"Foucault and Critical Animal Studies: Genealogies of Agricultural Power"

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Abstract
Michel Foucault is well known as a theorist of power who provided forceful critiques of institutions of confinement such as the psychiatric asylum and the prison. Although the invention of factory farms and industrial slaughterhouses, like prisons and psychiatric hospitals, can be considered emblematic moments in a history of modernity, and although the modern farm is an institution of confinement comparable to the prison, Foucault never addressed these institutions, the politics of animal agriculture, or power relationships between humans and other animals more generally. The few times that Foucault discussed animality or human–animal relations, animals and animality remained metaphors for humans and human experiences. Despite Foucault’s failure to analyze human–nonhuman animal relations, a significant body of Critical Animal Studies literature has mobilized Foucault’s work over the last decade. In particular, a number of scholars have taken up Foucault’s writings to consider how relations between humans and nonhuman animals in agriculture might be conceptualized as instances of sovereign power, biopower, disciplinary power, and pastoral power, as well as why we may not think that these are power relations at all. This essay provides an overview of Foucault’s accounts of power and of the Foucauldian scholarship that applies these accounts to human–nonhuman animal relations in animal agriculture.

1. Introduction
Michel Foucault is well known as a theorist of power who provided forceful critiques of institutions of confinement such as the psychiatric asylum and the prison. Although the invention of factory farms and industrial slaughterhouses, like prisons and psychiatric hospitals, can be considered emblematic moments in a history of modernity (Lee 2008; Nimmo 2010), and although the modern farm is an institution of confinement comparable to the prison (Guenther 2012), Foucault never addressed these institutions, the politics of animal agriculture or power relationships between humans and other animals, more generally. The few times that Foucault discussed animality (in the History of Madness) or human–animal relations (the shepherd–flock relationship of pastoral power), animals and animality remain metaphors for humans and human experiences (Palmer 2004; Cole 2011). Critical Animal Studies scholars have noted this oversight on Foucault’s part, much as feminist scholars have critiqued Foucault’s failure to consider gender in his studies of sexuality and power (see for instance Bartky 1990), and Critical Race Theory scholars have reproached Foucault for his failure to consider race in his writings on the prison and punishment (James 1996; Davis, A. 2005; Garland 2012). Despite Foucault’s neglect of race and gender, his writings have provided important tools for feminist and anti-racism scholars, and a considerable amount of scholarship in these fields has drawn on his work (see for instance McWhorter 1999; McWhorter 2009; Feder 2007; Heyes 2007). Similarly, despite Foucault’s own failure to analyze human–nonhuman animal relations, a significant body of Critical Animal Studies literature has mobilized Foucault’s work over the last decade. Although Foucauldian Critical
Animal Studies pales beside the explosion of work on animals that draws on continental philosophers such as Derrida and Agamben, who theorized human–nonhuman animal relations explicitly, a number of scholars have taken up Foucault’s writings to consider how relations between humans and nonhuman animals in agriculture might be conceptualized as instances of sovereign power, biopower, disciplinary power, and pastoral power, as well as why we may not think that these are power relations at all. Although the majority of Foucault scholars writing about human–nonhuman animal relations have focused on agricultural contexts, and that will be the focus of this essay as well, other Foucault scholars have analyzed zoos (see Chrulew 2011), wild animals (see Collard 2012), and companion animals (see Palmer 2001).

This essay provides an overview of Foucault’s accounts of power and of the Foucauldian scholarship that applies these accounts to human–nonhuman animal relations in animal agriculture. Importantly, although Foucault claimed that modern society is increasingly characterized by biopower (Foucault 2003, 254), sovereign power and biopower—and biopower in its regulatory, disciplinary, and pastoral dimensions—are not mutually exclusive and nor are they ethically or temporally distinct (Foucault 1978, 149; Rose 1998, 27). In the following sections, it will be seen how each of the overlapping and interactive types of power that Foucault described can be seen in operation in contemporary human–nonhuman animal relations, with particular attention to agricultural practices. In addition, the extent to which nonhuman animals can legitimately be deemed capable of resisting contemporary farm technologies, and thus the extent to which speaking of agricultural animals as involved in power relations with humans at all, will be considered.

