such a philosophical standpoint inherently trivializes human concerns.

Objection C. Any pointing out of alleged similarities overlooks many differences between the Nazi Holocaust and the way animals are treated.

Reply to C. I readily concede that there are many relevant differences of detail. For example, the Jews have been liberated from the Holocaust (although the world has not yet been saved from racism), whereas the animals are very far from liberated. Jews suffered discrimination on the basis of their religion, whereas that consideration seems obviously inapplicable to nonhumans. The Jews' general relationship to the Nazi police state is of a very different character than animals' general relationship to humans. There are any number of other differences of detail. The point is that none of them erase the prominent *similarities* which give point to the

comparison in the first place. No analogy is perfect. It is remarkable how harsh and systematic discrimination can have chillingly comparable forms, even when the victims are of different species. In any case, it can be noted, once again, that the pattern of discriminatory oppression underlying *all* of the oppressive details is the same. There is the constant of presuming a license to harm others merely because they are different in some way.

There are innumerable differences of detail between racism and sexism, as well, but both are still considered to be forms of oppression. For instance, skin color is irrelevant to sexism per se, and also, rights to abortion are not a focal point in race debates. Of course, there are also similarities between racism and sexism, such as marginalization, economic and political discrimination, infringement of basic liberties, and so forth. We can even find cases linking the Holocaust, racism, misogyny, and speciesism, all in one bundle of horror: “At the Ravensbrueck concentration camp for women, hundreds of Polish inmates—the ‘rabbit girls’ they were called—were given gas gangrene wounds while others were subjected to ‘experiments’ in bone grafting” (Shirer 1960, 1275). The point is, it can well be argued that these are *all* forms of oppression, and it remains an open question as to how many parallels exist in the details.

Objection D. Far from the use of animals being comparable to the Nazi Holocaust, it is rather the case that animal activists themselves can be compared to Nazis in their tactics. Indeed, the Nazis themselves were animal rightists.

Reply to D. Certain critics have actually maintained this. John M. Orem, a vivisector, offers the following comment:

. . . there are parallels between the techniques of Nazi Germany and those of the animal rights movement. This movement uses propaganda to accomplish its goals; it cares nothing about the truth and is even attempting to rewrite the history of science to discount the role of animal research. The movement has infiltrated our schools; it condones terroristic acts as a means to its end; it uses legal bullying to silence its critics; it is anti- intellectual and anti-human. (Lutherer and Simon 1992, x)

Rather than drawing any concrete parallels between any supposed

oppressiveness on the part of animal liberationists and the Nazis, instead, would-be comparisons are made between the racist, vilifying propaganda of the Nazis, and the propaganda of the animal rights movement. Animal liberationist propaganda is like that of any movement: some is emotionally evocative, some is more informational, but all of it seems to be geared to fighting what it identifies as real oppression. To my knowledge, no animal rights campaign per se has sanctioned any of the known oppressions in any way. To indicate that animal liberationists “care nothing about the truth” or are “anti-intellectual,” or are in any way intellectually suspect for holding such a position is simply a prejudicial slur. Animal rights propaganda does not promote hatred at all, but rather universal respect.

Many opponents of animal liberation have also indicated that Nazi Germany was somehow animal rightist, and therefore, animal rightism is associated with Nazism. Both the inference and the initial premise are mistaken. Let us examine why some have thought otherwise:

There were 679 animal protection societies in Germany in the early 1930s, and many philosophical treatises projecting their views. In August, 1933, Hermann Göring, then chairman of the Prussian ministerial cabinet and later the author of the ‘final solution’ of the Jewish question, issued an order prohibiting the vivisection of animals in Prussian territory. ‘To the Germans,’ he declared in a public broadcast, ‘animals are not merely creatures in the organic sense, but creatures who lead their own lives and who are endowed with perceptive faculties, who feel pain and experience joy. . . . An absolute and permanent prohibition of vivisection is not only a necessary law to protect animals...but it is also a law for humanity itself.’ Any person engaged in such practices would be ‘removed to a concentration camp.’ Bavaria soon issued similar prohibitions, and in 1934 the national government prohibited unnecessary torment of animals. In Nazi eyes, biomedical science was a heavily Jewish—that is, polluted—profession, while, in contrast, animals were symbols of nature and purity. (Jasper and Nelkin 1992, 23–24)

