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Dickstein, Jonathan

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Animals in Hindu South Asia: From Cosmos to Slaughterhouse

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Religious Studies

by

Jonathan Dickstein

Committee in charge:

Professor Barbara Holdrege, Chair

Professor David White

Professor William Elison

September 2022

The dissertation of Jonathan Dickstein is approved.

David White

William Elison

Barbara Holdrege, Committee Chair

August 2022

RESEARCH AREAS

South Asian Religious Traditions, Animals and Religion, Religion and Ecology

EDUCATION

Ph.D., Religious Studies (expected) 2022
University of California, Santa Barbara

M.A., Religious Studies 2016
University of Colorado, Boulder

B.A., Philosophy, Politics, Economics (PPE) 2001
University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA

PUBLICATIONS

Jonathan Dickstein, “Review: *Sacred Cows & Chicken Manchurian: The Everyday Politics of Eating Meat in India* by James Staples,” *HIMALAYA* 40 (2): 164–166. 2021

Christopher P. Miller and Jonathan Dickstein, “Jain Veganism: Ancient Wisdom, New Opportunities,” *Religions* 12: 512. 2021

Jonathan Dickstein, “Their Bodies, Their Voice: Animal Abuse in Modern Yoga Gastropolitics,” *Sacred Matters Magazine*, May 16. 2021

Jan Dutkiewicz and Jonathan Dickstein, “The Ism in Veganism: The Case for a Minimal Practice-Based Definition,” *Food Ethics* 6 (2). 2021

Jonathan Dickstein, Jan Dutkiewicz, Jishnu Guha-Majumda, and Drew Robert Winter, “Veganism as Left Praxis,” *Capitalism Nature Socialism*. 2020

Jonathan Dickstein, “Ahimsā,” in *La Pensée végane. 50 regards sur la condition animale*, ed. Renan Larue. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France. 2020

Jonathan Dickstein, “The Strong Case for Vegetarianism in Pātañjala Yoga,” *Philosophy East and West* 67 (3): 613–628. 2017

Jonathan Dickstein, “Richard Garbe, German Indology and the Messiness of Atheistic Sāṃkhya,” *SAGAR: a South Asia Research Journal* XXIII: 2-33. 2015

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

“Veganism as Left Praxis,” co-presented with Jan Dutkiewicz at the Vegan Epiphanies digital conference, University of California, Santa Barbara. 2021

“Be Vegan to Be a Better Jain: Mahavira’s Epiphany and the Contemporary Reinvention of Ahimsa,” co-presented with Christopher Miller at the Vegan Epiphanies digital conference, University of California, Santa Barbara.	2021
“Jain Veganism: ‘Cautiously Integrating’ <i>Ahimsā</i> into a Globalized Movement,” co-presented with Christopher Miller at the 18th Annual Conference of the European Association for the Study of Religions, University of Pisa.	2021
"Revisiting Veganism and the “ <i>Ahimsā</i> Crisis”: Raising Consciousness according to Karma and Science," co-presented with Christopher Miller at The Second International Conference on Science and Jain Philosophy, Florida International University.	2021
“Their Bodies, Their Voice: Animal Abuse in Modern Yoga Gastropolitics,” LMU Graduate Yoga Studies online conference titled “Abuse in Yoga and Beyond: Cultural Logics and Pathways for the Future,” Loyola Marymount University.	2020
“Before They Were Food: Wasting and Weaponizing Animals in Yoga Gastropolitics,” Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion, University of California, San Diego.	2019
“Ātmans Don’t Matter: Framarin, Direct Moral Standing, and Nonhuman Animals,” Annual Conference on South Asia, University of Wisconsin, Madison.	2018
“The ‘V’ Word: Deploying Veganism in Liberationist Advocacy,” Annual Meeting of the Institute for Critical Animal Studies, Ft. Lewis College.	2017
“The Strong Case for Vegetarianism in Classical Yoga,” Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion-Western Region, The University of the West.	2017
“Richard Garbe, German Indology and the Messiness of Atheistic Sāṃkhya,” <i>Ways of Knowing</i> , 3 rd Annual Graduate Conference on Religion at Harvard Divinity School, Harvard University.	2014
“Dark to Light to Dark: Ecstasy in Iyengar Yoga and Butoh Dance,” Annual Meeting of the American Comparative Literature Association, Harvard University.	2009
TEACHING EXPERIENCE	
Teaching Associate, University of California, Santa Barbara, Religious Studies and Environmental Studies	2020–2021
Teaching Assistant, University of California, Santa Barbara, Religious Studies	2017–2021
Teaching Assistant, University of Colorado, Boulder, Religious Studies	2013–2015

AWARDS AND GRANTS

Gerald J. Larson Dissertation Award, Department of Religious Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara	2022
Interdisciplinary Humanities Center Dissertation Fellowship, University of California, Santa Barbara	2022
Graduate Division Dissertation Fellowship, University of California, Santa Barbara	2021
Bhagwan Vimalnath Lectureship, University of California, Santa Barbara	2021
CAS Ham Scholar of the Year, Institute for Critical Animal Studies	2020
Chancellor's Fellowship, University of California, Santa Barbara	2016–2021
Fellowship for Thesis Completion, Graduate School, University of Colorado, Boulder	2015
Katherine J. Lamont Scholarship for Academic Excellence, Department of Religious Studies, University of Colorado, Boulder	2014

ABSTRACT

Animals in Hindu South Asia: From Cosmos to Slaughterhouse

by

Jonathan Dickstein

“Animals in Hindu South Asia: From Cosmos to Slaughterhouse” takes a novel approach Hindu ethics, animal ethics, and the ethical principle of nonharming, *ahimsā*. While many sources on Jain, Buddhist, and Hindu traditions explore the topic of *ahimsā* in detail, exploring its origin, basis, meaning, and practice, comparatively few provide analyses of how it relates to both religious taxonomies and historical practices of animal domestication and consumption. This study examines Vedic and Hindu texts to identify enduring ideological patterns regarding domesticated animals and how these patterns facilitate the systemic exploitation of animals in human society. “Animals in Hindu South Asia” begins with Vedic literature of the first and second millennia BCE and proceeds into Dharma and Yoga literature of the first millennium CE. The first two chapters investigate ancient cosmologies, animal taxonomies, and sacrificial and dietary regulations, charting how taxonomical and prescriptive emphases shift over time. The third chapter focuses on Hindu ethics, particularly as espoused in the Mānava Dharmaśāstra and the Pātañjala Yogaśāstra, and provides analyses of *karma*, *ahimsā*, and the moral status of animals. The fourth chapter shifts to the modern and contemporary periods, beginning with a critical evaluation of Hindu-inspired cow protectionism and its neglect of bovines’ material well-being, or their *biobovinity*. This chapter also discusses the history of Subaltern Studies, the notion of

subalternity, and eventually argues for the inclusion of animals under the category “subaltern.” The final chapter interrogates the ethical implications of theories of “entanglement” and “relatedness” (theories largely inspired by the work of Donna Haraway), how these theories are almost exclusively applied to human-animal relations, and how the theories can be employed to justify exploitative human-animal relations. Overall, the study offers critical insights into South Asian religious studies, Critical Animal Studies, and animal ethics more broadly construed.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AĀ	<i>Aitareya Āraṇyaka</i>
AB	<i>Aitareya Brāhmaṇa</i>
AU	<i>Aitareya Upaniṣad</i>
ĀpDh	<i>Āpastamba Dharmasūtra</i>
AŚ	<i>Arthaśāstra</i>
AU	<i>Aitareya Upaniṣad</i>
AV	<i>Atharvaveda Saṃhitā</i>
BAU	<i>Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad</i>
BDh	<i>Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra</i>
CS	<i>Caraka Saṃhitā</i>
CU	<i>Chāndogya Upaniṣad</i>
GDh	<i>Gautama Dharmasūtra</i>
KB	<i>Kausītaki Brāhmaṇa</i>
KS	<i>Kāmasūtra</i>
Mbh	<i>Mahābhārata</i>
MDh	<i>Mānava Dharmasāstra</i>
PYŚ	<i>Pātañjala Yogaśāstra</i>
RV	<i>Rgveda</i>
ŚB	<i>Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa</i>
TB	<i>Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa</i>
TS	<i>Taittirīya Saṃhitā</i>
VaDh	<i>Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra</i>
ViDh	<i>Vaiṣṇava Dharmasāstra</i>
YDh	<i>Yājñavalkya Dharmasāstra</i>

Introduction

It's messy. All of it. Everything contained herein admits of variance, exception, and incompleteness.

Wendy Doniger says that “religions are messy,”¹ but what isn't? The cogency and history of terms such as “Hinduism,” “Hindu,” “religion,” and “religious”; the repetition, inconsistency, and obscurity permeating religious cosmogonies, cosmologies, and taxonomies; the definitions of technical moral philosophical ideas such as “value,” “disvalue,” and “moral standing”; the concept of “species” and the categories “human” and “animal”; the conceptualization and ethical relevance of affective states and dispositions such as “love” and “care”—all of these ideas and phenomena are complicated and slippery and my conclusions will not resolve any of the associated debates once and for all. However, fortunately for me (and for all of us, in fact), a vessel need not be watertight to hold a lot of water. No theory or argument is free from flaws, and not one can completely account for what future insights will bring. Hence I ask: each and every time we (this “we” refers to commentators and critics of any sort) recruit a conceptual vessel to produce something new, is it absolutely necessary to exhaustively declare and detail, time and time again, all of the cracks that make the vessel less than watertight? If we know how messy these things—all things—always are, how much preliminary qualification and reiteration are required?

Even with this confessional hesitancy, I know that I must oblige in some respects. The title of this study is “Animals in Hindu South Asia: From Cosmos to Slaughterhouse,” and, accordingly, a clear working understanding of “Hindu” is necessary. Henceforth I employ the term “Hindu” as a somewhat crude temporal shorthand for the early Vedic period through the first few centuries of the Common Era, covering the seminal Dharma literature exemplified by the Dharmasūtras and the Mānava

¹ Doniger 2009, 25; Doniger 2014, 4, n. i.

Dharmaśāstra. According to the Indo-Aryan migration theory, the Vedic period begins in the second millennium BCE with the migration of Central Asian nomadic pastoralists into the northwest of what is now India.² These migrants were responsible for the production of the Vedas, revealed “texts” that form the basis for all later “orthodox” Hindu traditions. I accept the periods before the Dharma literature of the late first millennium BCE as classifiable into early, middle, and late Vedic periods, with the Dharma literature itself inhabiting the early Hindu period.

Regarding what and who “Hindu” signifies, ample literature has been produced on the subject. *Hinduism Reconsidered*, edited by Günther-Dietz Sontheimer and Hermann Kulke, was published in 2001 and boasts several relevant essays by scholars such as Robert Frykenberg, Henrich von Steitencron, Romila Thapar, and Sontheimer. Between 2005 and 2006, Brian Pennington published a monograph entitled *Was Hinduism Invented? Britons, Indians, and the Colonial Construction of Religion*; David Lorenzen published an own collection entitled *Who Invented Hinduism: Essays on Religion in History*; and John E. Llewelyn edited a volume entitled *Defining Hinduism: A Reader*.³ Doniger’s *The Hindus: An Alternative History* was published only three years later in 2009. Add to this list any journal article or book chapter dedicated to the same topic⁴ and virtually any text “on Hinduism” or “introducing Hinduism,”⁵ and readers will soon find themselves swimming in the copious resources available. Readers will also quickly perceive how virtually all of these texts grapple with one basic fact:

² Bryant 2004; Bryant and Patton 2005.

³ Lorenzen’s journal article, “Who Invented Hinduism?” was originally published in 1999.

⁴ For example, Frykenberg 1993; Hawley 1991; Smith 1998; Smith 2000; Sweetman 2003.

⁵ A list of such sources also includes virtually any text on “world religions” or “religions of India” or “religions of Asia” or on any topic that requires even a superficial definition of “Hinduism.” Flood’s *An Introduction to Hinduism* (1996) is a well-known and commonly used sourcebook on “Hinduism.” The most recent book engaging the subject is Devadevan’s *A Prehistory of Hinduism* (2016).

“Hindu” and “Hindu traditions” are notoriously difficult terms to define, and yet Hindus and Hindu traditions undoubtedly exist.

Debates about the cogency of “Hinduism” frequently involve perspectives from three main camps: constructionists,⁶ primordialists,⁷ and syncretists (the final camp including perspectives that blend aspects of the two other camps). Constructionists assert that the entire notion of “Hinduism,” and not merely its reification during and after the colonial period, is a scholarly invention that “vacuums up a miscellany of Indic traditions, ideas, and communities that, at their core, have so little in common that their collective identification under this umbrella is at best misleading and at worst an exercise in ideological subterfuge.”⁸ In short, “Hinduism” as an identifiable and unifiable phenomenon is an academic “construction” that not infrequently deploys the construction in the service of self-serving if not also politically motivated ends. By contrast, primordialists, and even some voices from syncretic camps, reject the claim that “Hinduism” is a mere academic invention and meaningless prior to the colonial period. In fact, or so some primordialists argue, Hindus “developed a consciousness of a shared religious identity”⁹ centuries prior to Europeans’ investigations into, and re-presentations of, Indian religious and cultural history.

I identify as a syncretist and generally side with Lorenzen (although described as a primordialist by Devadevan), who offers a simply yet eloquent syncretic perspective:

If Hinduism is a construct or invention, then, it is not a colonial one, not a European one, nor even an exclusively Indian one. It is a construct or invention only in the vague and

⁶ This is Lorenzen’s term (1999, 631–636; 2006, 1–2) and is adopted by Pennington and Devadevan.

⁷ Devadevan 2016, 4. While this may not be the best or most accurate term, it is at least a useable single term. Pennington describes the anti-constructionist position as one that “that insist[s] that, however diffuse, variegated, multivalent, and internally contested, ‘Hinduism’ as an analytic category and descriptive label is both meaningful and reasonably true to observed social and historical realities” (2005, 169).

⁸ Pennington 2006, 168.

⁹ Lorenzen 2006, 36.

commonsensical way that any large institution is, be it Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, communism, or parliamentary democracy. In other words, it is an institution created out of a long historical interaction between a set of basic ideas and the infinitely complex and variegated socio-religious beliefs and practices that comprise and structure the everyday life of individuals and small, local groups.¹⁰

From this viewpoint, the formation of individual or group identity under an “ism” is neither the result of scholarly “vacuuming” or the product of an indigenous social vacuum that forged its identity independently from alternative philosophies, practices, rituals, interactions, and critiques. Thus, while the “vague and commonsensical” claim that “Hinduism” is a construction is virtually indisputable and thereby effectively watertight, despite this accuracy the claim unfortunately holds very little water. The volume of the vessel is unimpressive. “Hinduism” may be a construction akin to so many other human enterprises and institutions, yet similar to these phenomena it has no single maker, designer, or essence; to call “Hinduism” a “construction” offers little by way of insight or utility. If, however, constructionists could convincingly argue the claim that “Hinduism” is a specifically colonial or scholarly fabrication, then, alternatively, the interpretive vessel would carry a great deal of water. Relatedly, the opposing primordialist perspective that some stable primordial “Hinduism” existed prior to European influence is also highly doubtful.

As much as I side with Lorenzen, I share Doniger’s view that Lorenzen’s assertion regarding “a set of *basic* ideas” occupying the center (or part of the center) of “Hinduism” is also suspect. The critique of a Hindu “center” applies to any constructionist or primordialist perspective that assumes a monolithic “Hinduism” to have an ideological core no matter if the category has been recently constructed or not. Doniger seems accurate in contending that many scholars incline towards imagining individual Hindu traditions as circles overlapping in an extraordinarily complex Venn diagram. No

¹⁰ Lorenzen 2006, 36.

matter how numerous, diverse, or large or small the circles may be, they will all overlap somewhere, sharing some idea, belief, practice, or ritual. And even if some of these traditions do not overlap on a single unanimous feature, “each Hindu will adhere to some combination of them [qualities], as a non-Hindu would not.”¹¹ However, despite the plausibility of overlapping features or combinations of features that are improbable for non-Hindus, I still adhere to the position that without a central quality or “set of basic ideas,” it is difficult (or simply impractical) to speak coherently and skillfully of any single “Hinduism.” Doniger maintains: “the emptiness in the center, like the still center of a storm, suggests that the figure might better be named a Zen diagram, which is not, as you might think, a Venn diagram with just one ring or one that has an empty ring in the center but one that has no central ring.”¹² In reality, Hindu people occupy, live, and identify with different various Hindu centers. Accordingly, we can only speak responsibly of “Hindu traditions” relative to one another rather than a single “Hinduism,” and each of these traditions has its own center with its own corresponding peripheries.

Doniger identifies one Hindu center as the “Brahmin imaginary” or a “a Brahmin-oriented quasi-orthodoxy.”¹³ If I were pressed to identify a single Hindu “center” guiding this study, the “Brahmin imaginary” would be the most fitting. The sources I describe in the first three chapters derive their cosmological templates from Vedic sources and generally accept a top-down, Brahmin-centric, creation and classification of the universe. Accordingly, in the following chapters I follow Brian Smith in accepting as “Hindu” any person, group, text, or tradition that acknowledges (1) the authority of the Veda, and (2) the authority of the Brahmin class.¹⁴ “Hindu” also suits many of the actors and forces in

¹¹ Doniger 2009, 28, emphasis added.

¹² Doniger 2009, 29. Hence Doniger (and other potential syncretists) can avoid the force of the constructionist retort that these traditions “at their core, have so little in common.”

¹³ Doniger 2009, 29.

¹⁴ Smith 1998a, 37.

the Hindu-inspired and Hindu-populated cow protection movement discussed in chapter 4. I do not mean to imply that only Hindus are involved in Indian cow protection movements, or in any cow or animal protection movement, but only that “Hinduism” is the dominant religious ideology driving past and current cow protection movements in South Asia.

If I were also pressed to situate my work within a specific discipline, I would describe the first three chapters jointly as a contribution to South Asian religious studies. These chapters deal with cosmologies, taxonomies, dietary regulations, and ethics that originally emerged and operated in ancient South Asia. These chapters focus on Hindu South Asian religious-intellectual history, with an emphasis on animals and human-animal relations. As far as the work belonging to the larger field of religious studies, I adopt the general “religious studies perspective” expressed by Gerald Larson in *India’s Agony over Religion*. With this phrase Larson signifies “a perspective that focuses on the high salience of religious experience, not simply in terms of its manifestation in historical, social, economic and political contexts, but also in terms of its substantive content, that is, its basic intellectual and spiritual claims.”¹⁵ As ahistorical as this approach may appear, I view Larson as aspiring to give priority to identifying and appreciating religious experiences (and intellectual claims) in their own right. Interestingly, while Pennington claims alignment with Larson’s approach, they also “take Larson to be urging historians and social theorists not to write religion out of the equation, but to recognize its critical role in contemporary and historical movements.”¹⁶ However, I see Larson to be suggesting something rather different. While alternative—that is, complementary, and not necessarily competing—theoretical approaches focus on “historical, social, economic and political contexts,” the religious studies perspective serves as a “useful supplement” with its emphasis on “basic intellectual and spiritual claims” of “religious experience.”

¹⁵ Larson 1995, 43.

¹⁶ Pennington 2005, 17.

Larson would certainly concede that religious experiences and claims live inside of history, and thus have a “critical role in contemporary and historical movements,” especially in South Asia. However, Larson’s focus—as is my own in the first three chapters—is on “content” itself, which for this study involves the underlying assumptions and implications of animal taxonomies and animal ethics in Hindu South Asia.

Without leaving religious studies entirely, the fourth chapter and the epilogue shift from a focus on South Asian religious traditions to a Critical Animal Studies (CAS) perspective. Scientists have studied animals for centuries, and historians have not entirely omitted animals and human-animal relations from their research, yet the notion of animals as social-political subjects deserving of focused and critical study in the *humanities* is a relatively recent phenomenon. CAS formally emerged in 2001 with the founding of the Center on Animal Liberation Affairs (CALA) by Anthony J. Nocella II and Steve Best. CALA was renamed the Institute for Critical Animal Studies (ICAS) in 2007.¹⁷ In the same year, the journal that was originally entitled *Animal Liberation Philosophy and Policy Journal*, founded by Nocella II and Best in 2003, was renamed *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*.¹⁸ CAS is sometimes viewed as a subfield of Animal Studies (AS) or, more precisely, as a subfield of Human-Animal Studies (HAS), yet the “critical” aspects of CAS routinely resist these categorizations.¹⁹ Nocella II et al. describe not only CAS’s nonconformity with both AS and HAS but its direct opposition to them:

CAS developed to challenge two specific fields of theory: (1) Animal Studies (AS), rooted in vivisection and animal testing in the hard sciences and (2) HAS, which reinforces the socially constituted human-animal binary through which detached

¹⁷ ICAS 2022; Nocella et al. 2017; Taylor and Twine 2014; I say “formally” because, as Taylor and Twine note: “Any contextualisation of CAS must confront the fact that, in an intellectual sense, it existed before the term was coined, and that it has since become an umbrella term for bringing together scholars who do critical research on human-animal relations” (2014, 4).

¹⁸ JCAS 2022.

¹⁹ See Best 2009; Best et al. 2007; Nocella et al. 2017; Sanbonmatsu 2011; Taylor and Twine 2014.

scholars look at animals as objects without agency that exist to be theoretically studied and examined.²⁰

CAS rejects research and scholarship that involves the exploitative use of animals' actual bodies and minds (AS) as well the study of animals that is focused on human-animal relations but lacks any corrective trajectory the redress the asymmetrical, oppressive dynamics undergirding nearly all human-animal relations (HAS). CAS is "critical" in the superficial sense of being rigorously investigative and attentive to theory, but, more importantly, CAS is critical in its strong and consistent arguments against AS, HAS, apolitical academic research, and social justice movements that exclude animals from their purview.²¹ Helena Pederson aptly defines the field: "Critical animal studies is a field of research dealing with issues related to the exploitation and liberation of animals; the inclusion of animals in a broader emancipatory struggle; speciesism; and the principles and practices of animal advocacy, animal protection, and human-related policies."²² Not only does CAS "deal" with these issues as a "field of research," but CAS foregrounds its normative, political, engaged, and practice-oriented stance towards ending animal exploitation as part of a larger project of "total liberation."²³ As such, CAS situates itself alongside (and envisions itself as intertwined with²⁴) disciplines such as feminist studies, Black studies, queer studies, and disability studies, among others. These academic disciplines are not merely dedicated to talking about the histories and circumstances affecting

²⁰ Nocella II et al. 2017, xxiii. The authors add: "In fairness, not all AS and HAS scholars agree with this characterization, though we argue that an overview of such scholarship renders the assessment self-evident."

²¹ Taylor and Twine 2014, 2.

²² Pederson 2010, 2, cited in Nocella et al. 2017, xxvi.

²³ See Principle 8 in "The Ten Principles of Critical Animal Studies" in Best et al. 2017, 4–8. On the concept of "total liberation," see Pellow 2014.

²⁴ CAS Principle 4: "Advances a holistic understanding of the commonality of oppressions, such that speciesism, sexism, racism, ablism, statism, classism, militarism and other hierarchical ideologies and institutions are viewed as parts of a larger, interlocking, global system of domination" (Best et al. 2017, 4–8).

marginalized groups, but they are also intent upon improving the well-being of these populations through ideological, educational, social, economic, and political change. The present study certainly “talks about” animals in the first two chapters, yet the following chapter on Hindu ethics signifies a bridge between talking about animals to talking about how humans ought to consider and behave towards animals based on principles operative in the considered literature. The final chapter and the epilogue address more broadly why animals fail to be enfolded into ethical-political projects across the political spectrum.

Chapter Overview

Chapter 1, “Animals and the Vedic Village,” investigates cosmogonies, cosmologies, and animal taxonomies in Vedic texts of the first and second millennia BCE. The chapter focuses on anatomical and residential classifications, the former identifying animals based on physiological features, such as dental and pedal structure, with the latter propounding a relatively simple binary of “village animals” (*grāmya*) and “wilderness animals” (*āraṇya*). I argue that these location-based categories effect an “ontologization of residence,” or the cosmological denial of the historical process of animal domestication and of the exploitative relationships between animals and the Vedic village. In addition, the sacrifice of “village animals” is occasionally explained in terms of a subtle quality (*medha*) inhering in certain animals, with this quality allegedly proving an animal’s fitness for sacrifice and thus justifying their sacrificial fate. Through both the ontologization of village residence and this “anatomization of sacrificability,” both domestication and sacrificial killing are presented as hard-wired features of the phenomenal world.

Chapter 2, “Animal Taxonomies and Dietary Regulations in Dharma Literature,” retains the theme of animal taxonomies initiated in chapter 1 but proceeds into the early Hindu period with an analysis of the Dharma literature, and more specifically the Dharmasūtras and Dharmaśāstras (ca. third

century BCE to fourth century CE). The chapter begins with a discussion of how the phenomenon of urbanization in north India impacted religious traditions and moral philosophical thought and discusses how this impact is visible in the more “naturalistic” and empirical elements in Hindu traditions as well as in “heterodox” traditions such as Lokāyata and Buddhist traditions. I argue that urbanization and the rise of new traditions served to catalyze a taxonomic shift away from the village-wilderness binary—at least as attested in the Dharma literature—in favor of a more naturalistic approach to animal taxonomies. As a result of this shift, the meaning of the term “village” transforms considerably, and this change is evident in the “village” classification of pigs and fowl and in statements in the Dharma literature governing the permissibility and impermissibility of consuming specific foods. Following Patrick Olivelle, I highlight the categories of forbidden foods (*abhakṣya*) and unfit foods (*abhojya*) and discuss how the category of forbidden foods indicates a budding ethical sensibility concerned with human-animal relations that is significantly untethered from the rhetoric of sacrifice.

Chapter 3, “Hindu Ethics and the Foundation of *Ahiṃsā*,” engages this budding ethical sensibility head-on, providing an analysis of the notion of “Hindu ethics” in terms of foundational principles such as the intrinsic value of pleasure (*sukha*) and the intrinsic disvalue of pain (*duḥkha*). Greatly indebted to the work of Christopher Framarin, I describe how these principles undergird, at least partially, *karma* theory and the ethic of nonharming, *ahiṃsā*. *Karma* theory, as presented in the Dharma literature and the Pātañjala Yogaśāstra, routinely indicates that pleasure is a fruit (*phala*) of righteous action (*dharma*) and pain is a fruit of unrighteous action (*adharma*). I argue that the pain that results from unrighteous action is intrinsically disvaluable. If pain is intrinsically disvaluable, and avoiding pain is thereby preferable to causing it, then the foundation of the ethic of *ahiṃsā* is best understood as not promoting something that is intrinsically disvaluable—namely, pain. On this basis, I argue that all beings capable of experiencing pain (and pleasure)—that is, sentient beings—carry direct moral

standing according to Hindu ethics. I invoke examples from the Mānava Dharmaśāstra and the Pātañjala Yogaśāstra and emphasize how the sections pertaining to meat-eating and *ahimsā* clearly express a direct concern for the infliction of pain on nonhuman sentient beings. I conclude by asserting that these fundamental principles of Hindu ethics—pleasure is intrinsically good, pain is intrinsically bad—can generally be applied to the four “goals of human existence” (*puruṣārthas*), a normative theory common to Hindu literature across several genres.

In chapter 4, “Before They Were Food: Cows and Other Subalterns,” I shift to contemporary issues by first discussing the ethics and politics of cow protectionism. I ask to what degree anti-meat-eating and anti-cow slaughter movements express genuine moral concern for cows and other bovines, and I then proceed to critique beef-centric ethics and politics for frequently omitting considerations for buffaloes as well as for nonbovine animals. Most importantly, both the advocates of cow protectionism and lacto-vegetarianism commonly ignore—if not outright deny—the myriad nonlethal harms caused by the dairy industry, and this oversight weakens the “pro-cow” assertion that the cessation of cow slaughter and beef-eating emerges from genuine moral concern for bovine well-being. Moreover, I describe how marginalized or “subaltern” populations—Muslims, Christians, and Dalits—have been the routine human victims of fanatical cow protectionist vigilantism, and thus these communities tend to perceive cow protectionism and lacto-vegetarianism as the customs and weapons of their fundamentalist Hindu adversaries. Continuing with the theme of marginalized communities, the second half of this chapter examines the history of Subaltern Studies, and, more specifically, the concept of subalternity. I ask why the category “subaltern” has been restricted to marginalized humans and argue that the logic and rhetoric of subalternity should be extended to any nonelites discriminately stripped of a social-political voice, including animals. I conclude with Claire Jean Kim’s concept of “multi-optic”

analysis in which we imagine animal subalternity as a social justice issue rather than an ecological justice issue.

The epilogue, “Love and Entanglement,” commences with the vocabulary of “entanglement” and “relatedness” and its specific utilization in recent literature on human-animal relations. Similar to how categories such as “subaltern” and “oppressed” are typically reserved for marginalized human populations, the language of entanglement is often deployed selectively for one-sided analyses of humans’ interactions with nonhumans. The framing of human-animal relations as “entangled” (or messy) can function to immunize humans’ violent relations with animals from the types of ethical critique and social-political intervention that are applied to problematic human-human relations, which tend to eschew the term “entanglement” as a term reserved for human-animal relations. I underscore how appeals to feelings of love and even genuine bonding between humans and their domesticated animals deflect attention from the central issue of domestication and the myriad harms towards animals it involves.

Chapter 4 and the epilogue do not obscure their normative orientations. I mentioned earlier that these parts of my study represent (if only in part) a shift from South Asian religious studies to Critical Animal Studies. Accordingly, a brief concluding remark on this topic is in order.

Whether the topic is human-animal ethics or ethics more broadly understood, there is scant logical justification for omitting—at best—or denouncing—at worst—the inclusion of normative concerns that materialize from research questions and conclusions, especially when the research involves marginalized populations. In closing I emphasize that there is a crucial difference between “moralizing,” on the one hand, and performing—or simply including—moral philosophy in one’s work, on the other. Philosopher Judy Jarvis Thomson summarizes:

Since well before the twentieth century, moral philosophers have taken it to be their task to produce a theory about what we ought to do and why. That “why” is important: moralizers are happy to tell you what you ought to do—moral philosophers differ in that they aim to tell you also what makes it the case that you ought to do the things they say you ought to do. Moral philosophy, in other words, responds to the desire that moral requirement be “rationalized,” that is, shown to be a requirement.²⁵

Throughout this study, and specifically in the final chapter and the epilogue, I provide an analysis of “what makes it the case” that certain people, groups, and religious and political traditions should rethink their assumptions about, and relations with, nonhumans. The cases I analyze are not my own but are the ideas, principles, and concerns expressed by the people, groups, and traditions themselves. Hence I sincerely hope that I successfully avoid the charge of “moralizing,” even if the arguments I extend fail to be convincing to some.

²⁵ Thompson 2009, 6.

Chapter 1: Animals and the Vedic Village

Animal classifications expressed in Vedic sources persist through the early Hindu period (200 BCE–500 CE) and survive in virtually any later Hindu understandings of the phenomenal world. While the Vedic Saṃhitās (1500–800 BCE) furnish some of the initial formulations, the later Brāhmaṇas (900–650 BCE) contain greater detail and clarity, if not also innovation. This chapter details animal taxonomies in Vedic thought, predominantly as provided in the Saṃhitās and Brāhmaṇas, but occasionally in the relatively contemporaneous Āraṇyakas and somewhat posterior classical Upaniṣads (800 BCE–200 CE).¹ Even some of the earliest sources from this period exhibit these enduring categorizations, in particular those derived from biological origin, habitat, residence, sacrificability, pedalism, pedal structure, and dentition.²

The third chapter’s emphasis on ethics will address the alleged or assumed moral significance of cognitive, religio-behavioral (ritual), and soteriological distinctions between humans and nonhumans. That being said, a preliminary word on the topic of moral status is not entirely out of place, even if only to underscore the antiquity of South Asian philosophical thought on the matter. From the late Vedic period onwards, humans, animals, and occasionally plants were linked by their mutual possession of a

¹ “(1) The term Veda is used in its narrow sense to designate the four Saṃhitās, R̥g-Veda, Yajur-Veda, Sāma-Veda, and Atharva-Veda, which constitute collections of verses (*ṛcs*), sacrificial formulae (*yajuses*), chants (*sāmans*), and incantations and imprecations (*atharvāṅgirases* or *atharvans*), respectively. The versified portions of the Saṃhitās are termed *mantras*. (2) The term is subsequently extended to include not only the four Saṃhitās but also the Brāhmaṇas, sacrificial manuals attached to the Saṃhitās; the Āraṇyakas, ‘forest books’ that reflect on the inner meaning of the sacrificial rituals; and the Upaniṣads, the latest speculative portions of the Vedas” (Holdrege 1995, 7. Also see 30, 32–33, 43–44, 62–64).

² Other classifications exist for the totality of biological life, such as the distinction between plants and animals indicated by the categories “rooted” (stationary) and “rootless” (moving), or similarly “those supported by breath” and those only with “life juice” (*rasa*). However, the focus of this chapter is the distinctions between animals themselves. For plant classifications, see Smith 1994, 208–240.

“soul” or *jīva*. Prior Vedic thinking imbued all living beings with a “life force” even in the absence of any theory of, or belief in, a transmigrating soul.³ Concerning plant life, *rasa* (life juice) was the term most often employed to capture the essential quality of these entities. In short, the inherence of *rasa* and later *jīva* is what differentiated animate entities from inanimate ones.

In the early Hindu period, the “possession” of a *jīva* emerged as an increasingly pivotal standard—if only rhetorically—for an animate being’s moral value. Humans and animals were acknowledged as possessing a *jīva* even if only humans were claimed to understand morality, act as moral agents, and relatedly achieve liberation in their present embodiment.⁴ In the earlier Vedic period, which lacked any robust notion of an embodied transmigrating soul, it was the presence or absence of a *citta* (mind), with varying sophistication, that was the critical feature for demarcating entities from one another. The existence of the mental faculty was *the* key difference between animals and plants, and its various levels of complexity are what (among other standards) distinguished groups of animals from one another, and, most importantly, elevated human beings above all others. In this sense, corroborated millennia later by the Darwin, distinguishing humans from nonhumans according to consciousness and knowledge involved a standard of degree rather than one of kind. Arguments about “degrees” of mental

³ On the later emergence of the notion of *samsāra* (cyclical rebirth), Olivelle writes: “The Upanisads were composed at a time of great social, economic, and religious change; they document the transition from the archaic ritualism of the Veda into new religious ideas and institutions. It is in them that we note for the first time the emergence of central religious concepts of both Hinduism and of the new religious movements, such as Buddhism and Jainism, that emerged not long after the composition of the early Upanisads. *Such concepts include the doctrine of rebirth, the law of karma that regulates the rebirth process, and the techniques of liberation from the cycle of rebirth*, such as mental training associated with Yoga, ascetic self-denial and mortification, and the renunciation of sex, wealth, and family life” (1998, 3, emphasis added); Cf. Bronkhorst 2011a.

⁴ While many stories about animals across South Asian religious traditions illustrate alleged abilities to understand *dharma* and act dharmically, these do not represent assertions about what living animals are actually capable of understanding and doing. After all, many of the same animals understand and speak in Sanskrit in these stories. For a short synopsis of moral agency vs. moral patiency, and in the context of animals, see Regan 1983, 151–156.

operation—which remain stock-in-trade tools in contemporary debates about animal ethics—had been explicitly formulated as early as the Aitareya Āraṇyaka (ca. seventh century BCE):

For he [human] is most endowed with intelligence, he says what he has known, he sees what he has known, he knows tomorrow, he knows the world and what is not the world. By the mortal he desires the immortal, being thus endowed. As for the others, animals, hunger and thirst comprise their power of knowledge. They say not what they have known, they see not what they have known. They have not tomorrow, they know not the world and what is not the world. They go so far, for their experiences are according to the measure of their intelligence. (Aitareya Āraṇyaka 2.3.2)⁵

While modern science has refuted the blanket claim that, for animals (and it always matters *which* animals are under consideration), “hunger and thirst comprise their power of knowledge,” questions of self-consciousness, death-consciousness, and extended futurity remain areas of debate. Cognitive complexity determines a being’s ability to contemplate mortality and a potential life beyond death, regardless of whether “beyond” or “otherworldly” connotes a heaven or hell realm, a favorable or unfavorable rebirth, or a transworldly liberation from all phenomenal existence. Accordingly, cognitive complexity raises the topic of the need, motivation, and ability of a being to perform religious rituals (generally derivative of future-oriented, even if not specifically postmortem, concerns⁶), whether they be the classic fire rituals of the Veda or the “internal” rituals and novel soteriological practices heralded by The Upaniṣads and heterodox ascetic traditions. Here we may perceive, if only in a limited sense, the professed connections between the presence of the mental faculty to the capacity for moral agency to the nature of moral value in Vedic thought, or how the ability to perform religious rituals confers moral

⁵ See Keith’s note on this verse, wherein they reject Sāyaṇa’s interpretation that projects a theory of transmigration onto a text in which it is absent (1909, 217); Cf. Bentham “If the being eaten were all, there is very good reason why we should be suffered to eat such of them as we like to eat: we are the better for it, and they are never the worse. They have none of those long-protracted anticipations of future misery which we have” (1996, 310–311, n. 1).

⁶ There is ample evidence for the performance of “rituals” among animals, perhaps typified by funerary/grieving practices among elephants. Yet by “religious rituals” I generally refer to metaphysical transactional rituals, or those performed with hopes or expectations of a metaphysical response.

value and rank. Yet for the moment the salient point is that early assertions of human exceptionalism based in death-consciousness, futurity, and ritual performance emerge not from a strict classificatory anomaly—anatomical or behavioral—but rather from the assertion of capabilities afforded by a certain *level* of cognitive sophistication that only human animals possess. From an ethical perspective, the emphasis on capabilities and levels (rather than an emphasis on “kind”) is extremely consequential, as we will encounter in Chapter 3. Nevertheless, this early moral philosophical leaning (which is not “ethics” per se) seems to have had minimal influence on the Vedic taxonomies that profess humans’ proximity to, and distance from, other animals. It is to these taxonomies that we now turn.

Classifying the Universe

The most thorough mining of animal taxonomies in Vedic sources has been undertaken by Brian Smith.⁷ Smith has argued strongly that Vedic Brahminical attempts at “classifying the universe” constitute an overarching, elaborate, and ingenious means for naturalizing—and divinizing—the threefold (to become fourfold) system of *varṇas*, or social classes.⁸ In the Veda, *varṇa* serves as the “root metaphor” or ‘master narrative’ and the Brahminical “revelation” of the classificatory structure of the cosmos predictably “reflects the interests of those who are classifying.”⁹ Critics have challenged this assertion of a sweeping master narrative, deeming it materially reductionist and insensitive to alternative narratives and specific features of ancient India.¹⁰ While confessing the risks and limits of their thesis,

⁷ Bhaduri et al. (1971) provide the best summary of animal identifications and classifications from the pre-Vedic period through the modern period.

⁸ Smith generally accepts the “tripartite ideology” theory put forth by Georges Dumézil (1958). For a list of subsequent reviews of Dumézil’s work, see Smith 1994, 21, n. 10.

⁹ Smith 1994, 12, 323.

¹⁰ See Kak 1996 and Hatcher 1996 for another sort of critique; See Lincoln 1997 for a review praising the book.

Smith insists upon the pervasiveness of this narrative as well as the academic necessity of rejecting hodgepodge theories of Vedic thought.¹¹

Far from denying the prevalence of *varṇa* as the major classificatory schema, at the very least from the angle of human social organization and interactivity, in the current chapter I acknowledge both the force of the narrative and its relevance for animal taxonomies.¹² However, I also recognize what Smith confesses, which is that alternative and even competing classificatory templates abound in Vedic texts, some of which are irreducible to *varṇa*. Smith contends that when confronted with dissimilar templates, “we seem to observe the Vedic systematizers at work harmonizing and interrelating other classification modalities to that of *varṇa*.” It is these adjacent “classification modalities,” which operate dominantly in the context of animal life, that I investigate in this chapter. Moreover, noteworthy is Smith’s “third difficulty” that admits gaps and inconsistencies specifically in categorizations of animals according to this “master narrative” of *varṇa*.¹³ The difficulty is not simply that animals (and other entities) are taxonomized according to standards *other* than social class, but also that their *varṇa* affiliations are at times inconsistent. The elite ritual specialists, or Brahmins, are linked either to goats or cows (and sometimes the black antelope), two animals that are not only sacrificable animals (*paśus*) but also explicitly identified with the sacrifice. Kṣatriyas, members of the royal and military class, are connected to the horse, one animal that is hardly ever, if ever, linked to another *varṇa*. However, the merchant class (or “working class” more broadly understood), or Vaiśyas, are variously tied to goats, sheep, and cows. These associations generally derive from the sheer number of “commoners” in addition to their productivity for, and usability/consumability by, the upper two *varṇas*. The servant

¹¹ Smith 1994, 13.

¹² Smith 1994, 255–274 for the “varṇicization” of animals and the corresponding animalization of humans. For contemporary analyses of “casteised speciesism,” see Narayanan 2018b and 2021a.

¹³ Smith 1994, 16.

class or Śúdras typically share the same animals as Vaiśyas in the Vedic period, as originally these two groups were not as distinguished from one another as they would become over time. Yet, as but one example, cows are at times associated with Brahmins and at other times associated with Vaiśyas. The same dual associations occur with goats. Smith’s “master template” of *varṇa* falters on these occasions and I repeat Smith’s recognition of such exceptions simply to underscore how animals pose challenges when neatly filed under the master narrative.¹⁴ To Smith’s credit, this difficulty is by no means insuperable and ultimately inflicts negligible damage on the power of the overall thesis given the sheer abundance of corroborating material.

One could speculate ad infinitum as to why animals in particular generate a “problem,” but perhaps we need look little further than Smith’s truism that classificatory structures reflect the interests of the classifiers. Akin to how Brahmins were deeply invested in establishing themselves as the “foremost of men,” so too were they committed to situating the “[hu]man” as the foremost of terrestrial beings, and specifically the “foremost of animals.” In short, class supremacism is built upon and assumes anthropocentrism, or generally phrased, species supremacism.¹⁵ While Śúdras are likened to asses (or dogs, especially in the cases of outcastes¹⁶) and asses are referred to as the “Śúdras among animals,” Śúdras still remain biological “men” who are—collectively, even if not individually—the

¹⁴ See Smith 1994, 255–271 for a summary of these associations.

¹⁵ Smith 1994, 3–5, 320–325; A forthcoming Subaltern Studies text expresses: “If we define colonialism as a form of systematic exploitation that invades and subordinates another political system and legitimates this conquest through ideology, then the first colonialism that human beings perpetrated was undoubtedly over the animal world.” (Bannerjee and Wouters 2022, 83); While from a much later text, Suśruta tersely captures the anthropocentric perspective: “Man is the first, the rest are at his service” (cited in Zimmerman 1987, 203); Lastly, “species” is notoriously difficult to define—akin to race and gender—whether in application to Vedic cosmologies or contemporary ethical and scientific discourses. The conventional understanding will suffice for this study. On the limits of “species” a category, see Wilkins 2009.