2. Farms as War Zones: Animal Agriculture and Sovereign Power

Sovereign power, Foucault explains, is the right to kill (Foucault 1978). Since humans kill other species of animals prolifically and are within their legal rights in doing so most of the time, it is important to consider these relations in terms of sovereign power. In “The War Against Animals: Domination, Law and Sovereignty” (Wadiwel 2009), Dinesh Joseph Wadiwel surveys the hardly fathomable, “gargantuan” numbers of nonhuman animals who are killed by humans each year. While Wadiwel considers the millions of animals killed for military testing, product testing, and medical experimentation; and ‘euthanised’ by veterinarians in the companion animal system, he is clear that the most “staggering” number of animals against whom humans exercise their right to kill are agricultural animals. Drawing on Foucault’s “Society Must Be Defended” (Foucault 2003), Wadiwel argues that if we consider the sheer spectrum and magnitude of the legalized lethal violence that humans use against other animals, it becomes evident that we are looking at phenomena of sovereign power and, more specifically, that we are at war with animals. This is a protracted war, a war that arguably grows in intensity, a war that has no foreseeable end. This is a war that operates under the guise of peace, constructed more often than not within the rule of law. This is a war that does not appear to be a war, yet—as the casualties demonstrate—it bears the unmistakable hallmarks of continuing warlike domination. (285)

Although the claim that there is a “war against animals” is not uncommon in animal activist circles (see, for instance, Best 2012; PETA 2012; VegeSource 2012), unlike some writers, Wadiwel is not using the term metaphorically. Wadiwel is aware that the war is not apparent, and that we can indeed draw a number of distinctions between intrahuman wars and the war against animals that he is describing. Most obviously, in intrahuman wars, one army does not produce its own enemy for the purpose of slaughtering it. Similarly, while intrahuman wars tend to occur over a clear conflict of interest, such as both parties wanting
the same land; it is not as easy to identify a conflict between the human species and some of the species we dominate and kill. Thus, while we can easily see ourselves as at war with ‘pests’ such as rats and termites, fighting over the same territories that are our homes, it is harder to understand our relations with battery cage chickens or wild ‘game’ as warlike. The assumption that there is no “conflict” between humans and the animals we dominate, exploit, and kill assumes, however, that the animals do not resist the lives and deaths humans subject them to. If we recognize the ways that nonhuman animals resist what humans do to them, then we see that a conflict does indeed exist between the will of humans to treat other animals as means to their ends, and the resistance of animals to being so treated. Although this is surely a war of another kind than we are used to thinking about, for Wadiwel, no other concept but war conveys the scale of the killing that is the daily fare of human–nonhuman animal relations or the fact that this mass killing for the most part occurs within the bounds of law.

If the existence of a state of war against animals is not readily apparent; this is because, as Foucault argues, although sovereign power originates in overt war, it continues in the guise of politics and through the exercise of a law that becomes naturalized (Foucault 2003). When one side surrenders or loses in war, the winners may kill the conquered people. If the winners let the losers live, it is upon the winners’ terms. The conquerors in war exercise the right of death, and if they do not kill the vanquished party, they may plunder their property or they may require their servitude. If the winners give the losers certain rights and freedoms (including life), these remain given and may be taken away. This right to determine the terms on which others live and the limits that the winners choose to place on this right are enshrined in law. As Wadiwel explains, law functions within civil society as

the means by which war is enfolded within a new set of relations. . . law becomes a means by which continuing domination is encoded: the methodology by which it is possible to continue forms of domination that otherwise would be expressed openly in war. . . Law, from this perspective, becomes a means to enforce forms of domination that emanate from the right of death held by the sovereign. . . This in turn enshrines a form of law that guarantees a continual pleasure for the victors. . . (287)

The law of sovereign power that “guarantees a continual pleasure for the victors” is apparent in the case of human–animal relations, where anti-cruelty laws exempt from protection the vast majority of animals — animals in agriculture — that humans use for their continual pleasure as food. Rejecting Natural Law theories, Foucault stresses that sovereign power is a self-appointed right that is later enshrined in law and myths of origin. Thus humans confer upon themselves and define their rights over animals and then mythologize these as the natural order of things. (293) The stories that we tell about how we became human, of how humans emerged from a state of animality to form civil societies, of the break between nature and culture — stories about language, rationality, responsibility, free will, and agency — are the stories that Wadiwel calls “The First War,” the mythologized event that made man man and legitimated all of the exploitation of nature that would follow. When we begin to consider the relations of power that humans exercise over other animals as phenomena of war, the frequent but controversial comparison of industrial farms to the death camps of intrahuman wars (Coetzee 1999; Patterson 2002; Davis, K. 2005; Derrida 2008) becomes less contentious. To eventually shut these death camps and live in peace with other animals, Wadiwel suggests both a material and a symbolic disarmament. This would mean not only that we stop killing other animals and that we revoke the laws that legalize these killings but also that we surrender our ontologies of the human.
3. Feeding the Population: Regulatory Power