If the Nazis cared so much for creatures with “their own lives” and “perceptive faculties,” why did they not care for the Jews, who, like all humans, are animals—and whom the Nazis themselves often compared to animals, even to “vermin”? What is so “animal rightist” about such Nazi practices? The Nazis gluttoned themselves on hypocritical and self-aggrandizing propaganda, and their statements are hardly to be accepted at face-value. Opposing vivisection because it is “heavily Jewish” does not

sound like any kind of anti-oppression view. Indeed, Nazis probably felt they could “afford” not to vivisect nonhumans (and thus, to appear “good” in many people’s eyes) because they planned all along to experiment on live human beings as part of their schemes for conquering “inferior races.” Indeed, if one already experiments on humans, testing on nonhuman animals for medical purposes is most certainly a very expensive and inefficacious waste of money, time, and resources. In the case of putting limits on vivisection, the Nazis did not love animals that much, but rather, they hated the Jews that much. Certainly, the Nazis were very far from abolishing meat-eating, or hunting, or even laboratory experiments with animals, among other practices. Hitler is sometimes reputed to be a vegetarian, although he was not entirely—still there was Nazi propaganda to this effect (Arluke and Sanders, 1995, 148). However, Hitler believed that eating meat was contaminating because of the mixture of animal and Aryan blood (Arluke and Sanders 1995, 150). Thus animals were not revered but regarded with contempt. Even if Hitler had been a vegetarian, that would not logically entail that vegetarianism is morally wrong. Any cults of “nature worship” in Nazism were connected, again, with their oppressive ideology of finding pure breeds, and with their pseudo-Nietzschean admiration of predatory animals, who exemplify the strong dominating the weak. The Nazis did have laws regulating vivisection in ways comparable to Britain, but fell short of abolishing animal experimentation (Arluke and Sanders 1995, 134–135). If Nazi Germans’ softening of so-called “heavily Jewish” vivisection was the extent of their “animal rightism,” then they remain as they were—Nazis—and the people who compare animal rightists to Nazis emerge as they are: slanderous, superficial, and reactionary.

V. CONCLUSION

More or less detailed comparisons can be and are made by animal liberationists between animal exploitation and the Holocaust. In fact, the comparison can be illustrated not only in terms of specific activities such as intensive confinement, live experimentation, skinning, hunting, and so on, but in terms of more general features on both sides, such as the unimaginable numbers of victims, ruthlessness, exploitativeness, and harsh discrimination. Indeed, further comparisons could be drawn between those who resisted the Holocaust (the underground railroad,

harborers of Jews and partisan fighters) and those who liberate animals from oppressive confinement in laboratories, or who wreck machinery which torments and destroys them. However, resistance to oppression is not a part of any comparison of these forms of oppression themselves.

As well, forms of resistance are highly disanalogous when comparing responses to the Holocaust and to the oppression of animals. Violence and killing were common in resisting Nazi oppressors, however, while a very few animal activists use violence, this is very exceptional behavior. See generally the collection of essays, *Terrorists or Freedom Fighters*, (Best and Nocella 2004) for a discussion of the incidence and ethics of nonviolent and violent tactics in the animal rights movement. The Animal Liberation Front, for example, is committed to rescuing animals from labs and exposing abuses that are hidden from the public, but they are sworn to nonviolence. This predominance of nonviolent tactics is different from resistance to the Nazis, but although there are sociological and philosophical reasons for this difference, I will not explore them in detail in this paper.

Briefly, however, some reasons for the widespread nonviolent approach of animal rightists include: (1) wars involve soldiers sacrificing their own lives, and also the lives of those they kill, but even animal rights philosophers such as Tom Regan agree that in general we should preserve human lives when given choices between saving a human or, say, a dog on a lifeboat (Regan 1983, 324); (2) animal rights is a nascent cause with relatively little public sympathy, and animal activists engaging in violence would cause a severe loss in sympathy and defensiveness; (3) the ultimate goal of animal rights is to create a peaceful world, through education, and violence interferes with such goals; (4) people are often innocent in their use of animals in the sense of being non-malefactors, so it would be unfair to judge them too harshly; (5) liberal democracy permits both animal liberationist stances and non-animal-liberationist stances, and it would be a departure from liberal democracy, and a step in the direction of totalitarianism violently to foist animal rights on others; (6) animal rightists often reject utilitarian morality which is often used to justify violent means towards ends that are supposedly justified by aggregating welfares; (7) pragmatically, even if activists could rationalize to themselves the waging of a war, even a guerrilla war, against animal abusers, they could not hope to win such a war.

The comparison in general, to the extent that it can be illuminated, cannot successfully be impugned by alleging that it glosses over particular differences, is insulting, trivializing, or put forward by those who are “Nazi-like.” Certainly, it would be viciously circular to assume that animal liberation is mistaken from the start, which makes the comparison offensive, and which in turn is supposed to prove that animal liberation is wrong. I conclude that if all other objections against animal liberation fail, objecting to the Holocaust comparison by itself will not vindicate the case for anti-animal-liberation. I submit the possibility that some people are deeply offended by the comparison because they are profoundly prejudiced against animals and in favor of human beings, and intolerant of those who hold opinions that are reflective of animal liberationist tendencies. If there were no such thing as discriminatory oppression, there never would have been a Holocaust, but neither could there be what animal liberationists refer to as *speciesism*. Far from the comparison being intrinsically objectionable, it is potentially useful and illuminating, and may help to underline the gravity of our oppression of nonhuman animals.

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