¹⁶ For a clear equivalence with the ass, see ŚB 6.4.4.12. Regarding linkages between dogs and Śúdras and outcaste humans, see White 1991.

superior mode of being, outranking all nonhuman animals. Hence, in a Vedic context, even though *some* individual animals carry higher social or moral value than *some* individual humans, the charge of anthropocentrism still applies since it operates at the level of the group, with “man” as the “foremost [group] of [all groups of] animals.”¹⁷ Additionally, anthropocentrism is keenly expressed in the ways beings are classified. J.L. Bhaduri et al. note that “[t]heir anatomical, physiological, embryological and genetical observations, however, were chiefly based on their knowledge about man. The only other animals receiving similar treatment were the cattle, horse and elephant, that is, animals of economical or military importance.”¹⁸ Animal taxonomies emerge from a cosmology of value rather than a cosmology of reality, evidencing an existential orientation that determined who was and who was not justifiably exploitable, justifiably killable, and ultimately justifiably consumable.

Anatomical and Residential Classifications

Selecting an appropriate starting point presents a formidable challenge. Cosmogonic myths seem the most logical choice given that sequences of generation often connote ascending or descending scales of value. The being who emerges first is either the most perfect or least perfect, with succeeding entities deemed either inferior or superior to the being immediately preceding them. However, even according to monotheistic traditions such as the Jewish traditions, which rely upon an ostensibly singular creation

¹⁷ While I certainly do not equate 20th century Nazi ideology with Vedic thought, Boria Sax perhaps makes a similar mistake in denying anthropocentrism to Nazism owing to the latter’s centralization of race. Sax refers to a German veterinary journal of 1937 that states that humans or animals “[enjoy] appropriate protection on account of its belonging to the national {völkische} community” (Brumme, cited in Sax 2001, 31), and thus race determines moral “belonging” rather than species. However, the two standards—race and species—are not mutually exclusive. Brahmin animals are (at times) given greater “protection” than non-Brahmin animals due to their *varṇa* affiliation, and even greater protection than some non-Brahmin humans, but that does not dislodge the class “human” as/at the center, representing the superior mode of being when present in its ideal form. The same applies to Nazi ideology.

¹⁸ Bhaduri et al. 1971, 217.

narrative from a single authoritative source, one notices glaring inconsistencies. Genesis 1–2.4b provides a creation narrative in which the emergence of Adam (=man, =human) is both a climax and a culmination. Yet immediately thereafter, in a narrative at Genesis 2.4b–3.24, Adam is created first, even prior to the appearance of plant life. This disjuncture is not irreconcilable, not only from a text-critical perspective but also from the recognition that preeminence in a sequence can be signaled either through anteriority or posteriority. But in these competing accounts, the key feature, at least from a taxonomical perspective, is not the sequence of emergence but rather the relationship of humans to animals as commanded by God.

The first biblical narrative in Genesis introduces the well-known concept of dominion (whether interpreted as “subjugation” or “stewardship”), with God granting humans “dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth” (1.28). The second narrative lacks an explicit assertion of dominion, but interestingly implies (admits?) that animals receive their “names” (types? kinds? functions?) through their naming by Adam: “So out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name” (2.19). In short, and echoing Smith, “creation is not cosmos” in this scenario.¹⁹ Animals do not have cosmological assignments prior to being labelled by Adam. The names/types of animals are determined by Adam (=the human), and only Adam, in the process of cosmos-building.

This quick detour into the beginning of Genesis simply indicates how cosmogony can reveal underlying principles of cosmology and the relationships between its various parts. R̥gveda 10.90, possibly the most cited hymn of the R̥gveda, offers a clear example of how the two—cosmogony and

¹⁹ Smith 1998a, 54.

cosmology—can be deeply intertwined. In this myth the primordial “Man” (*puruṣa*) is sacrificed with the structured phenomenal world as the product of the sacrifice. Regarding this “Man,” it is asked: “When they apportioned the Man, into how many parts did they arrange him? What was his mouth? What his two arms? What are said to be his two thighs, his two feet?” (10.90.11). The response is: “The brahmin was his mouth. The ruler [Rājanyā] was made his two arms. As to his thighs—that is what the freeman [Vaiśya] was. From his two feet the servant [Śudra] was born” (10.90.12). Provided the culturally understood descending hierarchy of the head-arms-thighs-feet structure, along with the connoted subservience each social class owes to its predecessors, the communication of relative value in this cosmogony is hardly veiled.²⁰ This scale of value is corroborated by other passages from Vedic and Hindu texts.²¹ Moreover, the immediately preceding verse from the same hymn insinuates an early “varṇicization” of animals, as well as an introduction to anatomy-based classifications: “From it horses were born and whatever animals have teeth in both jaws. Cows were born from it. From it were born goats and sheep” (10.90.10). Here is an insinuated connection (*bandhu*²²) between the categories of animals and the categories of humans, even if the emergence of the horse (a Kṣatriya animal) prior to the cow (most often a Brahmin animal) reverses the order of Brahmins followed by the Kṣatriyas expressed in the succeeding verse.²³ However, most relevant to this inquiry is how the hierarchy is expressed (or more precisely, evidenced) by means of anatomy, in this case dental structure. Furthermore, the verse lists “livestock” or village animals (*grāmya*), but omits wilderness animals

²⁰ Holdrege 1998, 351–353; Holdrege 2004, 217–219.

²¹ Smith 1994, 26–57.

²² On “*bandhu*,” see Olivelle 1998a, 24; Smith 1994, 10–13; Smith 1998a, 31, n. 3, *passim*.

²³ This is unsurprising given that, despite textual and historical tensions between Brahmins and Kshatriyas regarding claims to power, the two “virile” classes are joined in opposition to the Vaiśyas and Śudras. These two, jointly, are the rulers while the rest are the ruled (Smith 1994, 36–46).

(*āranya*) altogether, thereby additionally presenting an implied valuation of a specific site of residence, namely the village.

The scientific study of animal life—human and nonhuman—leans heavily upon biology and ethology. While not exactly “scientific” in the manner we may now understand the term, Vedic thinkers also based their classifications on relatively commonplace anatomical characteristics and on what I will call, *residentiality*. I opt for this relatively cumbersome word over the more conventional term “habitat,” for the latter assumes a “natural,” intrinsic, and ideally fixed living space for the organisms in question.²⁴ These organisms, in this case nonhuman animals, while capable of adapting to alternative surroundings, remain estranged from their “proper” or “true” surroundings whenever dwelling elsewhere. Alternatively, and curiously, the notion of a “proper” habitat (or perhaps *any* habitat) is hardly ever applied to human beings. Even when surviving, dwelling, and reproducing in climates and topographies extremely inhospitable to human biological constitutions, these regions remain still human-habitable territories. In short, to invoke the well-worn phrase of Mary Douglas, human beings are simply never “out of place.”²⁵ Other than in the air or water (and perhaps including these regions as well), virtually all terrestrial domains are assumed to be legitimate human domains, thereby rendering the term “habitat” unproductive with reference to human migrations and settlements. In addition, the assumed inapplicability of the notion of a “proper” habitat to human beings reaffirms their own self-distinction from—if not also dominance over—“nature,” which cannot confine or contain them in any single habitat. Nonhuman animals, by contrast, are assumed to be akin to, if not partially constitutive of,

²⁴ Merriam-Webster (online) defines “habitat” first as “the place or environment where a plant or animal naturally or normally lives and grows.” Nearly all definitions insist on habitat as the “natural environment” for the organism in question, without clarifying the meaning of “naturally” or “natural” and what they include and exclude.

²⁵ Douglas 2005, 36.

a “natural” world that dictates their “proper” habitat. Only human beings transcend this fixity, and they do so by virtue of merely “being human.”

Residentiality eschews the “natural” to foreground residing and residence as historical and circumstantial phenomena, more often than not dictated—directly and indirectly—by human agents and activities. This terminological move accomplishes two immediate goals with applicability beyond this individual project: first, it helps erode the assumed human/animal binary, here with respect to the fixity and propriety of areas and patterns of dwelling; second, it highlights the real-world histories of nonhuman “habitats,” from the most anthropocentric classification of some nonhumans as “farm animals” to the ideological construction of “the wild” with its “beasts.”²⁶ The third goal—one very pertinent to this inquiry—is the illustration of the Vedic *ontologization of residence*. This phrase refers to a purported cosmic order of things that binds beings to places, an ontology that identifies the former via their associations with the latter, and performs the all-too-human dehistoricization of the institution of animal domestication. Such ontologization generates perceptions and assumptions about the personality traits of certain animals due to the relative values attributed to their various sites of residence. Assumptions about personality and residence then contribute to animals’ moral values for humans and the ethics of human interactions with, and manipulations of, these animals.

In this chapter I proceed by isolating anatomical and residential categories in Vedic taxonomies. The former includes categories based on means of propagation/generation, dentition, pedalism, pedal structure, and dietary habits. I include dietary habits in the anatomical category even though pre-modern

²⁶ The more accurate term for “farm animals” is “farmed animals,” which without bias expresses a history of domestication, breeding, and ultimately, commodification. Much more controversially, David Nibert (2013, 12) employs the neologism “domesecration” in lieu of the word “domestication” to evoke the violence integral to “keeping” animals. For telling, and recent, ethnographic reflections on “the wild,” see Govindrajana 2018, 119–145 and Narayanan 2021a.

(in India or Europe) consumption-based classifications have generally relied on behavioral observations rather than physiological properties for this determination.²⁷ The prior question was “What do they eat?” rather than, as contemporary researchers may ask, “From what substances can they obtain energy?” As we should expect, this distinction is absent in Vedic texts. Moreover, given the fact that, at least with respect to mammals, eating habits and pedal structure virtually always coincide, it seems prudent to include that feature as anatomical rather than to add it as a separate category.

The taxonomy based on residence identifies animals according to whether they reside in the “village” (*grāma*) or the “wilderness” (*aranya*).²⁸ For this matter we must swiftly divest ourselves of any preconceived notions about what the words “village” and “wilderness” signify. The semantic history of *grāma* betrays usages signaling pastured farmed animals (cows, goats, and sheep), village-residing farmed animals (horses, donkeys, and camels), and village-visiting/residing nonfarmed animals (chickens and pigs).²⁹ *Grāmya* (village animals) can refer to one of these groups, two of them, and

²⁷ The English word *omnivore* was borrowed from the French *omnivore* (1801), with the latter derived from the Latin *omnis* (“all”) and *vorare* (“devour, swallow”). The term refers to animals who eat “all,” namely both plant and animal matter, yet there remains a difference between animals who periodically (no matter how infrequently) consume both plant and animal matter (i.e., “food mix,” see Singer and Bernays 2003), and those who must obtain their energy and nutrients from both plant and animal matter. The former animals are what we may term “behavioral” omnivores and the latter animals are “physiological” omnivores.

²⁸ I translate *aranya* as “wilderness” rather than “forest,” as “forest” is only one type of wilderness (Malamoud 1996, 76). “Forest” is better captured by *vana* (“a forest, wood, grove, thicket, quantity of lotuses or other plants growing in a thick cluster” [Monier-Williams]). Moreover, *aranya* and “wilderness” share connotative similarities. As Malamoud notes, *aranya* derives from *arāna*, meaning “foreign, distant” (MW). “Wilderness” similarly refers to foreign and distant territories. In addition, according to the Vedic *grāma-aranya* binary, anywhere outside of the *grāma* is not only foreign but also uncultivated and uncultured. “Wilderness” in the general sense also implies both the lack of cultivation and civilization.

²⁹ Throughout I use “farmed animals” in place of either “farm animals” or “livestock.” As mentioned in a previous note, the word “farmed” instead of “farm” foregrounds the material history of “farming” to which animals have been subjected to by humans. “Livestock” is problematic not only owing to its popular resonance with specifically Western industrial farming practices, but also its uncritical identification of animals as human stock or inventory.

occasionally all three.³⁰ At the other end of the residential spectrum, as Charles Malamoud and Francis Zimmerman have convincingly demonstrated, both Vedic and Hindu understandings of “wilderness” (as well as *jāṅgala*/jungle) not only include subdivisions, but their opposition to “village” derives less from topography than from “religious and social significance.”³¹ Also included in the section on residential taxonomies are groupings based on habitat, yet here framed narrowly as a division of animals based on their physiological compatibilities to air, land, or water. Finally, while I do treat it as a distinct category, I highlight how sacrificability is closely linked to residentiality, even if also including an unmistakable quasi-anatomical element. In Vedic texts an animal that may be rightly sacrificed—a *paśu*, in the technical sense—is one that is composed of a sacrificial quality called *medha*. *Medha* is a *substantial* sacrificial quality, one literally present in the physiology of the *paśu*, and hence we may view it as anatomically present and expressive.³² However, as sacrificability coincides with an animal’s residential status as “village” (with the former designation arguably grounded in the latter), we arrive at a situation not unlike dietary habits being categorized as “anatomical” given their strong coincidence with pedal structure. Regardless of the satisfactoriness of this model, I simply propose it here as a heuristic. While I recognize that not everything will align or settle perfectly within the model, I expect that the results will warrant this initial simplification.

Anatomical Taxonomies

I maintain that in Vedic sources anatomical classifications are secondary to residential ones with respect to cosmological and ethical import. Nevertheless, both frameworks consistently co-operate to establish

³⁰ Olivelle 2002a, 10; Rau 1997.

³¹ Malamoud 1996, 75.

³² I make an important terminological distinction between sacrificability and sacrificability. The former refers to the quality of being related, or involved, in any way, with the (Vedic) sacrifice, while the latter refers the quality of being fit for slaughter in the (Vedic) sacrifice. To give an example, an altar is a sacrificial item but not a sacrificable one.

and detail a world of “others” with whom “we” interact according to myriad prescriptions and proscriptions. Taxonomical structures continually reinforce one another, so while the divinization of a *varṇa*-based hierarchy exclaims: “as in heaven, so too on Earth,”³³ the anatomization of said hierarchy corroborates the pattern, adding: “as on Earth, so too in the body.” Vedic materials cite the body and mind as sites of the inscription of social class, and thereby profess an ontologization of function, applicable to both humans and nonhumans alike.³⁴

Propagation/Generation

The manner in which an animate entity generates and reproduces reveals its nature—to an observer—as an animal or plant. A similar standard derives from the observation of motility, whereby an independently mobile or “rootless” entity is deemed an animal and a stationary or “rooted” entity a plant. This basic division is mentioned repeatedly in the context of food and the eaters of food.³⁵

Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 2.3.1.10 states: “That which affords (the means of) subsistence is of two kinds; namely, either rooted or rootless. On both of these, which belong to the gods, men subsist. Now animals (*paśus*) are rootless and plants are rooted. From the rootless animals (*paśus*) eating the rooted plants and drinking water, that juice is produced.”³⁶

A more exacting schema appeals to propagative processes, demarcating those born from embryonic sacs (*jarāyujā*), those born from eggs (*aṇḍajā*), those born from moisture (*svedajā*), and those born from sprouts (*udbhijā*).³⁷ The fourth category, those “born from sprouts,” refers to trees and plants. The other three categories refer to animal life, at least broadly speaking, as the status of “those

³³ And vice versa, see Smith 1994, 87–124.

³⁴ Holdrege 2015, 11–20; Holdrege 1998.

³⁵ Smith 1994, 46–48, 210–212.

³⁶ Also ŚB 1.8.3.15, ŚB 5.1.3.3; Cf. Smith 1994, 211.

³⁷ AU 3.3; Cf. ChU 6.3.1, which only contains three categories, lacking insects or “those born from moisture.” The categories are later listed at MDh 1.43–1.46.

“born from moisture”—insects and other small, liminal creatures—is far from apparent, nor regarded as a pressing cosmological or ethical concern. The entities born from embryonic sacs and eggs—mammals, reptiles, birds, fish, and other aquatic creatures—constitute the bulk of taxonomic attention in Vedic and post-Vedic sources. In later sources one also encounters a division based on habitat that does similar, but by no means identical, work, classifying sac- and egg-born animals into those of the sky, land, and air. What both schemata apparently attempt to accomplish (with the former reproductive categorization being more successful), is the isolation of not only “land” animals from other animals but specifically sac-born animals—mammals—from other animals.³⁸

While this division will be discussed in the upcoming section on residential taxonomies, it is telling that as early as the R̥gveda we see a firm division of animal life based on *where on land* the animals dwell. R̥gveda 10.90.8 offers a threefold classification of animals into those of the air, the wilderness, and the village.³⁹ There is no mention of aquatic creatures whatsoever and while this gap could conceivably derive from a lack of consistent contact between the Vedic pastoralists and aquatic life (or a heavy reliance of the former on the latter), much more plausible is that water animals have relatively little cosmological and ethical importance (and the two—contact and concern—tend to go hand-in-hand).⁴⁰ Birds, by contrast, not only do not spend all of their lives airborne, but many of them do not fly at all, or hardly at all. When flying, birds occupy the visible zone between heaven and earth

³⁸ Framing this an isolation of “mammals” is somewhat misleading. The category of “those born from embryonic sacs” more so illustrates a move to consolidate those animals most “like us”—humans—which we now categorize and refer to as “mammals.”

³⁹ RV 10.90.8: “It [the sacrifice] was made into the animals: those of the air (and both) those that belong to the wilderness and those that belong to the village.”

⁴⁰ In this context, by “cosmological and ethical importance” I mean importance for sacrificial ritual. In the Vedic period *dharma* is a ritual category rather than a social category. The meaning of the term, and with it what we may call “ethics,” shifts over time owing largely to movement away from village-centered, external, animal-sacrificing ritual. See Holdrege 2002, 219–222.

and are hardly ignorable. Moreover, when grounded these animals frequently venture into human settlements and, as we will later see, birds such as chickens can be classified as “village animals.” Other birds are occasionally categorized as “wilderness” animals. Yet as these designations generally surface in the later Dharma literature, the key point for the moment is that a primary concern of these anatomical (and residential) taxonomies is the isolation of animals most like us, with “like us” carrying a meaning as “thin” as those beings who are intermittently present in our life-worlds (such as birds flying overhead), or as “thick” as those beings who anatomically resemble us (such as monkeys) or upon whom we heavily rely (such as cows and goats).

The classification based on propagation/generation successfully boundaries land mammals from all other animals, and the remaining anatomical taxonomies almost entirely pertain to land mammals.

Pedalism

An early but relatively insignificant anatomical classification differentiates bipeds (*dvipad*) from quadrupeds (*catuspad*). This division neglects the “two-footedness” of birds or any other animals besides humans who travel on the ground on two legs. As such the Vedic bipedal/quadrupedal distinction only applies to land animals—village and wilderness animals—and hence apparently only “those born from embryonic sacs.”

In the R̥gveda and elsewhere, the recurrent phrase “the two-footed and the four footed” is used euphemistically to refer either to *all* animals (including humans), all land animals, or all humans and their farmed animals.⁴¹ Most often the final meaning—humans and their farmed animals—is intended, especially when utilized in divine petitions for protection. See, for example, R̥gveda 10.38.11: “To both

⁴¹ *davipade catuspade* [ca *paśave*] at RV 3.62.14; *davipādaścatuspādo* at RV 8.27.12; See AV 2.34.1; TS 4.3.4.3, 5.2.9.4–5.

our breeds, o gods, to the two-footed and the four-footed, extend shelter”; and Ṛgveda 7.54.1: ‘When we entreat you, favor us in return: become weal for our two-footed, weal for our four-footed”; and Ṛgveda 10.97.20: “Let our two-footed and four-footed all be free of affliction.” These verses refer to domesticated animals and their domesticators, with “the two-footed and the four-footed” denoting the human and nonhuman animals of the Vedic village.

Regarding the other two less common meanings—all animals or all land animals—it is useful to note that when employed adjectively, the phrase “the two-footed and four-footed” is most often accompanied by the noun *paśu*, which is translatable as “animal” in the broadest sense. Narrower technical usages characterize *paśu* as a specific sort of animal, but this is a later development.⁴² Olivelle underscores that in Ṛgveda 10.90, “*paśūn*” (plural form of *paśu*) refers to all animals—“air” animals (birds) as well as “village” and “wilderness” animals.⁴³ However, for the most part, birds are not *paśus* in the technical sense but only in a loose sense. There is no reference to “footedness” in this hymn, but we may compare it with Ṛgveda 1.49.3 which, while lacking inclusion of the noun *paśu*, classifies all animals as including birds, bipeds, and quadrupeds: “Even the winged birds and the two-footed and four-footed, o silvery Dawn, have set forth following your regulations of time, from the ends of heaven.” Similarly, Ṛgveda 10.121.3 asks, “[W]ho is lord of the two-footed and four-footed creatures here—Who is the god to whom we should do homage with our oblation?” The term *paśus* is absent from this second verse as well, yet the compound “the two-footed and four-footed” functions synecdochally referring to “all animals,” perhaps also including birds and fish. This global interpretation garners further support from the fact that the hymn is cosmogonic, with the preceding line of the very

⁴² Olivelle 2002a, 7–8, n. 4.

⁴³ While there is no mention of aquatic animals in this verse, the verse still appears to be categorizing all animals under these three categories (or at least those of cosmological concern).

same verse asking: “Who became king of the breathing, blinking, moving world?” It stands to reason that the “the breathing, blinking, moving world” includes all animals, not only humans and their farmed animals.

Minor details and exceptions aside, the division into those who walk on two legs and those who walk on four legs isolates human beings from all other animals. While this division is a feature of Vedic cosmology, it has relatively little impact on hierarchies of value. Pedalism provides no means to further distinguish all remaining animals from one another. The ability to stand and locomote on two legs is given much less prominence in Vedic and post-Vedic thought than in Western thinking about the human/animal divide, which imbues bipedalism with a sense of progress through the human “elevation” to two legs. As we will encounter time and time again, this relative lack of attention to pedalism (as but one example) does not remove anthropocentrism from South Asian thought, but rather it bases it on features other than an allegedly bestowed or developed capacity for bipedal locomotion. Pedal *structure*, on the other hand (or should we say, foot), is a crucial criterion in anatomical taxonomies, even if given limited attention in Vedic sources compared to Dharma texts.

Pedal Structure

There may be no one else “like us” when it comes to footedness, but this is not the case for “digitatedness.” Many other animals besides humans are five-clawed/five-nailed (*pañcanakha*), and these animals approach the fore in later discussions about residence, sacrificability, and consumption. Yet cosmogonically and cosmologically speaking, hoofed (nonclawed) animals are considered much more often than other animals, and at times what is implied by “four-footed animals” are precisely those animals with hooves, and specifically farmed animals

In an early cosmogonic passage from the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (ca. eight century BCE), highlighted by Brian Smith, following the generation of the human man (*puruṣa*), the human woman,

and cows, there emerge single-hoofed/whole-hoofed (*ekasāpha*) animals and then double-hoofed/cloven-hoofed (*dviśāpha*) animals. Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad 1.4.1–4 explicitly refers to male and female horses and donkeys as whole-hoofed, as from them “were born the whole-hoofed animals.” Alternatively, the passage states that from male and female goats and sheep “were born goats and sheep,” thus not explicitly referring to goats and sheep as “cloven-hoofed animals. Nevertheless, the category “goats and sheep” (*ajāvayah*) semantically functions as a foil to the aforementioned whole-hoofed class, thereby identifying goats and sheep as non-whole-hoofed or cloven-hoofed animals.⁴⁴ There are other cloven-hoofed animals besides goats and sheep, and this fact was not lost on the Vedic cosmologists. What is and is not included in this passage suggests which animals the composers felt were absolutely necessary to categorize. As a key example, while cows too are cloven-hoofed animals and should thereby be anatomically grouped with goats and sheep, their religio-cultural significance trumps anatomical affiliation in this cosmology of value and hence they are peculiarly isolated. Also, at the other end of the spectrum, following goats and sheep no additional animals are listed, except for the “very ants” who establish the nadir of this copulative cosmogony. The animals “between” sheep and ants are apparently irrelevant. Besides the critical sex/gender binary that runs through the entire narrative, the only distinctions provided are human/nonhuman, bovine/nonbovine, and whole-hoofed/cloven-hoofed. The importance of whole-hoofedness will become more apparent in the context of dietary rules, which place a taboo on eating such animals. Yet one may still wonder about the

⁴⁴ BAU 1.4.4: “She then thought to herself: ‘After begetting me from his own body (*ātman*), how could he copulate with me? I know—I’ll hide myself.’ So she became a cow. But he became a bull and again copulated with her. From their union cattle were born. Then she became a mare, and he a stallion; she became a female donkey, and he, a male donkey. And again he copulated with her, and from their union one-hoofed animals were born. Then she became a female goat, and he, a male goat; she became an ewe, and he, a ram. And again he copulated with her, and from their union goats and sheep were born. In this way he created every male and female pair that exists, down to the very ants.”

impetus to distinguish the whole-hoofed from the cloven-hoofed *at all*, and not merely those with phalanges from those with hooves. While the latter distinction has much more obvious significance—as the five-phalanged animals have paws that resemble our hands and feet and tend to be carnivorous or semi-carnivorous “like us”—the relevance of hoof structure is far less obvious, unless it was necessary to distinguish the horse from other village animals when devising sacrificial and dietary regulations.

Dentition

Akin to pedal structure, dental structure, while not highly emphasized in Vedic texts, is nonetheless present and over time only gains greater significance as a “scientific” classificatory measure. Once again, in the *puruṣasukta* of the Ṛgveda, after the division of animals into those of the air, wilderness, and village, the hymn states that “From it horses were born and whatever animals have teeth in both jaws. Cows were born from it. From it were born goats and sheep” (10.90.10). The verse subdivides the animals of the village into horses (and donkeys and mules), cows, and goats and sheep. This matches the cosmogonic passage from the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, which also divides animals into the categories of human/nonhuman, bovine/nonbovine, and whole-hoofed/cloven-hoofed. However, this time the division is based, explicitly and implicitly, on dental structure. Animals either have one row of incisors (*anyatodat*) or two rows of incisors (*ubhayatodat*), and this applies to *all* animals, whereas the bifurcation based on hoof structure is predicated on the exclusion of nonhoofed/five-clawed/five-nailed animals (including humans). Noteworthy is how cows are isolated once again even while anatomically aligning with “goats and sheep” in the class of having incisors in both jaws, in addition to them also having cloven hooves. Horses (and donkeys), by contrast, have two rows of incisors and are satisfactorily differentiated.

The overlap of hoof and dental structure is important. Patrick Olivelle maintains: “The members of the single-hoofed category also fall into the category of animals having two rows of incisor

teeth and are thus linked by their dental structure to the five-nailed carnivorous animals. The overlapping nature of the different classifications . . . is deliberate, I think, and plays a significant role in the dietary regulations.”⁴⁵ While dietary regulations will be explored at another time, the taxonomic extractability of horses and donkeys from the category of “goats and sheep” based on anatomical features—feet and teeth—is significant regardless of whether or not the significance lies, according to Olivelle, in a likeness to the “five-nailed carnivorous animals.” What is immediately apparent in the present context is the intention of the Vedic authors to divorce horses and donkeys from other farmed animals; this move occurs concurrently with a move to segregate cows as well, yet with the latter task facing a stiffer logical challenge given that bovines fail both pedal and dental tests for differentiation. It is almost as if, as is well known, the cow is deemed exceptional and is thus separable for reasons that supersede anatomy.⁴⁶

Dietary Habits

Akin to other anatomical classifications, dietary habits among animals receive short thrift in the Vedic texts in comparison to the Dharma and medical literature. However, key to our understanding of animal diets is the overall Vedic conceptualization of the world as “sequence of foods,” a “chain of being” comprised of only food and eaters of food. Smith colorfully expresses the situation: “Nature in the Veda was regarded as a hierarchically ordered set of Chinese boxes, or better, Indian stomachs.” Within this system of stomachs, each and every entity is but food for another and certain foods are proper to certain

⁴⁵ Olivelle 2002a, 10.

⁴⁶ The exceptionality of the horse and cow will be detailed in chapter 2. For a curious passage on the “inadequacy” of cows and horses, see AU 1.2.1–4: “Once these deities were created, they fell into this vast ocean here. It afflicted him with hunger and thirst. Those deities then said to him: ‘Find us a dwelling in which we can establish ourselves and eat food.’ So he brought a cow up to them, but they said: ‘That’s totally inadequate for us.’ Then he brought a horse up to them, but they said: ‘That’s totally inadequate for us.’ Finally he brought a man up to them, and they exclaimed: ‘Now, this is well made!’ for man is indeed well made.”

beings. To eat in accordance with one's cosmo-digestive rank is to act in accordance with the universal order of things.⁴⁷

The dietary ranking system was dominantly predetermined by physical and mental abilities, leading to a broad acceptance of nature's universal "law of the fish" (*"matsyānyāya"*), whereby bigger, stronger, and faster animals consume those naturally "below" them in a hierarchy of might and wit. This perspective is not dissimilar to conventional assumptions about the "dog eat dog" genome of the natural (and social) world, a "fact" endorsing the "survival of the fittest." At times, this unforgiving conception of the order of the world generates obligations to act in consonance with it, against it, or both. While Smith meticulously details how the distinction between foods and eaters of foods has clear and strong class and caste implications, I focus more (and more modestly) on the alleged propriety of ascribing herbivory, carnivory, and omnivory to groups of beings, specifically animals.⁴⁸

Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 11.1.6.19 paints the basic picture: "The eater of food and food indeed are everything here." "Here" Indian stomachs descend hierarchically from the gods to humans to animals and finally to plants, with each group feasting on the group that follows, concluding with plants "eating" rain or water.⁴⁹ In the ideal state of affairs the gods consume humans (the ideal *paśus*), humans eat animals, animals eat plants, and plants feed off water. The gods "consume" human beings by means of

⁴⁷ Zimmerman 1982, 1; Smith 1990, 177–178.

⁴⁸ See Smith 1994 and 1990. While the association of the different *varṇas* with specific classes of animals amounts to its own classification structure, which one may label "classized speciesism" or "casteised speciesism" (Narayanan 2018b), it is less a taxonomization of animals themselves than a means of (1) animalizing/subhumanizing human social classes, and (2) grafting the world of eaters and food onto social structures and relations. I will return to these themes in chapter 4.

⁴⁹ AĀ 2.3.1: "Plants and trees are food and animals are the eater, for animals eat plants and trees. Of these [animals], those who have two sets of incisors, and who are categorized in the [same] class [as that] of man are eaters of food; the other animals are food."; ŚB 10.3.4.4: "and the great one is Man, and the great (thing) of that great one are *paśus* (animals), for they are his food."; On rain, see TB 2.1.1.1: "as many drops fell down, that many plants were born [as food for animals]" (cited in Smith 1994, 232).

the sacrifice with its oblations.⁵⁰ While human stomachs both consume and derive energy from plant and animal matter, they do not need, in a strict physiological sense, to consume animal flesh, and thus are only behavioral omnivores. Yet despite universal human behavioral omnivory and the widespread presence of nonhuman physiological carnivores, the cosmic ordering of eaters and food imagines humans as the proper eaters of animals—humans are the ideal carnivores. Therefore in this imaginary humans are what we may term “symbolic” carnivores.⁵¹ Wendy Doniger states that “[w]hat animals are to us, we are to the gods,” but in reverse order we can alternatively conclude: what we are to the gods, animals are to us.⁵² Continuing this pattern, all animals are “symbolic” herbivores even though many, if not most of them, including “farmable” animals such as chickens, pigs, dogs, and cats, can and do consume animal matter in the actual world. Still, in the ideal order of things, all animals eat plants and plants “eat” water.

While humans’ consumption of plants in addition to their consumption of animals is hardly a serious cosmological dilemma, the existence of blatantly carnivorous animals such as lions does pose a legitimate problem for this “clear and elegant” digestive architecture of the world.⁵³ This is especially

⁵⁰ Doniger 2009, 152; Heesterman 1993; Malamoud 1975.

⁵¹ According to scientific research as well as even rudimentary observations, human beings do not require flesh to survive or thrive (other things being equal), and hence they are neither carnivores nor omnivores in a strict sense. A physiological carnivore would require nearly all of their calories to come from flesh, and an omnivore would require at least some to come from flesh. However, conceiving the terms in a behavioral (or historical) sense seems much more appropriate, for not only does it describe what humans and nonhumans have actually consumed for thousands of years, but also accounts for, dominantly in the human context, circumstantial factors such as climate, scarcity, and caloric requirements for labor. So while human carnivory (or even omnivory) is not a physiological fact, according to the Vedic worldview it is an ahistorical cosmological fact. I label it “symbolic” because in the imaginary Vedic order of things, animals are the food of humans, and exclusively so.

⁵² “What is most likely is that these texts are saying that human beings are, like all other animals, for to be sacrificed to the gods, that they are, as it were, livestock of the gods. What animals are to us, we are to the gods” (Doniger 2009, 152).

⁵³ Lincoln 1986, 200; Smith 1990; Zimmerman 1987, 159–179.

the case given the deep meanings of consumption, as Smith notes: “Food was not neutral, and feeding was not understood to be a regrettable necessary sacrifice of the other for one’s own survival. One cuisine was one’s adversary, and eating was the triumphant overcoming of one’s natural and social enemy.”⁵⁴ Therefore, if the world is inhabited only by food and eaters of food, and the taxon “human” implies that being’s monopoly on the consumption of animals, then what do we make of animals who not only reject their “proper” food (plants) but consume other animals similarly to their (that is, all animals) own assumed human eaters? At times animals such as lions even kill, consume, and digest humans. Here human “food” eats like its eater—the human—and occasionally even “eats” humans like the gods!

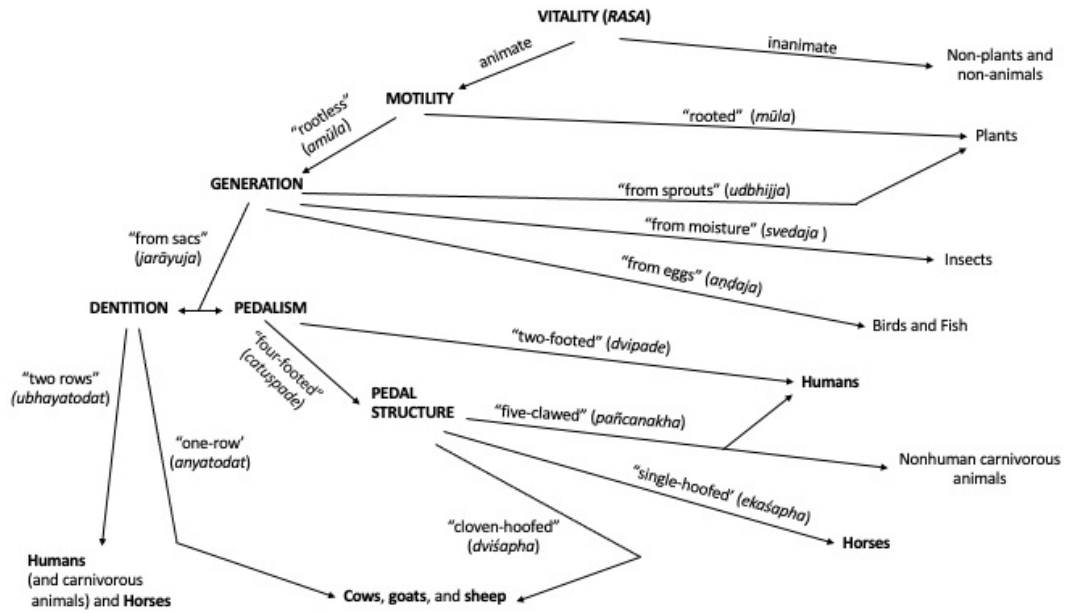
Turning to residential classifications, while “wilderness” and even “village” are indispensable categories for Vedic cosmology and taxonomies, they similarly create unignorable tensions by their recognition of beings and behaviors that deviate from ideal cosmic patterns. Bruce Lincoln seems accurate in asserting that “IE [Indo-European] thinking about food . . . was focused on the realm of culture, not nature.”⁵⁵ If food and its eaters are “indeed everything here,” then Vedic thinking about the world is not focused on the chaotic totality of “nature” but much more narrowly on the order of “culture” manifest in the Vedic village. In the actual village—no matter how nebulously construed—the interactions between human and animals are much closer to “symbolic” alimentation than they are in the world outside of the village—most village animals eat plants and village humans eat animals (in addition to plants). So perhaps we should revise Smith’s assertion to state that it is *culture* in the Veda, rather than *nature*, that is conceived as a series of Indian stomachs.

⁵⁴ Smith 1990, 185.

⁵⁵ Lincoln 1986, 200.

Anatomical classifications are organized in the following flowchart labeled *Figure 1*. The only missing element is diet, yet, as is indicated, carnivory typically aligns with being “five-clawed” (*pañcanakha*) and/or having two rows of incisors (*ubhayatodat*), though not without exceptions (for example, the horse).

Figure 1. Vedic Anatomical Classifications



Residential Taxonomies

In this section, residential taxonomies include those based on biological habitat and lived historical residence. I will discuss a third and related category of sacrificability in a separate section, for as we shall see, the notion of sacrificability is intimately connected to residential taxonomies.

Habitat

“Habitat” conventionally refers to “the place or environment where a plant or animal naturally or normally lives and grows,” with “naturally” and “normally” occupying critical functions but also remaining both vague and flexible. To clarify, I employ “habitat” to more specifically indicate the type of material environment—“vertically” speaking—the predominantly suits a being as determined by their biology. The division is rather simple: air, land, and water, corresponding to birds, land animals, and aquatic creatures, respectively. Interestingly, while fish are mentioned in Vedic sources, oftentimes with an individual fish serving as a figure in a narrative, there are no general classifications of sea creatures. While we can safely assume that the Vedic peoples in the northwest of the subcontinent had relatively minimal contact with and reliance upon aquatic animals, at least in contrast to their dependence upon land animals, their basic familiarity with these animals is evidenced through references in nontaxonomic contexts. Hence the question is not so much one of contact with sea creatures but of concern for them. As Hanns Peter Schmidt states: “It is remarkable that in the Ṛgveda the tripartite classification into animals of the earth, the air and the water is not attested. Ṛgveda 10.90.8 mentions the animals of the air (*vāyavya*) and then the wild (*āraṇyá*) and domestic (*grāmya*) ones. The water animals seem to be *consciously* ignored.”⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Schmidt 1980, 234, emphasis added; Olivelle writes that “[p]aralleling the cosmological classification of earth, water, and atmosphere, the early vedic sources already contain a threefold classification into land animals, birds, and fish” (2002a, 7). However, Olivelle does not give references for the sources of the threefold classifications including fish and I am unaware of them. See Schmidt (1980, 235) for a Jain account of this three-fold schema in the Uttarādhyayana Sūtra.

Further evidence for a lack of inclusion of aquatic life in the world of “culture” comes in the form of the tripartite division of the entire world into three spheres (*loka*): earth, middle region, and heaven.⁵⁷ As Olivelle states: “The Sanskrit terms for these three spheres—*bhūr*, *bhuvā*, *svā*—became sacred sounds, possibly because they contained the totality of the universe.”⁵⁸ In this worldview, the earth is the realm of humans and other land animals, the middle region that of birds, and heaven the abode of the gods. Despite examples of numerous references to “the waters” in Vedic and post-Vedic cosmogonies, “the waters” are primarily the realm of creation, not of cosmos. The waters are the “primordial soup” from which the world-proper emerges, the world of culture. As Pintchman concludes: “The primordial state of the undifferentiated cosmos is represented as formless water, which is the material matrix present at the dawn of creation, the unmanifest potential of the cosmos that must be disturbed in some way in order for differentiated creation to come about. When the waters are transformed, they become the earth.” Pintchman also states that “[a]s personal deities with qualities, the waters (*ap*) are depicted primarily as healing, purifying, life-giving, life-affirming, abundant, maternal goddesses, manifest as atmospheric, terrestrial, sacrificial, or in some other way tangibly liquid water.”⁵⁹

⁵⁷ RV 10.90.14; ŚB 2.1.4.11, 11.1.6.3, 11.8.8.1; KB 22.1–3; AB 5.32.

⁵⁸ Olivelle 1998a, 20; CU 2.23.2n: “Prajapati incubated the worlds, and, when they had been incubated, the triple Veda sprang from them. He incubated the triple Veda, and, when it had been incubated, these syllables “*bhūr*, *bhuvā*, *svā*” sprang from it.” Cf. AB 5.31–32; AU 1.1.4 does mention the waters, but in a more cryptic cosmogonic passage: “So he created these worlds—the flood, the glittering specks, the mortal, and the waters. Now, the flood is up there beyond the sky, and its foundation is the sky. The glittering specks are the intermediate world. The mortal is the earth, and what is underneath are the waters.”

⁵⁹ Pintchman 1994, 28–29, 24. See 22–30 for a full discussion of “the waters” in the Saṃhitās. See 43–46 for “the waters” in the Brāhmaṇas and 54–56 for the same in The Upaniṣads; For a clear example from the Saṃhitās, note RV 10.129.1-3: “The nonexistent did not exist, nor did the existent exist at that time. There existed neither the airy space nor heaven beyond. What moved back and forth? From where and in whose protection? Did water [*ambhas*] exist, a deep depth? Death did not exist nor deathlessness then. There existed no sign of night nor of day. That One breathed without wind by its independent will. There existed nothing else beyond that. Darkness existed, hidden by darkness, in the beginning. *All this was a signless ocean [salila]*” (emphasis added); Cf. RV 10.82.5–6, 10.121.7; ŚB 11.1.6.1: “Verily, in

Yet Pintchman's second description merely asserts the "biodivinity"⁶⁰ of material water or bodies of water, praised for their magical healing powers and other use-values for human or their embodiment of, or even identification as, deities capable of conferring boons and other benefits. The actual biological residents of these waters, specifically animals, are hardly of cosmological concern. Thus even prior to gauging the logistical challenge of classifying aquatic animals from one another, due to both infrequency of contact and difficulty in observation (as is also the case with birds and wilderness animals), there remains the conceptual fact of aquatic animals simply not being an important matter for the Vedic thinkers.

The middle region, by contrast, which is one of the three spheres in the tripartite division of the cosmos, is inhabited by air animals, namely birds. Akin to fish, birds are absent in classificatory discussions in the Vedic literature.⁶¹ Olivelle does note, however, as is also the case with aquatic animals, that some birds are included in Vedic sacrifices: "Although wild animals and even birds are included in the list of animals at a horse sacrifice, they are not killed but released and their inclusion may have been purely for the sake of completeness so that *the rite includes the sacrifice of all beings*."⁶² Sacrificability will be discussed later, but the key feature at present is how even though birds (and wilderness animals) are not subject to classification to the extent as land (specifically village) animals, they are identified and accepted as part of the world that must be accounted for in a sacrificial context. In short, the world-proper is a world with birds and somewhat, but much less so, with fish. This fact is

the beginning this (universe) was water, nothing but a sea of water. The waters desired, 'How can we be reproduced?'"