In works such as *Discipline and Punish* (1977) and *The History of Sexuality* (1978), Foucault argued that the modern era is characterized by a new form of power, biopower, which contrasts with traditional sovereign power. Biopower operates at two levels: the level of the population, which Foucault called biopolitics or regulatory power, and the level of the body, which Foucault called anatomo-politics or disciplinary power. While sovereign power is negative (forbidding, silencing, censoring, seizing, and killing), regulatory power and disciplinary power are positive or constitutive, producing and fostering certain kinds of populations and certain kinds of subjects. Regulatory power works to constitute a ‘healthy’ and ‘productive’ population, for instance, while disciplinary power produces “docile bodies” (Foucault 1977). While sovereign power is spectacular and possessed by recognized individuals (kings and heads of households), regulatory power and disciplinary power are varied and dispersed in their manifestations, operating through and outside of numerous state and non-state institutions. Such power, Foucault explains, is “everywhere,” not because it embraces everything but because it “comes from everywhere.” (Foucault 1978, 63) In contrast to sovereign power, which is structured around laws, regulatory power and disciplinary power are structured around norms – norms that can control a vast realm of behaviors within and beyond the bounds of the legal. Regulatory power assures that the population adheres to norms such as desired rates of growth, health, and productivity, while disciplinary power assures that individuals adhere to corporeal norms such as gender and sexual ‘normalcy’. These modern forms of power are internalized, inscribed on bodies and shaping populations; this, combined with their diffusion throughout society, makes the workings of regulatory power and disciplinary power less easy to recognize as power than the blatant violence and explicit laws of sovereign power.

Foucault contrasts the sovereign right to take life with the biopolitical state’s mandate to protect society and foster life. While sovereign power is manifested in the power to take life, modern states are expected to manage society and promote the health, safety, growth, and well-being of the population. Whereas disciplinary power manages life at the level of the individual or the body, the regulatory form of biopower operates at the level of the race, the population, or the species. At times, Foucault suggests that sovereign power and biopower characterize different historical epochs, however, in *Animals as Biotechnology* (2010), Richard Twine argues that we do best to highlight the moments in his work where Foucault indicates that

sovereign power is complemented by biopower and transformed in the process. It is a mistake to read Foucault as arguing that a shift to biopower is somehow an end to violence. Indeed he is specifically interested in considering how the political power to kill is sustained under conditions of biopolitics. (85)

Sovereign power is thus modified and maintained within biopower as a right to kill for the protection, management, and fostering of the population. Although the biopolitical state may still kill, and while it may “let die” or refrain from fostering and protecting the lives of certain segments of the population, it does so in the name of life or to protect its idea of society.

As Foucault recognized, the idea of “society” – or what kind of population the state wants to foster and protect – is almost inevitably racist and normalizing. Ironically, Foucault suggests that biopolitical states shed even more blood than traditional sovereign states, since they can slaughter not merely in their own names but in the name of entire populations and life itself. According to Twine, in the biopolitical state, “racist modes of representation intervene to legitimize killing” (85), whether the racialized other is identified as a threat to the population or as a being that it is legitimate to kill. As Twine also argues, Foucault’s extremely general use of the term “racism”
is “applicable to the naturalization of gender, class, race, and species hierarchy.” (85) Foucault writes of “racism against the abnormal” (Foucault 2004, 316) and all those who stray from the norm of the white, middle-class, able-bodied, and heterosexual human can be understood as targets of biopolitical racism within the broad terms of Foucault’s discussion (see also Taylor and Nichols 2010).

In Animal Capital: Rendering Life in Biopolitical Times (2009), Nicole Shukin criticizes philosophers of biopower such as Foucault for not explicitly theorizing the speciesism of biopolitics. She notes the assumption on the part of these authors “that the social flesh and ‘species body’ at stake in the logic of biopower is predominantly human.” (9) This assumption began with Foucault’s remarks on biopower, where “Actual animals have already been subtly displaced from the category of ‘species’” (Shukin, 2009), and it has persevered in the works of philosophers appropriating Foucault’s concept such as Giorgio Agamben, Michael Hardt, and Antonio Negri. For these authors, Shukin observes, “animality functions predominantly as a metaphor for that corporeal part of ‘man’ that becomes subject to biopolitical calculation.” (9–10) In particular, Shukin notes that “there are few signs that the social flesh eats” in the works of Foucault and later theorists of biopower or “few signs that the social bios is materially contingent upon and continuous with the lives of nonhuman others.” (9)

In response to this lacuna, several scholars have now drawn on Foucault’s account of biopower to describe the lives of animals in contemporary agribusiness. Twine’s work, for instance, provides a biopolitical analysis of livestock genetic science (Twine 2010), Richie Nimmo has written a book-length biopolitical analysis of the British liquid milk trade (Nimmo 2010), Lewis Holloway has offered a series of analyses of contemporary biopolitical farm practices (Holloway 2005; Holloway 2007; Holloway and Morris 2007; Holloway et al. 2009), and Wadiwel has considered some of the ways that ‘livestock’ fit into a biopolitical society (Wadiwel 2002). In “Cows and sovereignty: biopower and animal life,” Wadiwel writes:

The key questions which relate to biopolitical life are asked here: How much life? What duration of life? What is the cost of life? How best to reproduce? What manner of death? The life of cattle (or ‘livestock’ as they are aptly named) is vulnerable to a politics of ‘life and death’, where the political question returns to life itself. (Wadiwel 2002, 2)

Among his examples, Wadiwel considers two incidents from 2001: first, the case of five hundred police being deployed to protect Australian cattle after eight cows were bashed to death by farmers protesting livestock imports in Korea, and second, the mass slaughter of cows in the UK during the ‘mad cow’ crisis. For Wadiwel, the latter example, like the unprecedented bloodshed of biopolitical states noted by Foucault, “represents the extreme extent of this power: a power that includes the prerogative... in the moment of crisis, to darken the skies of Europe with the ashes of the dead.” (2) In both these examples, we see the ways that the lives of nonhuman animals are protected and destroyed according to how they are anticipated to benefit or threaten the human population. The lives of nonhuman animals in the food industry are managed in such a way as to be as beneficial to humans as possible (to produce the most meat, milk, and eggs with the greatest efficiency at the lowest cost), while the health risks to humans associated with intensive farming are simultaneously regulated (by adding antibiotics to feed and by stunning large animals before slaughter). Like those segments of the human population who are seen as biopolitical threats or drains on the state rather than part of the society that the biopolitical state is mandated to foster, the lives of nonhuman animals are considered not for their own sake but only in terms of how they may benefit or endanger those humans about whom the state is concerned.

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Philosophy Compass 8/6 (2013): 539–551, 10.1111/phc3.12046
In the graphic opening pages of *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault 1977), Foucault famously compares the public torture of the regicide Damiens to the strict timetable of a nineteenth-century prison. For Foucault, this comparison illustrates the difference between sovereign power and disciplinary power or the transition from the sporadic but unapologetic exercise of the right to kill to the less obtrusive but systematic production of docile bodies. In “Foucauldian Hog Futures,” Dawn Coppin maps this comparison onto “the ancient regime of hog farming with all its horrors and hardships” and the regulated lives of hogs in contemporary “large scale swine facilities.” (Coppin 2003, 599) The shift from traditional methods of swine farming to the advent of total confinement farm facilities is presented by Coppin as analogous to the birth of the disciplinary institutions of confinement described by Foucault. Like prisons, schools, hospitals, and asylums, industrial mega-hog farms are characterized by disciplinary features such as partitions and meticulous record keeping. While pigs used to move freely in pastures, associating with other swine as they chose, today sows move from gestation crates to farrowing crates, while their piglets move from nurseries to growing buildings to finishing buildings to slaughter. While once few records were kept of either pigs or farmers, today extensive records are kept regarding the activities of each, as pigs and farmers alike are subject to ever-increasing control. The result is a greater production of pork requiring fewer farming facilities; however, both pigs and farmers have less self-determination than before. (601)

Just as Foucault argues that disciplinary power produces docile bodies and new kinds of subjects (the mentally ill and the pervert), so Coppin argues that new kinds of hogs are created as the result of disciplinary power: pigs have been bred to produce more and larger litters, to have less backfat, and to be more docile. As a result of these transformations, hogs can no longer survive in the conditions of their ancestors. For instance, hogs bred for lean meat and large litters would freeze and sunburn if left in pastures; they must therefore be kept in climate-controlled buildings. No longer adapted to the life of a wild hog, the industrially farmed hog submits more docilely to conditions of confinement than a wild hog would do. As shall be discussed below, this is not to say that pigs do not resist their fate at all; on the contrary, aggression between pigs and other manifestations of swine discontent remain a continual problem for industrial farmers. (Coppin 2003, 606)