⁶⁰ Tomalin 2016. I return to this concept in Chapter 4.

⁶¹ Olivelle 2002a, 10.

⁶² Olivelle 2002a, 9; TS 5.5 includes a crocodile, a fish, a dolphin (!), a crab, and an otter as animals to be included in the *aśvamedha*; See Smith 1994, 278, n. 19 for references to "the 111 and 180 animal victims at the *Aśvamedha*, divided into village and jungle."; Cf. Doniger 2009, 152.

presumably also a product of the physical difficulty of capturing birds as it is with keeping aquatic animals alive out of their marine habitats. Later texts will introduce novel classifications for air animals, yet these seem to be but thinly obscured attempts to separate carnivorous birds from herbivorous ones for the sake of dietary protocols. Also, as the bulk of this attention abounds in medical texts, which are almost exclusively focused on the health benefits of substances rather than taxonomizing living animals, the result is more so a catalog of post-mortem meats than a catalog of living creatures.⁶³

Residence

There are no categories more complicated and consequential than those pertaining to residence, here crucially distinguished from habitat. While the latter, as I conceive it, is more so an anatomical-atmospheric category (meaning a living zone as it relates to biological compatibility), “residence” refers to where animals live owing to direct and indirect historical interventions by human (and/or nonhuman) actors—as well as any other factors—in addition to biological compatibility and evolutionary adaptation. Domestication is an example of a direct intervention that determines animals’ zones of residence, with deforestation and the resultant migration of select animals into urban areas representative of an indirect intervention. Much more fundamentally, an animal’s residence is simply where they actually live rather than where they allegedly “naturally” live. In a Vedic context, the two major areas of residence are the village (*grāma*) and wilderness (*araṇya*), inhabited, respectively, by village animals (*grāmya*) and wilderness animals (*āraṇya*).⁶⁴

⁶³ Zimmerman 1987.

⁶⁴ These categories are distinct from, even if at times overlapping and operating synonymously with, *paśu* (sacrificable animal) and *mṛga* (wild/huntable animal), which will be discussed in the context of sacrificability.

R̥gveda 10.90.6-8 reminds us of the three categories of animals created from the original sacrifice: air animals, village animals, and wilderness animals.⁶⁵ Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 8.4.3.11-15 similarly divides all land animals into the major groups of *grāmya* and *āraṇya*. Malamoud arguably over-simplifies in asserting that “[t]he entirety of the inhabitable [Vedic] world is divided between *grāma* and *araṇya*,” yet there is ample support for this claim in the context of the primary division of animal groups and also plants.⁶⁶ This foundational binary also appears to derive from, and hinge upon, the social history of the Vedic peoples themselves, who were nomad-pastoralists who only occasionally engaged in settling and settled plant and animal agriculture.⁶⁷

Wilhelm Rau (1997) initiates a brief analysis of the term *grāma* by means of the second-century BCE grammarian Patañjali:

This word *grāma* has many meanings. There is [the case where] it denotes a group of sheds, as in [the sentence]: the *grāma* is burnt. There is [the case where] it denotes what is surrounded by an enclosure, as in [the sentence]: he has entered the *grāma*. There is [the case where] it denotes the people [i.e. the inhabitants], as in [the sentence]: the *grāma* has gone; the *grāma* had come. There is [the case where] it denotes [all that has been stated above] together with the [adjacent] jungle, together with the boundaries, together with the open fields, as in [the sentence]: a *grāma* has been obtained [through a land grant].⁶⁸

By the second-century BCE, *grāma* had thus come to mean: (1) a group of structures or “sheds”; (2) the territory enclosed by a fence or other demarcating element; (3) a group of people; (4) all of the above,

⁶⁵ Cf. Atharvaveda 11.2.24; Also notice the similarity the ancient Iranian classification at Yasna 71.9: “We worship all the animals, those in the water and those in the earth, the flying ones, those roaming in freedom (the wilderness), and those attached to the pasture” (cited and translated in Schmidt 1980, 214).

⁶⁶ For animals, ŚB 12.7.3.19; AV 2.24.4, 3.31.3; TS 6.1.8.1, 7.2.2.1; For plants, ŚB 11.1.7.2, 12.7.2.9, TS 5.2.5.5, 5.4.9.1–2, 7.3.4. For one selection containing both, see ŚB 12.7.3.19.

⁶⁷ Brereton and Jamison 2020, 9–11; Doniger 2009, 111–14, 136–37; Olivelle 1992, 29–33; Thapar 2003, 110–117.

⁶⁸ Vyākaraṇa-Mahābhāṣya on 1.1.7.4, cited in Rau 1997, 203.

that is, the structures, the enclosed territory, and the people. Rau then follows with their own assessment that

Of these four meanings, the third is undoubtedly the oldest, and the only one attested in the earlier strata of the Vedic literature. The term denotes in the first place a train of herdsmen roaming about with cattle, oxcarts and chariots in quest of fresh pastures and booty; secondly, a temporary camp of such a train, sometimes used for a few days only and sometimes for a few months at the most.

Rau asserts that the initial, primary meaning of *grāma* lacks any emphasis on location, for the term refers to the group of herdsmen itself, no matter wherefrom or whereto the group travels. Only secondarily does the word indicate a temporary camping site which, notably, is still not a fixed settlement. Later *grāma* assumes a sense of fixity, particularly in the sense of “a *grāma* has been obtained [through a land grant],” but this is a subsequent phenomenon. The initial focus is on people, not place.⁶⁹

Olivelle agrees with Rau’s definitional chronology, noting that “during the vedic period it is likely . . . that the term [*grāma*] refers to a roving band of pastoral people who moved about with their animals.”⁷⁰ Malamoud corroborates the point, stressing that *grāma* “more often designates a

⁶⁹ For an interesting parallel in the post-Vedic period, see Barbara Holdrege’s discussion of the multiple meaning of the term *vraja* in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa (2015, 201–204). For the present context, the following statement is relevant: “The Bhāgavata’s narrative distinguishes Vraja, as a nomadic cowherd encampment, from fixed inhabited places such as *purās*, cities, and *grāmas*, villages” (201). By the time of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa (ninth century CE)—and since many centuries prior—*grāma* had developed to signify a “fixed inhabited place” rather than an “encampment.” Vraja also offers another instance of a term denoting relationships between humans and their animals. Holdrege notes: “An extended analysis of the terms Vraja and Gokula in the tenth book of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa reveals that the two terms, along with the term *goṣṭha* (literally, “cow-station”), are often used interchangeably to refer to a station, or encampment, of cowherds and their cows” (202). And akin to the *grāma* (village)/*araṇya* (wilderness) relationship, “Vraja, as an inhabited cowherd encampment, is thus often distinguished in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa from *vana*, the uncultivated forest, that surrounds the cowherd encampment and to which the cowherds go forth each day to pasture their cows” (202).

⁷⁰ Olivelle 2002a, 10–11, n. 10.

concentration of people or a network of institutions than it does a set territory.”⁷¹ Etymologically *grāma* denotes a “troop,” and as this troop migrates in search of “pastures and booty,” we can conceive how *saṃgrāma*, the “coming together of the *grāma*,” evolves to mean “battle, war, combat.” Malamoud contrasts the Sanskrit *grāma* with the Latin *pagus* (“district,” “canton”), distinguishing the former’s emphasis on people from the latter, which, derived from the Latin root *pāg-/pāk-*,⁷² denotes a “fastened” or “staked” area, a demarcated territory.

As for the “secondary” meaning, Rau admits that occasionally the temporary camps of roving bands were fixed for long enough periods to enable rudimentary forms of agriculture. However, such intermittent and site-variable forms of settling hardly constituted “villages” in the sense that either we now understand the term that was utilized in late- and post-Vedic sources such as the Arthaśāstra. This conclusion aligns with the well-established phenomenon of the absence of fixed temple structures in the Vedic period, even though Vedic traditions not only revolve around ritual and sacrifice, but also entail the construction of temporary-though-robust sacrificial arenas for their intricate performance.⁷³ Malamoud also notes the dearth of specifics about the spatial organization of the *grāma* itself, contrary to what one would expect from people not only obsessively meticulous in their ritual practices but also deeply concerned about the identification of the village vis-à-vis the wilderness. This absence of

⁷¹ Malamoud 1996, 75; MacDonnell and Keith 1912, 245.

⁷² The Latin root can be traced to the Proto-Indo-European root *peh₂ǵ-/peh₂k-*: to attach. The Latin *pāg-/pāk-*, meaning to attach, fasten, or fix, not only generates *pagus* or “district,” but also *pecus*, meaning a single “herd animal” or “livestock animal.” Contrast this with how the same PIE root generates the Sanskrit *paś*, which not only produces *pāśa*, meaning a “snare, trap, tie, noose,” but also *paśu*, which, like *pecus*, denotes a “livestock animal.” Monier-Williams, capturing the original dynamic of fastening or fixing, defines *paśu* as “orig. ‘any tethered animal.’”

⁷³ Doniger 2009, 104, 203; Heesterman 1993; Staal 1996.

information stands out in comparison to other ancient societies whose village physical organization was a subject of consistent concern.⁷⁴ In sum, all signs point to a *grāma* as a people on the move.

To summarize: the term *grāma* originally referred to the relationships between people and their animals rather than the geographic location and residential arrangements of those people and animals. This meaning shifted over time, and by the time of the Arthaśāstra (ca. second century CE) the word signified a fixed village rather than a mere “concentration of people” or “network of institutions.”⁷⁵ Importantly (and expectedly), this pivot contributed to a modification in the meaning of the derivative term *grāmya*, or “village animals.” Previously the term referred solely to the animals moving with their roaming caretakers, yet with the burgeoning physical establishment of the late-Vedic *grāma*, *grāmya* morphs to signify, if only at times, nonfarmed animals merely residing in the established village. As a result, in the later Dharma literature, *grāmya* refers these nonfarmed village-living animals (such as chickens and pigs), yet at other times it refers to those animals in addition to farmed village-living animals (such as horses, donkeys, and camels). The term is also at times used to designate farmed animals grazing in the pastures *around* the village (such as cows, goats, and sheep). This perplexing multi-usage will be explored in the following chapter, but for the moment we should note that in the early and mid-Vedic periods *grāma* functionally meant “our [moving] community,” with *āranya* signifying the space, beings, and dynamics functioning “outside our [moving] community.”

⁷⁴ Malamoud 1996, 76; MacDonnell and Keith 1912, 245.

⁷⁵ For the date of the Arthaśāstra, see Olivelle 2013, 25–31. As one example of the shift in, and expansion of, the meaning of *grāma* by this time, note AŚ 2.1.2: “He [the ruler] should settle villages [*grāmaṃ*] with mostly Śūdra agriculturalists (see 6.1.8), each village consisting of a minimum of 100 families and a maximum of 500 families, with boundaries extending one or two *Krośas*, and affording mutual protection.”

Consequently, *grāmya* or village animals thereby referred to “our animals,” with *āranya* or wilderness animals referring to “not our animals.”⁷⁶

A brief preliminary note on the relationship of the village and sacrifice is in order. Regardless of its lack of geographical or architectural fixity, the *grāma*, or village-on-the-hoof, marks the epicenter of the ordered cosmos owing to its constancy as the site of sacrifice (*yajña*). The world order (*ṛta*) is ensured by proper conduct, which centers on the maintenance of the “network of institutions” and relationships constitutive of the Vedic village. Sacrifice is proper conduct par excellence, for the world order would collapse without the regular and precise execution of sacrificial rituals.⁷⁷ Expectedly, sacrifice in the early and mid-Vedic period is exclusively a “village affair.”⁷⁸ As for the relationship of the village to animals and to sacrifice, the “village” status of animals (including human beings) is an ahistorical, ontological designation unrelated to actual human activity. In other words, village animals *inherently* belong to the village—they always have and always will. This is evident in the aforementioned cosmogonic accounts wherein village animals emerge from the original sacrifice already pre-packaged as “villaged.” There is no acknowledgement of the process by which nonhumans

⁷⁶ In Malamoud’s words: “The village is here, the forest is over there. Similarly, the forest is that towards which one heads when one leaves the village. Might we not, then, define this *āranya* as that which is external to the village?” (1996, 76). Which is not to say that others’ village animals were not also “village animals,” rather that the kinds of animals that were “ours” and *could* be ours were “village animals.” This division is not absolute, but nearly virtually so (77).

⁷⁷ Malamoud 1996, 77–91; Heesterman 1993; Smith 1989; Staal 199; On the early history of the word *dharma*, especially as it pertains to sacrifice-as-world-foundation/support, see Brereton 2004, Holdrege 2004, and Horsch 2004. One statement from Brereton is informative, particularly as to how proper—and existential—conduct in the Vedic period is concentrated on ritual performance: “In either case, however, the ‘support,’ upon which the gods take their seat, is again the sacrifice. Since this sacrifice is itself the foundation (*dhárman*) of heaven, *dhárman* here signifies the ritual as the foundation for the gods and the world” (2004, 451).

⁷⁸ Malamoud 1996, 78.

become associated with—and actually defined by—the human village.⁷⁹ They are ever-farmed and thus (at least most of them) ever-engineered for sacrifice.⁸⁰ It is their eternal *telos* to be ritually slaughtered.

Jonathan Z. Smith’s insight into theorizing sacrifice is quite pertinent: “Sacrifice is, in part, a meditation on domestication. A theory of sacrifice must begin with the domesticated animal and with the *socio-cultural process* of domestication itself.”⁸¹ Zimmerman adds: “On the level of religious representation, sacrifice—even *blood sacrifice which presupposes the raising of livestock* among which victims are chosen—is indissociable from cultivated land.”⁸² Hence we encounter a very early and consequential (for animals) example of what Annemarie Mol refers to as “ontological politics”:

Ontological politics is a composite term. It talks of *ontology* which in standard philosophical parlance defines what belongs to the real, the conditions of possibility we live with. If the term 'ontology' is combined with that of 'politics' then this suggests that the conditions of possibility are not given. That reality does not precede the mundane practices in which we interact with it, but is rather shaped within these practices. So the term *politics* works to underline this active mode, this process of shaping, and the fact that its character is both open and contested.⁸³

⁷⁹ Staples describes cows as “seemingly *at home* among the jumble of pedestrians, cyclists, autorickshaws, motorbikes, and trucks” (2020, 3). There is the sense here—albeit historical—that “village” cows are now “at home” in the city as well.

⁸⁰ “[T]he animals serving as victims in blood sacrifice are thereby assuming the function for which they were created in the scale of rebirths” (Zimmerman 1987, 190). This claim is accurate regardless of whether the worldview includes the notion of rebirth or not. Vedic casuistry explained why this had to be so, and why the animal victim consented to its immolation. For an interesting Tantric variation on this theme, see Somadeva Vasudeva 2010.

⁸¹ Smith 2003, 333, emphasis added; Bulliet speculates on the link (and order) between the two, even in if not absolute: “So many examples of sacrifice known from historical sources involve domestic animals that at first blush it appears that wild animals were never sacrificed. If true, this might imply that animal sacrifice only arose after domestication. But the sacrifice of wild animals is not unheard of” (2005, 126); Also see Heesterman 1993, 23; For archaeological and bioarcheological material on pastoralism and domestication in ancient West and South Asia, see Meadow 1981, 1991, 1992, 1996; Meadow and Patel 2003, 2017; Patel 1997, 2009, 2015; Patel and Meadow 1998.

⁸² Zimmerman 1987, 60, emphasis added.

⁸³ Mol 1999, 74–75. See also Mol 2002.

From a Vedic perspective, the village and its incorporation of animals and plants is not a socio-cultural process. Vedic “reality” *does* in fact “precede the mundane practices in which we interact with it.” The village is a not an “open and contested” site but rather an immediate and intrinsic ethical-residential feature of the universe. The cosmos is always partitioned into the village and the wilderness, with all of its beings belonging to one site or the other.

In the late first millennium BCE, the geographic site of sacrifice shifts with the rise of *śramana* traditions, dislodging earlier meanings and values attached to both “village” and “wilderness.” Ritual performance not only migrates—though not exclusively—from the village to the wilderness, but also individualizes, internalizes, and even anatomizes, when it is not rejected outright.⁸⁴ Accordingly, during the late-Vedic period “village” and “wilderness” take on new meanings and values owing to changes in residential patterns and religious allegiances. Nevertheless, prior to this period of redefinition and reevaluation, stemming from the fact that sacrifice was understood to ensure the orderliness of the world and village elites both performed sacrifices (as ritual specialists/Brahmins) and patronized them (as wealthy householders/*grhasthas*), the performance of sacrifice was precisely what marked a community or person as quintessentially “civilized.”⁸⁵ To be civilized in this manner was to be part of the

⁸⁴ Brereton remarks how in the Mahābhārata the R̥gveda relocates from the village to the hermitage [in the wilderness]: “Thus the hermitage is a place where the R̥gveda is recited and where sacrifices are carried out, and both recitation of the R̥gveda and ritual contribute to the sanctity of the place.” (2020, 196); On the question of the endurance of the logics of Vedic ritual beyond the Vedic period, see Olivelle 1992, 60–67; For an example of the continuation of such ritual logics even in “heterodox” Jain traditions, see Harikeśa’s explanation in the Uttarādhyayana Sūtra: “Austerity is my sacrificial fire, my life is the place where the fire is kindled. Mental and physical efforts are my ladle for the oblation and my body is the dung fuel for the fire, my actions my firewood. I offer up an oblation praised by the wise seers consisting of my restraint, effort and calm” (US 12.44–45, cited in Dundas 2002, 15).

⁸⁵ This runs counter to modern thinking that frames sacrificial rituals (especially those involving animal killing) as “barbaric” and antithetical to “civilized” behavior. But even as a necessary act of “civilization,” there remained ambivalence about the sacrificial killing of animals (Houben 1999). For example, while various explanations may be given for the placement of the sacrificial stake (*yūpa*) outside the ritual perimeter, one reason seems to be a basic uneasiness with the act of slaughter—no

community or world that had superior value, or value at all, or was “real” in Olivelle’s sense: “The Brahmanical system of ethics works almost exclusively at the level of social groups, and individuals become real only as members of such groups.”⁸⁶ The designation of “civilized” derives as much from the existential function of the sacrifice as from its assignment to a particular social group—Brahmins—including the performance of sacrifice in the “well-formed” elite language of Sanskrit, with its array of sacred, exclusive, and world-altering utterances.⁸⁷ Furthermore, given the centrality of and emphases on fire, cooking, offering, and eating in Vedic ritual, we can perceive a convergence of civility, social grouping, killing, animals, and food in the concept of the *grāma* itself. As Annette Reed notes: “[F]ood preparation and consumption serve as cosmogonical metonym, and sacrifice is emblematic of all that is ‘civilized.’”⁸⁸

Still challenging is understanding the nuances of the category “village animals” even if we have a working idea of what “village” itself signifies. This complexity derives the varying accounts of the number of village animals and the terminological overlap of *grāmya* with *paśu*, the latter we can

matter how “civilized”—and thus there was a desire to push it out of sight. Heesterman notes how “the wooden sacrificial post [is] put up at the eastern extremity of the sacrificial ground like a boundary mark [separating *grāma* from *aranya*]” (1993, 30). Moreover, as is well-known, the killing of animals in sacrifice is routinely referred to as “quietening,” through the use the verb *sam* meaning “to quiet” or “to pacify,” and the killer referred to as the *samitr* or “quietener.” ŚB 3.8.1.15 describes how this “quietening” should be done either by holding the animal’s mouth closed or tying it closed with a rope. Houben notes how the horse in the *aśvamedha* was killed “by means of a cloth saturated with clarified butter” (1999, 188, n. 21). Killing by muzzling has become a source of controversy in Tibet, given the excessive suffering it purportedly causes (Barstow 2017, 74; Gayley 2017, 39).

⁸⁶ Olivelle 1992, 28.

⁸⁷ “Sanskrit” comes from the noun *saṃskṛtam*, itself derived from the verb *sam* (“together”) + *kr* (to make, to do, to form).

⁸⁸ Reed 2014, 128; Sacrifice and eating are not only emblematic of being civilized but being of the superior gender as well. Smith notes: “Eating was both the source and proof of virility, of *virya*; conversely, emaciation was juxtaposed with fear (ŚB 1.6.4.4). One’s food ‘is’ one’s virility (ŚB 2.2.1.12, 12.2.2.7–8), and therefore to take away the food of another is to take away the rival’s masculinity” (1990, 179).

tentatively be translated “sacrificable animal.” Vedic and post-Vedic sources list between five and seven village animals, with the seven being the cow, horse, goat, sheep, human, ass, camel, and mule.⁸⁹ Smith notes that “[o]ther, and much more common taxonomies of village animals number only five (excluding from consideration the ass, as well as the mule or camel) and refer to them simply as ‘*paśus*,’ or ‘the animals.’”⁹⁰ Leaving aside the subject of how *paśu* occasionally means “the animals” or “all animals,”⁹¹ when confined to the five—cow, horse, goat, sheep, human—the conflated category of *paśu/grāmya* omits the ass, mule, and camel. These three animals are farmed animals physically residing within the *grāma*, but they ultimately fail to qualify as sacrificable animals. Hence while sacrificability tends to imbue the category *grāmya* with its moral-cosmological force, the two categories are not truly equivalent. The distinction between *grāmya* and *paśu* increases in the Dharma literature with the expansion of the term *grāmya* to include the “village pig” and the “village fowl,” which are also considered nonsacrificable village-living animals akin to the ass, mule, and camel. To Smith’s credit, they acknowledge that the term *paśu* “requires that the animal be not only domesticated but also sacrificable,” but Smith’s working conflation of the categories “village” and “sacrificable” obscures a crucial factor that *substantially* makes an animal fit for sacrifice.⁹²

Sacrificability

I suggest translating *paśu* as “sacrificable animal” even while the more exacting and etymologically evocative translation as “tethered animal” is more apt, even if only for the sake of the present analysis.

The latter rendering elicits the historical process of capturing, confining, and manipulating the

⁸⁹ For lists of seven, see AV 3.10.6, ŚB 9.3.1.20.

⁹⁰ Smith 1994, 248.

⁹¹ A telling example occurs at ŚB 8.4.3.15, where wilderness animals are twice referred to as “*āraṇyāḥ paśāvaḥ*.” As there are no “sacrificable wilderness animals,” the phrase here means “wilderness animals,” with “*paśāvaḥ*” meaning simply “animals.”

⁹² Smith 1994, 249. Also see 277–278, n. 17.

corresponding animals (for purposes of “taming,” “breaking,” or “domesticating”), and also the process of affixing them to the slaughtering stake (*yūpa*) during ritual sacrifice. However, problem with the latter translation is that not all tethered animals are *paśus*, at least when limited to the more common list of five. The ass, mule, and camel are also regularly tethered but not to a stake to be later slaughtered in sacrifice. The term “sacrificable animal” is thus more consistent with the prevalent enumerations of five *paśus*, as well as with scholarly convention. As such, we can thereby contrast *paśu* with *mṛga*, the latter word translatable as “wild animal.”⁹³ *Mṛga* derives from the verb *mṛg*,⁹⁴ “to hunt,” which, like the term *paśu*, defines animals according to humans’ utilitarian relationships with them. In short, humans sacrifice *paśus* and hunt *mṛgas*. The animals are categorized according to how they die by human hands.⁹⁵

Mṛgas are “wild” in the sense of not being bound, neither by the domesticator’s tether or by the systems of exploitation that bind animals to forced labor. *Mṛga* both etymologically and semantically differs from *āraṇya*, that latter denoting “wilderness animals” through an ostensibly objective demarcation of space. *Mṛga*, by contrast, is not so much a statement about space or residence as it is about the relationship between these animals and civilized humans, and consequently about these

⁹³ “In the Puruṣa hymn, the term *paśu* is given its widest application; it includes both birds and land animals. The term is generally restricted to land animals, however; and even among them, *paśu* in the restricted sense applies to domestic animals, especially farm animals such as cows, goats, and sheep. The term *mṛga*, specifically meaning the deer or antelope, is used to cover the spectrum of wild animals, and thus stands in contrast to *paśu*” (Olivelle 2002a, 8). On *mṛga* as specifically indicating the antelope, see Zimmerman 1987, 88.

⁹⁴ Although the verb *mṛg* is possibly an artificial construction from the noun *mṛga*.

⁹⁵ Doniger 1988, 83. Smith cites Doniger’s conclusion that “[*p*]ashus are the animals that get sacrificed, whatever their origins; *mṛigas* are the animals that get hunted. In both cases Indians defined animals according to the manner in which they killed them” (1994, 250). This assertion is instructive for, echoing Jonathan Z. Smith, admits how the history of domestication factors into cosmogonic classification. However, here Brian Smith seems to omit that fact that hunted animals were often eaten after being killed, hence problematizing the claim that wilderness animals are inedible; Also see Zimmerman 1987, 59–60.

animals' alleged dispositions and demeanors. Nevertheless, the two categories—*mṛga*/wild and *āraṇya*/wilderness—nearly always overlap, yet specificity will assist us in contexts where only one of the two terms is used.

Non*paśus*/*mṛgas* are included in the sacrifice but they are only placed “in the spaces” (“*ārokeśu*”) between the stakes and are ultimately set loose during the ritual. Accordingly, these animals are “neither an offering nor a non-offering.”⁹⁶ Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa 12.4.3.3 speaks plainly in expressing that “the wilderness animal (*āraṇya*) is not a sacrificable animal (*paśu*), and offering should not be made thereof.” Yet since the sacrifice must be all-inclusive, accounting for the facticity of the wilderness while nevertheless expressing the centrality and superiority of the village, both types of animals—*āraṇyas* and *paśus*—are included in the ritual complex.⁹⁷ Still, grave warnings are given about using and slaughtering the wrong animals.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ On the wilderness animals known as the “eleven decades,” see Eggeling’s n. 9 on ŚB 13.2.5.4: “After the (349) domesticated animals have been secured to the stakes, sets of thirteen wild beasts are placed on the (twenty) spaces between the (twenty-one) stakes, making in all 260 wild beasts. From the 150th beast onward (enumerated Vāj. S. XXIV, 30–40) these amount to 111 beasts which here are called eleven decades; the odd beast not being taken into account, whilst in paragraph 3 above the first ten decades are singled out for symbolic reasons. These beasts are spread over the twelfth (only the last seven Beasts of which belong to the first decade) and following spaces.” As to their inclusion in the sacrifice at all, a prior verse ŚB 13.2.4.3 explains: “Well, they dismiss them after fire has been carried around them thus, indeed, it is neither an offering nor a non-offering;” TB 3.8.19.2 likewise states that *grāmya* are killed and *āraṇya* released. The rule is not absolute however, as even in the Dharma literature (e.g., MDh 2.267) the rhinoceros (a non*paśu*) is prized for the benefits resulting from its sacrificial killing.

Interestingly, while the cow is sometime equated with the sacrifice, so too is the hide of black antelope, a *mṛga*: “The skin of the black antelope is the sacrifice, and the skin of the black antelope is this land, for on this land the sacrifice is spilled” (ŚB 6.4.1.9, cited in Zimmerman 1987, 60). This is curious, for as Zimmerman adds: “Let us simply note that the object chosen to represent the land of the sacrifice is precisely the pelt of an animal that is never used as a *victim*, but is, on the contrary, the very epitome of *game*.”

⁹⁷ Malamoud 1996, 79; Heesterman 1993, 30.

⁹⁸ Smith 1994, 250; TB 3.9.1.2–4, ŚB 12.2.4.1–4.

With the prevailing omission of the ass, mule, and camel from the fivefold list of village animals, what remain are the cow, horse, goat, sheep, and human. Here a convergence of residential and sacrificable status in the term *paśu* becomes apparent. All five are village animals *and* animals who are suitable for sacrifice. Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 6.2.1.15 states: “There are a man, a horse, a bull, a ram, and a he-goat; for such are all the animals (used for sacrifice) [*paśus*].” Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 10.2.1.1 adds: “Prajāpati was desirous of going up to the world of heaven; but Prajāpati, indeed, is all the (sacrificial) animals [*paśus*]—man, horse, bull, ram, and he-goat—by means of these forms he could not do so.” The order is not random, as the human is routinely referred to as “all *paśus*” (7.5.4.6) and, to be more hierarchically precise, the foremost of *paśus*.⁹⁹ The Vedic thinkers held the human sacrificer to be the ideal sacrificial victim and the sacrificial fires themselves desired to consume him. Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 11.7.1.2–3 states:

[F]or whilst he is offering the Sacrificer's fires long for flesh; they set their minds on the Sacrificer and harbour designs on him. In other fires people do indeed cook any kind of meat, but these (sacrificial fires) have no desire for any other flesh but this (sacrificial animal), and for him to whom they belong. Now, when he performs the animal offering, he thereby redeems himself—male by male, for the victim is a male, and the Sacrificer is a male.

Questions about the historical practice of human sacrifice (*puruṣamedha*) aside, the propriety of situating the human as the ideal sacrificial victim is clearly evidenced through the primordial sacrifice of the cosmic Man in Ṛgveda 10.90.¹⁰⁰ Yet as Ṛgveda 10.90 illustrates, while humans may be the ideal

⁹⁹ “A man (*puruṣa*) he slaughters first, *for man is the first of animals*; then a horse, for the horse comes after man; then a bull, for the bull (or cow) comes after the horse; then a ram, for the sheep comes after the cow; then a he-goat, for the goat comes after the sheep: thus he slaughters them according to their form, according to their excellence” (ŚB 6.2.1.18; Cf. ŚB 7.5.2.6).

¹⁰⁰ The human sacrifice (*puruṣamedha*) is modelled after the horse sacrifice (*aśvamedha*) and detailed at ŚB 13.6.1–2. In this account the “victims” are set free, as ŚB 13.6.3.13 states: “[A]s soon as fire had been carried round them, he set them free, and offered oblations to the same divinities.” Hence it appears that this was only a symbolic sacrifice. The reason for its nonconsummation is given in the line immediately preceding their announced release: “Then a voice said to him, ‘Puruṣa, do not consummate

victims, they are also the only beings capable of executing the sacrifice. Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 7.5.2.23 announces: “He then offers on the human head—sacrifice is offering: he thus makes man the one among animals fit to sacrifice; whence man alone among animals performs sacrifice.” Hermann Tull succinctly concludes: “Though it fulfills the requisites of the sacrificial theory, suicide would prevent the sacrificer from meeting his obligation to the gods and the fathers, whom he sustains through the continued performance of various ritual acts and the production of offspring.” Thus, humans are the only beings who can perform the sacrifice and serve as patrons of the sacrifice—thereby fulfilling crucial societal and spiritual obligations—and for these reasons they are excused from being sacrificial victims and surrogates are offered instead.¹⁰¹

Medha

Earlier I noted a factor that *substantially* makes an animal fit for sacrifice. This element of sacrificial logics is *medha*, a feature that reveals the Vedic anatomization of sacrificability. The topic is relatively unexplored in the literature on Vedic animal classifications with Brian Smith being an exception, as

(these human victims): if thou wert to consummate them, man (*puruṣa*) would eat man.” However, archaeological evidence does show human remains alongside other nonhuman *paśus* in the sacrificial arena, albeit with non*paśus* as well, such as the tortoise and elephant. See G.R. Sharma 1960, 87–126; Heesterman makes an interesting observation regarding the release of the human victims: “Apparently man, though a *paśu*, forms a link with the nondomesticated wild. The *puruṣamedha*, like the *aśvamedha*, brings both spheres together to mark more strongly their separation. Man, however, has his being in both worlds.” (1993, 229, n. 20). It is unclear how humans have their “being in both worlds,” specifically the wilderness, and more so the issue may be the consequences of slaughtering human beings and the prospect of cannibalism; Also see Tull 1989, 54–55, *passim*, and Doniger 2009, 151–154; Regardless of the actual practice of sacrificing humans, the notion of the original sacrifice being a human sacrifice, only to be adjusted to employ animal victims, survives in Indian communities, as Govindrajan records in their recent work (2018, 34, 48).

¹⁰¹ Tull 1989, 55, n. 60. See Tull 1989, chapters 2 and 3, for discussions of “the problem of sacrifice” and specifically how the ritualists strategized how to recreate-with-modification the primordial sacrifice of the cosmic Man in RV 10.90 while sparing the sacrifice (*yajamāna*) by means of a ritual substitute.

Smith cites the most telling example of the import and dynamics of this sacrificial quality. The passage from Aitareya Brāhmaṇa 2.8-9 deserves to be reproduced in full:

The gods offered man as sacrificial victim. Then the sacrificial quality (*medha*) passed out of the offered man. It entered the horse. Then the horse became fit for sacrifice whose sacrificial quality had passed out of him. He [the former man, now devoid of the sacrificial quality] became a pseudo-man (*kimpuruṣa*). They offered the horse, and the sacrificial quality passed out of the horse. It entered the bull. . . . It [the former horse] became the wild white deer (*bos gaurus, gauramṛga*). They offered the bull. . . . The sacrificial quality entered the ram. . . . It [the former bull] became the gayal (*bos gavaeus, gavaya*). They offered the ram. . . . The sacrificial quality entered the he-goat. . . . It [the former ram] became the camel. It [the sacrificial quality] stayed the longest in the he-goat; therefore the he-goat is the *paśu* most often used [as sacrificial victim]. They offered up the he-goat, and it [the sacrificial quality] passed out of the he-goat. It entered this [earth] and therefore this [earth] became fit for sacrifice. They dismissed him whose sacrificial quality had passed out of him. He [the former goat] became the wild *śarabha*. These *paśus* whose sacrificial quality had passed out of them became unfit for sacrifice. Therefore one should not eat them. They follow it [the sacrificial essence] into this [earth]; it, being followed, became rice. When thy offer the rice cake in the animal sacrifice, [they do so thinking], “May our sacrifice be done with a *paśu* possessing the sacrificial quality; may our sacrifice be done with a full constituted (*kevala*) *paśu*.” His sacrifice becomes one done with a *paśu* possessing the sacrificial quality; the sacrifice of one who knows this becomes one done with a fully constituted *paśu*.¹⁰²

There is much to absorb from this single passage. As a preliminary note, the fact that sacrificability is determined by the inherence of a subtle biological substance called *medha* reasonably justifies defining sacrificability as an anatomical form of classification rather than one defined by residence. However, as the five sacrificable animals are all village animals, and no nonvillage animals are claimed to possess *medha*, I would suggest that the anatomization of sacrificability follows from the prior residential designation of these animals as village animals. Sacrificability is fundamentally based on domestication and residentiality and, as will be discussed later, a particular sort of residentiality. In sum, *medha* is at least partially a biological inscription of where an animal “naturally” resides.

¹⁰² Cited in Smith 1994, 251–253; Cf. ŚB 1.2.3.6–9, 7.5.2.32–37.

The anatomization of sacrificability is therefore a critical component of the aforementioned ontologization of residence. The latter refers to the Vedic claim that animals are either village animals or wilderness animals from the very moment of the conception of the cosmos, thereby denying domestication as a historical phenomenon. Likewise, in this passage from the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, sacrificial acceptability is eternally “proven” by these animals’ (*paśus*) possession of an intrinsic quality that announces their predetermined purpose for sacrifice. Striking is the fact that a being’s fitness for sacrifice hinges upon their possession of the sacrificial quality, which is clearly a tautology.

Monier-Williams translates *medha* variously as “the juice of meat, broth,” “marrow (esp. of the sacrificial victim), sap, pith, essence,” and “a sacrificial animal, victim.” In the passage above, “sacrificial essence” or “sacrificial quality” resounds as the most accurate translation, at least in the present nonmedical context, for after the beings in question are sacrificed their *medha* “passes out” (*kram + ut*) of them. A *paśu* is apparently a type of holy piñata that unfortunately must be destroyed for the hidden treasure to be released. One could plausibly characterize animal sacrifice as an offering of *medha* rather than of the actual “life force” or animal as a whole—“These *paśus* whose sacrificial quality had passed out of them became unfit for sacrifice”—even if one cannot offer the *medha* without killing the animal in which the sacrificial substance inheres. This fact is further evidenced by the mysterious transformation of the human into the “pseudo-human” (*kimpuruṣa*) after their killing, the latter being a type of living husk or shell of the “real” *puruṣa*. Likewise, the sacrifice transforms the horse into the “wild white deer” (*gauramṛga*¹⁰³), the bull into the gayal (*gavaya*), the ram into the camel

¹⁰³ Smith translates this term as “wild white deer,” but the “wild *gaura*” or “*gaura* of the jungle” (“*gauram āraṇyam*,” TS 4.2.10.2) is a type of buffalo (*bos gaurus*), as Smith also notes.

(*uṣṭra*), and the he-goat into the “wild” *śarabha*.¹⁰⁴ The afterlives of the holy piñatas arguably challenge, even if not insuperably, the assumption of a *paśu*’s *total* death in sacrifice. But even more significantly, these five metamorphoses produce five *medha*-less animals, which, although absent in this passage, are elsewhere *explicitly* designated as wilderness animals (and I would suggest that this is assumed in this passage). This points again to the nonsacrificable status of animals whose non*paśu* status derives precisely from their lack of *medha* and their assigned residence in the wilderness.¹⁰⁵

While Aitareya Brāhmaṇa 2.8–9 does not use the terms *mṛga* (wild animal) or *āraṇya* (wilderness animal) in its enumeration of the five *medha*-less animals, none but the camel are ever identified or even suggested as being village animals. The *kiṃpuruṣa*, *gauramṛga*, *gavaṇya*, and *śarabha* are never listed as sacrificable animals (*paśus*) or village animals (*grāmya*). Smith emphasizes that in several parallel passages “the desacralized doubles of the five sacrificial and village *paśus*” are explicitly identified as “jungle” or wilderness animals. Commenting on Taittirīya Saṃhitā 4.2.10.1–4, Smith notes:

[One] reads of a list of five animals with five wild counterparts living in the jungle: (1) the “biped of the *paśus*” (i.e., the human being) with its counterpart, “the barbarian of the jungle” (*mayu āraṇya*); (2) the “whole-hoofed of the *paśus* (i.e., the horse) and the *gaura* of the jungle (*gaura āraṇyaka*); (3) the bovine and the wild *gavaṇya*; (4) the sheep and the wild camel (*uṣṭra āraṇyaka*); and (5) the goat together with the *śarabha*.¹⁰⁶

Here all five of the post-slaughter doubles are designated as wilderness residents, with even the camel explicitly identified as the wilderness camel (*uṣṭra āraṇyaka*). The precision of such identification either communicates the existence of a village variant of the camel or simply stresses that the camel is—

¹⁰⁴ The *śarabha* is probably some form of deer (Smith 1994, 279, n. 28) but is later regarded as a “fabulous” animal with “eight feet, the size of a camel, large horns, with four feet on its back; it lives in Kashmir” (Zimmerman 1987, 82–83, 209–210). In either case, the *śarabha* is not a *paśu*.

¹⁰⁵ TS 4.2.10.1–4 for a list of the five village animals and their five wilderness counterparts. Also see Smith 1994, 252.

¹⁰⁶ Smith 1994, 252.

during this period—a wilderness animal and not a village animal. In either case (with the former more probable than the latter), this designation confirms that all five former *paśus* have now become wilderness animals owing to their loss of *medha*. In certain Vedic texts’ less common sevenfold classification of village animals, the camel is classified as a village animal but not one that is sacrificable or in possession of *medha*. For this reason, the distinction between the two variants is crucial in this context.

Even more peculiar is the figure of the *gavaya*, also designated as the *gomṛga*, otherwise known as the gayal (*bos frontalis*). In the passage from the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, the *gavaya* is *implicitly* presented as the wilderness counterpart to the bull but, as Eggeling notes in reference to Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 13.34.3, Taittirīya Saṃhitā 2.1.10.2 suggests that the *gomṛga* is neither a village animal nor a wilderness animal.¹⁰⁷ Yet this *gavaya/gomṛga* is apparently killed alongside the horse and the he-goat, as Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 13.2.2.2 announces: “A horse, a hornless he-goat, and a *gomṛga*, these they bind to the central stake.”¹⁰⁸ The *gomṛga* is not released alongside the other “quasi-victims,” that is, the other animals who are used for the sake of comprehensiveness but which are ultimately spared in the course of the ritual. Therefore, in this case there is the anomaly of an animal designated as neither “village” or “wilderness” but still seemingly sacrificable, which would suggest that perhaps it does possess *medha*. Nevertheless, while only implicitly conveyed in Aitareya Brāhmaṇa 2.8–9, the residential status of the *gavaya/gomṛga* as a wilderness animal is made explicit in Taittirīya Saṃhitā 4.2.10.3 where the *gavaya* is referred to *gavaya āraṇya*, or “wilderness *gavaya*.”¹⁰⁹ This specification

¹⁰⁷ TS 2.1.10.2 *naiṣa grāmyaḥ paśur nāraṇyo yad gomṛgas*; See Eggeling (1900) for more details on the controversy of identifying the *gomṛga*. Malamoud too notices this peculiar categorization (1996, 77). Cf. MacDonell and Keith 1912, vol. 1, 222.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 13.3.4.3, 13.5.1.3.

¹⁰⁹ Whether “*gavaya āraṇyam*” implies the existence of a village *gavaya* is uncertain.

would seem to imply the existence of a non \bar{a} ra \bar{n} ya or village *gavaya*. Thus, while there remains the lingering question concerning whether the *gavaya* is a wilderness animal and/or neither a village animal or wilderness animal (and thus somehow still sacrificable), in these specific passages discussing *medha* and its transitions in and out of various *paśus*, the *gavaya* is the *medha*-less wilderness counterpart of the *medha*-containing village bull.

A note on the figure of the *kimpuruṣa* or “pseudo-man” is also in order. In the passage from the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, the *kimpuruṣa* (or *mayu āraṇya*) is the husk of the “real human” that survives the sacrifice. This creature, like the other living husks, presumably takes up residence in the wilderness and not the village, although this is not explicitly stated in the passage. In a note on the term *kimpuruṣa* at Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 6.3.1.24, Eggeling remarks: “Thus probably a counterfeit of a man, a doll or human effigy.” And at Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 7.5.2.32, they comment: “It is doubtful what is meant here by this term [*kimpuruṣa*], unless it be a monkey, or a counterfeit human head.” In the first note, Eggeling refers to Sāyaṇa’s commentary on the verse that glosses *kimpuruṣa* as *anaddhā puruṣa* (“untrue human”) and *alīka puruṣa* (“counterfeit human”). It is not entirely clear whether Eggeling is more sympathetic to the suggestion of a *kimpuruṣa* denoting a nonhuman primate or simply an effigy, but Smith rejects both of these suggestions.¹¹⁰ Invoking the same verse as Eggeling, Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 7.5.2.32, Smith highlights the identification of *kimpuruṣa* with *mayu*, the latter signifying an uncertain type of creature although surely not some constructed counterfeit. Smith’s claim is initially convincing given how all of the other four *paśus* have “real” counterparts as opposed to effigies. Even more illustrative is Smith’s reference to Taittirīya Saṃhitā 4.2.10.1 mentioned earlier, which in its description of the five wilderness counterparts to the standard five *paśus* names the counterpart to the

¹¹⁰ Smith, 1994, 255–256.

human being as the *mayu āraṇya*, or the “human of the wilderness.”¹¹¹ Smith also mentions a creature called the “*puruṣamṛga*” or “wild man” at Taittirīya Saṃhitā 5.5.15.1.¹¹² In my view, these additional verses support the assertion that the *kimpuruṣa* is an actual creature rather than an effigy, and more specifically the *medha*-deficient version of the “true human” or *puruṣa-as-paśu*.