It may fairly be objected here that the kind of docility that is produced on the farm exceeds and is different in kind from that of the “docile bodies” described by Foucault. While prisoners, students and psychiatric patients are made docile through habituation and internalization of pedagogical, penal, psychiatric, medical, or social norms, they are not bred or genetically modified to be docile. Foucault inverts Plato’s phrase by suggesting that with disciplinary power, the soul becomes the prison of the body (Foucault 1977), or the mind internalizes norms according to which it then regulates the body. This power is light, according to Foucault, since it works primarily through vision and paperwork; we monitor ourselves to conform to social norms because we are aware of being watched and that records are kept of what we do and because we become habituated to self-regulation until it seems to derive from our own consciences, inclinations, wills, and desires. This kind of power that operates primarily through vision and record keeping rather than by shedding the body’s blood seems different in kind from what is done to nonhuman animals in farms. They are transformed into new kinds of beings not through panopticism and writing – although these activities occur, the farm animals are oblivious to them – but, in part, because their ancestors have been genetically modified and bred for particular traits.
While these objections to the comparison between the disciplinary practices that Foucault analyzed and the technologies of power at work on the farm are legitimate, it is also worth noting that there are similar complications even if we stay within the disciplinary institutions that treat humans, such as the prison and the hospital. While the psychiatrist who uses counseling and behavioral modification techniques may be described as disciplining her patient, is this still what is taking place when she gives her patient drugs that alter his brain chemistry? Already, this seems to be a direct alteration of the patient’s body rather than the creation of a gaoler-soul through vision and writing. And what if the psychiatrist gives her patient electroshock therapy against his will or lobotomizes her patient? Are we still in the realm of disciplinary power? Foucault in fact discusses such psychiatric techniques as disciplinary despite the fact that these are acts that directly modify the biological body—albeit in a different way than selective breeding. In *Family Bonds* (2007), Ellen Feder has argued that while psychiatric treatment for Gender Identity Disorder is disciplinary, non-medically required surgeries that normalize the bodies of intersexed children cannot be so described. These surgeries are usually undertaken long before the children could consent, and for Feder, once doctors take up knives, we are not in the realm of disciplinary power but rather of sovereign power. Nevertheless, in Feder’s example and in that of the factory farm, it is still the case that bodies are being normalized rather than punished for transgressions of the law; intersexed bodies are being submitted, transformed, made docile to norms of gender and sex by sex reassignment surgeries, and genetically modified farm animals are being transformed according to the norms of agricultural production. Despite differences in the kinds of violence entailed in these examples, the fact that these actions aim to produce conformity to norms rather than to punish transgressions of the law suggests that we are still in the realm of biopower, albeit a particularly draconian one.

In “Apparatuses of Animality: Foucault Goes to the Slaughterhouse,” Stephen Thierman takes up Foucault’s notion of an “apparatus” to consider what he calls an “apparatus of animality,” a complex nexus of institutions (laboratories, zoos, and shelters), disciplines (animal husbandry, zoology, and agricultural engineering), practices (breeding, grooming, and exhibiting), laws and bylaws (governing bestiality, pet ownership, and cruelty), discourses (PETA, Greenpeace, and journalism), and cultural representations (film and literature) that make up the heterogeneous space of human–nonhuman animal relations. Focusing, like Coppin, on industrially raised swine, Thierman examines the end of these animals’ lives or the role of the abattoir within the apparatus of animality. Also drawing on the comparison between the execution of Damiens and the timetable of a modern prison, Thierman imagines the “gripping” first lines of a book that Foucault might have written on human–nonhuman animal power relations. Such a book, Thierman suggests, might have begun with a comparison between the last moments of a pig in a slaughterhouse, entailing “bludgeoning...dismembering, blood and viscera” (Thierman 2010, 89–90), and the schedule of an urban and domesticated cat. The latter, “...would present a contrasting image of a power that regulates and normalizes.” (90) While Foucault explains the move from the execution of Damiens to Léon Faucher’s prison schedule as a historical development, Thierman notes that the last moments of the pig and the regimented routine of the domesticated cat co-exist in the same time period and culture. Indeed, the same human may slaughter the pig (or eat the ensuing bacon) and groom the domesticated cat. Borrowing Gary Francione’s phrase, Thierman thus suggests that it is “moral schizophrenia” rather than historical development that enables us to move between these moments of power.

In “Taming the Wild Profusion of Existing Things,” Clare Palmer has provided a Foucauldian analysis of the life of a domesticated cat (Palmer 2001). Thierman, who cites Palmer, therefore focuses on the other half of his comparison, or the “pig on his (or her)
way to becoming pork chops,” and other animals — including human animals — caught in the institution of power and violence that is the modern slaughterhouse. While Thierman acknowledges that some disciplinary practices may be benign and even enabling for both human and nonhuman bodies, he argues that the slaughterhouse, like the prison, should be seen as a “troubling disciplinary institution.” (96) After considering a number of ways in which nonhuman animals are disciplined into docile bodies outside of and prior to the abattoir, the slaughterhouse is suggested by Thierman to be a space where human bodies are made docile through the spatial partitioning, hierarchical observation and arrangement, surveillance, and assessment of workers. In contrast, for the even less fortunate nonhuman animals in these spaces, Thierman argues that the slaughterhouse is a space of sheer violence rather than power. For the pig, unlike for the human on the kill floor or the cut line, the slaughterhouse is “the endpoint of a docile life” (103) rather than a site where meaningful resistance might occur.