Smith is one of the few who have connected—albeit briefly—the figure of the *kimpuruṣa* with the *mleccha*, or uncivilized foreigner.¹¹³ Regarding the latter, Barbara Holdrege remarks that

mlecchas, “babbling barbarians,” are the abhorred Other, the undifferentiated mass of “foreigners” whose principal function is to define the outer limit of the “indigenous” custodians of *dharma*. In the brahmanical discourse of *dharma* the Āryans alone—as represented by the four *varṇas*—are portrayed as emerging from the divine body of the creator at the beginning of creation, while all other peoples in the world are excluded from this claim to divine origins. The sacred land of the Āryans, Āryāvarta, is distinguished from the land of the *mlecchas* as the land of the Vedas and the land of *dharma*, which alone is considered fit for the performance of Vedic sacrifices and the locus of authoritative practices.¹¹⁴

At present, the key point is the intimate relationship between the notions of civilization, village, and *dharma* (as sacrifice), and conversely between savagery, wilderness, and *adhharma*. Smith contends that the “pseudo-man” is the “babbling barbarian,” with the Āryans/Vedic cosmologists “relegating their non-Āryan neighbors to the status of ‘pseudo-men,’ the wild, inedible, nonsacrificial other, the empty

¹¹¹ Smith translates *mayu āraṇya* as the “barbarian of the jungle.” MacDonell and Keith understand the term as a designation for the ape (1912, vol. 1, 157), and Keith translates *mayu* as “ape” at TS 5.5.12.1 and elsewhere. They recognize alternative hypotheses such as “contemptible man” (Roth) and “savage” (Müller), which seem more accurate to the present author.

¹¹² Cf. MacDonell and Keith 1912, vol. 2, 2.

¹¹³ Smith 1994, 255–256, 275; On “*mleccha*,” David White notes: “The term *mleccha* comes to have a wide range of usages, but “properly speaking, the Mleccha barbarians are the Greco-Bactrian (Yāvana), Indo-Scythian (Śaka), and Yue-chi (Kushan) conquerors of India of the second century B.C. to the second century A.D” (1991, 217, n. 6).

¹¹⁴ Holdrege 2022, 16–17; “*Dharma* is the differentiated ‘custom’ and ‘propriety’ which constitutes the Aryan form of life, which upholds the identity of the *ārya* and distinguishes him from the *mleccha*, and which also legitimizes the privileged position of the Brahmins as the teachers and guardians of the *dharma*” (Halbfass 1988, 320, cited in Holdrege 2022, 42–43, n. 7).

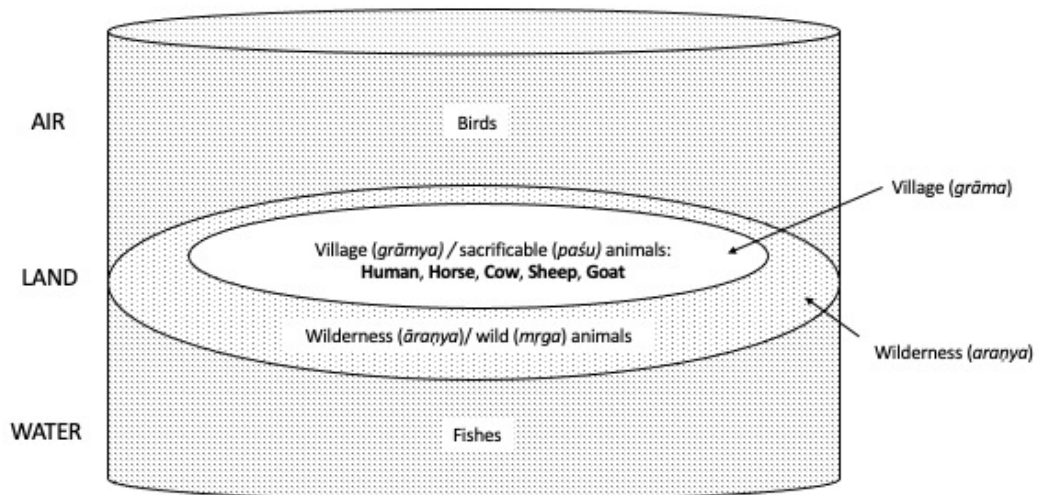
shells of real human beings.”¹¹⁵ Hence the village—more precisely, the ritual arena if not the sacrificial stake itself—may be viewed as the axis of civilization in the Vedic worldview, with both the sacrificer and sacrificed (ideally sacrificer *as* sacrificed) as the “truest” or “most real” human being, or even better phrased, the “superior mode of being.”¹¹⁶ Remarkably, in the modern world that views the performance of animal sacrifice and the suitability for sacrifice as markers of inferior, and not superior, status (“primitive” in the former case, “killable” in the latter), in Vedic traditions both of these bio-cosmogonic qualities are what designate one as civilized, as integral to the world of *dharma*, to the world-proper. Returning to Reed’s emphasis on how the phenomenon of domestication is necessary not only for an analysis of sacrifice but also of civilization (the superior mode of *living*), in this instance to be domesticated is to be civilized, and the already-domesticated status of the Āryans/*puruṣas/paśus* is quasi-anatomized through the inherence of *medha*, which is lacking among the *mlechhas/kimpuruṣas/mṛgas*.

Residential classifications are given in the graphic labeled *Figure 2*. As the status of birds and fish is vague in the Vedic sources, I have not included them as “wilderness animals” (*āraṇya*) even though that is the most appropriate designation.

¹¹⁵ Smith 1994, 275.

¹¹⁶ Syl Ko uses this phrase in the context of race and animality (Ko and Ko 2017, 45).

Figure 2. Vedic Residential Classifications



Edibility and Diet: A Preview

As we have encountered, Smith characterizes the “other” as the “wild, inedible, nonsacrificial,” which echoes their general insistence on the “binary opposition [of] village/sacrificial/edible vs. jungle/nonsacrificial/inedible.”¹¹⁷ While this binary satisfies as a rough template, it does not satisfy absolutely, especially when we move into the second half of the first millennium BCE. While Smith admits as much, their analyses do intermingles Vedic sources with Dharma sources, which is problematic given the Dharma literature’s significant exceptions to the template.¹¹⁸ These inconsistencies will come to the fore in following chapter, but in two notes Olivelle captures the problem well:

Smith (1994, 254–55) is incorrect in assuming that *grāmya* is edible and the wild is inedible; this dichotomy is valid for the sacrifice (*medhya*) but not for food (*bhakṣya*).

The term *abhakṣya* parallels *amedhya*, which refers to any food that cannot be offered in a sacrifice, and more generally to non-ritual food. The two categories, however, are overlapping but not identical. Unlike in the Jewish prescriptions, sacrificability does not imply edibility and vice versa. The horse, for example, is *medhya* but *abhakṣya*, whereas a deer is *bhakṣya* but *amedhya*. Brian Smith (1994, 254) is not quite accurate when he appears to identify sacrificability with edibility.¹¹⁹

Using the horse and deer as two examples, Olivelle emphasizes how not all village animals are edible even if sacrificable, nor are all wilderness animals inedible even if not sacrificable. This critique of Smith is particularly fitting because Smith does cite Dharma sources in support of their general binary. Thus not only must Smith account for the routine consumption of wilderness animals killed by

¹¹⁷ Smith 1994, 252.

¹¹⁸ Smith 1994, 251; Reed also accepts the binary too readily, as well as the association of specific animals with specific *varṇas* (2014, 126–128).

¹¹⁹ Olivelle 2002a, 11, 14.

means hunting rather than sacrifice¹²⁰ but also for the fact that at least three animals—camels, pigs, and fowl—are considered by the Dharma texts to be both inedible and unsuitable for sacrifice, *even though they are village animals*.¹²¹ In short, we have the exceptions of edible wilderness animals, sacrificable but inedible village animals, and nonsacrificable and inedible village animals.

With respect to the Vedic period however, we should still accept the general rule, expressed in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa: “These *paśus* whose sacrificial quality had passed out of them became unfit for sacrifice. Therefore one should not eat them.” During this period an animal is generally considered edible if it is sacrificable/possesses *medha*. And if sacrificability determines who is and who is not killable and/or consumable, then Smith is largely accurate in stating that “whether or not the animal possesses *medha* or sacrificial essence that determines if it is edible or inedible, *village or jungle*; thus the sacrificial order of things is supposedly prior even to the natural order of things.”¹²² Yet I would emphasize that while this statement is *textually* accurate, the “sacrificial order of things” itself potentially derives from embedded, prefigured residential assignments. These assignments—village and wilderness (“jungle” for Smith)—derive from historical human-animal relations in the real world, or to repeat Jonathan Z. Smith, “the socio-cultural process of domestication itself.” Hence it is reasonable to contend—and to invert Smith’s claim—that while edibility may generally derive from sacrificability, residential assignments are actually what dictate sacrificability and not the other way around. Even the

¹²⁰ Looking forward to the time of the Mahābhārata, Jha writes: “The *Mahābhārata*, especially the *Vanaparvan*, gives the impression that kṣatriyas hunted wildlife oftener for food than for sport. . . .” (2002, 95).

¹²¹ As Holdrege also notes: “Olivelle emphasizes several anomalous cases in which brahmanical food taxonomies single out certain animals for explicit prohibition—in particular, camels, village pigs, and village fowl—that fulfill all of the requirements of the edible class except for a single negative feature that is sufficient to disqualify them: they are village animals” (2018, 11). Note how “village animals” here, in a very technical sense, is a disqualifying feature for consumption.

¹²² Smith 1994, 275, emphasis added.

order of the terms in Smith's phrase "village/sacrificial/edible vs. jungle/nonsacrificial/inedible" appears to situate residentiality and not sacrificability as the source of the subsequent "order of things." Nevertheless, Smith's rule still generally holds regardless of its starting point in the "sacrificial" or "natural" order of things. Two major exceptions to this rule, the horse and (to a lesser degree) the cow, will be discussed in the next chapter as "extraordinary" animals due to their specific types of exceptionality. However, camels, mules, and asses still remain contradictions to the village=sacrificable=edible equation, as well as to some anatomical categories.

Recapitulation

Beyond occasional forays into taxonomic exceptions and topics to come, this chapter has primarily focused on anatomical and residential categorizations of animals in Vedic sources. In developing this binary, I argued for structure the inclusion of dietary habits among the anatomical classes of reproduction, pedalism, pedal structure, and dentition. I also argued that sacrificability is intimately connected to residential taxonomies given that village residence is a necessary (but not sufficient) condition for sacrificability *and* is arguably the socio-historical foundation for designating an animal as sacrificable given the historical dynamics of domestication. However, proper attention and consideration were lent to the alleged basis for sacrificability in the inherence of a biological quality known as *medha*, which is what substantially makes an animal fit for sacrifice. As such, sacrificability could arguably be considered an anatomical category as well. In any event, the Vedic sources express a much greater concern for the village/wilderness binary rather than for the more "scientific" divisions of animals based on anatomical characteristics. Humans, horses, cows, sheep, and goats are most often deemed the five *paśus*, the five village-and-sacrificable animals. For reasons offered at the beginning of the next chapter, the residential emphasis diminishes in later periods, as illustrated in the Dharma

literature, which includes alternative animal taxonomies in which animals such as the horse, cow, mule, ass, camel, pig, and fowl challenge the assumption that edibility is a mere function of residential designation.

Chapter 2: Animal Taxonomies and Dietary Regulations in Dharma Literature

[T]ruly to escape Hegel involves an exact appreciation of the price we have to pay to detach ourselves from him. It assumes that we are aware of the extent to which Hegel, insidiously perhaps, is close to us; it implies a knowledge, in that which permits us to think against Hegel, of that which remains Hegelian. We have to determine the extent to which our anti-Hegelianism is possibly one of his tricks directed against us, at the end of which he stands, motionless, waiting for us.¹

Out of Vedic Traditions

When pivoting from the Vedic period of the Brāhmaṇas to the late Vedic and early Hindu periods, it would be prudent not to underestimate the enduring influence of the ideologies and discourses of Vedic sacrifice on later, even staunchly anti-Vedic, traditions.² Accordingly, and similar to heeding Foucault's warning regarding our anti-Hegel Hegelianism, it is crucial to mind how post- and anti-Vedic metaphysics, soteriology, and somatic practices contain Vedic residues in their structure if not also in their content. In short, Vedic logics and even spectacle endure, even if not insidiously "waiting" for the post-Vedicists like Foucault's Hegel. War and hunting, asceticism and meditation, physical yoga

¹ Foucault 1982, 235.

² This is by no means uniform in its application. On the one hand, and as only one example, we may look to the Jain monk Harikeśa, who explained to Brahmins that "austerity is my sacrificial fire" and then proceeded to discuss various elements of this ascetic resignification of sacrifice (Uttarādhyaṇa Sūtra 12.44–45, cited in Dundas 2002). On the other hand, and in a different context, Bronkhorst notes how "the Brahmins, did not occupy a dominant position in the area in which the Buddha preached his message, and this message was not, therefore, a reaction against brahmanical thought and culture" (2011a, 1; Mallinson and Singleton 2017, xxxiv; Also see Bronkhorst 2007). In the latter case, it may be more challenging to locate the phenomenon of the ascetic resignification of Vedic sacrifice. Regardless, my general point is that renouncers of all sorts, of Upaniṣadic and "heterodox" stripes, incorporated the logics of sacrifice into their folds, even if to varying degrees.

practices, yogic diets, medical practice, and even discourses around procreation are reimagined and resignified with the principles and authority of sacrifice in mind.³ In some cases, resignification is deployed to rationalize elements of harm and killing contained in these modalities and practices. A recurrent site is the topic of killing animals and consuming their flesh. Francis Zimmerman notes, albeit in the context of the medical traditions, over time there survive “three kinds of reasons of authorizing the eating of meat,” with only the first two operating in the legal texts. These three are sacrifice, emergency, and “providing the model of royal life.”⁴ By the mid-first millennium BCE, as I will discuss in the next chapter, ethical norms proliferate that challenge Vedic practices and ideologies, especially those explicitly involving animal sacrifice. Yet despite these burgeoning sensitivities to ritual and nonritual harming, and despite denunciations of Vedic sacrifice as proper and effective religious practice, structures and rhetoric of sacrifice endure. In short, the Vedic apologetics regarding sacrifices get grafted onto new contexts distinct from traditional sacrifice.

That being said, not everything survives. Ideologically speaking, the mid-first millennium BCE witnesses the rise of *śramaṇa* traditions, most famously Buddhist and Jain traditions, but also the emergence of renunciant traditions from within Brahmanical circles.⁵ Equally significant is the appearance of skeptic—often labeled “materialist”—traditions such as Cārvāka, traditions arguably

³ As Barbara Holdrege describes this phenomenon in Hindu and Jewish traditions: “The category of sacrifice has operated in both traditions as an authoritative network of signifiers that, once divested of its delimited significations tied to a particular complex of ritual practices, has been mapped onto a variety of discursive domains, becoming invested with distinctive new significations in each domain. Through the discursive strategies of resignification sacrifice, as a canonical category, has been expanded beyond the circumscribed boundaries of the ancient Vedic and Jewish sacrificial rituals and has been used to valorize a diverse range of practices as legitimate new forms of sacrifice” (Holdrege 2018, 233); See Miller 2019; Olivelle 1992, 28, 86–89; White 1996, 13; Zimmerman 1987, 183–185, 191.

⁴ Zimmerman 1987, 183.

⁵ Dundas 2002; Gombrich 2006; Olivelle 1992.

more broadly encapsulated by the title Lokāyata.⁶ Some of the features of Vedic sacrifice persist but original “external” performance declines markedly. But what instigated the rise of these divergent traditions and their newer ideologies? What other, nonphilosophical factors (as philosophy also emerges in and from the material world) may have led to the decline of Vedic sacrifice with its use and killing of animals? How might these factors connect to the naturalistic and empirical sensibilities that I contend operate in the Dharma literature?

Urbanization

The “second urbanization” in ancient India involved a movement from villages to towns and cities in the Gangetic Plain in the centuries approaching the Common Era.⁷ The “first urbanization” refers to the non-Āryan, non-Brahmanical Indus Valley civilization that had disintegrated long before the Āryan migration to the region.⁸ Nearly a millennium later, northern India “has her ‘second urbanism,’ borrowing nothing from the Indus civilization . . . after which urbanism has a continuous history across the country.”⁹ Historian Romila Thapar details:

The location of the later Vedic corpus in the Ganges Plain describes conditions that are a *prelude* to urbanization. Chalcolithic cultures encouraged specialization and some of the settlements were eventually to become urban centres. . . .

. . . [I]ncipient urbanism is noticeable by about the early sixth century BC at some sites, and at other places somewhat later. Links between the Punjab and the Ganges Plain were through routes along the Himalayan foothills and along the rivers of the Ganges system.¹⁰

⁶ This is a complicated terminological issue, and many of the details need not concern us here. See Bhattacharya 2002, 602; Dasgupta 2007, 512–516, *passim*.

⁷ Ghosh 1973; Gombrich 2006; Olivelle 1992; Thapar 1975; Thapar 1984; Thapar 2003.

⁸ Bryant 2004; Bryant and Patton 2005.

⁹ Ghosh 1973, 30.

¹⁰ Thapar 2003, 116–17, *emphasis added*.

Prior to this “prelude” of “incipient urbanism” in the late Vedic period, the world of culture existed exclusively in the village and focused on village life: “The Vedic civilization remained village based until the sixth century B.C.E. . . . The Brahmanical *dharma* is addressed to the villager.”¹¹ It should come as little surprise then that the cosmologies and taxonomies explored in the previous chapter stress the village and wilderness affiliations of animals and plants and foreground the importance of ritual as the sustainer of both village and cosmos. However, the phenomenon of urbanization significantly impacts this village-centric worldview and value system. Historical details about the second urbanization are available in the studies of Amalananda Ghosh, Thapar, and other scholars, and this chapter will not rewrite those histories. Noteworthy in both Ghosh’s and Thapar’s accounts of urbanization is their insistence on two key points: (1) the creation and continuing presence of an agricultural surplus, produced by hydraulic, climactic, and technological factors, as a necessary but not sufficient condition for urbanization; (2) the substantial textual evidence found in the Upaniṣads, early Buddhist texts, and Dharma literature, for movements from villages to centralized kingdoms/cities.

On the first point, one may reasonably assume that first element is a prerequisite for the second—agricultural surplus *precedes* kingship and city organization. Yet for Ghosh the process is precisely the reverse, at least at a rudimentary stage. The movement from *grāma* to *nagara*, or village to city, with all its intermediate manifestations, is initially and intimately tied to a *recognition* of wealth in surplus. Ghosh argues: “Surplus was thus not a technical but a social product; ‘the institution created the surplus, which is not ‘there’ the moment it is technically possible but only *after it has been institutionalized through taxes, trade, and other means.*’ The non-agricultural aspect is dominant in the

¹¹ Olivelle 1992, 29–30.

procurement, and therefore in the production, of surplus.”¹² During this period of urbanization, social institutions were already established to conceptualize and operationalize something called a “surplus.” They made surpluses possible and desirable. Such a “recognition” indicates a top-down social organization in king-led cities, visible through taxes and regulated trade. We may also add the influence of the newfound prominence and esteem ascribed to the trader and the individual profiteer, except perhaps among those Brahmins still decrying the village-threatening city with its new professions.¹³

Individuation and Ideology

The period of urbanization was marked by material and social individuation, by which I mean an increased isolation of, and concern for, the individual as opposed to the group.¹⁴ The necessary condition for this change was not mere population density but a diverse—landed and transient—population with a growing division of labor hitherto absent (at least in mature forms) within pastoralist, agriculturalist, and agro-pastoralist economies. Specialization and production of wealth produced individuals, and more specifically, individuals concerned with their *own* material world in *this* material world. Individuation had a significant impact on the prior village mentality. Ghosh notes:

¹² Ghosh 1973, 21, emphasis added. The passage is worth quoting in full: “More than a surplus or even the capacity to produce a surplus, therefore, what is required is a social-political institution to force or induce the farmer to produce a surplus, to divert the surplus to where it is required and to procure food, again by coercion or for consideration, from distant hinterland should the crop in the near hinterland fail. For procurement by coercion, which would include taxes and tributes, an administrative authority is required and by commercial means mercantile system is called for. The prerequisite, therefore, is not a hypothetical surplus but an administrative and mercantile organization—the ruler and the merchant, both of the city and each the ally of the other in history. Surplus was thus not a technical but a social product; the institution created the surplus, which is not ‘there’ the moment it is technically possible but only after it has been institutionalized through taxes, trade, and other means. The non-agricultural aspect is dominant in the procurement, and therefore in the production, of surplus.”

¹³ Although these factors were quite attractive for Jains: “Apart from the archaeological evidence, another indication, albeit indirect, of the growth of cities is the rapid rise of Jainism when, with the prohibition on agricultural professions and restriction on ownership of land, trade became the predominant occupation of the Jainas” (Thapar 1975, 121).

¹⁴ Dumont 1980.

The diversity of occupations gave rise to a larger division of labour than was required by the rural economy and tended to loosen bonds of kinship. Trade, largely based on money, gave the people greater mobility. The lessening of orthodox tradition, the natural outcome of all this, promoted a degree of secularization, which would explain the Brahmanical hatred of the city. . . . The relative prosperity of the city eventually gave rise to a class of people with greater leisure and gave a fillip to the growth of art and secular literature.¹⁵

Claims about the phenomenon of “secularization” aside, I concur with Ghosh (as well as Thapar, Louis Dumont, Richard Gombrich, and Patrick Olivelle) that the emergence of the city with its new labor divisions, currencies, scripts, leisure activities, and relationships, as well as organization under a formal chief or king, instigated a shift from the group to the individual. Thapar cites among other factors the city’s own “social stratification where the *sreṣṭhin* (‘merchant or banker’) was the most powerful and where the institutional base was that of the *śreni* (‘guild’)” and an “an increasing sense of alienation.”¹⁶ Olivelle cautiously factors in (following Gombrich and William McNeill) the possible role of epidemics in foregrounding the bio-material pain and suffering of the individual, thereby contributing to the plausibility and appeal of ascetic ideologies.¹⁷ While the fundamental ascetic focus on the individual was also arguably bolstered by the emergence of the city, Olivelle also cites Gombrich’s notion of “spiritual malaise” generated by city life. Such malaise with the city—or as I prefer, skepticism—relates to how *śramaṇa* traditions questioned and then dislodged the village as the sole center of religiosity. In other words, the ritualistic village is no longer the home—or at least the sole home—of *dharma*, for now the *wilderness* is exalted as the ideal realm of spiritual practice and awakening. Textual evidence

¹⁵ Ghosh 1973, 39.

¹⁶ Thapar 1975, 120.

¹⁷ Olivelle 1992, 35.

also suggests the need for rulers and administrators to cope with the fraying of kinship mentality and the emergent individuation of the period, specifically through reformulations of *varṇa* and *āśrama*.¹⁸

The second urbanization was perhaps the most influential *material* phenomenon in the history of Indian philosophy, significantly instigating Lokāyata movements (among others) that collectively posed a major intellectual challenge to Vedic Brahmanism.¹⁹ Lokāyata movements, perhaps even more so than contemporaneous anti-Vedic *śramaṇa* movements, such as the Buddhists and Jains, produced the major skeptical, empirical, and rationalist and thoughts and discourses of the period. For this reason the emergence of the Lokāyata movements it is relevant to the production of the legal literature as well as to the emergence of “Hindu ethics.”

Lokāyata

Relative to work on other branches of Indian philosophy, Lokāyata has received sparse attention.

Arguably the most decisive factor is the absence of any surviving ancient Lokāyata texts, in particular

¹⁸ A cosmo-ideological recovery of social order was catalyzed by both Buddhist and urban Brahmins: “By the middle of the first millennium, tribal egalitarianism had surrendered to the evolution of a system of government that, whether oligarchic or monarchical, was explained as concerning itself with the problems of social disharmony, the need for authority, and the justification for revenue collection. The Buddhist theory emphasized the perfection of society in the pre-government age, thus implying that government had become an unfortunate necessity, through the diffusion of social disharmony resulting from family discord and private property. Seeking a solution, people had gathered together and elected a leader—the *mahāsammata* ‘the Great Elect’—in whom they invested the authority to maintain law and order; in payment for this service the *mahāsammata* was paid a share of the revenue. Significantly the Buddhist theory emphasizes contract and seems not to have had any notion of royal divinity. The *Mahābhārata* expresses a similar idea, but with a greater emphasis on the notion that societies without governments result in anarchy; the anarchic society is described as a state of *matsyānyāya* ‘the law of the fish,’ where the big fish devour the smaller ones. In this theory, the king also contracts to maintain law and order, but an element of divinity is introduced in his actual appointment as kin.” (Thapar 1975, 122); On *āśrama*, see Olivelle 1993.

¹⁹ Dasgupta believes that “[i]t seems possible, therefore, that probably the *lokāyata* doctrines had their beginnings in the preceding Sumerian civilization” (2007, 529), but we still do not arrive at anything concrete until the mid-first millennium BCE.

the sixth-to-seventh-century BCE *Bārhaspatya Sūtra*.²⁰ Another contributing factor is early Western Indology’s insistence on—if not also fabrication of—an ageless and overarching Indian idealism no better epitomized (and often anachronistically wielded) than in Śāṅkara’s Advaita Vedānta.

Nevertheless, a number of notable studies on Lokāyata exist and in this chapter I am specifically concerned with how the rise of Lokāyata was not only product of urbanization, but also constituted a significant force of rationalism, naturalism, and this-worldliness/anti-transworldliness.²¹

Skepticism and This-Worldliness

The common characterization of Lokāyata “materialism” as a uniform hedonistic sensualism can be misleading.²² Lokāyata was far from consistent in its indulgence in—if accepting at all—gross sense-gratification, and such indulgence is hardly an inevitable consequence of materialist thought. I favor Pradeep Gokhale’s translation of the term *lokāyata* as “limited by the world,” that is, *this-worldly*, rather than the widespread interpretation of the term as denoting as “spread among people,” meaning popular

²⁰ There is one extant but very late Lokāyata text, the *Tattvopaplavasīmha* of Jayarāśibatta, dated to ninth century CE. This work is the subject of Eli Franco’s *Perception, Knowledge, and Disbelief: A Study of Jayarāśi’s Skepticism* (1987).

²¹ The two major 20th monographs on Lokāyata are Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya’s *Lokāyata: A Study in Ancient Indian Materialism* (1959) and Kewal Krishnan Mittal’s *Materialism in Indian Thought* (1974). Another text is Eli Franco’s *Perception, Knowledge, and Disbelief* (1984). More recent studies are Ramakrishna Bhattacharya’s *Studies on the Cārvāka/Lokāyata* (2005) and Pradeep Gokhale’s *Lokāyata/Cārvāka* (2015). Surendranath Dasgupta’s (2007) robust appendix entry “The Lokāyata, Nāstika, and Cārvāka, is also very useful. Between the two twentieth century monographs, the first by Chattopadhyaya is more pertinent to the present inquiry. Still, Mittal’s work, even if admittedly uninterested “in the history (precise conditions) of India (1974, 14), assists the necessary problematization of the “school” and “*āstika/nāstika*” paradigms of philosophical taxonomization (Olivelle 1992, 22). They help transfer to Lokāyata the same conclusion Philipp Maas has expressed regarding Classical Yoga: “future studies in Yoga philosophy will be particularly promising when they give up the doxographical approach completely” (2013, 79).

²² As in Madhva’s medieval *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*: “The only end of man is enjoyment produced by sensual pleasures” (Cowell and Gough 1882, 3). Dasgupta’s conclusion is perhaps the most balanced: “Thus, even in those early times, on the one hand there were in the Vedic circle many moral and learned people who believed in these heretical views, whereas there were also immoral and bad people who lived a vicious life and held such heretical views either tacitly or openly” (2007, 531).

or common.²³ The latter translation contributes to a caricature of all Lokāyatas as “commoners” obsessed with superficial pleasure-seeking and gratification.²⁴ Alternatively, Gokhale and Johannes Bronkhorst define Lokāyata in terms of its principles, namely its omission of an afterlife or any means to completely transcend the world. Accordingly, Lokāyata is consistently referred to as a *nāstika* or “heterodox” tradition, alongside others, but of a very specific sort.

²³ “The term ‘*lokāyata*’ is generally derived from *lokeṣu āyatam* and interpreted as ‘spread (*āyatam*) among people (*lokeṣu*)’ or ‘prevalent among people’ . . . Here I would like to suggest an alternative derivation of the word, which I think is more objective and neutral. The word ‘*loka*’ is used many times to mean ‘world,’ rather than ‘this world,’ and is contrasted with *alaukika* or *lokottara*. Similarly the word ‘*laukika*’ derived from the word ‘*loka*’ means worldly as against otherworldly. The word ‘*āyata*’ means ‘spread.’ But it also has another meaning, namely *lokena āyatam* (literally, restrained by the world), which can be interpreted as ‘limited by the belief that this is the only world,’ or ‘limited by this-worldly approach,’ or ‘limited by the approach which disregards other worlds.’ I think it is more or less obvious that Lokāyata philosophy in all its versions denies the existence of other worlds. Hence the interpretation suggested by me brings out this unique feature of the Lokāyata approach, that it is this worldly.” (Gokhale 2015, 11–12); Dasgupta (2007, 514–15) favors the meaning of *lokāyata* as an art or science of disputation. This meaning is also acceptable even if it does not emphasize the this-worldly perspective of Lokāyata traditions that is highly relevant to this analysis; Cf. Bhattacharya 2005, 21–32.

We should be cautious when accepting novel interpretations but given that we have no access to ancient Lokāyata sources and are left with mere fragments, reconstructions, and views of opponents, compounded by the acceptance by all scholars that this-worldliness is a consistent feature of Lokāyata, the interpretation is not unreasonable in the least. What is more controversial is Gokhale and Bronkhorst’s claim that Lokāyata was not a philosophy of the “common people.” Not everyone is in agreement, as Chattopadhyaya accepts a “clash of two distinct cultures [Brāhmin culture and Lokāyata culture], the latter being deeply rooted in the lives of the masses” (1959, 40). Yet Chattopadhyaya states earlier that “Lokayata did mean the philosophy of the people, though those who were using it in this sense had often a deep contempt for the people along with their philosophy.” Ultimately, Chattopadhyaya accepts both senses—philosophy of the masses and the philosophy of this-worldliness (1–4).

²⁴ Gokhale highlights the irony of this charge, responding that ritualism and not hedonism is the dominant practice of the commoners: “common people are generally guided by religious superstitions and are involved in ritualistic practices as prescribed by the priestly class” (2015, 13). Also, while it is beyond the scope of this study to discuss *pramāṇa* in Lokāyata, sense perception within it surely relates to its this-worldliness. However, on the mischaracterization of sense-centric, this-worldly perspectives as inherently hedonistic, Bhattacharya helpfully gives a parallel example with Epicureanism, describing how materialism is distinct from hedonism as it can accommodate asceticism, hedonism, and various positions in between (2005, 30–31). Also see Gokhale 2015, 149–180, on how Lokāyata can include asceticism or temperance.

Surendranath Dasgupta gestures to Patañjali's and Jayāditya's commentaries on Paṇini 4.460, with the former asserting that a *nāstika* is someone who thinks "it does not exist," with Jayāditya adding that "it" refers to the *paraloka* or "other world."²⁵ Medhātithi on Mānava Dharmasāstra 4.30 describes *nāstikas* as those who reject other worlds or the metaphysical mechanics of sacrifice. Following this latter description, Buddhists, Jains, and Lokāyatas can all be categorized as *nāstikas* but only the Lokāyatas deny *both* sacrifice and the existence of any other world. Buddhists and Jains reject the authority of Veda and its specific forms of sacrifice but their *nāstika* traditions still accept some post-material state of being, some *para-loka* even if not one shared by the Vedicists. By contrast, for Lokāyata *nāstikas* the human "person" is nothing but the body and mind constituted by the gross elements, and thus when the material body dies so does the person in toto.

I contend that given its this-worldly focus that is largely *responsive* to alterative religious-intellectual traditions of the period, it is wise to label Lokāyata as rigorously skeptical rather than materialistic.²⁶ In short, Lokāyata was a skeptical movement of Indian thought and practice prominent during the second urbanization, with adherents active in India up until the close of the first millennium CE.²⁷ Lokāyata "this-worldliness" means that these traditions rejected any other world beyond the perceptible realm experienced by a mortal person during their one and only life. Lokāyatas denied both the next-worldliness of Vedic Brahmanism and the trans-worldliness of Upaniṣadic Brahmanism, later *āstika* philosophy, and both Buddhist and Jain traditions.²⁸

²⁵ Dasgupta 2007, 518.

²⁶ Bhattacharya notes: "But as I have tried to show elsewhere, *lokāyata* originally meant *disputatio*, the science of disputation, both in Pali and Sanskrit" (2002, 602). Also, Bhattacharya quotes Franco with respect to the fact that the word is not used "in the sense of a materialistic philosophical school, but as a science whose nature is to criticize with reasons" (629, n. 39).

²⁷ Bronkhorst 2011b, 39.

²⁸ "Trans-worldliness" carries two valences: first, the belief in *transmigration* or a life cycle preceding and following one's current life (thus assuming an interplay of *karma* and *saṃsāra*), and second, the

Two “Carvāka Fragments” illustrate the point:

paralokasiddhau pramānābhāvāt

There is no means of knowledge for determining (the existence of) the other-world.

paralokino 'bhāvāt paralokābhāvaḥ

There is no other-world because of the absence of any other-worldly being (i.e., the transmigrating self).²⁹

Gokhale’s 2015 monograph, preceding Bronkhorst’s article by a year, stresses this anti-other-worldly orientation. In the preface Gokhale cautions against asserting ideological unity in Lokāyata thought:

I suggest that Lokāyata as a “rationalist,” anti-other-worldly movement may not have been an organized movement. It is possible that the unity and identity as a single *darśana* was conferred on the diverse trends by their “religious” opponents rather than being accepted by the thinkers belonging to the trends themselves. It is possible that Lokāyata, as an unorthodox intellectual movement, contained and entertained diverse trends simultaneously.³⁰

The suggestion of a diversity of Lokāyatas irreducible to a unitary *darśana* is accepted by many scholars, including Gokhale. Still, Gokhale’s definition of Lokāyata, despite its insistence on pluralism, posits anti-other-worldliness (or conversely, this-worldliness) as the *sine qua non* of Lokāyata.

Whichever strand of Lokāyata one locates, anti-other-worldliness is constant. Moreover, urbanization, with its diverse material benefits (enjoyed by some but visible to all), initially tends to bring *this world* and its goods into even greater focus and esteem, and not a world to come or some world-transcending ultimate state. During the second urbanization a more cosmopolitan neo-Brahmanism—in both

belief in a *transmaterial* (i.e., *trans-prakṛtic*) final state called *mokṣa*, *nirvāna*, or *kaivalya*. Thus, I employ the following terminology: this-worldliness (Lokāyata), next-worldliness (Vedic Brahmanism) and trans-worldliness (“Hindu,” Buddhist, and Jain traditions). “Other-worldliness” encapsulates both next-worldliness and trans-worldliness

²⁹ Bhattacharya 2002, 605, 612; Bronkhorst 2016, 46.

³⁰ Gokhale 2015, xii.

renouncer and non-renouncer manifestations—began to substitute city values for village ones, including esteem for the material-oriented royal and merchant classes.³¹

The Mānava Dharmaśāstra expresses concern about the potentially damaging effect of logicians and *nāstikas* who denigrate the authority of the Veda. As Dasgupta noted a century ago, Mānava Dharmaśāstra 2.11 states:

"Scripture" [*śruti*] should be recognized as "Veda," and "tradition" [*smṛti*] as "Law Treatise." These two should never be called into question in any matter, for it is from them that the Law has shined forth. If a twice-born disparages these two by relying on the science of logic [*hetuśāstra*], he ought to be ostracized by good people as an infidel [*nāstika*] and a denigrator of the Veda.

Elsewhere Mānava Dharmaśāstra 12.105–106 commends and recommends "logical reasoning," as well as the epistemological tools of perception, inference, and alternative treatises, so long as they are used to support Vedic assertions:

Perception, inference, and treatises coming from diverse sources—a man who seeks accuracy with respect to the Law must have a complete understanding of these three. The man who scrutinizes the record of the seers and the teachings of the Law by means of logical reasoning not inconsistent with the vedic treatise—he alone knows the Law, and no one else.

At the very least these statements indicate the ubiquity—and perceived threat—of disputation, logical reasoning, and skepticism, specifically towards the Veda but also towards any form of "heard" or dogmatic teachings.

³¹ This phenomenon helps us understand why so many major Upaniṣadic passages situate kings in the roles of teachers to Brahmins. It may also make us pause before assuming Kṣatriya origins for some of the Upaniṣads simply due to the roles of royalty contained therein. And we may also better guess as to why the royal origins of Gautama Buddha and Mahāvīra are heavily emphasized in their hagiographies, and consequently we should be open to questioning their royal origins altogether; See Olivelle 1992, 37–38.

The Common Enemy

Both Lokāyata and Vedic Brahmanism lacked mature conceptions of transmigration, *karma*, *samsāra*, and a trans-worldly state of liberation. Bronkhorst seems correct in asserting a triadic fork in Brahmanical thought in the middle of the first millennium BCE, split between those who adhered to the this-worldly-but-also-very-next-worldly ritualism of Vedism (Mīmāṃsakas), those who accepted the emerging doctrines of trans-worldliness (Brahmanical renunciants, Buddhists, and Jains), and the Lokāyatas who dismissed any type of other-worldliness.³²

Lokāyata's damning divergence was precisely its unmatched and unapologetic rejection of *all* other-worldlinesses, including the not-next-world-but-still-other-world—that is, the “world” of liberation—of renunciant traditions. These groups were also threatened by Lokāyata skeptics. In addition, it is not wholly implausible to assert that these newer forms of other-worldliness—the trans-worldlinesses—were in fact (or at least in part) counter-movements to the this-worldly individualized here-and-now ethos prominent during the second urbanization.³³ The maturation and dissemination of the principles of *karma* and *samsāra* may have been, at least to some degree, *responses* to Lokāyata.

Bronkhorst summarizes this situation well:

Rejecting the “other world” in the form of rebirth and karmic retribution, they had to abandon the belief in a Vedic heaven as well, because the same arguments cut both ways; however, this was no great sacrifice, for the “other-worldly” dimension of the heaven which is presumably brought about by the Vedic sacrifice was not strong. Since more and more Brahmin thinkers joined the other side in this debate (the side of rebirth and karmic retribution), the Cārvākas found themselves more and more isolated and in the end abandoned by all, including other Brahmins.³⁴

³² Bronkhorst 2016, 52.

³³ See Dasgupta 1922, 512–550 for a summary of anti-Cārvāka/Lokāyata arguments voiced in “Hindu,” Buddhist, and Jain sources.

³⁴ Bronkhorst 2016, 50; Also see Dasgupta: “It is difficult, however, to say how and when this older science sophisticated logic or the art of disputation became associated with materialistic theories and revolutionary doctrines of morality, and came to be hated by Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism alike. Formerly it was hated only by the Buddhists, whereas the Brahmin are said to have learnt this science as

This is a crucial point. While histories of Indian philosophy tend to focus on the idea of the eternal, non-changing *ātman* or “Self” as the epicenter of late Vedic contention, perhaps more much basic, and thus contentious, was the question of the nature of an individual’s post-mortem state. Bronkhorst notes: “Various Brahmanical authors, moreover, admit that their concern to prove the eternality of the soul has as ultimate aim to show that there is life after death.” Bronkhorst then links anti-Vedic Buddhists and Jains (who also believed in life after death) with these Upaniṣadic Brahmins: “The Buddhists were concerned with the intellectual threat coming from the Cārvākas, not of course because they denied the soul, but because they denied ‘another world.’”³⁵ Overall, the sweeping anti-other-worldliness of Lokāyatas was ideologically one of the most radical developments of the mid-first millennium BCE. This perspective was extremely innovative if we accept Dumont’s and Olivelle’s arguments concerning the virtual absence of the sovereignty of the individual in Indian thought up to that point.

A Quick Reformulation

Urban Brahmins had to face the brunt of the onslaught of the new ideas of rebirth and karmic retribution, for the kingly courts, and the cities, were natural focal points for different ideologies to confront each other. The life of these Brahmins may have left them little space for traditional rites, but they would not be able to ignore the confrontation with the new ideas about rebirth and karmic retribution. It is in the surroundings of the royal court, including the capital city, that we may have to look for Brahmins who took up the challenge and responded to it in a coordinated fashion. They, or some of them, fought back. They rejected the belief in rebirth, and the existence of “another world” in general. Sometimes they may have succeeded in convincing their king; in such cases their opponents might associate this for them heretical point of view with a king: Pāyāsi, Paesi, Vena, or someone else.³⁶

one of the various auxiliary branches of study.” (2007, 516); “The Cārvākas had to contend on the one hand with those who admitted a permanent soul, such as the Jains, the Naiyāyikas, the Sāṃkhya-yoga and the Mīmāṃsā, and on the other hand with the idealistic Buddhists who believed in a permanent series of conscious states” (2007, 539).

³⁵ Bronkhorst 2016, 47.

³⁶ Bronkhorst 2016, 50; It seems that Bronkhorst, while making an appropriate distinction between rural and urban Brahmins, strays into questionable territory with their speculation that the urban Lokāyata Brahmins never truly eschewed their Vedic allegiance, only veiled it (51–52). In n. 65 Bronkhorst adds:

Bronkhorst's narrative runs thus: Rural Brahmins move to the city. There they battle with the new ideology of *karma* and rebirth (assuming it was not their own innovation). Some dig in their heels, some adapt, and others "fight back." The ideological sequence goes from next-worldly to trans-worldly to this-worldly. This is similar to Thapar's chronology. However, I would suggest that this linear chronology is questionable. It is not possible, on the basis of textual and historical evidence, to determine definitively—in a linear cause-and-effect manner—which ideological currents emerged in response to the other ideological currents that intermingled in complex ways during the period of the second urbanization in the mid-first millennium BCE. The second urbanization, with its loosening of lineage bonds, its social diversity, its elevation of the merchant and trader, its strong material elevation of the individual who lives but one life, helped to fuel the rejectionist movement of Lokāyata, which rejected other-worldliness and, more specifically, the next-worldliness of Vedic Brahmanism. Lokāyata also responded to the trans-worldliness of Upaniṣadic thought, by rejecting it with all other forms of other-worldliness. However, it is not possible to establish a definitive linear chronology of cause-and-effect relations.