It is important to note in relation to these articles that despite the relative freedom of swine prior to the birth of total confinement facilities and factory-style slaughterhouses and despite a tendency to idealize what farm life was like for agricultural animals before the advent of industrialized farming, pre-modern farm life, like modern farm life, was already characterized by relentless brutality against agricultural animals. We should no more wish to reinstate the treatment of agricultural animals on the ‘family farm’ than we should wish to reinstate public torture. Thierman’s and Coppin’s analyses of the shift in farm technologies in terms of sovereign and disciplinary power are useful in that they allow us to critique the latter without generating nostalgia for the former, just as Foucault’s study makes us critical of the prison without longing for the days of Damiens.

5. ‘Happy Meat’ and Other Oxymorons: Pastoral Power

In a lecture that he delivered in 1979, “‘Omnes et Singulatim’: Toward a Critique of Political Reason” (Foucault 2000), Foucault traces the long history of a shepherd–flock metaphor that is used to describe yet another form of power relation, which Foucault would call “pastoral power.” The earliest manifestations of the shepherd–flock metaphor are found in antiquity, and they flourished in the Christian tradition. In the latter context, both the relationships between Christ and Christians and between pastors and parishioners were conceptualized as shepherd–flock relations. Foucault describes four aspects of such shepherd–flock/pastor–parishioner relations: responsibility, submission, individualized knowledge, and self-mortification. The shepherd/pastor is responsible for the well-being of his flock/parishioners and must know each sheep/parishioner individually (thus the pastoral tradition of confession) in order to assure the individual sheep’s as well as the flock’s well-being. In return for the shepherd’s/pastor’s beneficence, insight, guidance, and protection, the flock/parishioners owe permanent submission to the shepherd/pastor and, ultimately, renunciation of this world and their selves. In its modern forms, Foucault describes the shepherd–flock model of power relation — found, for instance, in the secularized spiritual guidance and confessional practices offered by psychological professionals (see Rose 1998) — as a third modality of biopower.

In “From ‘Animal Machines’ to ‘Happy Meat’?” (Cole 2011), Matthew Cole follows authors such as Coppin in arguing that the docility-producing technologies of factory farming are well understood as operations of disciplinary power. Cole also notes, however, a “public disquiet” over the last decades surrounding the treatment of animals as mere meat-producing machines since the advent of industrialized farming. Some consequences of this disquiet are the emergence of ‘animal-centred’ or ‘animal friendly’ welfare studies and the agricultural production of so-called
‘happy meat’. As Cole notes, the term ‘happy meat’ is “literal nonsense” since it “imputes subjectivity (being ‘happy’) to an object (meat)” (94) and, as Cole makes clear, the same can be said of the supposedly ‘animal-centred’ discourses whose aim is to facilitate the premature deaths of healthy animals for unnecessary human consumption. Cole notes that each of these phenomena are in stunning bad faith, representing an “attempt to remoralize the exploitation of ‘farmed’ animals in such a way as to permit business as usual, with the added ‘value’ of ethical self-satisfaction for the consumer of ‘happy meat’” (84).

If factory farming is best understood as an example of disciplinary power, Cole suggests that ‘animal-centred’ welfare science and the production and consumption of ‘happy meat’ are best understood as instances of pastoral power. Cole demonstrates that all four aspects of pastoral power – responsibility, knowledge, submission, and self-mortification – are present in these phenomena. Most obviously, in producing and consuming ‘happy meat’, the consumer and producer express a sense of responsibility for the well-being of agricultural animals, even if, as Cole observes, there is simultaneously “a powerful vested interest in remaining insensitive to particular kinds of truth, for instance the expression of the mere desire to continue living and evade death” on the part of the agricultural animals. (92–93) To assure this well-being, producers and consumers need individualized knowledge of farm animals; in particular, scientists must learn about the psychological states of agricultural animals in order to give farmers the information they need to be spiritual guides of agricultural animals’ lives. Hen, swine, and bovine states of anxiety, stress, frustration, fear, security, and contentment must be known about in order for the farmer to know how to minimize the animals’ negative emotions and to foster the positive ones. In turn, the pastoral consumer must know about the source of her meat, or what the lives of animals were like on the farm whose products she buys. As Cole writes, “consumers also assume responsibility for their, albeit deceased, ‘flock’.” (93)

While knowledge and responsibility for agricultural animals’ welfare are the moral obligations of the shepherd/pastor in these relations, the other two aspects of pastoral power, submission and self-mortification, are the responsibility of the sheep. Cole notes that deriving knowledge about agricultural animals’ emotional states already requires submission on the part of these animals; much as Foucault argues that the confessant submits to the authority of the one who listens (Foucault 1978), Cole writes: “animals confess the truth of their experience as an integral aspect of their submission to their confessors.” (Cole 2011, 91) The submission of farm animals to farmers and consumers is readily apparent: their lives are in the most basic ways subjected to the decisions of farmers and to the desire for animal products on the parts of consumers, and agricultural animals offer minimal resistance to the wills of these individuals.