"Franco and Preisendanz (1998: 179) observe: 'It is quite possible, though not yet provable, that Indian materialism developed in kingly and state administration circles as an alternative worldview counterbalancing that of the priestly class.' If our reflections are justified, the first part of Franco and Preisendanz's observation ('Indian materialism developed in kingly and state administration circles') is correct, whereas the second part ('materialism ... as an alternative worldview counterbalancing that of the priestly class') is not." Here I side with Franco and Preisendanz and am not convinced of Bronkhorst's critique of their second point, unless Bronkhorst is only asserting that the argument for an exclusively non-Brahmin source for Lokāyata is presumptuous. I would most likely agree on that point, but not Bronkhorst's final point that Lokāyatas would "turn in their graves" if they were regarded as "critics of the Vedic tradition."

From Lokāyata to Dharma Literature

The pivot to the Dharma literature from here is not simple, but terms like “naturalism” and “rationalism” are also applicable to this corpus, at the very least in comparison with its authoritative predecessors. The movement away from the village to both the wilderness and the city dislodged some of the anchors of Vedic ideology and culture, even if the Dharma literature is constantly grappling with the transition and repeatedly concedes to aspects of Vedic authority. The changes of this period had ramifications for ethical thinking that will be explored in the following chapter, but they also influenced ongoing cosmological thinking and taxonomization.

There is little escaping the almost inherent anthropocentrism of taxonomization, by which I mean not simply the fact that human minds and human experiences determine these classifications; rather, my point is that taxonomies are constructed—some more than other—with anthropocentric assumptions and aims in (human) mind. A taxonomy need not be hierarchical, although one would be hard-pressed to locate a taxonomy lacking an implicit or explicit scale of value, and especially one not favoring humans in aspects of form and/or content. Vedic sources taxonomize according to human sacrificial logics, legal sources taxonomize alongside human dietary regulations, and medical sources catalog the human health benefits of various animal meats, secretions, and other substances. Given these dissimilar foci, challenges abound when selecting sources from which to analyze animal taxonomies, especially in the post-Vedic period when contemplating the legal and medical sources.

With respect to medical sources, Zimmerman has comprehensively detailed animals and meats in the medical traditions, and as Olivelle emphasizes, in these sources “regulations are related to the health benefits of various meats rather than to socio-religious prescriptions.”³⁷ The medical corpus

³⁷ Olivelle 2002a, 11.

provides a catalog of substances rather than of living beings, and while some “socio-religious” elements season these texts, their focus is predominantly the physical and mental condition of the human patient, which is the supreme if not sole priority of the medical texts. Accordingly, while the texts are nutritionally prescriptive and proscriptive, they are rarely morally so.³⁸ For this reason, one is tempted to discard the medical literature due to the fact that its focus is *not* on living animals but rather on the quality of their extracted substances, as if the animals were no different than wheat, rice, or bean plants.

As Zimmerman highlights, scholarship on the history of Indian vegetarianism heavily favors explicitly religious texts over medical texts that are primarily from “the doctor’s point of view.”³⁹ Once one recognizes how meat taxonomies are deeply enmeshed in broader ecological, geographical, and anthropological classificatory structures, any attempts to completely divorce catalogs of meats from catalogs of animals are misguided. Nor do the Indian medical specialists seem to be wholly unconcerned with animal taxonomies. Zimmerman asserts: “[M]y hypothesis maintains that this text [*Suśruta Saṃhitā*] represents a corpus of knowledge about the fauna, not set out as such but slipped into the mold of discourse intended for the use of medical practitioners.”⁴⁰ Evaluations of various animals persist within ostensibly value free discussions of the quality of their meats and their practical applications. Moreover, the religious mechanics of sacrifice persist into the *śramaṇa*, Dharma, and

³⁸ By “morally so” I refer to a moral gaze directed outwards first and foremost. Importantly, I do not deny the presence of *dharma* in the medical traditions, as Anthony Cerulli has stressed that Āyurveda provides a comprehensive system of “body *dharma*.” This foundational body *dharma* of Āyurveda includes “pharmaceutical remedies along with social, religious, and legal aids” (2016, 81).

³⁹ Zimmerman 1987, 185; This is not to say that Zimmerman disagrees with Olivelle’s assessment of the focus of Āyurveda, as the former nonetheless asserts: “Āyurveda is concerned solely with the that aspects of things: health, the equilibrium of the elements of the body, efficacy—in a word, *artha*; the problems of violence and sin and the realization or negation of *dharma* do not fall within its province” (1987, 193); “The object of this compendium [*Caraka Saṃhitā*] is to is achievement of *dhātusāmya* [equilibrium of the *dhātus*]” (CS 1.53).

⁴⁰ Zimmerman 1987, 99; See also Olivelle’s overview of animal taxonomies in the *Caraka Saṃhitā* and *Suśruta Saṃhitā* (2002, 11–13).

medical traditions. Virtually all of these traditions appropriate the social currency (if not necessarily the accepted truth) of sacrifice, whether through metaphysical internalization (*śramaṇa*), concession to sacrificial necessity (Dharma), or resignification of the external Vedic sacrifice to the internal digestion and overall well-being of the patient (medical). The traditional medicine tradition (*Āyurveda*), like the Dharma traditions, toggles between the scientific and religious, also making it fit for socio-religious inquiry.⁴¹ That being said, and arguably running the risk of repeating the mistake Zimmerman cautions against, there remain convincing reasons to focus on legal texts in this chapter.

First, the assertion that legal texts focus on animals rather than meats still applies. My focus in this chapter is on situating animals relative to humans and relative to one another and flagging the emergence of ethical norms around human-animal relations. The dietary proscriptions of the legal texts provide insight into these relations even if couched in discussion about food and sacrifice.

Second, the distinction between *jāṅgala*, animals that inhabit dry lands or “jungles,” and *ānūpa*, animals that inhabit marshy lands, is absent from legal texts while critically operative in the medical sources as well as in the *Arthaśāstra*.⁴² Zimmerman emphasizes that *jāṅgala* and *ānūpa* are “words stemming *strictly* from the technical vocabulary of medicine,” while the types of residential and anatomical classifications that I discussed in chapter 1 “appear in many varied contexts and belong to the *overall* Hindu tradition.”⁴³ Hence even though the *jāṅgalalānūpa* division may be pivotal for an all-inclusive understanding of Hindu moral geography, it does not explicitly dictate the animal taxonomies and dietary regulations in Dharma texts that are the focus of the present chapter.

⁴¹ “Āyurveda... represents the seeds of secular thought. True, this secularism is almost immediately repressed, normalized, impregnated with a religious vocabulary: as we have repeatedly stressed, Āyurveda is a religious science” (Zimmerman 1987, 212, *passim*).

⁴² Zimmerman 1987, 47–55.

⁴³ Zimmerman 1987, 101, *emphases added*.

Third, Āyurvedic texts generally sanction the consumption of any and all animal-derived substances insofar as they have remedial applications, and these texts do not adhere to the normative categories of *abhakṣya* (“forbidden foods”) and *abhojya* (“unfit foods”) that are critical in the Dharma sources that are the focus of my inquiry.

Fourth, and finally, “ethics” is virtually absent in the medical texts, at least insofar as we construe ethics primarily as a gaze turned outwards towards the other rather than inwards towards the self. In the Āyurvedic canon, exaltations of vegetarianism surface as gestures of recognition towards the emerging socio-religious climate that is increasingly concerned with harm inflicted upon animals. At the same time, the medical sources promote the consumption of meats and one cannot procure meats without harming animals, and thus there is an inherent conflict. In sum, the absence of any substantial ethics in the medical texts means that they are only occasionally informative when pivoting from cosmology to corresponding ethical practices.

Religion and Empirical Sensibilities in the Mānava Dharmaśāstra

Zimmerman ascribes to the Mānava Dharmaśāstra, or Manu-Smṛti, a “realistic, naturalistic perspective” one divergent from prior Vedic dispositions. Akin to how Āyurveda accepts and responds to how the body naturally operates, so does the Mānava Dharmaśāstra *allegedly* accept and respond to the “natural activity (*pravṛtti*) of creatures,” which includes the eating of some creatures by others.⁴⁴ There is an ethical tension between adherence to “natural activity” and “abstaining from such activity” (*nivṛtti*), but our present focus is simply how the Mānava Dharmaśāstra favors a more empirical and naturalistic perspective than the Vedic texts. This appears to be a predictable development in relation to the

⁴⁴ MDh 5.56; Zimmerman 1987, 188; I say “allegedly” because while the MDh accepts the facticity of the natural activity of creatures, it does not seem to accept such activity as having normative force for humans. In other words, the text recognizes the moral fallacy of an “appeal to nature.” See Olivelle’s note to MDh 5.27 (2005, 279).

processes of urbanization discussed earlier, along with the concomitant rise rationalism, materialism, and other social transformations.

The attribution of an empirical perspective to Manu may seem odd given that it opens with two cosmogonies and a novel explanation for the origin and transmission of the *dharma*. Manu, the human man, the son of the divine creator, is staged as the first listener to the treatise of *dharma* composed by the creator himself: “After composing this treatise, he himself in the beginning imparted it according to rule to me [Manu] alone; and I, in turn, to Marīci, and the other sages” (Mānava Dharmasāstra 1.58).

Note how this introduction diverts from traditional forms of Vedic authority and knowledge:

Paralleling the Buddhist doctrine of *buddhavacana* and doing one better than that, the MDh grounds its authority (*pramāṇa*) on the *svayambhūvacana*, the words of the Self-existent One, the very ground of creation. This appeal to a single source of authority stands in sharp contrast to the traditional source of authority for and means of knowing *dharma*, namely the Veda supplemented by traditional texts (*smṛti*) and the conduct of the virtuous (*ācāra*).⁴⁵

The author of the Mānava Dharmasāstra grounds the work’s authority in the creator’s own words and not the eternal Veda. The author does not explicitly reject the authority of the Veda and elsewhere claims that all of the Mānava Dharmasāstra’s contents have already been taught therein.⁴⁶ Thus, in the opening chapters and throughout the text, the author attempts to balance the authority of Manu and the authority of the Veda as the true source of *dharma*.⁴⁷ This is not dissimilar, or disconnected from, how the text must balance Brahmanical (ritual and ascetic) *dharma* with Kṣatriya (royal and warrior) *dharma*. It is also not dissimilar from how the medical traditions must balance, with much less consequence, their own pragmatism with Brahmanical *dharma*. And finally, it also not so dissimilar to

⁴⁵ Olivelle 2005, 28.

⁴⁶ The point here is that at times the MDh diverts from, but does *not* subvert, the authority of the Veda. The text even celebrates the Vedas as the eternal (*sanātana*) blueprint of creation and the ultimate source of teachings on *dharma*. See Holdrege 1995, 79–80.

⁴⁷ MDh 2.7; Olivelle 2008, 28.

how Brahmanical *darśanas* (“philosophical perspectives”), such as Pātañjala/Classical Yoga, must balance their newer *dharma*s with the Vedic *dharma* of sacrifice.⁴⁸

The issue of conflicting and conflating *dharma*s will be discussed in the next chapter. In this chapter we will focus on how the Mānava Dharmaśāstra, while adopting a narrative and verse format that would afford it religious authority,⁴⁹ includes content that displays a more “realistic, naturalistic perspective,” one markedly influenced by the rise of alternative metaphysical ideologies and ethical practices. The content relevant to this inquiry is that pertaining to animal classifications, dietary regulations, and verses about harming (*hiṃsā*) and nonharming (*ahiṃsā*)

Origins and Interpolations

Mānava Dharmaśāstra 1.1–32 opens with a creation account detailing its own origins as well as the world, a feature that distinguishes the text from earlier Dharmasūtras. Manu, who was spoken to by the creator himself, communicates the cosmogony to the seers who approach him wishing to learn the *dharma* of the creator. The cosmogony presented is not dissimilar to that of earlier Vedic texts, with repeat motifs of darkness and inertia (1.5), a “Self-existent” (*svayambhū*) creator introducing the five elements (1.6), primordial waters and divine impregnating semen (1.8), a golden egg (*hiranyagarbha*, 1.9), the introduction of the three worlds and eight directions (1.12), and so forth. Following initial creation accounts, Manu continues to describe how each and every creature follows the activity (*karman*) pre-designated by the creator:

To establish distinctions among activities, moreover, he distinguished the Right (*dharma*) from the Wrong (*adharma*) and afflicted these creatures with the pairs of opposites such as pleasure and pain. Together with the perishable atomic particles of the

⁴⁸ See Holdrege 2004.

⁴⁹ “His use of verse for the composition of his *Dharmaśāstra*, therefore, must have been part of a deliberate plan to lend the kind of authority to his text that would come only through this literary genre. We have, of course, the parallel examples of the epics *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyana* composed in verse and claiming religious authority” (Olivelle 2008, 26); Also see Olivelle 2018, 22.

five elements given in tradition, this whole world comes into being in an orderly sequence. As they are brought forth again and again, each creature follows on its own the very activity assigned to it in the beginning by the Lord. Violence or nonviolence, gentleness or cruelty, righteousness (*dharma*) or unrighteousness (*adharma*), truthfulness or untruthfulness—whichever he assigned to each at the time of creation, it stuck automatically to that creature. As at the change of seasons each season automatically adopts its own distinctive marks, so do embodied beings adopt their own distinctive acts. (Mānava Dharmaśāstra 1.26-30)

A few elements of this passage are noteworthy. First, *dharma* and *adharma* are advertised in a “newer” valence, that is, in the sense of “righteousness” and “unrighteousness,” rather than referring to the essence or purpose or the necessity of the performance of sacrifice. Second, and somewhat unremarkably—in the sense of it being a truism by this time—is the mention of all creatures being afflicted with pleasure (*sukha*) and pain (*duḥkha*) as well as other “opposites” (*dvandva*). Third, the activity (*karman*) of creatures is pre-determined: “whichever he assigned to each at the time of creation, it stuck automatically to that creature.” These activities include propensities for “violence or nonviolence, gentleness or cruelty, righteousness (*dharma*) or unrighteousness (*adharma*), truthfulness or untruthfulness.” At the outset, the Mānava Dharmaśāstra expresses concern for what we may view as ethics-connected “activities,” specifically those connected to harming.

Following the creation account are numerous “excursuses” that Olivelle labels “parenthetical statements.” Olivelle dates the Mānava Dharmaśāstra to approximately the second to third centuries CE but the extant text is not free from interpolations; Olivelle regards these excursuses later additions.⁵⁰ In the creation account referenced above, there is no mention of categories of animals or any explicit biological order of generation. In fact, the only taxonomy of beings is an anthropocentric social taxonomy, with the final verse repeating the Ṛgveda’s division of humans into the four social classes (*varṇas*). Akin to the structure described in Ṛgveda 10.90—yet this time produced by the will of the

⁵⁰ Olivelle, 2008, 52, 20–25.

creator rather than from the dismemberment of the cosmic *puruṣa*—Brahmins emerge from the creator’s mouth, Kṣatriyas from his arms, Vaiśyas from his thighs, and Śudras from his feet (Mānava Dharmaśāstra 1.31). After this verse detailing the creation of the *varṇas* a second cosmogony unfolds, one that is most likely a later addition. But even if not an interpolation, this “quite superfluous second account of creation” still adds or clarifies very little on a grand scale.⁵¹

The “Second Account of Creation,” given in Mānava Dharmaśāstra 1.32–41, lists many types of created entities, from the ten great seers to gods to sages to demons as well as other extraordinary beings. Cosmic phenomena such as lightning and rainbows are also included—curiously so—followed by a medley of creatures from pseudo-humans (*kiṃnara*) to monkeys to fish to birds, followed by sacrificial animals (*paśus*), wild animals (*mṛgas*), humans, predatory animals, animals with incisors in both jaws (*ubhayatodat*), and numerous other creatures ending with “immobile creatures of various kinds” (1.40).

The excursus offers little new information, mostly repeating some of the names and categories of animals prevalent in earlier sources. However, the subsequent excursus, “Classification of Flora and Fauna,” expresses propagative processes as seemingly the sole classificatory standard, or at least the only one conferring animals’ relative value. Mānava Dharmaśāstra 1.42–46 repeats the quadripartite division offered at Aitareya Upaniṣad 3.3, segregating those born from embryonic sacs (*jarāyujā*) from those born from eggs (*aṇḍajā*) from those born from moisture (*svedajā*) from those born from sprouts (*udbhijā*). Humans, other land mammals, *rākṣasas* and *piśācas* (two types of demons) populate the first category; birds, fish, snakes and other such animals constitute the second category; “creatures that sting

⁵¹ Olivelle 2008, 239, see note to MDh 1.32.

and bite” such as lice and flies make up the third category; finally, plant life of various sorts constitute the fourth category.⁵²

Peculiar to this excursus is how the author opens with “I will now explain to you exactly which type of activity is ascribed here” (1.42) but neglects to explicitly indicate these respective “activities,” with the exception of *svedaja* creatures who “sting and bite.”⁵³ Yet in the following verses concerning sprout-born creatures, the author explicitly endorses the view that these beings (plants) have an inner awareness (*antaḥsaṃjñā*),⁵⁴ feel pleasure and pain, and are involved in the endless cycle of birth and death (*saṃsāra*, 1.49–50). The final verse correlates categories of propagation with a hierarchy of “conditions,” in which sprout-born creatures are of the lowest rank (*etadanta*) and Brahmā the creator occupies the highest (*brahmādi*). This assertion implies that the three other categories of propagation are also ranked: moisture-born creatures rank above sprout-born, egg-born above moisture-born, sac-born above egg-born, and divine beings above the sac-born.

Propagative Taxonomy: Beyond the Religious/Science Dichotomy

Despite Olivelle’s caution that the excursus may be a later interpolation, I find that it warrants some consideration. First, at no other point in the Mānava Dharmaśāstra is a classification of animals provided that is not also tied to their consumption or nonconsumption as food. This section on the “Classification of Flora and Fauna” immediately follows the second creation account, indicating a concern to classify actual, living animals independent of the ascribed value of animals as foodstuffs. Noteworthy is how the model is anatomical, emphasizing propagation and not residential assignment along the village/wilderness axis. This choice seems to favor a biological, empirical means of classification.

⁵² *Udbhijja* (sprout-born) refers only to plants and does not imply the existence of sprout-born animals. See Zimmerman 1987, 200.

⁵³ Medhātithi’s commentary offers little by way of explaining this omission.

⁵⁴ Olivelle 2008, 240, note on MDh 1.49.

Zimmerman disagrees with this type of conclusion, contending that such a propagative classificatory structure “can in no way be considered as proof of an effort at empirical knowledge.” While Zimmerman argues this point in the context of the medical corpus and not the legal literature, the thrust of the claim applies to both Āyurveda and the Dharmasāstras: propagative taxonomies—in Zimmerman’s view—reflect religious and not scientific sensibilities. Zimmerman writes:

Suśruta’s presentation of it [the fourfold propagative division] lacks the indispensable complement that alone confers on this division its true ontological and religious dimensions: the principle of the *ātman*’s transmigration through reincarnations.⁵⁵

Zimmerman’s argument is that Āyurveda virtually ignores propagative processes because the medical tradition is unconcerned with the “ontological and religious dimensions” that give propagative taxonomies relevance in other, even contemporaneous, traditions. Āyurveda is uninterested in *how* animals are born, viewing propagative distinctions as largely irrelevant to the health value that the flesh and secretions of animals have for humans.⁵⁶ Religious texts, by contrast, find religious utility in this taxonomy—or so Zimmerman’s argument goes.

To respond to Zimmerman, we should recall that this fourfold model of propagation first appears in Aitareya Upaniṣad 3.3 and a threefold variant is found in Chāndogya Upaniṣad 6.3.1. While the notion of transmigration appears in several Upaniṣads, including the early Upaniṣads, no standardized “doctrine” of transmigration was established at that time.⁵⁷ For Zimmerman this doctrine would have had to have been mature enough by the time of these Upaniṣads to generate an allegedly complementary propagative taxonomy. However, the relevant verse in the Aitareya Upaniṣad makes no

⁵⁵ Zimmerman 1987, 199, emphasis added.

⁵⁶ While uninterested in *how* animals are born, the medical tradition is interested in *where* they are born given the alleged connection between the geographical location of a meat source (e.g., the dry “jungle” or the wet marshlands) and its quality.

⁵⁷ Olivelle 1998a, 19–21.

connection between the types of propagation and the idea of transmigration and, moreover, the entire Upaniṣad lacks any mention, explicitly or implicitly, of rebirth. The final verse eschews any reference to rebirth and refers instead to a “heavenly world up there” where one becomes “immortal”—“It is with this self consisting of knowledge that he went up from this world and, having obtained all his desire in the heavenly world up there, became immortal” (Aitareya Upaniṣad 3.4). In addition, the threefold classification mentioned in Chāndogya Upaniṣad 6.3.1 also does not explicitly connect propagative divisions with the cycle of rebirth. Unlike the Aitareya Upaniṣad, the Chāndogya Upaniṣad does elsewhere explicitly reference rebirth and its connection to action (*karma*)—“Now, people here whose behavior is pleasant can expect to enter a pleasant womb, like that of a woman of the Brahmin, the Kṣatriya, or the Vaiśya class. But people of foul behavior can expect to enter a foul womb, like that of a dog, a pig, or an outcaste woman” (Chāndogya Upaniṣad 5.10.7). Significantly, this passage does not rank types of propagation but rather the relative “pleasantness” of the various wombs of sac-born beings, in particular among classes of human beings. Thus, in the context of the early Upaniṣads, one wonders, contra Zimmerman, how the theory of rebirth allegedly operates as an “indispensable complement” to the propagative taxonomy.

Returning to the Mānava Dharmaśāstra, the text subscribes to the doctrine of rebirth and also includes the fourfold classification based on birth-type. The terminological and conceptual proximity of *rebirth* with various types of *birthing* is obvious but the religious import and influence of the two on one another is less so. Zimmerman writes how “the scale of rebirths appears in the first pages of *The Laws of Manu*,”⁵⁸ yet the “excursus” in the “first few pages” of Manu is not only a later interpolation, at least according to Olivelle, but much more significantly expresses a scale of *births* and not necessarily

⁵⁸ Zimmerman 1987, 200.

rebirths. The four means of propagation and corresponding scale of ontological value are equally as applicable and relevant to a worldview that omits rebirth as to one that includes it. The highest nondivine birth issues from an embryonic sac and the lowest from a sprout; hence if one is sprout-born one is the lowest on a scale of (terrestrial) ontological value and if sac-born one is the highest on that scale. This scale of ontological value could survive even in the absence of the theory of rebirth.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that at the end of its description of the fourfold propagative taxonomy, the Mānava Dharmaśāstra does introduce the notion of *saṃsāra*, the endless cycle of birth and death, and suggests that plants, which are sprout-born, are relegated to the lowest rank on the scale of ontological value in the transmigratory cycle *because of their past deeds*: “Wrapped in a manifold darkness caused by their past deeds, these come into being with inner awareness, able to feel pleasure and pain. In this dreadful transmigratory cycle of beings, a cycle that rolls on inexorably forever, these are said to represent the lowest condition. . . .” (1.49–50). Elsewhere the text emphasizes that if human beings transgress the injunctions of *dharma* and “commit grievous sins,” then in their subsequent births they will fall from their human condition and, depending on the seriousness of their transgressions, will descend into a variety of wombs. These wombs range from those of land mammals such as dogs, pigs, and donkeys (sac-born), to the wombs of birds, snakes, and lizards (egg-born), to the wombs of insects such as moths and spiders (moisture-born), and finally to the wombs of plants such as grasses, shrubs, and creepers (sprout-born).

Which kind of womb this Jīva, the “individual self,” attains in due order within this world through which kind of action—listen to all of that. Those who commit grievous sins causing loss of caste first go to dreadful hells during large spans of years; upon the expiration of that, they reach the following transmigratory states. A murderer of a Brahmin enters the womb of a dog, a pig, a donkey, a camel, a cow, a goat, a sheep, a deer, a bird, a Cāṇḍāla [outcaste]. . . . A Brahmin who drinks liquor enters the wombs of worms, insects, moths, birds that feed on excrement, and vicious animals. A Brahmin who steals enters thousands of times the wombs of spiders, snakes, lizards, aquatic animals, and vicious ghouls. A man who has sex with an elder’s wife enters hundreds of

times the wombs of grasses, shrubs, creepers, carnivorous animals, fanged animals, and creatures that commit cruel deeds. (Mānava Dharmaśāstra 12.53–58)

What is the point of this digression? Zimmerman insinuates that propagative classifications are foregrounded—and only have real force—when complemented with “the principle of the *ātman*’s transmigration through reincarnations.” The Mānava Dharmaśāstra’s inclusion of this propagative division coupled with the text’s acceptance of rebirth supposedly evidences this “indispensable” connection. Moreover, the religious underbelly of the taxonomy is what should persuade us, according to Zimmerman, that the taxonomy is *not* “an effort at empirical knowledge.” However, I would argue that Zimmerman’s insistence on establishing a dichotomy between “religion” and “science” is problematic with respect to both the Dharmaśāstras and Āyurvedic texts. I concur with Anthony Cerulli, who cautions us against perpetuating the debates about “classical Indian science versus religion” in our studies of Āyurvedic texts and other premodern Indian sources: “Instead of attempting to separate out layers of science vis-à-vis layers of religion in the sources, we must learn how to read statements made by the premodern Indian authors as ‘facts of a special kind,’ as Shigehisa Kuriyama puts it, that ‘invite us to develop our sensibility in such a way as to discern the realities described therein.’”⁵⁹ Moving beyond the religion/science dichotomy, I would suggest that the Mānava Dharmaśāstra clearly evidences what Zimmerman terms “ontological and religious dimensions” when it connects animal taxonomies with notions of rebirth and the karmic consequences of adharmic actions. At the same time, the text expresses in other contexts what Zimmerman characterizes as a “realistic, naturalistic perspective”—a perspective that I would argue, contrary to Zimmerman, is reflected in the text’s classification of animals based on *empirical knowledge* of specific anatomical characteristics and propagative processes.

⁵⁹ Cerulli 2016, 70.

Forbidden Animals/Forbidden Foods

Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 11.1.6.19 divides the animate world into food and eaters of food. But food eaters are also food themselves, at least if we conceive of food as any substances that provide creatures with nutrition through consumption. While most humans do not typically identify other humans as food, humans materially remain just that. “Food” (or that which is “edible”) designates that which can be consumed with nutritional benefit rather than that which should be consumed.⁶⁰ It is fundamentally a descriptive, not normative term. A food is a nutrition-providing edible substance.

Virtually all plants and animals are edible, thereby *substantively* satisfying as food, yet regulations pervade Hindu texts detailing which edibles are *morally* satisfying as food. Some sources invoke the allegedly positive or negative health consequences of various foodstuffs to strengthen normative calls for their respective avoidance or consumption. However, only medical traditions evaluate, proscribe, and prescribe foods exclusively on the basis of their nutritional properties. Health consequences are both the basis for the regulations and their sole determinant, for what one should eat is merely that which increases vitality and prolongs life. Alternatively, in other sources the health effects of foods are largely supplementary and occasionally operate to confirm the purity/impurity, propriety/impropriety, and fitness/unfitness of the substances in question. The purported correspondence between physical health and moral-spiritual health is found in many sources, and even the pragmatic

⁶⁰ One could argue that the term more precisely denotes that which is actually consumed by creatures for sustenance, rather than that which is potentially consumable. In short, the term “food” is always relational, always food *for* someone—e.g., pigs *could* drink mango lassis with nutritional benefit, but they typically don’t, hence lassis are not food for pigs. Even still, while the term then becomes historically descriptive in addition to being physiologically descriptive, but it still lacks normative force.

medical texts periodically extol—if only rather performatively—the alleged physiological gifts of the moral life.⁶¹

The Dharma literature oscillates between various reasons for refraining from specific foods, a dynamic I will explore in chapter 3 in the context of the ethics of the Dharmaśāstras.⁶² Perhaps the greatest contribution—and emblematic feature—of the Dharma literature in the context of food regulations is how it designates edibility by means of the categories of *abhakṣya* and *abhojya*. Olivelle summarizes:

Abhakṣya refers to items of food, both animals and vegetables, that are completely forbidden; generally the term refers to food sources rather than cooked food served at a meal.

Abhojya, on the other hand, refers to food that is normally permitted but due to some supervening circumstances has become unfit to be eaten. This term takes on a secondary meaning referring not directly to food but to a person whose food one is not permitted to eat.⁶³

These two terms—and corresponding lists of food—first surface with any technicality in the Dharmasūtras and are developed the Dharmaśāstras, and they seem to have become prevalent by the second century BCE.⁶⁴ The terms are present in the Āpastamba Dharmasūtra (ca. 300–200 BCE), the Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra (ca. 200–100 BCE), the Gautama Dharmasūtra (ca. 200–100 BCE), the Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra (ca. 100 BCE), and the Viṣṇu Smṛti (“Vaiṣṇava Dharmaśāstra,” ca. 500–800 CE), yet carry greater precision in the Mānava Dharmaśāstra (ca. 0–100 CE) and the Yājñavalkya

⁶¹ “He who abstains from meat and alcohol and who eats only what is indicated—the pure and pious man, in whom the *sattva* (spirit, the principle of knowledge and purity) predominates, escapes from mental disorders both innate and acquired” (CS *Cikitsāsthānam* 9.96, cited in Zimmerman 1987, 190); Also see Zimmerman 1987, 180–194.

⁶² It should be noted that the intended audience of the Dharma literature was the literate Brahmin. See Olivelle 2016.

⁶³ Olivelle 2002b, 345.

⁶⁴ Olivelle 2002b, 345.

Dharmaśāstra (ca. 300–500 CE). *Abhakṣya*, or “forbidden foods,” are intrinsically prohibited, meaning that they are not to be consumed no matter how they are prepared or who prepares or offers them (except in “times of adversity,” or *āpaddharma*, Mānava Dharmaśāstra chapter 10). More succinctly, the origin or source of the food is what marks these items as morally impermissible.

By contrast, *abhojya*, or “unfit foods,” are those foods that are intrinsically permitted but become impermissible due to some “supervening circumstance.” These circumstances may be contamination by a substance or creature, such as contact with dirt or an insect or a human in a temporarily impure state (during menstruation, for example). There are also individuals whose prepared food is virtually always unfit to be consumed, and hence while the food substance itself is otherwise permitted, the fact that it is prepared by an unfit cook renders it impermissible for consumption.⁶⁵ In sum, *abhojya* can mean both “unfit food” (as a *tatpuruṣa* compound) and “a person whose food is not permitted to be eaten” (as a *bahuvrīhi* compound).⁶⁶

A looming issue here is that of a substance’s purity or impurity, a characteristic not infrequently assumed to govern not only interpersonal food transactions but also the intrinsic nature of the substance itself. Therefore, one may legitimately ask how much the well-trodden purity paradigm influences the categories of *abhakṣya* and *abhojya*. Olivelle comments regarding how purity and impurity relate to these two categories:

The category of *abhakṣya*, *within whose purview I have not seen the pure/impure play any significant role*, refers to the physical and biological world—the cosmology—constructed by ancient Brāhmaṇas. In the classification of *abhakṣya* animals, we see the distinctions between atmosphere, earth, and water; between village and wilderness (*grāma/āraṇya*); between cloven-hoofed farm animals based on the paradigmatic cow and the uncloven work animals (horse); between paradigmatic birds that live up in the

⁶⁵ For a concise yet wide-ranging list of various disqualifications, see GDh 17.9-2. Cf. ĀpDh 1.16.16–32; For a long list of *abhojyānnaḥ*, or “people whose food is not permitted to eat,” see MDh 4.205–217; Cf. ĀpDh 1.18.16–1.19.15.

⁶⁶ Olivelle 2002b, 346.

air and those that live and feed in water (web-footed); between carnivores and herbivores.

The category of *abhojya*, on the other hand, is closely connected with social boundaries and with the pure/impure distinctions governing social relationships. Much of the anthropological work on food prohibitions in modern India has focused on food transactions—the *bhojya-abhojya*: from whom can food be accepted, and what types of food can be accepted from which types of people?⁶⁷

Abhakṣya furnishes information about animals, cosmology, and worldview, while *abhojya* focuses on human social hierarchies and permissible food transactions between humans. The latter category is where the purity/impurity paradigm is the most operative, and this paradigm correspondingly has relatively little influence on, or relevance to, the category of *abhakṣya*.⁶⁸ The Dharma texts give many examples of disqualifying factors—those that render foods either irrevocably *abhojya* or in need of ritual purification—and only some of these will be mentioned, as necessary, in the following discussion in which I will focus on the category of *abhakṣya*. Moreover, the focus here will be on flesh prohibitions given their relevance to topics of permissible and impermissible killing and the Dharmasāstra literature’s gradually increasing ethical concern with the harming and nonharming of animals. Extracted animal substances, especially milk, are also relevant but of secondary importance.⁶⁹ In chapter 4 dairy milk will be discussed in a very particular political context.

Fish and Birds

Land animals are the main focus of this chapter, but some attention must be directed to birds and fish.

Even though air and water animals—particularly the latter—are less present and pressing in the day-to-

⁶⁷ Olivelle 2002b, 352–53, emphasis added.

⁶⁸ Some definitive works on the interaction of purity/impurity, social division, and caste: Dumont 1980; Marriott 1968, 1976a, 1976b; Olivelle 1998; Orenstein 1965, 1968, 1970; Quigley 1993; Tambiah 1973; For a linguistic study of *bhakṣya* and *bhojya* as indicators of food, see Yagi 1994.

⁶⁹ Olivelle makes a key point regarding eggs: “Prohibition of eggs is noteworthy because the legal texts are completely silent about eggs, from which we must deduce that eggs were practically never eaten in ancient India; laws generally forbid what is commonly done” (Olivelle 2002a, 18, n. 20).

day life worlds of most humans, they still surface in varying degrees in the Vedic and Dharma sources. As for aquatic animals, Dharma texts seem content with singling out particular species of fish and other aquatic creatures, with the only recurring categories of forbidden being carnivorous fish and grotesque fish (*vikṛta*).⁷⁰ Olivelle notes that “the older [Dharmasūtra] sources appear to assume that all fish, except those explicitly forbidden, may be eaten.”⁷¹ Yet as carnivorous fish are explicitly forbidden as sources of food, one may reasonably wonder which species of fish were assumed *not* to be carnivores. The distinction is key because, as Olivelle notes,

[w]e detect what could be called a “bottom line” in these [*abhakṣya*] restrictions: all land animals, birds, and fish that eat other animals rather than vegetables are strictly forbidden. Thus, when we go beyond the vegetable kingdom, the paradigmatic food is the meat of vegetarian animals.⁷²

The developing belief in carnivory among most if not all kinds of fish reinserts the logical wrench highlighted in chapter 1. In the utopian schema that plots all nonhuman animals as plant eaters and humans as the sole eaters of animals, meat-eating land animals cause a problem. Any assertion of vegetarian fish is largely a moot point, as over time the Dharma sources prohibit eating virtually all types of fish—exemplified in the Mānava Dharmasāstra—most likely due to a “shift in attitude with regard to fish.” After all, the maxim of the “law of the fishes” seems to spring from the general assumption of carnivory among aquatic animals.⁷³

While fish should present a gastro-cosmological dilemma similar to the one posed by lions and other nonhuman carnivores, they ultimately do not. Given the marginal location of fish in the cultural (as opposed to natural) landscapes of the Vedic and Hindu taxonomists, it seems that it was sufficient to

⁷⁰ ĀpDh 1.17.39; GDh 17.36; VaDh 14.42.

⁷¹ Olivelle 2002a, 19.

⁷² Olivelle 2002a, 27.

⁷³ Olivelle 2002a, 20.

acknowledge the unsavory eating habits of fish and simply ban their consumption. The Mānava Dharmaśāstra prohibits eating “every kind of fish” (5.14),⁷⁴ indicating both the fundamental problem of carnivory and the uniquely problematic carnivorous habits of aquatic animals: “A man who eats the meat of some animal is called ‘eater of that animal's meat,’ whereas a fish-eater is an ‘eater of every animal's meat.’ Therefore, he should eschew fish.” (5.15). Immediately thereafter the Mānava Dharmaśāstra permits two types of fish to be consumed under extraordinary circumstances and three types to be consumed at any time (5.16). Still, these represent only a handful of exceptions to the general prohibition.

The consistent reluctance to sanction the eating of the eaters of meat becomes more obvious with even a cursory analysis of birds. Much like with fish, the legal texts largely favor naming species of birds individually rather than emphasizing more general categories. Nevertheless, there are a few recurring groups of birds that should not be eaten, such as birds who scratch the ground to find food, birds who feed by pecking, carnivorous birds, and water/web-footed/diving birds.⁷⁵ The terms “water birds,” “waterfowl,” “web-footed birds,” and “birds that catch fish by diving” (and the Mānava Dharmaśāstra’s “fish eaters”) all designate water birds or those birds who live on or around bodies of water. This includes birds who spend most of their time on land but also venture over and into the water, as well as those who spend the majority of their nonaerial lives on top of the water. The Mānava Dharmaśāstra’s specific mentioning of both “birds that catch fish by diving” and “fish eaters” appears to

⁷⁴ YDh ends with “fish” as its final prohibited food, although five exceptions are given at 1.177.

⁷⁵ “Scratchers” ĀpDh 1.17.32, GDh 17.36, BDh 1.12.7, VaDh 14.48, MDh 5.13; YDh 1.171; “peckers” ĀpDh 1.17.33, GDh 17.36, MDh 5.13, YDh 1.171; carnivorous birds ĀpDh 1.17.34, VaDh 14.48, MDh 5.11 (also “fish eaters” 5.14), YDh 1.171; “water birds” GDh 17.29; “waterfowl” MDh 5.12; YDh 1.171; “web-footed birds” VaDh 14.48, MDh 5.13, YDh 1.173; “birds that catch fish by diving” MDh 5.13.

include piscivorous birds such as sea eagles, who dive for some of their food but generally remain on and over land and are not commonly categorized as water birds.

The association of birds with water is, I contend, a de facto association of birds with fish and specifically the consumption of the latter by the former. Water birds are assumed to be eaters of fish and for this reason they are categorically prohibited for consumption. Even in the earliest sources, the Āpastamba Dharmasūtra forbids the consumption of carnivorous birds and the Gautama Dharmasūtra, which is silent on the dietary habits of birds, forbids the human consumption of “water birds.” The case of the Gautama Dharmasūtra may not be entirely convincing for the text does not prohibit eating “scratchers” or “peckers,” either or both of whom are later assumed to be carnivorous animals. Hence for the Gautama Dharmasūtra it remains possible that the prohibition against eating water birds does not derive from their assumed carnivory but something else entirely.⁷⁶

The Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra mentions only five “scratchers” that are permissible for consumption and is silent on “peckers,” water birds, and carnivorous birds. Given that the text lists the animals that are consumable rather than those that are forbidden, one can assume that its silence indicates prohibition with respect to the other categories. The Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra forbids eating all web-footed birds, carnivorous birds, and nearly all “scratchers,” but the text is silent on “peckers.” Much more definitively, the Mānava Dharmasāstra bans both of these categories—not without exceptions—even adding the aforementioned categories of “divers” and “fish eaters,” two classes

⁷⁶ Here we may also have an example covered by Stanley Tambiah’s “Proposition 2: An unaffiliated animal, if it is seen as capable of leaving its location or habitat and invading a location or habitat of primary value to man, will be the focus of strong attitudes expressed in the forms of (1) a food taboo and (2) a bad omen or inauspicious sign” (1969, 450). The water may or may not be conceived as “of primary value to man,” but as birds are categorically associated with the sky, “water birds” are “capable of leaving its location or habitat,” which makes them atypical and hence potentially the focus of a food taboo. This same proposition may dictate parallel taboos on “village birds.”

explicitly indicating dietary habits. The Yājñavalkya Dharmasāstra bans all birds save five individual exceptions. Olivelle notes that the great variance with respect to “scratchers” and “peckers” may indicate consternation about the eating habits of these birds, in particular about whether they are plant eaters or meat eaters. The authors and commentators of these texts seem uncertain as to the diets of these two recurring categories of birds.⁷⁷ While we should be wary, as always, of concluding too much from inclusions and omissions in some sources but not others, some speculation on the value of these classes is in order. For what else could be the utility of these two categories—“scratchers” and “peckers”—apart from their (implicit?) communication of the kinds of foods eaten by the two groups of animals?⁷⁸

The Mānava Dharmasāstra’s prohibition against eating both groups seems to convey the belief that all of these birds are carnivorous. The conclusion seems credible when considered alongside the text’s simultaneous forbiddance of all diving, web-footed, and fish-eating birds—that is, aquatic and piscivorous birds that presumably eat other animals for sustenance. The upshot is that not only does the proximity of “air animals” to water (even if not residing upon it) make them cosmologically anomalous—and thus, according to Stanley Tambiah, potentially subject to a food taboo—but given the “bottom line” restriction on consuming nonvegetarian animals, these birds’ perceived and later assumed

⁷⁷ Olivelle 2002a, 19 (including n. 4), 28.

⁷⁸ “I think the old classification of birds into scatterers (*viṣkīra*) and peckers (*pratuda*) also points to an attempt at generalizing vegetarian birds. By contrast, the web-footed birds, besides breaching the divide between air and water, are viewed as carnivores by nature” (Olivelle 2002a, 28); These are not the only bird classes that should give us pause. The Gautama Dharmasūtra also mentions “red-footed and red-beaked” birds (*raktapādatuṇḍa*, GDh 17.29; Cf. YDh 1.174) and “night birds” (*nakṭacara*, GDh 17.34). The latter category initially appears to echo the “solitary” (*ekacara*) category of land animals (and seemingly YDh 1.173’s “unknown animals and birds” (*ajñātāṃśca mṛgādvijān*) subject to strict food taboo. The red feet and/or beaks of the other birds could be seen as representing blood, thereby denoting carnivory, which would also make them subject to a prohibition. But these are speculations, not conclusions. Most importantly, as the categories only appear together in GDh, though with “red-footed” also appearing in YDh, I conclude that they should be viewed as fringe designations.

eating of fish generates the prohibition as well. If the “scratcher” and “pecker” designations only thinly cloak assumptions about eating habits, we can conclude that these categories also derive from the enduring interest in animals’ diets and, accordingly, their moral fitness for human consumption.

Land Animals

Of greater concern in the Dharma literature are land animals, and these animals generally follow the taxonomical tendencies found in the Vedic sources. Many of the categories and terminology are the same, or similar, even if pointing to dissimilar values. Beginning with Āpastamba Dharmasūtra 1.17.29-30, if only to set the stage: “The meat of one-hoofed animals, camels, Gayal oxen, village pigs and Śarabha cattle are forbidden. It is permitted to eat the meat of milch cows and oxen.” The previously noted mystery of the *śarabha* aside, these verses reveal some of the complexities that emerge in the early legal period.

First, albeit coming at the end of this passage, there is the question of consuming the flesh of dairy cows and draught oxen. This was apparently a controversial issue, for while the Āpastamba Dharmasūtra permits their consumption (though not gayals), they are included among the prohibited foods by the Gautama Dharmasūtra, a slightly later text.⁷⁹

Second, the inclusion of “village pigs” (*grāmasūkara*) evidences the developing meaning of both *grāma* (“village”) and *grāmya* (“village animals”). In the Vedic period, village pigs were not included among the village animals deemed fit for sacrifice or consumption even though they satisfied all of the dental, pedal, and (seemingly) residential standards. Yet here their consumption is explicitly prohibited, with an implicit permissibility of consuming the “wilderness pig.” Pigs’ “village” designation refers to their physical presence as village-visiting animals, but not necessarily village-

⁷⁹ GDh 17.30; Olivelle 2002b, 348.

confined farmed animals. This newer sense of *grāma* as a signifier of an actual physical location comes to apply to fowl as well. This expanded meaning of the term underscores how Brian Smith’s village=sacrificable=edible formula frays over time.

Third, we notice the predictable prohibition against eating single-hoofed (*ekakhura*) animals, which covers work, transport, and war animals such as the horse, mule, and ass. Camels, by contrast, receive their own individual prohibition. Even though camels are not included in the list of five (as opposed to seven) *paśus*—an exclusion that would ostensibly generate an immediate prohibition on their consumption—camels seem to remain more vulnerable than these single-hoofed animals owing to their parted “hooves.”⁸⁰ Without a special individual prohibition against eating camels, they would presumably be included in the list of village animals as they are cloven-hoofed animals with a single row of incisors.

Absent in the verses from the Āpastambha Dharmasūtra cited above, yet expressed elsewhere in the Dharma texts, is the strict prohibition against eating five-clawed land animals (*pañcanakha*), a category that most explicitly advertises the human worry about eating the eaters of animals. As Stephanie Jamison comments in an article focusing on a specific member of this class:

A widespread provision in the dharma texts ... forbids the eating of the flesh of “five-nailed” (*pañcanakha*), i.e., “five-toed” animals, save for a restricted group: porcupines, hedgehogs, monitor lizards, hares, tortoises—and often rhinoceroses (*khadga*).

Jamison continues:

A standard list of five edible five-nailed animals, i.e., this same list minus the rhino, is rather surprisingly common in a variety of ancient Indian text-types, in the fixed and memorable expression *pañca pañcanakhā bhakṣyāḥ* “five five-nailed ones are edible.”⁸¹

⁸⁰ Camels do not have hooves at all but rather two large toes with nails that can give the impression of a hoof.

⁸¹ Jamison 1998, 249; See Zimmerman 1978, 173–174 on this class; Also, the use of “*bhakṣya*” rather than “*abhakṣya*” in these instances is an example of *parisaṃkhyāvidhi*, “that is, positive injunctions

The prohibition against eating the *pañcanakha* class covers animals such as monkeys, dogs, cats, bears, and rodents. These animals may also be forbidden owing to additional characteristics, such as dentition, carnivory, and residence, but their five-clawedness immediately disqualifies them from consideration. There are exceptions—namely the five listed by Jamison (*śvāvidh*/porcupine, *śalyaka*/hedgehog, *godhā*/monitor lizard, *śāśa*/hare, *kūrma*/tortoise)—but none of these animals are village animals, nor are any of them regularly consumed, and, furthermore, there is no explicit positive prescription recommending their consumption. In short, the exceptions afford very little insight. I concur with Jamison—who follows Smith—that the *pañcanakha* prohibition is tantamount to “a ban on eating humans or human-like animals,” that is, a cannibalism or an almost-cannibalism taboo.⁸² Many *pañcanakha* animals resemble humans in both phalangeal structure and eating habits, conceivably making their consumption a little too close for culinary comfort. It is thus unsurprising that the five consumable five-clawed animals do not resemble humans in their other physical features, at least when compared with the prohibited five-clawed animals. In addition, the questionable or infrequently witnessed carnivory of these five exceptional animals may also contribute to their dietary permissibility; in other words, their eating habits are often out of sight and hence more easily placed out of mind.

The ideal land animals for human consumption are more distant in terms of phalangeal and gastronomical configuration. A few animals that are not five-clawed but are still considered nonedible, such as the horse and camel and to some degree the cow, will be discussed individually. However, there are general regulations in the Dharma texts that proceed from the Vedic categorizations detailed in chapter 1. Perhaps most clearly, the Dharma sources repeat the Vedic prohibition against eating single-

whose principal aim is to prohibit what is not enumerated. Thus, one is not obliged to eat the listed animals, but one is forbidden to eat animals that are not listed” (Olivelle 200b, 347).

⁸² Jamison 1998, 249, n. 2.

hoofed animals, a regulation included in five of the seven texts consulted, with the Vasiṣṭha Dharmaśūtra as the sole example of a definitive omission.⁸³ While not referring to hoofedness directly, the Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra 1.12.1–4 still prohibits eating “village animals . . . with the exception of goats and sheep,” which functionally eliminates all single-hoofed animals. We should also note that the prohibition against eating single-hoofed animals does not appear to derive from any “problem” or deficiency relating to pedal anatomy itself—after all, if five-clawedness is too close for comfort for human eaters, then wouldn’t single-hoofed animals be even *more* preferable than cloven-hoofed animals for human consumption? Why then the prohibition against eating them? The injunction against eating single-hoofed class appears to result from the utility of these animals for other human ends and thus, as Tambiah emphasizes, generates a utilitarian food taboo cloaked as an anatomical one.⁸⁴ This phenomenon will be elaborated below.

The *pañcanakha* class is assumed to be a carnivorous class, and this assumption nearly, although not as definitively, applies to dentition as well. Animals with two rows of teeth (*ubhayatodat*), referring specifically to incisors, are assumed to be carnivorous or, at the very least, resemble carnivorous animals enough to cast the propriety of their consumption by humans into doubt. The Gautama Dharmasūtra prohibits eating animals that have incisors in both jaws (GDh 17.27). The Mānava Dharmaśāstra similarly rules that only those with one row of incisors are consumable (MDh

⁸³ ĀpDh 1.17.29; GDh 17.28; MDh 5.11; VaDh 14.48; YDh 1.171; ViDh 51.30; BDh is curious in listing only five edible cloven-foot animals (1.13.6), seeming to imply that all the others are forbidden, which could contradict the thrust of most regulations pertaining to pedal structure. However, the author is only referring to the pedal structure of wilderness animals, for not only is the line (1) embedded in a section listing exclusively wilderness animals, but more convincingly, (2) the five exceptional cloven-foot animals—*rśya* antelope, *hariṇa* deer, *pr̥ṣata* deer, buffalo, and *wild* boar—are all *mṛgas* and not *paśus*. BDh 1.12.4 states that goats and sheep are both explicitly permitted, hence they cannot be covered by this later prohibition.

⁸⁴ Tambiah 1969, 451 (Proposition 3).

5.18), as does the Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra (VaDh 4.41) and the Yājñavalkya Dharmaśāstra (YDh 1.171). The Vaiṣṇava Dharmaśāstra (ViDh 51.30) prescribes penances for those who consume animals with two rows of incisors. Both the Mānava Dharmaśāstra and the Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra state that the camel, which has a single row of incisors, is an exception to the rule and may not be consumed. This exception is necessary, for while the camel is used for similar purposes as the horse—transport, war, and other labor—it does not have a single hoof and hence cannot be covered by the prohibition against eating single-hoofed animals. Hence the camel falls into every category suitable for consumption: a village animal with one row of incisors and cloven “hooves.” Even if the camel is not marked as a sacrificable animal (*paśu*) because it lacks the sacrificial quality (*medha*), these designations are not crucial standards in the legal texts. The only possible *categorical* exception for the camel—as opposed to an individual exception that names an animal with no explanation—is the emergent prohibition against eating “village animals,” a phenomenon revealing a transformation in the meanings of the words *grāma* (“village”) and *grāmya* (“village animals”).

New Village, New Rules

Pigs and Fowl

The least informative source on the evolving idea of the village is also, unsurprisingly, the earliest. Nevertheless, the Āpastambha Dharmasūtra 1.17.29’s prohibition against eating of “village pigs” (*grāmasūkara*) reveals how the term *grāmya* now no longer refers—at least exclusively—to “village animals” in the sense of farmed animals (sacrificable or not). As discussed in chapter 1, *grāma* in its earliest valence in the Vedic period designated people, not place. To repeat Rau: “The term denotes in the first place a train of herdsmen roaming about with cattle, ox carts and chariots in quest of fresh

pastures and booty.”⁸⁵ I concluded in chapter 1 that *grāma*, at that time, referred to relations between humans and their animals rather than the spatial locations of humans and their animals. A village animal was one that had a relationship to the network of institutions of the village, and often to the ritual complex. Yet in the Āpastambha Dharmasūtra and the later Dharma sources, the meaning of the term *grāma* alters—or at least expands—to foreground place rather than people. Village pigs are not only not *paśus* but—unlike horses (who are *paśus* but inedible) and camels (who are not *paśus* and are also inedible)—they are also not farmed animals despite being village-residing (even if only intermittently) animals. During this period pigs are not conceived of as biological assets confined, manipulated, and bred for human benefit.⁸⁶ Pigs are apparently only village-residing animals, unexploited for food, labor, or other human ends.⁸⁷ Hence, the “villageness” of pigs is not an intrinsic, quasi-biological characteristic, or even cosmological fact, but rather a description of where some pigs sometimes take up residence—that is, in the physical village.

⁸⁵ Rau 1997, 203.

⁸⁶ Harris comments on pigs contra cows, goats, and sheep: “The pig, however, is primarily a creature of forests and shaded riverbanks. Although it is omnivorous, its best weight gain is from food low in cellulose—nuts, fruits, tubers, and especially grains, making it a direct competitor of man. It cannot subsist on grass alone, and nowhere in the world do fully nomadic pastoralists raise significant numbers of pigs. The pig has the further disadvantage of not being a practical source of milk and of being notoriously difficult to herd over long distances” (1974, 41–42; for a complete discussion, see “Pig Lovers and Pig Haters, 38–57); As for the history of pig domestication in South Asia, the story is not entirely clear. While feral and domesticated varieties existed, just *how* domesticated pigs were is uncertain. Larsan et al. state: “At present, little is known about the history of pig domestication in India. *Sus* bones are a widespread but minor component of archaeological assemblages throughout India and Pakistan. An initial increase and subsequent rapid decrease of pig remains in successive periods at Mehrgarh in Pakistan raises the possibility that efforts were made to keep pigs during the late fourth millennium B.C., but were later abandoned. Because detailed morphometric evidence for separating wild and domesticated pigs in this region is not yet available, the archaeological evidence is inconclusive. What the genetic evidence implies, however, is that modern Indian domestic pigs are derived from local wild boar” (2010, 7689).

⁸⁷ Although one can imagine that pigs were useful for waste disposal, operating like as living garbage disposals for humans’ food scraps.

This fact is corroborated by the other legal texts. Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra 1.12.1–4 initiates its discussion of prohibited foods with: “It is forbidden to eat village animals [*grāmya*]*—*the carnivorous and birds, as well as cocks and pigs, with the exception of goats and sheep.” *Grāmya* appears to include all of the animals associated with the place of the village. Olivelle remarks regarding this passage: “The exact meaning of *grāmya* is unclear. It can mean animals that generally live in or around a village (as I have taken it) or specifically domesticated or tame animals (so Bühler).”⁸⁸ The latter interpretation by Bühler is doubtful, for not only are *grāmya*-as-farmed animals generally not prohibited food sources, but the examples specified in this passage—carnivorous animals, birds, cocks, and pigs—are all nonfarmed animals. I concur with Olivelle’s understanding of the term *grāmya*, which in this case refers to both farmed and nonfarmed animals present in the village, including cocks and pigs.

Later Dharma texts provide greater clarity. Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra 14.48 concludes a section on forbidden foods, and more specifically on forbidden birds, with a blanket prohibition against eating those “those living in villages [*grāmacāriṇāḥ*].” This statement is preceded by an allowance for eating only those sacrificial animals (*paśus*) “that have teeth in only one jaw, with the exception of the camel” (14.40).⁸⁹ Therefore we can perceive a key new distinction between sacrificial animals (*paśus*) and village(-residing) animals (*grāmya/grāmacāriṇāḥ*), a distinction absent in the Vedic materials. This fact is reinforced by the preceding verse (14.47) that refers to a debate about whether “nonvillage pigs” (as well as rhinoceroses) may or may not be consumed. Olivelle rightly translates *agrāmyasūkara* as “wild pig” rather than the more cumbersome “nonvillage pig,” but the latter rendering conveys the salient point that the new village/wilderness binary operates outside the realms of sacrificability and

⁸⁸ Olivelle 1999, 382.

⁸⁹ This implies that camels are also *paśus*.

domestication. The difference between the village pig and the nonvillage/wilderness pig is where they reside—not in some Vedic imaginary but in the real world, atop the real soil of the physical village.

The Mānava Dharmasāstra repeats the prohibition against village birds, similarly stating “He should eschew all carnivorous birds, as also those that live in villages [*grāmanivāsinah*]” (5.11). The additional and specific prohibition against eating “village fowl” (*grāmakukkuṭa*) matches the phrasing at Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra 1.12.1–4, cited earlier, which also forbids consuming all village carnivores and birds, adding “as well as cocks and pigs.” In the Mānava Dharmasāstra, village cocks are also referenced individually, distinguished from other village-residing birds. And like the Dharmasūtras, the text forbids eating “village pigs” (5.12). The Yājñavalkya Dharmasāstra follows suit, forbidding both “village pigs” and “village fowl” (1.175), and includes a few verses earlier—echoing the Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra—a forbiddance of “all animals living in villages” (*grāmanivāsinah*, 1.171). And the Vaiṣṇava Dharmasāstra 51.3 stipulates a lunar penance for those who eat “the meat of a village pig, village fowl, monkey, or cow.”

All of these references signal a burgeoning definition of *grāma* that ultimately complicates our previous conception. Olivelle’s translation of the term *paśu* as “farm animal” at Yājñavalkya Dharmasāstra 1.179 reveals how far we have travelled from the Vedic village in which the term *paśu* designates sacrificable animals composed of the sacrificial essence or *medha*. Not only do the legal texts downplay notions of intrinsic sacrificability, but the terms *grāma* and *paśu* both become much more malleable terms, connoting either actual human relations with these animals (such as the actual farming of animals) or pointing of the actual space within which animals reside, even periodically.⁹⁰ With this

⁹⁰ I use “reside” in a loose sense, including nonfarmed animals that spend all of their time in or near the physical village, as well as those who roam within the village from time to time.

expanded definition, we can reasonably apply Tambiah’s “Proposition 2” to both village pigs and village fowl.⁹¹

Proposition 2: An unaffiliated animal, if it is seen as capable of leaving its *location* or habitat and invading a *location* or habitat of primary value to man, will be the focus of strong attitudes expressed in the forms of (1) a food taboo and (2) a bad omen or inauspicious sign.⁹²

Both pigs and fowl exist in “village” and “wild” variants. Anatomically both pigs and fowl should qualify as edible—especially pigs—given their cloven-hooves and single row of incisors. Yet owing to their dual residentiality, these animals are quasi-anomalies blurring the boundaries between the village and wilderness.⁹³ Both commute to and from the village and the wilderness, abiding as denizens of the village rather than assets of the village and capable of surviving well beyond the village limits. Pigs and fowl may not necessarily be “invaders” of the village as Tambiah’s Proposition 2 suggests, but their presence still challenges traditional geography and the network of institutions of the village. A recent study of pig domestication in Eurasia commences by announcing the constant versatility of pigs (and one could feasibly extend the statement to fowl): “The multifaceted behavioral and ecological flexibility of pigs and wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) makes study of their domestication both complex and of broad anthropological significance.”⁹⁴ The residential “transgression” of pigs and fowl back-and-forth from the wilderness to the village may account in part for the early prohibition against their consumption.

⁹¹ Tambiah’s propositions derive from fieldwork and analysis related to a village in Northeast Thailand, but the propositions can certainly be applied to other contexts when fitting.

⁹² Tambiah 1969, 450, emphasis added; Cf. Olivelle 2002a, 23.

⁹³ For a telling example regarding pigs, see Govindrajana 2017, 119–145. As the author remarks: “Mohan’s wonderful neologism, *paltu-jungli*, or the domestic wild, captures the fluid and contingent relationship between the wild and the domestic perfectly. In effect, he was arguing that *all* pigs are always and already subject to the affective tension between the wild and the domestic” (130).

⁹⁴ Price and Hongo 2020.

Camels

Returning to the camel, we should recall how the village is not only a place for consumable farmed animals, whose proper place is, more precisely, the surrounding pasture, but also *nonconsumable* farmed animals, specifically horses, asses, mules, and camels. As noted earlier, the camel differs from the other three animals by not having a single hoof and having only one row of incisors. These two features should mark the camel as fit for human consumption. However, the camel is repeatedly prohibited in the legal texts. But why? In addition to the new prohibition on village-residing, nonfarmed animals, which includes pigs and fowl, the camel's likeness to other valuable village-residing, farmed, and laboring animals may account for the exception. Tambiah's Proposition 3 states:

Proposition 3: An animal that is placed in a class because it shares certain dominant properties of that class may yet be seen as exceptional or anomalous and therefore ambiguous as food or inedible (even if other members of its class are edible) if it shares one or more characteristics with animals of another class which carries strong values and is considered inedible.⁹⁵

As the camel “shares one or more characteristics with animals of another class which carries strong values and is considered inedible”—namely horses, asses, and mules may be “seen as exceptional or anomalous and therefore ambiguous as food or inedible.” Anatomy only dictates so much and may be trumped in certain cases by a relational fact between humans and the animals they use for key utilitarian ends.

The Horse

This study does not mandate a long, detailed history of the horse in Hindu myth, thought, and culture.⁹⁶ Our focus is on how cosmology and dietary regulations reflect concerns for community sustenance alongside prevailing ethical sensibilities. The horse was a critical animal for the migrating Vedic

⁹⁵ Tambiah 1969, 451.

⁹⁶ See Doniger 2014, “The Mythology of Horses in India,” 438–451; Doniger 2021.

nomads/pastoralists as a riding, pack, and war animal. As for the horse's special valuation in Vedic and post-Vedic society, I would suggest that the status of the horse is similar to the status of the buffalo in the Thai village of Ban Phraan Muan. Tambiah emphasizes the buffalo is "of vital importance as a work animal in agriculture" and "the buffalo alone of all animals is attributed *khwan* (spiritual essence)."⁹⁷ While the horse is not an agricultural animal—at least in a very strict sense—it is used for transport and thus works along with the ass and the mule. And even though the horse is not the sole nonhuman animal claimed to possess *medha* (unlike the buffalo), by containing *medha* the horse is similar the buffalo and its possession of *khwan*. *Khwan* is claimed to be a "pre-eminently human possession," even if also possessed by buffalos, and such is also somewhat the case with *medha*. *Medha* latter is not only a relatively scarce substance but is also a critical quality of the human being posited as the ideal sacrificable victim (recall how Aitareya Brāhmaṇa 2.8 begins: "The gods offered man as sacrificial victim."). Hence, I would suggest that there is—if only loosely speaking—a close association between the horse and the human in the Vedic and Dharmic contexts that is comparable to the association between the buffalo and the human in the Thai context. The fact that the buffalo is not milked in the Thai village also aligns with the situation of the horse, an animal that is likewise not exploited for milk. Moreover, while not ceremonially consumed like the buffalo in Ban Phraan Muan, the horse is still killed for ceremonial purposes in the *aśvamedha* (horse sacrifice), which is one of the most esteemed Vedic sacrifices.⁹⁸ Wendy Doniger notes: "The horse, rather than the cow, was the animal whose ritual importance and intimacy with humans kept it from being regarded as food, though not from being killed in sacrifices."⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Tambiah 1969, 437.

⁹⁸ RV 1.162-63; Brereton and Jamison 2020, 58–60.

⁹⁹ Doniger 2014, 438.

I highlight these similarities to suggest that owing to the horse's immense utilitarian value for humans, the entire categorical prohibition against eating single-hoofed animals may have been designed specifically to protect the horse (and to lesser extents the ass and the mule) from slaughter and consumption. Given that horses have two rows of incisors, a fact that should also excuse them from mundane slaughter and consumption, the additional prohibition against eating single-hoofed animals only serves to buttress that prohibition by isolating horses by means of a focus on their unparted hoof.

The developing meaning of the term *grāmya*, now frequently including village-residing farmed animals (horses, camels, asses, and mules) and village-residing nonfarmed animals (pigs and fowl) is relevant insofar as living proximity and intimacy with humans tends to produce ethical guidelines. Tambiah notes that in the Thai case “[v]illagers claim that, in the case of a collective village ritual, no animal that belongs to the village may be killed; it must be acquired from another village.”¹⁰⁰ This matches the repeated prohibition against eating “village animals” in the Dharma sources. The fact that another village’s “village animals” are killed in the Thai case somewhat distinguishes the two contexts, for the legal texts seem to be making claims about *all* village animals and not only those belonging to one’s own village. Tambiah comments further: “In the case of a family or household ritual, no animal reared in the house may be slaughtered; it must be acquired from another household *in the village* or in another village.”¹⁰¹ Thus, in certain contexts in the Thai case, even village animals from one’s own village may be utilized for ritual sacrifice when the locus of the ritual shifts from the community as a whole to the household. But these differences are of minor import to the present point: the physical

¹⁰⁰ Tambiah 1969, 437–438; Also, similar to how Tambiah describes the living and sleeping space of certain village animals, much more recently Govindrajan notes: “These animals lived in intimate proximity to their human caregivers. In a few of the older stone and wood houses, livestock animals still lived in rooms on the ground story with people’s rooms perched directly above them” (2018, 7).

¹⁰¹ Tambiah 1969, 438, emphasis added.

location and relational proximity of animals to humans in their daily lives (not to mention the intimacy of rearing animals) can generate strict regulations if not outright taboos. The fact that the ideal animals for sacrifice and consumption in the Vedic and Dharma sources pass most of their time in pastures away from their human consumers should not come as a great surprise.¹⁰²

The Cow

There is no dearth of sources on the cow in the Indian imaginary.¹⁰³ D. N. Jha's 2002 monograph on the sacred cow and beef-eating in ancient India arguably provides the most focused treatment of the subject and is a repository of relevant source materials. For nearly one-and-a-half centuries scholars have detailed—often counter to popular and religious sensibilities—how cows were routinely sacrificed and consumed in South Asia during the Vedic period and afterwards. Relatively under-emphasized is what precisely is meant by the terms “sacred” or “holy” in discussions about holy cows and sacred cows.¹⁰⁴

When analyzing the purported sacrality of nature, what exactly do we mean? Is nature itself intrinsically sacred, or is nature sacred as a resource?¹⁰⁵ Are all sacred items and entities for humans, at base, merely sacred resources? Substituting “animal” for “nature” in this context, we may ask whether a sacred animal is sacred in itself or sacred only owing to its use value for humans. Emma Tomalin warns how

¹⁰² There are numerous works touching on what Timothy Pachirat (2013) succinctly labels “the politics of sight.” One may refer to their text to observe how sight operates in the contemporary slaughterhouse, or, for a comprehensive historical discussion on sight and the development of large-scale animal agriculture, see Cronon 1992, “Annihilating Space: Meat,” 207–259.

¹⁰³ Alsdorf 2010; Brown 1964; Harris 1966, 1974; Heston 1971; Jha 2002; Lincoln 1980; Lodrick 1981; Simoons and Lodrick 1981; Smith 1994, 60–62; Staples 2020.

¹⁰⁴ For one example of how complicated the interpretive terrain for “sacred cow” can be, see Witzel: “Cows are not sacred at all. This is a Christian term that have no bearing on ancient or modern India. Cows to not intercede as for example Catholic saints do, with god or the gods, to arrange eternal bliss for men in heaven” (1991, cited in Jha 2002, 55, n. 116).

¹⁰⁵ Narayanan 2018a; Narayanan 2018b, 9.

the ascription of “biodivinity” to nature or an animal does not necessarily derive from an acknowledgement of the entity’s value in itself, or even entail significant protection for that entity:

Thus, the idea of the intrinsic value of nature is not necessarily implied by these examples of nature worship. Elements of the natural world may be considered as sacred without any explicit consciousness about the relevance of this to environmental protection.¹⁰⁶

Chapters 3 and 4 will discuss both the concept of intrinsic value and the dangers of ignoring *biobovinity* for *biodivinity*. The notion of an animal (or nature) having indirect value as a sacred resource is comparatively less challenging to decipher. A sacred resource is typically a critical, highly monitored, and/or protected substance for a given community, whether that substance be used for food, drink, shelter, clothing, or a ritual or ceremonial purpose. In this sense the substance may not necessarily be sacred in the sense of extraordinary or divine, but rather sacred in the sense of being an indispensable, life-supporting material or being. And *biodivinity* may, at least sometimes, issue directly from indispensability. Norman Brown initially seems to suggest that the “unslayability” of the cow—its inviolability, its sacrality—may have derived from its utility as a milch, draught, and/or pack animal.¹⁰⁷

And Jha elaborates on the myriad uses of the cow by humans:

When slaughtered they provided food to the people and their priests and the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* states unambiguously that “meat is the best kind of food.” When milked, cows gave additional nourishment not only through milk but also a variety of milk products, which formed part of the diet as well as of the Vedic sacrificial oblation (*havis*). Oxen were used as draught animals; they pulled the plough and are also referred to as pulling Sūrya’s bridal car. Cattle hide was used in a variety of ways. The bowstring (*jyā*) was made of a thong of cowhide—a practice that may have continued in later times. The

¹⁰⁶ Tomalin 2016, 4.

¹⁰⁷ “No other animal was so much appreciated for its economic value. The cow or ox was an asset in producing food directly through its milk and flesh and in serving as assistance for agriculture and for transportation. All these phases of the cow’s or ox’s usefulness are abundantly stressed in Vedic literature, especially in the Rig Veda” (Brown 1964, 246). Brown also cites the Arthaśāstra: “But another passage refers to ‘cattle which are fit only for the supply of flesh’ (2.19), thus indicating that not all cattle were inviolable. Possibly the text implies that these animals were otherwise economically worthless and expresses an idea similar to that which I suggested above lies at the bottom of the use of the Vedic word *aghnya*” (246–248).

different parts of the chariot were tied together with leather straps, also needed for binding the arrow to the shaft. The goad for driving animals was made of cow hide or tail. Leather thongs were used not only for making snares but also for a musical instrument called *godhā*. The utility and importance of cattle therefore inspired warriors to fight wars (*gaviṣṭi*) for them and it is likely that part of the cattlestock of the vanquished tribes was killed in the course of raids. While all this goes against the popular notion of the inviolability of the cow through the Vedic period and proves that it was certainly killed for sacrifice (*yajña*) and food as well as for other requirements, the extent to which the economic value of the cow contributed to its supposed sacredness is difficult to ascertain.¹⁰⁸

Brown later locates “a constellation of at least five elements which have produced the doctrine of the sanctity of the cow,”¹⁰⁹ but oddly omits nutritional and economic importance among these five elements even though the author previously admitted the cow’s immense utility as a milch, draught, and pack animal. Brown argues that the cow’s indispensability in Vedic ritual “in itself is not sufficient to account for the cow’s sanctity.”¹¹⁰ Brian Smith argues that “the ‘sacrality’ of the cow may be derived from the economic or ritualistic sources, or, more likely both,” and like Brown, does not deny that other elements may have led to the cow’s sacralization.¹¹¹

For this study, sacrality is not the focus but rather exceptionality. The objective is to uncover what isolates and exempts certain animals—in this case, cows—from slaughter when they seem to be ideal victims like goats and sheep. The situation is not so dissimilar from that of the camel and even the horse. A utilitarian analysis thus seems appropriate, especially once we acknowledge (with Jha and Brown) the fact that the full sacralization of the cow is a relatively recent phenomenon. Or, alternatively

¹⁰⁸ Jha 2002, 37–38.

¹⁰⁹ “It seems possible to recognize a constellation of at least five elements which have produced the doctrine of the sanctity of the cow. These are: the importance of the cow and its products for the performance of the Vedic sacrificial ritual; the figurative uses of words for the cow in Vedic literature and the later understanding of these figurative expressions as indicating literal truth; the prohibitions against violation of the Brahman’s cow; the inclusion of the cow under the general doctrine of Ahimsa and the association of the cow with the mother-goddess cult” (Brown 1964, 249).

¹¹⁰ Brown 1964, 249.

¹¹¹ Smith 1994, 282, n. 49.

phrased, we can admit the exceptionality of the cow vis-à-vis other animals in the context of “economic and ritualistic” utility—itsself leading to cosmological and taxonomic difference—while at the same time admitting the later emergence of the alleged holiness or sacredness of the cow. This far-from-controversial conclusion holds that while cows were sacrificed and consumed from Vedic times onwards, growing regulations surrounding their use emerged from various sources, and owed at least in part to the numerous utilitarian roles the cow and cow products served for Vedic and post-Vedic peoples.

We find prohibitions against eating the meat of cows in certain Vedic sources as early as the period of the Brāhmaṇas (ca. 900–650 BCE). For example, Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 3.1.2.21 declares that the cow and the ox “support everything here on earth” and have been invested by the gods with the vigor of all other species of animals, and therefore one should refrain from eating the flesh of either the cow or the ox. With respect to the Dharma literature, as mentioned earlier, the Dharmasūtras are not entirely in agreement about the question of whether it is permissible to consume the flesh of cows and oxen. The Āpastamba Dharmasūtra, the earliest of the Dharmasūtras, prohibits eating the meat of *śarabha* cattle and *gayal* oxen but permits the consumption of dairy cows and oxen (1.17.29–30). However, both the Gautama Dharmasūtra (17.30) and the Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra (14.45) include dairy cows and oxen in their lists of forbidden foods.

With respect to the penalties for killing cows, the Āpastamba Dharmasūtra prescribes a penance for killing a dairy cow only if it is killed “without cause” (1.26.1), whereas the other Dharmasūtras prescribe specific penalties for those who commit the sin of killing a cow. The Gautama Dharmasūtra includes people who kill cows among those who are guilty of secondary sins that cause loss of caste and prescribes a penance that is comparable to the penance for killing a Vaiśya (21.11; 22.18). The Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra prescribes a penance for killing a cow that is comparable to the penance for

killing a Śūdra (1.19.3–4). The Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra declares that a person who kills a cow “should perform an arduous or a very arduous penance for six months” and then outlines the procedures for the two types of penance (21.18–22).

The Dharmaśāstras, as I will discuss in the next chapter, go beyond the Dharmasūtras in that they not only prohibit the killing of cows and consumption of their meat, but they also admonish twice-born persons to abstain from eating meat altogether. As we shall see, the Mānava Dharmaśāstra ultimately advocates an ethic of vegetarianism based on *ahiṃsā*, nonharming—an ethic that is shared by the Vaiṣṇava Dharmaśāstra.¹¹²

The Dharma literature celebrates the ritual value of the cow, particularly in the form of the purificatory efficacy ascribed to the *pañcagavya*, the five products of the cow—urine, dung, milk, curds, and ghee. A mixture of these five bovine products is regularly prescribed as a potent purificatory concoction to be ingested or bathed in for various ritual purposes.¹¹³ Among the *pañcagavya*, cow’s milk in particular is extolled in the Dharma literature as not only essential for ritual purposes but also as an important food source.¹¹⁴ The importance of cow’s milk for material sustenance is corroborated in the dairy prescriptions found in classical medical texts. For example, the earliest and most heavily-referenced authority on Āyurveda, the Caraka Saṃhitā (ca. first century CE), exalts the healing and preventative properties of milk. Amongst other functions and benefits, milk is extolled as

generally sweet, unctuous, cold, galactagogue, refreshing, body-promoting, spermatogenic, intellect-promoting, strength-promoting, mind-promoting, vitalizer, fatigue-alleviating, destroyer of dyspnoea, cough and internal hemorrhage; union-

¹¹² See MDh 5.45–55. These eleven verses found in the MDh are also invoked in ViDh 51.68–78. See also YDh 1.180.

¹¹³ See BDh 1.11.38, 4.5.11–14, 4.5.28, 4.6.5; VaDh 27.13–14; MDh 11.166.

¹¹⁴ See Olivelle 2002a, 20.

promoting in injuries, whole-some for all living beings, pacifier (of *doṣas*), eliminator (or *malas*), destroyer of thirst and appetizer.¹¹⁵

Milk is not only prescribed for human health but is utilized in numerous individual treatments emphasizing the life-sustaining powers of milk for physiological recovery. The unique life-sustaining powers of milk have penetrated ascetic ideology and practices as well. Thus, alongside the economic and ritual utility afforded by the cow, even more fundamental is the basic nutritional indispensability of cow's milk for the ancient (and later) South Asians, which is arguably the basis for the cow's economic and ritual importance. And this indispensability does not even take into account the great value of the cow in agriculture as a draught animal.

Nonanimal *Abhakṣyas*

Not all forbidden foods are animal-derived, but many still relate to consequences for living—more precisely, sentient—beings. The terms *abhakṣya* and *abhojya* are virtually absent in Vedic sources, and the corresponding lists of forbidden and unfit foods first appear in the Dharmasūtras. Yet Olivelle concludes that “[t]hese lists must have become sufficiently standard by Patañjali's [the grammarian] time (2nd cent. BC) for him to use a stock example repeatedly: *abhakṣyo grāmyakukkuṭo 'bhakṣyo grāmasūkarah*—‘it is forbidden to eat a village cock; it is forbidden to eat a village pig.’”¹¹⁶ The later Vedic and legal proscriptions against eating animals, and specifically *nonanimal* foods, seem traceable to dietary prohibitions found in contemporaneous “heterodox” traditions, specifically Jain traditions.

These nonanimal foods are present in lists of the Jain *abhakṣyas*, a twenty-two-fold list of which survives in standardized form from at least the eleventh century CE.¹¹⁷ Some of these foods had been subject to taboos by Jains for nearly a millennium and a half prior to the eleventh century, and

¹¹⁵ CS, *Sūtrasthāna* 1.107–109. The entire section spans 1.105–113; Cf. CS *Sūtrasthāna* 27.223–224.

¹¹⁶ Olivelle 2002b, 346.

¹¹⁷ Cort 2001, 128; Williams 1963, 110–113.

especially the obvious culprits such as meat and honey. There are several reasons why nonanimal foods are forbidden, but John Cort rightly stresses that “[m]ost of the foods are forbidden because they contain innumerable tiny and invisible organisms.”¹¹⁸ This class of *abhakṣyas* is known as *ananta-kāy*s or “infinite bodies.” The corresponding class of plants is called “aggregate” (*sādhāran*) and is distinguished from “individual” (*pratyek*) plants by virtue of its members containing not one but countless souls (*jīvas*). Cort notes that the prohibition against eating these plants in “general practice”¹¹⁹ amounts to the avoidance of root vegetables. As a result, many Jains do not consume onions, garlic, leeks, and potatoes, and also mushrooms and other fungi, which are similarly assumed to harbor countless *jīvas*.

Somewhat unsurprisingly, many of these same vegetables surface in lists of forbidden foods in the Dharma literature. Āpastambha Dharmasūtra 1.17.26–28 forbids eating garlic, onions, leeks, and mushrooms. Gautama Dharmasūtra 17.32 mentions only mushrooms and garlic. Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra 14.33 prohibits eating garlic, onions, and mushrooms. And like the Āpastambha Dharmasūtra, Mānava Dharmasāstra 5.5, Yājñavalkya Dharmasāstra 1.175, and Vaiṣṇava Dharmasāstra 51.3 and 51.34 prohibit eating garlic, leeks, onions, and mushrooms. These are not the only vegetal items listed in the texts but they are the most prominently situated and consistently cited. One potential complication surfaces in the Mānava Dharmasāstra: “Garlic, leeks, onions, and mushrooms are foods forbidden to twice-born persons; and *so is anything growing in an impure medium.*”¹²⁰ The concern for “impure mediums” apparently only applies to mushrooms and other fungi. One may be tempted to link this concern for “impurity” to the alleged pan-Indic infatuation with religious purity, following Dumont. Yet

¹¹⁸ Cort 2001, 128; See the “secondary interdictions” in Valley 2004.

¹¹⁹ Cort 2001, 129.

¹²⁰ MDh 5.5, emphasis added.

if we, at least here, understand “impure” (*amedhya*) in a much more rudimentary fashion—that is, connoting a foul, unhygienic environment, one conducive to the proliferation of insects, bacteria, and other “innumerable tiny and invisible organisms”—then the rationale behind the prohibition becomes much clearer: one should avoid substances and mediums resulting in harm to “infinite bodies.” Understood in this way, the concern is not for purity or impurity in some religious sense but for organisms subjected to harm through the harvesting of the plants in question.

Recapitulation

I have not included in this chapter a detailed treatment of the sections from the Dharmaśāstra literature that deal directly with meat-eating. I will discuss these sections in the next chapter in the context of the burgeoning Hindu ethics of the period and its reasons for avoiding practices that cause harm (*hiṃsā*) to sentient beings. Yet we can detect the presence of this ethical concern even in the taxonomies and lists of prohibited foods, including the nonanimal *abhakṣyas*, for they themselves express an underlying sensitivity to the effects our actions have on various organisms.

This chapter pivoted from Vedic to Dharma sources by means of the material and ideological transformations in north India in the mid-first millennium BCE. I proposed that urbanization greatly contributed to the shift in focus from the group to the individual during this period, prompting the rise in materialism, skepticism, naturalism, and empirical modes of thinking, as well as new forms of, and perspectives on, renunciation. The Dharma sources express tensions between Vedic and emerging norms of the period, with the authors and assumed receivers of these texts also clearly concerned with how to accommodate the shifting ideological landscape while maintaining their elite class status. Regarding animal taxonomies and the corresponding dietary regulations—namely, the *abhakṣya* regulations—one notices diminished esteem for the village and village values, the prioritization of

sacrifice, the notion of *medha*, and concomitant notions of consumability as a direct function of sacrificability. With the proliferation of stationary village settlements and towns and cities, and the deprioritization of the village-as-sacrificial site, emerges a reinterpretation of the terms *grāma* and *grāmya* expressed in dietary regulations. Dietary regulations concerning birds and fish in the Dharma sources are less fixed and important than those involving land animals, which matches not only Vedic sensibilities but also those of the contemporary world, globally speaking. Still, misgivings about consuming any animal-eating animals, including birds and fish, display the enduring reservation about eating animals who, allegedly, eat as only humans should eat, if only ideally. Prescriptions and proscriptions regarding the consumption of land animals largely match the Vedic sources, yet with a new concern extending beyond cosmologically-deemed “village animals” to actual village-residing animals, particularly nonfarmed animals such as pigs and chickens.

While Olivelle rightly indicates modifications to the meaning of the term *grāmya*, which gradually includes pigs and fowl, I indicate three specific meanings of the term underscore these distinct forms of human-animal relations. By the time of the Dharma literature, the term *grāmya* could mean: (1) pasture-roaming farmed animals—cows, goats, and sheep; (2) village-residing farmed animals—horses, asses, mules, and camels; or (3) village-residing nonfarmed animals—pigs and fowl.¹²¹ The first category refers to animals that may not spend their lives (or at least most of their lives) in the physical village itself but rather in the pastures surrounding the village. The word “pasture” itself expresses a relationship of use between humans and their animals. A “pasture” is an area suitable for grazing, yet not for wild animals but only for those animals manipulated by human beings for the latter’s benefit. Thus the “village” status of cows, goats, and sheep derives from their utilitarian relationship to the

¹²¹ A fourth meaning would be any combination of (1), (2), and (3).

village and its human inhabitants. These animals are farmed and pastured by humans, and these relationships are what make them *grāmya*, not the animals' regular residence in the village itself. The second category refers to other farmed animals besides cows, goats, and sheep, and these animals, by contrast, typically live and labor in the physical village. Horses, asses, mules, and camels may at times graze in pastures, but they predominantly reside in the village, restrained and confined with tethers and barriers. The third category of animals refers to nonfarmed animals who live some, if not all, of their lives in and near the physical village. In this period, pigs and fowl are not exploited for flesh, milk, eggs, or other forms of coerced labor, but rather roam and occasionally also live in the physical village. Presumably some of these animals venture to and from the wilderness (*aranya*) into the village, while others pass their entire lives in the village, surviving on available water and food scraps. These “village animals” have no relational or exploitative connection to the village but rather only a physical one, which makes them quite distinct from cows, goats, and sheep whose “village” status is predominantly relational and exploitative.

I have contended, alongside Olivelle, that these greater concerns for delineating “village animals” align with Tambiah’s observations in the Thai case. In my judgment these modifications indicate a shift towards more rational, empirical, and embodied (that is, living alongside the bodies of animals) ways of thinking about animals, which have a direct influence on the ways humans interact with them, such as through food taboos. The following chapter will explore the reasons given in the Dharma literature for refraining from eating meat and other *hiṃsā*-causing acts, and will explore how, even when framed in a sectarian fashion, the rationales reflect nondogmatic logics common to numerous traditions of the period.

Chapter 3: Hindu Ethics and the Foundation of *Ahiṃsā*

Over three decades ago Barbara Holdrege described the controversial terrain of Hindu ethics:

It has been argued that traditional Hindu culture has no formal discipline of ethics in the Western philosophical sense of the term: an internally consistent rational system in which patterns of human conduct are justified with reference to ultimate norms and values. On the other hand, the ancient texts do contain an elaborate collection of teachings and practice that serve to regulate every aspect of human behavior. These prescriptions, encompassed under the general rubric of *dharma*, required no justification with reference to rational principles, for their ultimate justification lay in the fact that they were derived from tradition (*smṛti*), and this tradition was held to be based on direct cognition of reality (*śruti*).¹

If, as Holdrege states, the ultimate justification for proscriptions and prescriptions in Hindu traditions rests on the infallibility of “tradition” (*smṛti*) and the purported “direct cognition of reality” (*śruti*), then any argument for a Hindu “ethics” remains quite thin. However, what if we can locate logical “ultimate norms and values” and even “rational principles” in the legal as well as Yoga texts as we approach the Common Era, texts not grounded in an unquestionable authority? Would these elements provide the basis for a form of ethics even if operating alongside indisputable—if intermittent—invocations of *smṛti* and *śruti*? I contend that even in the absence of an ethical system in a “Western” sense, we can certainly identify principles and concerns that convey an ethical sensibility. A critic remains justified in doubting whether it is necessary at all to evaluate Hindu perspectives according to Western moral philosophical criteria. However, asking whether it is necessary to do so is one thing, and asking whether it is fruitful to do so is another. Recently Charles Goodman has made a strong case that while South Asian (and Tibetan) Buddhist traditions may not espouse identical ethical perspectives, they do share a “fundamental basis . . . the same as that of the welfarist members of the family of ethical theories that

¹ Holdrege 1991, 12.

analytic philosophers call ‘consequentialism.’”² Goodman’s basic argument is that Buddhist ethics accept the core consequentialist claim that “of all the actions available to an agent in any given situation, the right action is the one that produces the best consequences.”³ Goodman’s thesis requires an accompanying theory of “the good”—which Goodman provides—that permits us to speak of “worse” and “better” and ultimately “best” consequences.⁴ I would venture that Goodman’s claim regarding the good applies not only to Buddhist traditions but also other religious traditions of the region, namely Jain and Hindu traditions. However, this more ambitious argument for a pan-Indic consequentialism far exceeds the scope needed to complete the analyses regarding animals initiated in the two prior chapters.