As for the final aspect of pastoral power, Cole writes, “‘Farmed’ animals do indeed practice self-mortification through an ‘everyday death’ – the devotion of their lives to serving human appetites. None of their everyday activities make sense outside of the context of submitting to human desires for their flesh, skin, hair or secretions.” (92) Indeed

Self-mortification... becomes the reason for living, and dying, for these ‘pampered animals’. Popular food culture often deploys images of ‘suicidal’ or cannibalistic self-mortifying animals, often as cartoon characters smacking their lips at the thought of eating their own flesh, or that of one of their fellow creatures. (94)

Images of happy farm animals who are already meat, who willingly offer up their bodies as meat-for-another, illustrate the fantasy of the fourth and final aspect of pastoral power: the self-mortification of the ‘sheep’. 

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Philosophy Compass 8/6 (2013): 539–551, 10.1111/phc3.12046
In the pastor–flock relation, the shepherd’s rightful domination over the sheep remains unquestioned, and the shepherd is able to conceptualize his manipulation of the flock as ‘in their best interests’. Likewise with ‘welfarist’ agricultural research and the production and consumption of ‘happy meat’, scientists, producers, and consumers derive the benefit of feeling protective of agricultural animals even while they dominate, exploit, slaughter, and consume them. Pastoral power is understood as mindfully benevolent, even though the ultimate fate of the sheep remains a violent death framed for the consumer as self-sacrifice. Because the nonsensical discourses of ‘animal-centred’ agriculture and ‘happy meat’ still the moral disquiet to which the factory farm gives rise, Cole argues that such phenomena are “very bad news for the goal of animal liberation.” (84) Cole concludes that veganism, not ‘happy meat’, is the antidote to the horrors of factory farming. (96)

6. Resistance

In the first volume of The History of Sexuality, Foucault makes the oft-cited claim that “Where there is power, there is resistance.” (Foucault 1978, 95) Foucault reiterates this point when he writes: “The characteristic feature of power is that some men can more or less entirely determine other men’s conduct – but never exhaustively or coercively. A man who is chained up and beaten is subject to force being exerted upon him, not power.” (Foucault 2000, 324) As such, situations of sheer force are contrasted by Foucault with power, in so far as the latter always entails some possibility of resistance. For this reason, and given the extreme level of domination involved in animal agriculture, a number of scholars have expressed a “note of caution” (Cole 2011, 88) when it comes to thinking about agricultural relations through the lens of Foucault’s analyses of power. Cole, for instance, writes:

Power always has a relational, mobile and active quality in Foucault’s work. If the prisoner, patient, pupil or soldier did not have the capacity to resist their subjectification in relation to disciplinary norms, there would be no relation to speak of, no contestation of the process of normalization... The obverse of power, for Foucault, is therefore not freedom, but domination... A violent death is almost inevitable for ‘farmed’ animals, excepting rare escapes and rescues. Therefore, in situations where no resistance to that doom is possible, power relations appear problematic as a framework for understanding... (Cole 2011, 88)

According to Thierman’s analysis, human–nonhuman animal relations in the slaughterhouse are sites of domination rather than power precisely because of the total absence of possibilities for resistance on the part of a nonhuman animal on the kill floor. Since the almost inevitable fate of a farm animal is the kill floor or the cut line, we might legitimately follow Cole in asking whether the entire life, and not just the death of that animal, is characterized by domination rather than power. Twine anticipates Cole in expressing this concern (Twine 2010). Similarly, Clare Palmer calls into question her own analysis of the disciplined life of a domesticated cat on these grounds (Palmer 2001) despite the arguably greater scope of resistance on the part of companion animals compared to agricultural animals.

Nevertheless, it was seen that Thierman suggests that prior to his or her arrival at the abattoir, it is useful to think of the industrially farmed pig’s life as disciplined or entailing a relation of power and hence, the possibility of resistance. Like Thierman, Dawn Coppin follows Foucault in arguing that where there is no possibility of resistance, there is no power, but she points to a variety of forms of resistance to factory farming on the parts of both humans and swine. Human resistance to factory farming includes boycotts, rallies, legislative appeals, newspaper articles, and death threats to farmers. (Coppin 2003, 611) Resistance on the part of swine includes biting
through soft wooden floors in their confinement pens (612), and producing less milk when strapped to the ground to be constantly available for nursing (604). Joel Novek similarly notes tail-biting on the parts of factory-farmed pigs as evidence that these animals have not been made perfectly docile, or that, like inmates in a prison, they resist disciplinary power despite the extremely limited range of activities that are available to them. (Novek 2005)