I begin this chapter by proposing that Hindu ethics recognizes—specifically in the contexts of *karma* theory, *ahiṃsā*, and the *puruṣārthas*—the intrinsic value of pleasure (*sukha*) and the intrinsic disvalue of pain (*duḥkha*). Invoking and amplifying the critical philosophical work of Christopher Framarin, I discuss how the mechanics of *karma* and the emergent ethic of *ahiṃsā* can only function with a foundational acceptance of these principles. These principles then lead us to a recognition of the direct moral standing of all sentient beings, including animals. I delve into the Dharma and Yoga literature to illustrate the presence and functions of these principles even when *karma* and *ahiṃsā* seem to be operating according to different motivations and mechanisms. I proceed with a discussion of the theory of the *puruṣārthas* to argue that not only do the intrinsic value of pleasure and the intrinsic disvalue of pain undergird *karma* theory and *ahiṃsā* but also form a basis for the “goals of human existence” common to many Hindu traditions.

² Goodman 2009, 5.

³ Goodman 2009, 24.

⁴ Goodman 2009, 47–71 for a conception of the good in the context of Theravāda Buddhist ethics.

The Logics of Karma

One of the key arguments presented in Christopher Framarin's *Hinduism and Environmental Ethics* conveys how descriptions of *karma* and its consequences (*phala*, fruits) disclose the acceptance of the intrinsic value of pleasure and the intrinsic disvalue of pain. I use "value" here in a sense that can be synonymously rendered as "good," and likewise with "disvalue" and "bad." Intrinsic value is "the value that something has as an end, independent of the value of further ends to which it is a means."⁵ By contrast, instrumental value is the value something has by virtue of the further ends to which it is a means. A thing that has intrinsic value is good in itself and *certeris paribus* ("all other things being equal") is to be promoted. Likewise, a thing that has intrinsic disvalue is bad in itself and *certeris paribus* is to be avoided. I propose that when we discuss things of value/good things, Hiriyanna's succinct description satisfies:

The Sanskrit word used for "value" means "the object of desire" (*iṣṭa*), and the term may therefore be generally defined as "that which is desired". The opposite of value or "disvalue" may be taken as "that which is shunned or avoided" (*dviṣṭa*).⁶

Things of value and disvalue are person-affecting, which means that things of value are desired by individuals and things of disvalue are avoided by individuals. Things cannot be of value or disvalue without individuals for whom they are valuable or invaluable. I will return to this topic again, but to assert that something has value because it is desired is not to claim that the thing is a prudent thing to desire *certeris paribus*. The claim is rather that something is desired because the satisfaction of that desire provides something of value (for example, pleasure) for the experiencer, despite any other things it may also provide or contribute to providing. The experience of that which is desired is valuable, in some way, for the experiencer, or otherwise they would not desire it. Things of value benefit (or prevent

⁵ Framarin 2014, 6.

⁶ Hiriyanna 2001, 1; For series of essays on the subject of value, see Perrett 2001.

harm to) individuals in some way, and things of disvalue harm (or prevent benefit to) individuals in some way.

Before focusing on the value and disvalue of pleasure and pain, respectively, it is necessary to establish what we mean, if only loosely, by “pleasure” and “pain.” In an article devoted to an analysis of pain in the Mahābhārata, Framarin highlights different types of pain and particularly differences between bodily pain (*śārīra duḥkha*) and mental pain (*mānasa duḥkha*). The term “*duḥkha*” captures the entire field of human (and nonhuman) pain and suffering, even as conventionally understood.⁷

Framarin writes:

A bodily pain [*śārīra duḥkha*] is a painful or unpleasant physical sensation, like a headache, nausea, and so on. Contemporary philosophers refer to these types of pains as “sensory pains.” The notion of mental pain [*mānasa duḥkha*], in contrast, seems obscure. The Mahābhārata offers a number of clues to its nature, but stops short of naming the specific states that count as mental pains. My thesis in this paper is that mental pains are states like dislike, dissatisfaction, disappointment, and so on. To take mental pain in something is to mind it, and to mind something is to dislike it, be dissatisfied with it, disappointed in it, and so on. Contemporary philosophers refer to states such as these as “attitudinal pains.”⁸

I use the terms “*duḥkha*” and “pain” synonymously, with all references to the two signifying both bodily and mental pain. This usage does not imply that all sentient or experience-capable entities experience the same bodily and mental pain, or pain of the same quality, or pain with the same intensity. The point is simply that “*duḥkha*” refers to all kinds of pain, those of both body and mind. Predictably, I use the terms “*sukha*” and “pleasure” synonymously, with references to them signifying both bodily and mental pleasure. Adjusting Framarin’s phrasing, we may think of a bodily pleasure as a pleasant physical sensation, such as the taste of a ripe apple, the smell of freshly baked bread, or a skin massage.

⁷ See Goodman 2009, 31–32 on defining and translating terms such as “pleasure” and “suffering.”

⁸ Framarin 2019, 103–104; It is true that mind (*manas*) is commonly considered to be a part of the body (*śārīra*), but I believe Framarin’s language—however Cartesian-esque—helps to distinguish the mental faculty from the organs of perception, which assists in describing differences in pain and pleasure.

A mental pleasure is a pleasant mental state, such as feeling of satisfaction, achievement, happiness, and forth. The phenomena of pleasure and pain are intimately relevant to the emerging ethic of nonharming, *ahiṃsā*, of the first millennium BCE.

An Emergent *Ahiṃsā* Doctrine

Common to the legal, Yoga, and even medical literature of the post-Vedic period is a deference to—if not outright promotion of—the ethic of *ahiṃsā*. *Ahiṃsā* as “nonharming” derives from a negation of the Sanskrit noun *hiṃsā*, “injury” or “harming”⁹ The ethic of nonharming includes nonkilling but also refers to all nonlethal harms inflicted by means of body, speech, and mind. As the experience of pain can be both bodily and mental, harms afflict sentient beings both physically and mentally, albeit to varying degrees according to the physical and mental constitutions of the individual beings. *Ahiṃsā* is sometimes translated as “nonviolence,” but this translation obscures semantic differences between the terms “harm” and “violence” and risks confusing the principle with the political strategies of nonviolence employed by Mohandas Gandhi and later by Martin Luther King, Jr. I do not offer a comprehensive history of scholarly perspectives on the term *ahiṃsā* but rather a general sketch of the contested landscape.

Contrary to pervasive assumptions about India, especially in the West, the prehistory of Hindu traditions is not dominated by *ahiṃsā* or any other deep ethical misgiving about animal sacrifice, war

⁹ On the literal definition of *ahiṃsā* as “nonharming” or “nonviolence” rather than “the wish/desire not to harm,” I side with Bodewitz’s conclusion: “Some scholars have misinterpreted *ahiṃsā* as ‘the wish not to kill’ or ‘the absence of the wish to kill’, i.e., they take it as the negation of a desiderative derived from the root *han* ‘to kill’. This is obviously untenable since the real desiderative of that root is *jighāṃsati* and a corresponding adjective **hiṃsu* (or **ahiṃsu*) is missing. The verb originally was *hinasti* rather than *hiṃsati*. Moreover *ahiṃsā* in pre-Upaniṣadic texts means ‘security, safeness’, which cannot be connected with the desiderative. For the formation (*a*)-*hiṃs-ā* see Wackernagel-Debrunner II, 2 1954: 246; 248” (1999, 17–18).

making, or the killing of animals—including cows—for food.¹⁰ Vedic traditions, which are grounded in the teachings of the *Samhitās* and *Brāhmaṇas*, and lay the foundation for later Brahmanical traditions, routinely call for the killing and subsequent consumption of animals for ritual purposes. As described in chapter 1, in the context of sacrifice various species of animals were killed in the Vedic period, with the most regular victims being goats, cows, and occasionally horses. In Vedic ritual the sacrificial animal was killed outside the perimeter of the sacred space, with the preferable means of killing being strangulation, referred to euphemistically as “tranquilizing” (although there is also evidence for death by axe and knife).¹¹ Brahmin ritual specialists recited verses emphasizing the post-mortem benefits that would accrue to the sacrificial victims and maintained (as even the later Dharma texts do) that the killing of an animal in a ritual context was not really a “killing” at all. Such Brahmanical counter measures may, however, have been undertaken to ensure the success of the sacrifice rather than to assuage serious anxieties about the harming and killing of animals.

Following Hanns-Peter Schmidt, and echoed years later by Hermann Tull, J. C. Heesterman has argued that *ahiṃsā* sprouted “orthogenetically” (a type of linear and internal evolution) from within Vedic circles, gradually emerging due to mounting concerns over the causing of harm to animals in ritual practice.¹² This shift is epitomized in the eventual abstraction and internalization of ritual sacrifice—and thus the avoidance of tethering and killing—in the early Upaniṣads. However, the rationalizations for committing harm as well as the ritual substitution practices expressed in the *Brāhmaṇas* evidence controversy and uncertainty more than any consistent and concrete ethic. The early Upaniṣads lack any definitive insistence on *ahiṃsā* as an ethical principle. Moreover, the

¹⁰ Bryant 2006; Jha 2002.

¹¹ The ritual specialist appointed for this purpose is the *śamitr*, meaning “tranquilizer.” See Houben 1999b, 115–120.

¹² Heesterman 1984; Schmidt 1968; Tull 1996.

criticisms of Vedic tradition voiced in the Upaniṣads generally spring from renouncer groups rather than ritualistic concerns. The most plausible determination, argued in various forms by Louis Dumont, Brian K. Smith, Henk Bodewitz, and Jan Houben, is that *ahiṃsā* originated within non-Vedic renouncer traditions of ancient India, namely, Jain and Buddhist traditions.¹³ In all probability, these “heterodox” renunciators regularly interacted with Vedic renunciators, influencing emerging post-Vedic Hindu traditions in numerous ways, including the appropriation of some notions of *ahiṃsā* and even the eventual abandonment of animal sacrifice. The adoption of the principle by nonrenunciators may have been assisted by the post-Vedic shift from pastoralism to settled agriculture, which increased the use-value of cows and motivation for their protection.

While the Jains and Buddhists were in all probability the earliest exponents of the principle of *ahiṃsā*, a semblance of the fivefold vow is found in a list of sinful acts in an early Upaniṣad. The Chāndogya Upaniṣad (ca. 600–500 BCE), the only Upaniṣad that explicitly mentions *ahiṃsā* as an ethical guideline, gives the five major sins as stealing gold, killing a Brahmin, drinking alcohol, sexual contact with the wife of the guru, and contact with one who commits any of these four sins (3.17.4). The first four sins resemble Jain and Buddhist restraints of nonstealing, nonharming, nonintoxication, and chastity. However, *ahiṃsā* is not prominent as an ethic in Hindu traditions until the time of the Dharma literature, and even then, the situation is not entirely clear. In the Gautama Dharmasūtra (ca. 200–100 BCE), *ahiṃsā* is lacking altogether, though the practice of *dayā sarvabhūteṣu* or “compassion for all living beings” is included (8.23). The classical fivefold list of restraints, including *ahiṃsā*, is only found

¹³ Bodewitz 1999; Dumont 1970; Houben 1999; Smith 1990; See Alsdorf (2010) for the claim that *ahiṃsā* emerged from the early Vedic if not pre-Āryan peoples of South Asia. Alsdorf gestures to the Indus Valley Civilization based on scant archaeological evidence, resulting in admittedly even scantier speculations. The evidence for the domestication and consumption of animals found at the Indus Valley sites, coupled with virtually no sign of any abstentions on eating animals, specifically cows, makes the case for a third millennium BCE starting point for the ethic of *ahiṃsā* very thin.

once in the Dharmasūtras, in a later interpolation in the Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra (2.18.2–3; ca. 200–100 BCE). The list of five restraints is not entirely fixed even in the later legal texts, with the Mānava Dharmasāstra (ca. 0–100 CE) listing *ahiṃsā* in a fivefold list of vows specifically for renunciators (6.75) and elsewhere including it in a fivefold list for laypeople (10.63). Given the differences in the earlier and later Dharma literature, and the fact that *ahiṃsā* had been well formalized in Jain and Buddhist circles by the post-Vedic period, the most reasonable conclusion is that post-Vedic Hindu traditions were in the process of responding to and appropriating the notion of *ahiṃsā* from these “heterodox” traditions. Texts such as the Mahābhārata and the Bhagavad Gītā include teachings on *ahiṃsā*, but they are posterior to the Jain and Buddhist formulations and are rarely consistent regarding the ethics of avoiding and inflicting harm. Arguably the clearest Hindu elaboration of the principle of *ahiṃsā*—at the very least as a mandate for renunciators resembling Jain and Buddhist renunciators—is in the fifth-century CE Yogasūtra of Patañjali, otherwise known as the Pātañjala Yogaśāstra, the main text of Classical Yoga. In this text the five *yamas* (“restraints”) for the *yogin* are nonharming, truthfulness, nonstealing, chastity, and nonhoarding. The *Yogabhāṣya*, or commentary by Vyāsa, emphasizes *ahiṃsā* as the primary restraint, with the remaining four *yamas* operating as further means to perfect nonharming. Significantly, the Pātañjala *yogin* adopts a “great vow” (*mahāvratā*) by practicing all five of these restraints unconditionally, irrespective of birth, place, time, or circumstance (2.30–31).

Action, Merit, Fruits

The Mānava Dharmasāstra begins a chapter on *dharma* (righteous action) and *adharma* (unrighteous action) and their consequences (*phalas*) with the postulate that “[a]ction [*karma*] produces good [*śubha*] and bad [*aśubha*] results and originates from the mind, speech, and the body. Action produces the human conditions—the highest, the middling, and the lowest” (12.3). Actions of all types generate

consequences for the actor, and these consequences are good or bad depending on the nature of the actions. Another general statement about the action-fruits dynamic comes soon thereafter in the chapter:

After paying for the sins resulting from attachment to sensory objects, sins that lead to misery, he is freed from taint and approaches the same two beings of great power. Unwearied, these two jointly examine his merits [*dharma*] and sins [*pāpa*], linked to which one secures happiness or suffering [*sukhāsukha*] here [*iha*] and in the hereafter [*pretya*]. If he acts righteously for the most part and unrighteously to a small degree, enveloped in those very elements, he enjoys happiness in heaven. If, on the other hand, he acts unrighteously for the most part and righteously to a small degree, abandoned by those elements, he suffers the torments of Yama. (Mānava Dharmaśāstra 12.18–21)

Details regarding the “two beings of great power” in the first verse are irrelevant for our present purposes.¹⁴ What is relevant is how the verses emphasize that happiness in this world and in heaven are the consequences of righteous behavior, while suffering in this world and the torments of Yama (the deity of the afterlife) are the consequences of unrighteous behavior. It is evident throughout the Dharma literature that acting in accordance with *dharma* produces good results, with “good” commonly meaning consequences that generate pleasure/happiness in its various forms.

Earlier in the Mānava Dharmaśāstra, in the context of the relationship between desire and action (specifically the performance of Vedic “sacrifices,” “religious observances,” and “restraints”¹⁵) the text expresses that “[b]y engaging in them [sacrifices and so forth] properly, a man attains the world of the immortals and, in this world, obtains all his desires just as he intended” (2.5). A succeeding verse adds that “by following the Law [*dharma*] proclaimed in scripture and tradition, a man achieves fame in this world and unsurpassed happiness [*sukha*] after death” (2.9). Another verse insists that “by good conduct [*dharma*] he obtains long life; by good conduct he obtains the kind of offspring he desires; by good conduct he obtains inexhaustible wealth; and good conduct neutralizes unlucky marks” (4.156).

¹⁴ See Olivelle 2005, 348.

¹⁵ See Olivelle 2005, 244, note on MDh 2.5.

Additional verses from the Mānava Dharmasāstra express how righteous action furnishes one with a lifespan of one hundred years (4.158) and guarantees them a superior rebirth (9.334–35).¹⁶ The Gautama Dharmasūtra arguably presents the clearest and most comprehensive summary of the connection between righteous action and pleasurable (in all of the bodily and mental senses of *sukha*) results: “People belonging to the different classes and orders of life who are steadfastly devoted to the Laws proper to them enjoy the fruits of their deeds after death; and then, with the residue of those fruits, take birth again in a prosperous region, a high caste, and a distinguished family, with a handsome body, long life, deep vedic learning, and virtuous conduct, and with great wealth, happiness, and intelligence. Those who act to the contrary disperse in every direction and perish” (11.29–30).

As the final statement from the Gautama Dharmasūtra indicates, just as righteous action leads to pleasurable results, unrighteous actions generate painful results. Chapter 12 of the Mānava Dharmasāstra describes the many unfavorable results awaiting those who engage in unrighteous action, with verses 12.74–80 presenting a litany of extremely painful fruits:

By repeatedly engaging in these sinful actions, these men of little understanding undergo torments here in various births—such as tossing about in dreadful hells such as Tāmisra; the hell Asipatravana and the like; being tied up and cut up; various kinds of torture; being eaten by crows and owls; being burnt by hot sand-gruel; the unbearable tortures of being boiled in vats; taking birth constantly in evil wombs full of suffering; being assailed by cold and heat; terrors of various kinds; repeated residence in different wombs; being born agonizingly; being wrapped up in painful ways; doing servile work for others; being separated from relatives and loved ones; having to live in the company of evil people; earning and losing wealth; winning friends and enemies; old age, against which there is

¹⁶ MDh 12.70–72 describes the kinds of unfavorable births once receives from acting adharmically with respect to social class and profession: “When people belonging to the social classes deviate from their respective occupations outside a time of adversity, they go through evil cyclical existences and end up as servants of the Dasyu people. When a Brahmin deviates, he will become an Ulkāmukha ghost eating vomit; a Ksatriya will become a Katapūtana ghost eating filth and corpses; a Vaiśya will become a Maitrākṣajyotik a ghost feeding on pus; and a Sūdra who deviates from the Law proper to him will become a Cailāsaka ghost.”

no remedy; being assailed by illnesses; various afflictions; and death itself, which is impossible to overcome. (Mānava Dharmaśāstra 12.74–80)

The Dharma literature contains other sections that connect the nature of action and the nature of its fruits.¹⁷ Repeatedly they express how “good” (here meaning in accordance with *dharma*) actions produce “good” (here meaning pleasurable/conducive to happiness) fruits and “bad” (here meaning contrary to *dharma*) actions produce “bad” (here meaning painful/conducive to suffering) fruits. Yet no matter how obvious or commonsensical the answer may seem, what remains unexplained is what makes some of these good actions good and some of these bad actions bad, and what exactly makes good and bad fruits good and bad, respectively.

Chapter 5 of Framarin’s *Hinduism and Environmental Ethics* carefully dissects the causal relationships between nonharming/harming, merit/demerit, pleasure/pain, and knowledge/ignorance, specifically in connection with the ultimate religious goal of *mokṣa*, liberation from *samsāra*, the cycle of birth and death. Here I focus on the aspects of *karma* theory that admit foundational principles regarding value and pleasure and pain.¹⁸ Using *ahiṃsā* as an example of righteous behavior, Framarin remarks how nonharming results in pleasure, but not directly. Righteous behavior such as *ahiṃsā* generates merit (*puṇya*), which commonly fructifies in the form of pleasure:

In the simplest cases, *ahiṃsā* toward animals is in accord with *dharma*, and *hiṃsā* toward animals contradicts *dharma*. An agent who acts in accord with *dharma* is typically meritorious, and an agent who contradicts *dharma* is typically demeritorious.

¹⁷ See Holdrege 2004, 237 and throughout for a more extended discussion of this topic.

¹⁸ This echoes Framarin’s thesis: “My argument for this claim goes roughly as follows. The *Manusmṛti* claims that certain actions produce merit and demerit, and that this merit and demerit often take the forms of pleasure and pain, respectively. Pleasure and pain are suitable forms of merit and demerit only if they have value and disvalue, respectively. The value and disvalue of pleasure and pain are not derived entirely from the value of the further ends to which they are a means. Hence the value and disvalue of pleasure and pain are at least partly intrinsic. If the value and disvalue of pleasure and pain are at least partly intrinsic, then any entity capable of pleasure and pain has direct moral standing. The *Manusmṛti* claims that animals and plants are sentient. Hence the *Manusmṛti* attributes direct moral standing to animals and plants, at least in part because they are sentient” (2014, 77).

As a result of performing a meritorious action, an agent typically accrues merit, and as a result of performing a demeritorious action, an agent typically accrues demerit (12.3–10). The merit or demerit that an agent accrues as a result of their action often takes the form of pleasure (4.149, 4.229, 6.80, 8.343) or pain (4.157, 5.33, 5.55), respectively. Hence diagram (1) can be elaborated as follows:

(2)

ahiṃsā → merit → pleasure

hiṃsā → demerit → pain¹⁹

One acts righteously (in this case by nonharming), doing so generates merit, and merit frequently manifests as pleasure and/or the absence of pain for the doer. The opposite is true for *adharma*. One acts unrighteously (in this case by harming), doing so generates demerit, and demerit frequently manifests as pain and/or the absence of pleasure for the doer. This causal chain is visible in numerous verses from the Mānava Dharmaśāstra and elsewhere. One meat-eating-related verse from the Mānava Dharmaśāstra states: “When a man refrains from eating meat like a goblin, except when the rules prescribe it, he is loved by the world and is not tormented by diseases” (5.50). We can assume that being “loved by the world” constitutes a form of pleasure (mental and perhaps also bodily) for the meat-abstaining man, and being “not tormented by diseases” is valuable because it constitutes an absence of the bodily and mental pain concomitant with disease. If so, by acting righteously through the avoidance of meat “except when the rules prescribe it,” a human generates merit. This merit manifests as pleasure in the form of being loved by the world and in the form of the absence of the pain caused by disease.

¹⁹ Framarin 2014, 79.

As the issue of merit-making is somewhat inconsequential for this discussion, for the moment it may be simpler to utilize the more basic diagram that Framarin labels “diagram (1)”:

ahimsā → pleasure

himsā → pain

According to the cited verses, righteous action results in pleasure and unrighteous action results in pain. If righteous action results in pleasure and unrighteous action results in pain, then pleasure has value and pain has disvalue. If pleasure is a reward for righteous action and pain is a punishment for unrighteous action, then as a reward, pleasure must be good in some way, and as punishment, pain must be bad in some way. We must therefore assume that pleasure has value and pain disvalue. However, are the value of pleasure and the disvalue of pain intrinsic, or instrumental, or both?

The argument could be made that while pleasure has value and pain has disvalue, their value and disvalue are not intrinsic but are only instrumental. As mentioned earlier, intrinsic value is the value that something has as an end, in itself, while instrumental value is the value something has by virtue of the further ends to which it is a means. Something may be wholly intrinsically valuable or disvaluable, wholly instrumentally valuable and/or disvaluable, or partially intrinsically or instrumentally valuable and/or disvaluable.²⁰ For an example of something that can have both intrinsic and instrumental value, the physical pain I feel when performing cardiovascular exercise may be intrinsically disvaluable, but the pain is also most likely instrumentally valuable for improving and sustaining my overall long-term health.²¹ By contrast, the pleasure of eating french fries on a daily basis may be intrinsically valuable,

²⁰ A thing cannot be wholly intrinsically valuable *and* wholly intrinsically disvaluable. Therefore, this is only category described with an “or” and not an “and/or.”

²¹ First, these statements assume that overall long-term health is either intrinsically good or instrumentally good, or both, and this assumption is debatable. Second, one may object that the “pain” involved in cardiovascular exercise is not painful at all and is in fact pleasurable to the person exercising. However, this perspective derives from the reflex acceptance of our unfortunate “no pain no

but it is also most likely instrumentally disvaluable for improving and sustaining my overall long-term health. The argument I intend to critique the argument that contends that pleasure and pain are *only* instrumentally valuable and disvaluable, respectively, and not intrinsically valuable or disvaluable. According to this argument, pleasure and pain are only means to ends. Their value and disvalue derive solely from their promotion and obstruction of ends other than pleasure and pain, ends that are themselves intrinsically valuable or disvaluable. In the context of *karma* theory—specifically the issue of the consequences of righteous and unrighteous action—the “instrumentalist”²² argument maintains that pleasure and pain only have value and disvalue in relation to the achievement of liberation, or to the achievement of some other worldly aims.²³ In the context of liberation, righteous action results in pleasure because pleasure is somehow conducive to liberation, whereas unrighteous action results in pain because pain somehow impedes liberation.

Regarding liberation as the ultimate goal, at the outset it should be noted that some Hindu renouncer traditions, such as the Advaita Vedānta tradition of Śaṅkara, reject the claim that any actions—righteous or unrighteous—are instrumental to the goal of liberation. *Mokṣa* is liberation from the phenomenal world (*saṃsāra*), yet actions and their consequences all occur in the phenomenal world. If all actions produce consequences and all of these consequences—both good and bad—must

gain” state of affairs. Which is to say, the pain that is necessary for gain remains intrinsically disvaluable but because it is instrumentally valuable for improving one’s overall long-term health (as well as their appearance, presumably), then the pain is pleasurable insofar as it confirms one’s commitment to, and progress in, attaining that goal. However, this does not deny the presence of pain in our “no pain no gain” reality. A better state of affairs would involve “the same gain without pain.” See Benatar 2017, 83–91.

²² Framarin dedicates three chapters of their book detailing competing “instrumentalist” (20–40), “interconnectedness” (41–60), and “sameness” (61–76) interpretations which falter whether raised for or against the claim that Hindu ethics (as presented in the three texts under scrutiny) attribute direct moral standing to animals (and plants).

²³ Framarin 2013, 31.

manifest in a present or future lifetime, then as long as one acts then they are compelled to continue existing in the phenomenal world in order reap these consequences. In short, action is precisely what binds one to *saṃsāra* and not what liberates one from it.

Regardless of how this perspective argues for an alternative path to liberation, the important point at present is that even *if* pleasure and pain can be demonstrated as exclusively instrumentally valuable and disvaluable, respectively, to the goal of liberation, some traditions argue that absolutely nothing in the realm of actions and fruits can be instrumentally valuable and disvaluable to the goal of liberation.²⁴ However, other Hindu traditions (outside of Dharma traditions), do admit a relationship between righteous action and liberation. Perhaps most famously, the Bhagavad Gītā insists on consistent action while cultivating a disposition of nonattachment to the fruits of action. Righteous action does not bind one to *saṃsāra*, but rather it is attachment to the fruits of righteous action that binds; hence action does propel one to liberation but only insofar as one remains completely unconcerned with the saṃsaric consequences of action.²⁵ The following discussion recognizes but omits the aforementioned renouncer perspective and confronts the more basic claim that pleasure and pain only have value and disvalue insofar as they assist or prevent the ultimate goal of liberation.

Pleasure and pain can only be of instrumental value and disvalue to liberation if their instrumental relationship to liberation is consistent and reliable. Framarin offers numerous objections to the claim that pleasure is a reliable means to liberation and pain a reliable means to the postponement of liberation.²⁶ These objections to reliability challenge the claim that the value and disvalue of pleasure and pain can be reduced to their instrumental value and disvalue respectively. The most damaging

²⁴ Holdrege 2004, 240–242.

²⁵ Holdrege 2004, 242–244.

²⁶ Framarin 2014, 78–86.

objection, which is immediately plausible to those familiar with soteriological thought in South Asia, pertains to conventional understandings of the nature of the world, reasons why liberation is the ultimate goal, and how pleasure and pain are conducive or nonconducive to liberation.

The goal of liberation is the ultimate goal precisely because the world involves immense and inescapable pain that outweighs the pleasure one may enjoy while living. Therefore, one should seek to escape the world of pain—and pleasure—entirely and permanently. Accordingly, one would assume that righteous action, the generation of merit, and the fruits of merit—in this case, pleasure—would propel an aspirant towards the path and goal of liberation. However, a consistent thread in much South Asian soteriological thought is that pleasure and the desire for pleasure only increase one's attachment to the material world, while the pain and the desire for the absence of pain motivate one towards the goal of liberation. Pleasure tends to temporarily obscure the prevalence of pain in the world, thereby distracting one from the ultimate objective.

Heavenly beings, for example, cannot attain liberation because they “are simply too happy to engender the discontent that motivates religious pursuits”²⁷ By contrast, the everyday experiences and conscious understandings of pain present in humans, even if consistently sufferable, are two reasons why human births are claimed to be special or precious. Human beings’ “religious pursuits,” pursuits that are absent in pleasure-saturated heavenly beings as well as in pain-saturated nonhuman sentient beings, are motivated by humans’ routine experiences of pain coupled with their awareness of how pleasure is fleeting and comparatively trivial when compared to the forms of pain inextricable from existence. Hence one wonders why pleasure would be a reward for merit if pleasure only draws one further away from the path of liberation, particularly if the latter is the very motivation behind the

²⁷ Framarin 2014, 81.

generation of merit and the avoidance of demerit. If pleasure is of instrumental value—and only instrumental value—then it seems to be more instrumental for the obstruction of liberation rather for its achievement (thereby making it instrumentally disvaluable). By contrast, if anything is instrumentally valuable in assisting the goal of liberation, it would appear to be pain and not pleasure: “An experience of pain generally serves to remind the agent of the painful nature of *samsāra*, and hence motivates them to escape it.”²⁸ As such, one might expect pain and not pleasure to be the reward for righteous action, for it would only further convince the aspirant of the necessity of their goal. However, not only is such an action-reward dynamic questionable from the perspective of motivating an actual agent (do good → feel pain as a result → be motivated to do more good), but more importantly, such a dynamic is not attested by South Asian traditions themselves. Alternatively, one is rewarded with pleasure for acting righteously and penalized with pain for acting unrighteously, and typically regardless of overarching perspectives of how pleasure and pain bind one to and detach one from the phenomenal world. If pleasure and pain are the fruits of merit and demerit, respectively, but are unreliable means for the achievement and obstruction of liberation, then their value and disvalue as fruits cannot be completely instrumental. Pleasure must be at least partially intrinsically valuable and pain must be at least partially invaluable respectively.

This statement about pleasure and pain and *karma* theory does not deny the completely independent claim that pleasure can also be instrumentally bad (or good) and pain can also be instrumentally good (or bad). It is necessary to acknowledge that pleasure is also capable of distracting one from other, greater goods (“better” worldly pleasure and even liberation) and also causing pain in the future. Likewise, pain is also capable of leading one to other, greater goods (“better” worldly

²⁸ Framarin 2014, 84.

pleasure and even liberation) and preventing pain in the future. It is possible for a righteous human to be “rewarded” with a painful birth or set of circumstances so long as that birth or set of circumstances is virtually predetermined to propel that human towards more valuable worldly pleasure or ideally liberation, or simply the avoidance of greater pain that they would have experienced if they had not acted righteously. Yet conclusions about the intrinsic value and disvalue of pleasure and pain, respectively, are unaffected by references to the good or bad ends for which pleasure and pain may also be instrumentalized. *Karma* theory, or at least those versions of the theory that admit causal connections between righteous and unrighteous action and pleasure and pain as the fruits of action, accepts the intrinsic value of pleasure and the intrinsic disvalue of pain no matter how these fruits (pleasure and pain) may relate to additional ends. If a more “worldly” end is substituted for liberation as the aim of righteous action, such that pleasure and pain are still regarded as mere means for the attainment or postponement of that end, then again the consistency and reliability of those means leading to that end need to be proven. But even more significantly, denying the intrinsic value and disvalue of pleasure and pain would require that this worldly end be intrinsically good or bad for reasons irreducible to the intrinsic value of pleasure and the intrinsic disvalue of pain. In a later discussion about the “goals of human existence,” the *puruṣārthas*, I maintain that any such worldly ends are reducible—at least generally—to the same foundational claims about the intrinsic nature of pleasure and pain.

Animals and Direct Moral Standing

A relatively small but necessary step in our discussion is the transition from the idea of intrinsic value to the idea of direct moral standing:

If something has value as an end, independent of the value of further ends to which it is a means, then presumably human agents morally ought to consider it as an end in deciding what to do. If human agents morally ought to consider something as an end in deciding what to do, then human agents morally ought to consider it for its own sake in

deciding what to do. And if human agents morally ought to consider it for its own sake in deciding what to do, then it has direct moral standing.²⁹

If a thing has intrinsic value, then humans ought to consider that thing when deciding on actions that will have consequences—directly or indirectly—for that thing. If a thing ought to be considered by humans owing to its intrinsic value, then that thing has direct moral standing. If we accept the claim that pleasure and pain are things with intrinsic value and disvalue, humans must consider pleasure and pain when deciding what to do. But in what way are pleasure and pain “things” that humans can consider in as ends themselves when deciding what to do? How do the bodily and mental phenomena of pleasure and pain *themselves* have direct moral standing? What does it mean to morally consider the phenomenon of pain *itself* when deciding what to do?

While these questions can cause confusion when investigating the ideas of intrinsic value and direct moral standing, this confusion is of little practical concern here.³⁰ Ultimately it is the experiencers of experiences who must be considered, as Framarin illustrates: “My action of giving my dog a treat might cause a pleasure state in my dog, and the pleasure state might be intrinsically valuable, but it is my dog that I consider for his own sake in deciding what to do—not the pleasure state itself.”³¹ States of pleasure and pain do not arise, persist, and dissipate independent from “objects and wholes,” such as dogs and humans and other mind/body complexes. For this reason, while we can abstractly isolate these phenomena from “their” wholes, when it comes to determining actual behaviors the objects are considered and not the states associated with them. Therefore, as Framarin adds: “[I]f an object or its states has intrinsic value—in the sense of value as an end—and human agents might affect the object in

²⁹ Framarin 2014, 6.

³⁰ See Framarin 2014, 6–9 for an elaboration of intrinsic value and direct moral standing, and some problems associated with distinguishing them from one another.

³¹ Framarin 2014, 7.

relevant ways, then the object has direct moral standing as well.”³² Even if the states of a “whole” object are what have intrinsic value and not the object itself, the object itself is what has direct moral standing due to its intimate and inseverable relationship with those states—hence the dog has direct moral standing. To offer another example, let us assume that pain has intrinsic disvalue. Since phenomenal existence is permeated by pain, then liberation is a goal at least in part due to its promise of the complete alleviation of present pain and the prevention of future pain. Accordingly, if human agents must consider how their actions promote or discourage liberation due to liberation’s remedial function with respect to pain, then they must consider the people or “wholes” afflicted with pain and who are pursuing liberation. The people experiencing pain are the considered objects, they are the entities with direct moral standing, regardless of whether one insists philosophically that only pain and not the people experiencing pain have intrinsic value.

“Whole” animals have direct moral standing owing to their sentience. “Sentience” may here be understood in the basic sense as having the capacity to experience the states of pleasure and pain. Animals are universally admitted as sentient beings, as “wholes” who experience pleasure and pain, to varying degrees. If so, humans must consider all animals for their own sake when deciding what to do. This consideration owes to animals’ capacity for those experiences without reference to cosmological assignments as explored in previous chapters. Framarin claims that other characteristics of entities may additionally satisfy as morally relevant (for example, lifespan and being “alive”), but it is the sentience of beings that most convincingly—if not also foundationally—establishes their direct moral standing.

The foregrounding of the foundational ethical relevance of sentience has also been promoted by philosopher Alasdair Cochrane (among others) in their recent work on “sentient rights” and a

³² Framarin 2014, 7–8.

“sentientist politics.”³³ Cochrane’s work encourages us to commence and then proceed not from “the human” or “the animal” in discussions about moral standing and even political rights but rather from the specific characteristics of entities that ground their moral standing. Humans do not matter simply because “humans matter,” but because humans often have characteristics that matter and thereby qualify them as the types of being who matter, namely, sentient beings. However, there are other beings—such as animals—who also have these characteristics and thus also qualify as types of beings who matter. Cochrane’s argument is an extension of what Peter Singer elaborated decades ago in *Practical Ethics*, which introduced the principle of equal consideration of interests: “We give equal weight in our moral deliberations to the like interests of all those affected by our actions [because] an interest is an interest, whoever’s interest it may be.”³⁴ In short, the direct moral standing of animals, derived from their capacity to experience pleasure and pain, must be respected regardless of their species assignments. Far from applying contemporary Western animal rights theories to ancient Hindu perspectives, here I invoke Cochrane and Singer to emphasize how the texts soon to be discussed also assume the foundational ethical relevance of sentience in their promotion of specific ethical principles and practices.

We may summarize and conclude our initial discussion about *karma* theory and the intrinsic nature of pleasure and pain. Pleasure and pain exist in both mental and bodily forms. All forms of pleasure have intrinsic value and all forms of pain have intrinsic disvalue. Because pleasure is intrinsically good, then its experience should be promoted, no matter who experiences that pleasure. Likewise, because pain is intrinsically bad, then its experience should be avoided, no matter who

³³ Cochrane 2013; Cochrane 2018.

³⁴ Singer 2011, 21. This foregrounding of the foundational ethical relevance of the capacity to experience pain was famously stressed by Jeremy Bentham: “The question is not, *Can they reason?* nor *Can they talk?* but, *Can they suffer?*” (1996, 283).

experiences that pain. All sentient beings are capable of experiencing pleasure and pain by virtue of their sentience and thereby have direct moral standing because they are the “wholes” that experience the phenomena of pleasure and pain. Thus, all sentient beings—human and nonhuman—must be considered by human agents when deciding what to do, specifically insofar as those actions cause pleasure and pain to those sentient beings. These rudimentary principles on value and moral standing that ground *karma* theory also—unsurprisingly—form the logical basis of the principle of *ahiṃsā*. This is articulated in the Mānava Dharmaśāstra as well as in the Pātañjala Yogaśāstra.

Meat-Eating and *Ahiṃsā* in the Mānava Dharmaśāstra

The Mānava Dharmaśāstra is not only the most authoritative and celebrated legal text in the Dharma literature but its passages on meat-eating display a diversity of concerns around *hiṃsā* and individual action. The earlier Dharmasūtras, while including prohibitions against eating meat for certain people in particular circumstances, do not include explanations for these prohibitions, nor is there any indication of an underlying principle concerned with the means—namely, harming and killing—by which meat is procured. The two Dharmaśāstras following the Mānava Dharmaśāstra, the Yājñavalkya Dharmaśāstra and the Vaiṣṇava Dharmaśāstra, virtually repeat the teachings of the Mānava Dharmaśāstra and include little by way of elaboration.³⁵ In what follows I intend to make two specific points: (1) The Dharma literature that discusses *hiṃsā* in the context of meat-eating includes the assumption of the intrinsic value of pleasure and the intrinsic disvalue of pain, and, on that basis, assumes the direct moral standing of animals; (2) The motivation to avoid the negative karmic consequences of eating meat logically hinges upon the conclusions regarding intrinsic value and disvalue and direct moral standing, even if the intention of the agent who refrains from eating meat lacks any motivation to not cause pain to animals.

³⁵ Cf. ViDh 51.59–78 and YDh 1.178–80.

This second point is important given the scholarly history of arguing that the ethic of *ahimsā* does not necessarily include a moral concern for others (human or nonhuman) but rather a concern for one's own karmic welfare.³⁶ This claim may be rhetorically accurate, in that many texts do present self-interested reasons for abstaining from eating meat that reflect living agents' personal motivations for abstaining from eating meat. Regardless of this fact, the karmic edifice logically survives only through an underlying acceptance of the moral relevance of animals' experiences of pain and pleasure.

Extraordinary Situations

In the previous chapter I analyzed forbidden foods (*abhakṣya*) in the Mānava Dharmaśāstra. Following the section on these foods (Mānava Dharmaśāstra 5.4–25), the author of the Mānava Dharmaśāstra announces: “I have described above completely what foods are forbidden and what permitted to the twice-born. I will now explain the rule on eating and on avoiding meat” (5.26). The Mānava Dharmaśāstra then presents four very specific situations in which it is permissible to eat meat, four situations I refer to collectively as “extraordinary situations.” These four extraordinary situations are: (1) “when it is sacrificially consecrated”; (2) “at the behest of Brahmins”; (3) “when he is ritually commissioned according to rule”; (4) “when his life is at risk” (5.27). I concur with Olivelle's suggestion that the opinion following this list represents a hypothetical opponent's (*pūrvapakṣa*) perspective on the topic.³⁷ This opponent disagrees with these situational restrictions and argues that it is permissible to eat meat in virtually any situation. The *pūrvapakṣa* claims:

Prajāpati created this whole world as food for lifebreath; all beings, the mobile and the immobile, are nourishment for lifebreath. The immobile are food for the mobile; the fangless for the fanged; the handless for the handed; and the timid for the brave. The eater is not defiled by eating living beings suitable for eating, even if he eats them day

³⁶ See Framarin 2014, 22 for the relevant literature adopting this position.

³⁷ Olivelle 2005, 279; Framarin 2014, 88–89.

after day; for the creator himself fashioned both the eaters and the living beings suitable for eating. (Mānava Dharmaśāstra 5.28–30)

Immediately thereafter, in Mānava Dharmaśāstra 5.31, the text interjects with their own view (*uttarapakṣa*) that rebuts the opponent’s arguments: “‘The sacrifice is the reason for eating meat’—this, the tradition says, is the rule of gods. Doing it for any other purpose is called the rule of fiends.” The Mānava Dharmaśāstra reiterates the previous point that eating meat is permissible when the meat is “ritually consecrated” and not when it is consumed “day by day,” meaning regularly and without restriction. This prohibition on the casual, quotidian procurement and consumption of meat is repeated shortly thereafter in Mānava Dharmaśāstra 5.34., in which the texts warns that “[i]n the afterlife, the sin of someone who hunts animals for profit is not as great as that of a man who eats meat procured *capriciously* (*vr̥thā*).” According to the Mānava Dharmaśāstra, a consumer’s consumption of capriciously-obtained flesh is allegedly worse—ethically and karmically speaking—than a hunter’s killing of animals for profit.