While these latter examples of swine resistance may be involuntary physical responses rather than consciously chosen, this is also true for many of the kinds of human resistance that Foucault describes. Indeed, more than one scholar has argued that Foucault offers limited resources for theorizing the kind of resistance that most political theorists and activists seek (McNay 1992) or that his discussions of resistance appear to entail a naïve slip back to the idea of a pre-discursive or ‘wild’ body (Butler 1990), although others (Oksala 2004) have defended him against this charge. In The Psychic Life of Power (1997), Butler argues that resistance, for Foucault, occurs either when subjectification exceeds, or has effects that undermine, its own normalizing goals: “Thus resistance appears as the effect of power, as part of power, its self-subversion” (Butler 1997, 93). Resistance is often an effect of an error in power’s application, rather than a self-conscious rising-up on the part of the subjects to whom it is applied. In arguing that the “rallying point for the counterattack against the deployment of sexuality ought not to be sex–desire, but bodies and pleasures” (Foucault 1978, 157), Foucault suggests that resistance is something that bodies, rather than subjects or agents, do. It appears that resistance for Foucault is something that happens in bodies when there are gaps or contradictions in power or that resistance is an unpredictable result of the excesses of power on the body. Such is the picture of resistance that Foucault provides in two of his most sustained descriptions of resistance: in Psychiatric Power, Foucault writes of hysteria as a kind of involuntary resistance to doctors on the part of intensely medicalized women (Foucault 2006), and in Abnormal, he writes of the phenomenon of demonic “possession” as a “resistance effect” to confession on the part of religious women (Foucault 2004). In neither the case of hysteria nor possession was the resistance intentional, and in neither case did the resistance liberate the resisters from their hospitals or their convent cells. For Foucault, these phenomena were nevertheless resistance in that they entailed rebellions of the body – or “convulsions of the flesh” (Foucault 2004) – against those who would dominate them, and because they threw wrenches into the smooth operations of disciplinary power. Like hysterics and possessed women, agricultural animals have yet to fulfill the biopolitical dream of an absolutely docile body, but they all but never escape the institutions of power in which their subjection occurs. We may therefore speak of the resistance of agricultural animals, on Foucault’s terms, and thus of a relation of power, although this resistance is often no more than the passive and involuntary effects on bodies that simply cannot take any more subjection.

Short Biography

Chloë Taylor is an Assistant Professor of Philosophy and Women’s Studies at the University of Alberta. She has a PhD in Philosophy from the University of Toronto and was previously a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and Tomlinson postdoctoral fellow in the Philosophy department at McGill University. Her research interests include twentieth-century French philosophy, philosophy of sexuality, feminist philosophy, and animal ethics. She is the author of The Culture of Confession from Augustine to Foucault (Routledge 2008, 2010) and has published articles in journals such as Philosophy Today, Hypatia, Feminist Studies, Foucault Studies, Journal for Critical Animal Studies, Postmodern Culture, Symposium: Canadian Journal of Continental Philosophy, and the Journal of Modern Literature. She
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**Notes**

1 Personal correspondence with author.

2 In Canada, the United States, and across Europe, cruelty laws that apply to pets do not apply to animals in agriculture or in laboratories. This is not to say that there are no anti-cruelty laws at all that apply to agricultural animals. Most Western countries have a few such laws, such as that certain animals, such as cows and pigs, must be stunned before being killed (although even this law does not apply to animals being slaughtered for Kosher or Halal meat), but these laws are very few and are mostly about human safety (the worry is not so much that a conscious cow or pig will suffer when killed, but that a conscious cow or pig might kick the person killing her), and they do not apply to birds, who make up the vast majority of animals in agriculture. Across Europe and North America, the laws protecting pets cannot be applied to animals in agriculture or in laboratories, and if they did apply to agricultural animals, we would not have a meat, dairy, and egg industry, and we would not be able to carry out the vast majority of experiments on nonhuman animals that we do. This is true even if we are talking about the same species, e.g., cats and mice in laboratories versus cats and mice that people have as pets, or horses in the meat industry versus horses as pets – the former animals are exempt from the laws that protect the latter, although they are of the same species. Thus, the laws across Europe and North America allow scientists and farmers to do things to animals that we are not allowed to do at home. See Jordan Curnutt, *Animals and the Law: A Sourcebook.*

3 I would like to thank Andrew Cutrofello for raising this point. For a description of the brutality of pre-industrial animal agriculture, see Charles Patterson (2002): 6–10.

**Works Cited**