In the verse preceding Mānava Dharmaśāstra 5.34, the author skips to the fourth extraordinary situation expressed—“when his life is at risk”—and promptly sanctions all meat-eating undertaken in “a time of adversity” (*āpad*, 5.33).³⁸ The text is not forthcoming about what exactly *āpad* signifies, yet we can reasonably conceive of “a time of adversity” as a temporary situation of extreme stress or scarcity and/or the possibility of immediate death. Times of adversity situations permit the suspension of the standard *dharma* due to the impossibility or near impossibility of following that *dharma* under present circumstances. However, it is possible that the Mānava Dharmaśāstra accepts much longer periods of time, even centuries and perhaps an entire age, as qualifying as times of adversity. Olivelle contends that

³⁸ White states that “*āpaddharma* is the ‘dharma of thinking on one’s feet,’ a moral order of expediency in calamitous times (1991, 77). See also 74–77.

this interpretation clarifies the otherwise puzzling discussion of mixed *varṇas* (social classes) at the start of chapter 10 of the text, a chapter ostensibly dedicated to rules for times of adversity.³⁹ Under this interpretation, “[t]his enduring period of adversity is signaled by the intermixture of the *varṇas* giving rise to several intermediate and lower castes (*jāti*).”⁴⁰

These two extraordinary situations—sacrifice and times of adversity—are followed by the warning that one who does not “eat meat after he has been ritually commissioned according to rule, after death he will become and animals for twenty-one lifetimes” (5.35). This line refers to the third situation listed above—“when he is ritually commissioned according to rule”—which is distinct from sacrificial consecration. Olivelle clarifies:

Commentators explain the term *niyuktaḥ* (“ritually commissioned”) as referring to a person who is undertaking a rite such as an ancestral offering and the “honey mixture” (*madhuparka*: 3.119 n.). This is distinguished from sacrificial consecration (*prokṣita*) listed earlier. The latter refers to vedic sacrifices, while the former refers to non-vedic rites. The term *niyukta* is also used at 5.35.⁴¹

³⁹ See MDh 10.81–120; Olivelle isn’t entirely certain about the scope of *āpad* either: “For Manu, I think, a time of adversity was not just a temporary emergency but also a permanent state of affairs, given the decadent state of contemporary society. This enduring period of adversity is signaled by the intermixture of the *varṇas* giving rise to several intermediate and lower castes (*jāti*). This was probably the reason why Manu deals with the mixture of *varṇas* at the start of his discussion of *āpaddharma*” (2005, 58). Regarding rules for normal times and times of adversity, Olivelle also makes the general comment: “In both ritual and legal texts, there are often two sets of rules, the one primary (*kalpa*) and the other secondary (*anukalpa*). The primary rules are seen as the normal and the normative. In times of emergency and when it is impossible to follow the primary rule due to lack of resources or ability, it is permitted to follow the secondary mode. Frequently, the secondary mode is associated with what has come to be known as the ‘Law in times of adversity’ (*āpaddharma*). Sometimes, as at 3.147, Manu clearly identifies the primary and the secondary methods. Indeed, at 11.30 Manu condemns a man who follows the secondary rule when he is able to follow the primary: ‘When someone, though able to follow the principal mode, yet lives according to the secondary mode, that fool will obtain no reward for it after death.’ The two modes, however, are not always so clearly distinguished, and in those situations the differing rules may seem to be contradictory” (2005, 33).

⁴⁰ Olivelle 2005, 58.

⁴¹ Olivelle, 2005, 279.

By requiring that one eats the meat included in “non-vedic rites,” the author clearly accepts that it is permissible to do so. Up to this point the Mānava Dharmaśāstra has commented upon, however briefly, three extraordinary situations that trump the *prima facie* prohibition against meat-eating. The only extraordinary situation not explicitly addressed in this passage is “at the behest of Brahmins,” although the Mānava Dharmaśāstra addresses it—albeit obliquely and rather insufficiently—in later verses (5.42–44). In sum, the text presents four extraordinary situations in which it is permissible to consume animal flesh, and an individual is forbidden to consume it at all other times. What remains unclear is the reason *why* is it permissible to eat meat under these four situations but not under any others.

The verses that follow offer several reasons for the permissibility of killing animals and eating meat under the appropriate circumstances. Mānava Dharmaśāstra 5.39–44 elaborates:

The Self-existent One himself created domestic animals for sacrifice, and the sacrifice is for the prosperity of this whole world. Within the sacrifice, therefore, killing is not killing. When plants, domestic animals, trees, beasts, and birds die for the sake of a sacrifice, they will in turn earn superior births. The honey-mixture, a sacrifice, an offering to gods or ancestors—at no other occasion than these, Manu has declared, may animals be killed. When a twice-born man who knows the true meaning of the Veda kills animals for these purposes, he leads himself and those animals to the highest state. Whether he lives at home, at his teacher's, or in the wilderness, a twice-born man who is self-possessed must never, even in a time of adversity, carry out a killing that is not sanctioned by the Veda. When a killing is sanctioned by the Veda and well-established in this mobile and immobile creation, it should be regarded definitely as a non-killing; for it is from the Veda that the Law has shined forth. (Mānava Dharmaśāstra 5.39–44)

The opening line refutes the *purvapakṣa* view that asserted that “Prajapati created this whole world as food for lifebreath.” The counter claim provided by the text is that only “domestic animals (*paśu*)” were created by Prajāpati for sacrifice, and since “the tradition (*smṛti*)” says that “the sacrifice is the reason for eating meat,” then only the meat of *paśus* is suitable for human consumption. As such, “the whole world” is *not* in fact suitable for consumption under typical and even extraordinary circumstances (that is, in the context of sacrifice), rather only *paśus*. This verse also—and curiously so—includes a

justification for the performance of sacrifice in general. The sacrifice, with its slaughtering of *paśus*, is executed “for the prosperity (*bhūti*) of this whole world.” The implication is that in the absence of the sacrifice the entire world would be less prosperous. Thus, while the use and killing of animals is undesirable, the condition of the entire world would be worse were the sacrifice not performed, and that state of affairs is much more undesirable than the harming of animals in sacrifice. Although it is outside the scope of this analysis, this line of argumentation from the Mānava Dharmaśāstra could be cited as proof of a consequentialist, if not also utilitarian, bent in the tradition. The logic is that sacrifice involves harming sentient beings and harming sentient beings is bad because it causes pain; however, without the performance of sacrifice the world would have even more pain (and less pleasure) than without the sacrifice. Therefore, the sacrifice and the subsequent consumption of sacrificed animal flesh is ethical because, by means of its performance, the sacrifice prevents even greater pain from existing the world.

Mānava Dharmaśāstra 5.39 repeats the well-known Vedic claim that “Within the sacrifice, therefore, killing [*vadha*] is not killing [*avadha*].” This verse immediately follows the verse clarifying that only *paśus* are fit for sacrifice and that their sacrifice is crucial for ensuring the prosperity of the world. Thus (somehow), a direct consequence of the prosperity-ensuring fact of sacrifice is that it is inappropriate to apply conventional thinking about the propriety of “killing” to the context of sacrifice. Mānava Dharmaśāstra 5.40 adds that “[w]hen plants, domestic animals, trees, beasts, and birds die for the sake of a sacrifice, they will in turn earn superior births.” But the fact that these beings “will in turn earn superior births” does not seem to be the reason why sacrificial “killing is not killing.” Animals’ (and plants’) lives are terminated by human hands even if they subsequently “earn” better births in the next life or those to follow. Rather than justifying a removal of the label “killing” from killing in a sacrificial context, Mānava Dharmaśāstra 5.40 introduces an additional justification for causing harm

and death to animals (and plants) in sacrifice: compensation.⁴² Since these beings will receive “superior births” as a result of their inclusion in the sacrifice—births that will presumably contain less pain and more pleasure than their present births—and will presumably situate them closer to an eventual human birth, the best of all possible rebirths, then their killing is ultimately beneficial to them. Once again, this perspective lends to a consequentialist reading of animal sacrifice: while it is true that animals experience harm and death in sacrifice, the superior births that they earn by means of their inclusion in sacrifice will involve less pain than would have been present in the inferior births they would lead by not being included in the sacrifice. Moreover, these superior births (presumably) involve greater pleasure than those present in inferior births and also propel the animals closer to a human birth, which is the only birth from which one can achieve the permanent alleviation of pain through liberation. Therefore, it is best for the entire world—and for the animals themselves—to be killed in sacrifice. This argument is expanded two lines later: “When a twice-born man who knows the true meaning of the Veda kills animals for these purposes, he leads himself and those animals to the highest state [*uttamā gati*]” (Mānava Dharmaśāstra 5.42). Regardless of how we understand “the highest state,” this state is the ultimate good and a sacrificer ushers both himself and sacrificed animals to that good when sacrificing in accordance with the proper procedures.⁴³ Again, the harms inflicted in sacrifice are morally outweighed by the goods accruing to both the human sacrificer and the nonhuman victims.

The final line in this section is informative for other, though related, reasons:

⁴² “Although many people act violently without moral qualms, violence—the deliberate or predictable harming, injuring, mutilating, or killing of others without compensatory benefit to *them*—is also often taken to be paradigmatic of evil. . . . At the least, violent acts are *prima facie* wrong” (Ruddick 1992, 1274, cited in Houben and Kooij 1999, 1, emphasis in original)

When a killing [*hiṃsā*] is sanctioned by the Veda and well-established in this mobile and immobile creation, it should be regarded definitely as a non-killing [*ahiṃsā*]; for it is from the Veda that the Law has shined forth. (Mānava Dharmaśāstra 5.44)⁴⁴

Recall that Mānava Dharmaśāstra 5.39 claimed that “killing [*vadhā*] is not killing [*avadhā*]” in the context of sacrifice. Soon after, however, Mānava Dharmaśāstra 5.42 states: “[w]hen a twice-born man who knows the true meaning of the Veda kills [root *hiṃs*] animals for these purposes. . . .”⁴⁵ This verse admits that *hiṃsā* (as harming or killing) does in fact occur in the sacrifice, even if that harming is compensated for by the sacrificer and the animals consequently attaining the highest state. Thus, the phrase “killing is not killing” should probably be reinterpreted in this context as, to be more precise, “harming is not [ultimately] harming.” In other words, even though what appears as harming is in fact a type of harming, it ultimately fails to qualify as harming because it is the least harmful of the two available options: sacrificing or not sacrificing animals. However, killing—taken in a strict sense—happens to the animals no matter the compensatory benefits of their killing. Animals may not be harmed in some ultimate sense but their current lives are nevertheless terminated. Mānava Dharmaśāstra 5.44 reiterates the “killing is not killing” sentiment. Here the author states that the sacrificial killing (*hiṃsā*) should be regarded as a non-killing (*ahiṃsā*). This verse does not definitively deny the facticity of the killing but only asserts that sacrificial killing should not be viewed or treated as a “normal” killing. Since the circumstances of the killing are extraordinary, the killing is sanctioned by the Veda, and the killing purportedly prevents pain and maximizes pleasure, then the text suggest that it is inappropriate to group it with other types of killing and therefore it is better to perceive it as *ahiṃsā* despite some of the harms involved.

⁴⁴ MDh 5.44 *yā vedavihitā hiṃsā nityatāsmiṃscarācare | ahiṃsāmeva tāṃ vidyādvēdāddharmo hi nirbabhau ||*

⁴⁵ MDh 5.42 *eṣvartheṣu paśūnhiṃsanvedatattvārthavid dvijaḥ*

The Mānava Dharmasāstra invokes the Veda to explain the extraordinariness of animal sacrifice and how it dictates the manner in which we should apply specific terminology. Yet the aforementioned verse (5.44) contains an additional idea connected to ideas discussed in chapter 1: “When a killing [*hiṃsā*] is sanctioned by the Veda and well-established [*niyatā*] in this mobile and immobile creation.” In a note on this verse, Olivelle presents divergent interpretations put forth by the commentators Medhātithi, Govinda, Kullūka, and Georg Bühler. The syntactical focus of the note is Olivelle’s argument that *asmins carācare* (“in this mobile and immobile creation”) is linked to *niyatā* (as Medhātithi and Govinda read it) rather than to *hiṃsā* (as Kullūka and Bühler read it). In this context regardless of whether one aligns with Medhātithi and Govinda and translate *niyatā* as “without beginning” (they gloss the term with *anādi*), or favor Olivelle’s translation as “well-established,” the salient point remains the same:

Medhātithi and Govinda interpret *niyatā* to mean "without beginning" (*anādi*); the sacrificial killing has existed in the world always. This may be related to the fact that other types of killing, such as those sanctioned by Tantra, are recent customs. The "beginninglessness" of sacrificial killing is related to the timelessness of the Veda itself, which is the basis of *dharma*. Therefore, ethical norms of *ahiṃsā* that contradict the Veda cannot be part of *dharma*.⁴⁶

The concluding point made by Olivelle is the counterpart of a point made earlier: killing is not killing—that is, should not be regarded as killing—if it is sanctioned by the Veda. But here the situation is framed differently. Since *dharma* is nothing but what the Veda presents as *dharma*, then any practice of *ahiṃsā* that questions or criticizes and ultimately prescribes an alternative course of action than that which is prescribed by the Veda “cannot be part of *dharma*.” Therefore, *ahiṃsā* is not righteous behavior if its performance conflicts with *dharma* as prescribed by the Veda. Hence, here we encounter

⁴⁶ Olivelle 2005, 279–280.

a palpable moment of tension between Vedic conceptions of *dharma* and those promoted by post-Vedic *śramaṇa* traditions.

The feature of Mānava Dharmasāstra 5.44 that recalls topics discussed in chapter 1 is the assumption that “the sacrificial killing has existed in the world always. . . . [and] [t]he ‘beginninglessness’ of sacrificial killing is related to the timelessness of the Veda itself.” If the sacrifice has always existed, then so have all the animals who are killed in the sacrifice. In chapter 1 I argued that “village animal” is an ontological category that obscures, and thereby naturalizes, human practices of animal domestication. I also detailed how the categories “village” and “sacrificable” overlap, with “sacrificable” constituting another ontological designation that deems select animals eternally engineered for killing. Just as particular animals are forever pre-packaged as “village,” so too are some animals “naturally” and forever sacrificable. Thus, the phrase “well-established in this mobile and immobile creation” in Mānava Dharmasāstra 5.44 communicates that the sacrifice and its elements are fixed and embedded in the very fabric of the cosmos. As such, the sacrificial complex is absolutely *not* a venue of choice-making on the part of human agents, for its structure and contents remain ever and eternally in line with *dharma*. For this reason, the “killing” executed in sacrifice cannot legitimately be likened to killings in other contexts, contexts which may rightfully be subjected to circumstance-based analyses and choice-making.

Nonextraordinary Situations

Mānava Dharmasāstra 5.32–55 describes the positive and negative karmic consequences of abstaining from and eating meat in *nonextraordinary* situations. Positively speaking, a man is “loved by the world and is not tormented by diseases” (5.50) when he abstains from eating animals. For the person who performs the horse sacrifice (*aśvamedha*) and the person who refrains from eating meat, “the reward for their meritorious acts is the same” (5.53). The reward for “abstaining completely” from meat is even

greater than that generated by “living on pure fruits and roots and by eating the food of sages” (5.54).⁴⁷ And “[w]hen someone has no desire to tie up, kill, or cause pain to living creatures and seeks the welfare of all beings, he obtains endless bliss” (5.56). Negatively speaking, “if he [a man] eats meat in contravention of the rules, after death he will be eaten forcibly by those very animals” (5.31). Similarly, “[w]hen a man kills an animal for a futile reason, after death he will be subject in birth after birth to being slain as many times as the number of hairs on that animal” (5.38). And again, “[i]f someone, craving his own pleasure, harms harmless creatures, he will not find happiness anywhere while he is still alive or after death” (5.45).⁴⁸ The text also asserts that “killing living beings is an impediment to heaven” (5.48). Who exactly is implicated in the killing that impedes the attainment of heaven? The one who kills an animal directly? Is the eater of meat also a “killer”? Mānava Dharmasāstra 5.51 emphasizes that “[t]he man who authorizes, the man who butchers, the man who slaughters, the man who buys or sells, the man who cooks, the man who serves, and the man who eats—these are all killers.” The Mānava Dharmasāstra asserts that those who consume the flesh of a dead animal are also a “killers,” and their eating of flesh negatively affects their journey to heaven. In addition, by means of a creative and well-known phonetic etymology of the word *māṃsa* (“meat”), the Mānava Dharmasāstra claims that the one who eats another’s meat in this world will have their own flesh eaten by that same creature in the next world (5.55).⁴⁹ Hence a “flesh for flesh” karmic consequence awaits the one who eats meat outside of the four specified extraordinary situations.

⁴⁷ This referenced “food of sages” assumedly—and somewhat strangely—must include some meat or otherwise it would also count as a “complete” abstinence from meat.

⁴⁸ The reference to “harmless” creatures implies that when animals are harmful or pose a threat to one’s life or health, then their harming is permissible. Such a situation would qualify as a “time of adversity.”

⁴⁹ “Me he (*māṃ sa*) will eat in the next world, whose meat (*māṃsa*) I eat in this world”—this, the wise declare, is what gave the name to and discloses the true nature of “meat” (*māṃsa*).”

All of these verses provide agent-centric reasons for abstaining from eating meat. One refrains from eating it because doing so—instrumentally—avoids the negative consequences of eating meat and generates positive consequences as well. Or, in the terminology with which we began this inquiry, abstaining from eating meat avoids *duḥkha*, provides *sukha*, and moves one closer to the eventual absence of all *duḥkha* by means of the attainment of *mokṣa*. These agent-centric motivations have led some to assume that the Dharma texts—and Hindu traditions in general—lack an animal-centric ethical sensibility, for there is apparently little or no concern for the direct moral standing of animals. According to this interpretation, the Mānava Dharmaśāstra does not implore one to abstain from eating meat because animals matter morally in themselves, but because eating animal flesh results in negative consequences and abstaining from eating meat results in positive consequences for the human agent. This perspective is similar to a hypothetical proscription that warns one of the negative consequences of consuming (arguably) insentient things such as corn or apples or ginger. The motivation for refraining from these items would presumably be little but self-interest, because if these things are incapable of experiencing pleasure and pain, then a human agent need not (in fact, could not) consider them for their own sake when deciding what to do. Nevertheless, in this context one would have to explain why negative karmic consequences should issue from consuming these insentient things. Returning to animals, any accusation of the absence of an ethical regard for animals in the Dharma literature must explain why meat-eating in particular results in negative consequences for the human agent, if not owing in some part to the moral relevance of the process of “meatifying” these animals? In the absence of the direct moral standing of animals, why should refraining from eating meat generate positive consequences? And why should refraining from eating meat result in these consequences but not refraining from eating corn or apples or ginger? What is it about meat that separates it from other consumables?

Mānava Dharmaśāstra 5.37 instructs that “[i]f he gets the urge, let him make an animal out of butter or flour; but he must never entertain the desire to kill an animal for a futile reason.” Even more illustrative is Mānava Dharmaśāstra 5.46, cited earlier, that begins with: “When someone has no desire to tie up, kill, or cause pain to living creatures and seeks the welfare of all beings. . . .” Both of these verses convey that causing pain to living creatures, such as by tying them up and killing them, is in some way relevant in the proscription against eating meat. If the concern was purely for meat-qua-meat, as a substance akin to corn or apples or ginger, then there would be no need to emphasize the processes by which living animals are turned into meat. However, here the negative consequences resulting from consuming the substance “meat” relate to the *duḥkha* inflicted upon and experienced by animals in the process of transforming them into that substance. Mānava Dharmaśāstra 5.48 provides an explanation: “One can never obtain meat without causing injury [*himsā*] to living beings, and killing living beings is an impediment to heaven; he should, therefore, abstain from meat.” We have already noticed how authorizers, butchers, slaughterers, buyers, sellers, and eaters are all considered “killers” in the Mānava Dharmaśāstra, and all hinder their attainment of heaven as a result of their various associations with meat. Even more telling is the opening phrase of Mānava Dharmaśāstra 5.48: “One can never obtain meat without causing injury to living beings.” The following verse establishes this fact—that the process of obtaining meat unavoidably causes harm to animals—as a reason and motivation for human agents to abstain from consuming meat: “Reflecting on how meat is obtained and on how embodied creatures are tied up and killed, he should quit eating any kind of meat” (5.49). This verse does not include any motivational reference to the karmic consequences of eating or abstaining from eating meat, but rather it expresses a general concern for the pain experienced by embodied creatures when they are tied up and killed for their flesh. The implication is that if meat could hypothetically be obtained without causing harm to living beings—harms that include restraining and ultimately killing them—then owing

to the absence of this pain the consumption of such meat would not be an impediment to heaven.⁵⁰ This verse corroborates the claim made earlier that the Mānava Dharmaśāstra does not condemn capricious meat-eating owing to concerns about meat as a physical substance, but rather the text condemns it because the process by which it becomes a substance causes harm to sentient beings.

Framarin captures the essence of Mānava Dharmaśāstra 5.49:

The verse claims that what makes *himsā* wrong is self-evident to the careful observer. What should be self-evident to anyone is that certain entities are capable of pleasure and pain, that pain is bad, and that binding and slaughtering embodied entities causes them pain. This suggests that the value and disvalue of pleasure and pain are at least partly intrinsic.⁵¹

The Mānava Dharmaśāstra recognizes that pain has intrinsic disvalue and animals experience various forms of as well as pleasure. If pain should be prevented owing to its intrinsic disvalue, then any “whole” living being such as an animal that is capable of experiencing pain must be a site of concern for its prevention. This is another way of saying that an animal must have, as established earlier, direct moral standing. Hence, while meat eating may be problematic for other reasons, I maintain that it is *foundationally* problematic in the Mānava Dharmaśāstra due to a root ethical sensibility concerning the intrinsic value and disvalue of pleasure and pain and the corresponding duties for their promotion and prevention.

One could feasibly assert that the Mānava Dharmaśāstra merely confesses a degree of sentimentality at this juncture, and human beings are much more frequently motivated by concerns for their own physical and karmic welfare rather than for the well-being of animals. After all, many of the

⁵⁰ Possible situations include the consumption of “roadkill,” eating discarded meat through the practice of “dumpster diving” prevalent among people who identify as “freegans,” or by obtaining animal flesh procured through animals’ stem cells rather than the killing of actual animals, otherwise known as “lab meat” or “clean meat.”

⁵¹ Framarin 2014, 84.

cautions presented in the Mānava Dharmaśāstra that detail the consequences of eating meat for the human eater have nothing to do with the welfare of the slaughtered animals. Yet we must remain clear on one point: my claim is not that vegetarian humans—then or now—necessarily abstain from eating meat necessarily due to an intention not to cause harm and death to animals. My claim is merely that, according to relevant statements from the Mānava Dharmaśāstra, animals matter morally in themselves because causing pleasure and pain matters morally, and sentient beings are those beings who are capable of experiencing pleasure and pain. Even more foundationally, as explored earlier, *karma* theory logically depends upon the intrinsic value and disvalue of pleasure and pain for its plausibility. Irrespective of the intentions of human agents concerned with karmic repercussions for themselves, the very notion of karmic consequences is grounded in these root principles concerning intrinsic value and disvalue and direct moral standing.

A Renouncer Source: The *Pātañjala Yogaśāstra*

Yogaśāstra* and *Yogasūtra

While I do not attempt a deep dive into the main tract of Classical Yoga, the Pātañjala Yogaśāstra, it is useful to highlight how a text with an entirely different aim and audience accepts some of the same ethical principles and corresponding duties as the Dharma literature. The Pātañjala Yogaśāstra is a mid-first millennium CE text aimed, most likely, at Brahmin renunciators.⁵² Dissimilar from the Mānava Dharmaśāstra, which is composed in rather clear verses, the Pātañjala Yogaśāstra—or more specifically, the Pātañjala Yogasūtra—contains *sūtras*, or “threads,” of text that are much shorter and more cryptic than the language of a verse or prose text. Edwin Bryant describes a *sūtra* as “a mnemonic device to structure the teachings and assist memorization. I sometimes compare them to a series of

⁵² Bryant 2009, xxxiv.

bullet points that a lecturer might jot down prior to giving a presentation, to structure the talk and provide reminders of the main points intended to be covered; thus, from a dozen shorthand phrases incomprehensible to anyone else, a lecturer might discourse for a couple of hours.”⁵³ The key word here is “incomprehensible,” and Bryant, among others, have stressed how these “bullet points” are truly impenetrable without the accompanying *bhāṣya*, or commentary, of Vyāsa. However, even more significant is the relatively recent work of Philipp Maas,⁵⁴ who has insisted that the *sūtras* and *bhāṣya* were most likely composed at the same time and perhaps by the same author. Maas argues that is therefore not only prudent for readers to accept the authority of the original commentator (*bhāṣyakāra*), but also consider that the *bhāṣya* was most likely integrated into the original text, thereby rendering the “Pātañjala Yogaśāstra” as a much more appropriate title than the “Pātañjala Yogasūtra.” Maas notes that while most modern texts on Indian philosophy present the *sūtras* and *bhāṣya* as separate works by separate authors, there is considerable scholarship and evidence in Sanskrit literature itself to evidence otherwise. A few statements from Maas will suffice to illustrate the overall point, which is a position with which I concur in my analysis of the Pātañjala Yogaśāstra:⁵⁵

Śrīdhara, Abhinanavgupta, Hemacandra, Viṣṇubhaṭṭa, Śivopādhyāya and Devapāla all refer to *bhāṣya* passages as having been composed by Patañjali. All these authors

⁵³ Bryant 2009, xxxv.

⁵⁴ Maas 2006, 2008, 2010, 2013, 2017.

⁵⁵ The comparably “soft” position of scholars such as Edwin Bryant leads into the same interpretive territory as Maas’ “hard” position regarding the unity of the text. Bryant emphasizes that the history of Pātañjala Yoga scholarship is a history of analyzing the *sūtras* as they are understood by the *bhāṣyakāra* (2009, xl). Even scholars who critique the *bhāṣyakāra*’s unpacking of particular *sūtras* have depended almost singularly on the *bhāṣya* for their own fundamental understanding of the context and content of the *sūtras*. Thus, at the very minimum, the present study accepts this soft position while favoring Maas’s assertion that the text is most likely guided by “single, roughly datable authorial intention” (2013, 68) regardless of the thrust of that actual intention. In short, from the standpoint of plausibility, the accuracy of the *bhāṣyakāra*’s interpretation trumps any other, and a disagreement with the *bhāṣya* on any *sūtra* amounts to a disagreement with the content of the *sūtra* itself.

indicate that the Pātañjala Yogaśāstra (i.e. the *sūtra* passages together with the *bhāṣya* part of the work) is a unified whole possibly composed by one single author.⁵⁶

References to the title *yogabhāṣya* and to the author's name Vyāsa or Vedavyāsa are only transmitted in a few manuscripts of limited stemmatic relevance. Originally the work had neither the title *yogabhāṣya* nor did it contain the personal name Vyāsa.⁵⁷

The Yoga Sūtra appears to have no manuscript transmission independent of that of the PYS [Pātañjala Yogśāstra], because the manuscripts of the Yoga Sūtra I have seen so far exist of extracts from the PYS only.⁵⁸

Establishing the authority of the *bhāṣya* is critical to my own investigation because the most convincing statements that I invoke from the Pātañjala Yogaśāstra derive from the commentary and not the “bullet points” of the text.

The Pātañjala Yogaśāstra arguably presents the clearest and most enduring, and possibly earliest, Hindu exposition of the five restraints (*yamas*), which are also found in the “heterodox” renouncer traditions of the time. The list of five is led by nonharming (*ahiṃsā*), and the Pātañjala *yogin* is expected to practice nonharming along with the four other *yamas* (truthfulness, nonstealing, nonacquisitiveness, celibacy) regardless of birth, place, time, or circumstance (2.30–31). The commentary to *sūtra* 2.31 explains the meanings of birth (*jāti*), place (*deśa*), time (*kāla*), or circumstance (*samaya*) and how the “great vow” (*mahāvratā*) requires unconditional adherence with respect to these variables. Noteworthy is how all of the commentator's examples describing these variables refer—explicitly or implicitly—to violent human relations with animals. Most explicit and significant is how even one's *jāti* as a fisherman (“birth” here carrying the meaning of birth-based occupation) disqualifies them from satisfying the great vow. A fisherman cannot vow to kill fish and only fish, and since it is their *jāti* to kill fish, expect (hypothetically) that an exception to the vow can be

⁵⁶ Maas, 2013, 57.

⁵⁷ Maas 2006, xvf. and xxf.

⁵⁸ Maas 2013, 58.

made. The *bhāṣyakāra* continues by stating that one cannot promise to cause injury only in sacred places, or only on sacred days, or only for the sake of gods and Brahmins, and still expect to satisfy this vow. In my interpretation, these three examples—avoiding harm except sacred places, on sacred days, and for gods and Brahmins—predominantly refer to the harms involved in sacrificing animals at these places, on these days, and for these individuals. The only example that does not refer to animals is that of warriors (Kṣatriyas) who claim to injure and kill others in battle and only in battle.

In *sūtra* 2.34, Patañjali gives the example of harming and its various actualizations to illustrate the depth to which contrary attitudes and behaviors must be practiced:

Dubious thoughts such as harming, etc., whether committed by oneself, for oneself, or approved of, preceded by greed, anger, or delusion, and mild, medium, intense, result in unending suffering and ignorance—this is a consideration of the opposite.⁵⁹

The first motivation discussed, greed, is especially relevant as the *bhāṣya* connects it to the killing of an animal for their flesh and skin. It is owing to greed that one kills, has killed on one's behalf, or approves of the killing of an animal for these substances. It would be a mistake to underestimate the breadth of this claim. The Pātañjala Yogaśāstra holds that not only must one refrain from killing animals by one's own hand, but they cannot have the killing performed by another, nor can they approve of or assent to an environment in which acts of killing are carried out. It could not be stated any more plainly that the practice of *ahiṃsā* mandates the unconditional renunciation of all flesh-eating and appears to stretch much further to rejecting the societal practice of killing animals altogether.

An extended interpretation of *ahiṃsā* in the Pātañjala Yogaśāstra can thus argue for behavioral and dietary modifications beyond vegetarianism. Appealing to the *anumodita* (accepting or consenting to) aspect of harming, one could claim that patronizing businesses that slaughter or serve flesh or other

⁵⁹ PYŚ 2.34 *vitarkā hiṃsādayaḥ kṛtakāritānumoditā lobhakrodhamohapūrvakā mṛdumadhyādhimātrā duḥkhājñānānantaphalā iti pratipakṣabhāvanam*

animals derivatives constitutes an act of harm. A proponent of veganism would argue that any enslavement, confinement, mutilation, or manipulation of animals for their products constitutes *hiṃsā*. This relates to the acquisition both of products that require slaughter and those that do not. Moreover, as an interesting addendum, a vegan perspective could argue that the restraint of nonstealing (*asteya*) applies to the forcible extraction of milk, eggs, and honey from animals who naturally produce and “own” these substances. As stealing constitutes a form of harming according to Pātañjala Yogaśāstra 2.30, and these substances are produced for intraspecies purposes, human appropriation can be viewed as a form of stealing and thereby harming. A hypothetical opponent may contend that according to the Pātañjala Yogaśāstra, stealing is simply described as the “improper taking-for-one’s-own the things of another.” “Improper” is the key term here, and the *bhāṣya* defines “improper” as “not authorized by sacred texts.” Hence, a vegan perspective must demonstrate that the sacred texts (*śāstras*) affirm that milk, eggs, and honey “properly” belong to cows, chickens, and bees, respectively. If this cannot be proven and the extraction of these substances is not considered “improper” by the sacred texts, then there exist no conclusive instances of theft. In addition, from a historical (as opposed to purely textual) perspective, milk and ghee have been daily staples on the subcontinent for thousands of years. These products have been consumed by the general population as well as by *yogins* and are consumed even during periods of fasting. Thus, it would be difficult, though not impossible, to assert that Patañjali intended one’s diet to extend to such culturally atypical ends.

In my 2017 article that discusses the Pātañjala Yogaśāstra in greater depth, I explore what the “great vow” logically demands, specifically regarding relations with living animals and animal products.⁶⁰ However, the focus of that essay was the various implications of Patañjali’s *ahiṃsā* for the

⁶⁰ Dickstein 2017.

practitioner following the text and its Yoga dogmatically, without questioning the credibility of the bases for the text's proscriptions and prescriptions. In the following analysis, by contrast, my objective is to examine the philosophical credibility of the foundational principles that underlie these proscriptions and prescriptions.

Dharma, Pain, and Ahimsā in the Pātañjala Yogaśāstra

Framarin dedicates a chapter of their book to the Pātañjala Yogaśāstra, including deliberations concerning other ethically relevant attributes besides sentience. However, my concerns at present are *sukha* and *duḥkha*, *dharma* and *adharma*, and *karma* theory, and their implications for the direct moral standing of animals. The *bhāṣya* on *sūtra* 4.11 provides the clearest and most succinct indication of the intrinsic value of pleasure and the intrinsic disvalue of pain, with righteous action resulting in pleasure and unrighteous action resulting in pain. The *sūtra* refers to the concept of cause (*hetu*) with respect to mental impressions (*saṃskāras*).

The opening line of the *bhāṣya* reads: “[Regarding] cause [*hetu*]: From *dharma* comes pleasure [*sukha*] and from *adharma* comes pain [*duḥkha*]” (4.11).⁶¹ When one acts righteously, pleasure results for them. When one acts unrighteously, pain results for them. As discussed earlier, these results must be at least partially intrinsically good or bad if they are to be regarded as reward and punishment for righteous and unrighteous action. This is credible since pleasure nor pain can serve as purely instrumental means for the attainment or postponement of the ultimate goal of liberation.⁶² This point is

⁶¹ PYŚ 4.11 *heturdharmātsukhamadharmādduḥkhaṃ*

⁶² PYŚ 2.15 states that “For the one who has discrimination, everything is suffering. . .” (*duḥkham eva sarvam vivekinaḥ*) but while this supports the claim that *duḥkha* is intrinsically bad, it does not negate the claim that *sukha* is intrinsically good. The *sūtra* continues by stating that everything is suffering “on account of the suffering produced by the consequences [of action], by pain [itself], and by the *saṃskāras*, as well as on account of the suffering ensuing from the turmoil of the *vr̥ttis* due to the *guṇas*.” (Bryant 2009, 203). Hence everything is [ultimately conducive to] suffering, including pleasure, because of the consequences of experience, suffering included. If we return to PYŚ 4.11, the *bhāṣya*

evidenced in more detail in an earlier chapter of the Pātañjala Yogaśāstra, where Patañjali states that “[t]he stock of *karma* has the *kleśas* [impediments] as its root. It is experienced in present or future lives” (2.11).⁶³ *Karma*, caused by the five impediments (2.3), fructifies in various ways in present and future lives. *Karma* fructifies in type of birth, life span, and types of life experiences. As *sūtra* 2.13 indicates: “As long as the root [of the *kleśas*] exists, it fructifies as type of birth, span of life, and life experience [of an individual]” (2.13).⁶⁴ *Karma*, both good and bad, influences not everything but specifically the type of birth one will have, the length of their life, and the kinds of experiences they will have. But what will be the qualities of these births, life spans, and experiences? *Sūtra* 2.14 elaborates:

These [the type of birth (*jāti*), span of life (*āyus*), and life experience (*bhoga*)] bear the fruits of pleasure [*hlāda*] and pain [*paritāpa*], as a result of [the performance of] virtue [*puṇya*] and vice [*apuṇya*].⁶⁵

We may read *puṇya* and *apuṇya* as synonyms for *dharma* and *adharma*, righteous and unrighteous action. Hence the “fruits” of righteous action are good birth, long life span, and good life experiences. The fruits of unrighteous action are bad birth, limited life span, and bad life experiences. *Hlāda* (pleasure) and *paritāpa* (pain) are synonyms or variants of *sukha* and *duḥkha*, respectively. We can interpret this *sūtra* in two ways. According to one interpretation, the Pātañjala Yogaśāstra considers a

continues to state that “from pleasure there is attachment and from pain aversion; from this proceeds action; due to this exerting either through the mind or through speech or through the body one either helps (favours) or hurts (injures) another. Thence, there again results virtue and vice, pleasure and pain, attachment and aversions; thus revolves the six-spoked wheel of existence” (Rukmani 2001, vol. 2, 149). Thus, the problem with pleasure is that it typically *leads* to attachment, which then *leads* to action, itself dharmic or adharmic, thus *leading* again to pleasure and pain. This process binds one to *saṃsāra*, the escape from which (*mokṣa*) is the ultimate good due to its prevention and absence of any and all pain. Hence the experience of pleasure is not intrinsically bad but it is typically (“typically” because it is bad only insofar as it leads to attachment or even aversion) instrumentally bad because it hinders one’s achievement of *mokṣa*; Cf. the detailed *bhāṣya* on PYŚ 2.15.

⁶³ PYŚ 2.11 *kleśamūlah karmāśayo dṛṣṭādrṣṭajanmavedanīyaḥ*

⁶⁴ PYŚ 2.13 *sati mūle tadvipāko jātyayurbhogāḥ*

⁶⁵ PYŚ 2.14 *te hlādaparitāpaphalāḥ puṇyāpuṇyahetuvāt*; See PYŚ 2.13 for the three “fruits.”

good birth and a long lifespan as intrinsic goods independent of their relationships to pleasure and pain.⁶⁶ According to an alternative interpretation, a good birth and a long lifespan merely provide one with various forms of bodily and mental pleasure (and avoidances of various forms of bodily and mental pain), thereby making them both instrumentally valuable for the experience of pleasure. Whichever position we adopt, the fact remains that Patañjali links the performance of righteous action to the reward of pleasurable life experiences and the performance of unrighteous action to the punishment of painful life experiences.

The Pātañjala Yogaśāstra conceives of pain as intrinsically bad (and pleasure as intrinsically good) and accepts this fact so as to require little explanation. *Sūtra* 1. 31 describes the “distractions” (*vikṣepa*) that accompany the “disturbances” (*antarāya*), which are both impediments to yoga practice. *Duḥkha* is listed as one of these distractions and is described as “that by which living beings (*prāṇin*) are overcome and for the destruction of which they strive.”⁶⁷ Therefore, all living (sentient) beings feel pain and strive for its destruction. Sentient beings seek to prevent and eliminate pain precisely because pain is painful. This is reminiscent of Hiriyanna’s remark that “[t]he opposite of value or ‘disvalue’ may be taken as ‘that which is shunned or avoided’ (*dviṣṭa*).” Something of intrinsic disvalue is that which is “shunned or avoided” by “all living beings.” But why do all living beings seek the prevention and elimination of pain? Pain is bad because it is shunned or avoided by all living beings, and/or pain is shunned or avoided by all living beings because it is bad. No matter how the description is phrased, the enduring point is that pain is intrinsically bad. Hence, when Pātañjala Yogaśāstra 2.30 announces the list of five restraints (*yama*) led by nonharming (*ahiṃsā*), and nonharming is defined as “not injuring

⁶⁶ See Framarin 2014, 141–151.

⁶⁷ PYŚ 1.31 *yenābhīhatāḥ prāṇīnaḥ tadapadhātāya pratante tadduḥkham*

(*anabhidroha*) any living creature anywhere at any time,⁶⁸ we must assume that nonharming is foundationally grounded in the principle that pain is intrinsically disvaluable, and harming (*droha*, *himsā*) causes immense pain to sentient beings. It is for this reason that harming should be consciously avoided. The dharmic and karmic implications of this have already been explained.

A Note on the Fear of Death and Volition

Earlier I described how pain exists in both bodily and mental forms. Fear is a form of mental pain that is extended to all sentient beings according to Patañjali, including the fear of death. *Sūtra* 2.9 describes the fifth “impediment” (*kleśa*) termed *abhiniveśa* or “clinging to life.”⁶⁹ The *bhāṣya* understands clinging to life as a synonym for—or an intrinsic complement of—the fear of death (*maraṇatrāsa*). Both fear of death and clinging to life are experienced by all living beings, all of whom desire to live forever and to never die.⁷⁰ The *bhāṣya* extends these two desires even to worms, who are the most mentally deficient (*antamūḍha*) sentient beings. However, whether or not a cow, pig, chicken, or worm is capable of cognizing, and thus fearing, their own death is irrelevant to their eligibility for direct moral standing since; as sentient beings, these animals experience myriad other forms of bodily and mental pleasure and pain. A sentient being’s ability to cognize their own death may in fact influence the weight of their moral standing vis-à-vis other sentient beings in a situation of a potential conflict of interests, but that is an entirely different issue. The significant point for the moment is the facticity and complexity of mental experience attributed even to worms by Patañjali.

⁶⁸ PYŚ 2.30 *tatrāhimsā sarvathā sarvadā sarvabhūtānāmanabhidrohaḥ*

⁶⁹ PYŚ 2.9 *svarasavāhī viduṣo ’pi tathārūḍho ’abhiniveśaḥ*

⁷⁰ PYŚ 2.9 *sarvasya prāṇina iyamātmāsīrṇityā bhavati ’maraṇam mā ’nvabhūvaṃ iti*

As we approach the conclusion of this discussion regarding intrinsic value, direct moral standing, and the bodily and mental experiences of sentient beings, it may help to summon a few texts investigated earlier in chapter 1. Recall this passage from the Aitareya Āraṇyaka:

For he [human] is most endowed with intelligence, he says what he has known, he sees what he has known, he knows tomorrow, he knows the world and what is not the world. By the mortal he desires the immortal, being thus endowed. As for the others, animals, hunger and thirst comprise their power of knowledge. They say not what they have known, they see not what they have known. They have not tomorrow, they know not the world and what is not the world. They go so far, for their experiences are according to the measure of their intelligence. (Aitareya Āraṇyaka 2.3.2)

This passage does not deny positive and negative experiences to “the others [nonhuman animals],” but rather asserts the absence of knowledges that are allegedly uniquely present in human beings.

According to the text, animals “have not tomorrow, they know not the world and what is not the world.”

Animals allegedly have no ability to conceive the future and thus lack any awareness of their own eventual demise. They are unaware of the difference between the world and the nonworld and only act as dictated by “hunger and thirst.” Such claims conflict the sentiments about the cognitive complexity of animals provided in the Pātañjala Yogaśāstra, which ascribes clinging to life and fear of death to most if not all sentient beings, perhaps even to worms. Perhaps there is still room for doubt as to whether animals’ *abhiniveśa* operates at the level of “instinct” rather than “consciousness,” but given that the *bhāṣya* attributes animals’ fear of death to their experiences of death in previous lives, it would be difficult to chalk their fear of death up to “instinct.”

The Aitareya Brāhmaṇa and Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa both accept that *paśus* maintain an awareness of their fates if included in the Vedic sacrifice. In fact, due to their awareness of the future that awaits them, they resist their own inclusion in the ritual:

“Should the sacrificial post stand? Or should he throw it (into the fire)?” they say. It should stand for one desiring cattle [*paśu*]. Cattle would not serve the gods for slaying as food. *They having departed kept disputing; “Ye shall not slay us, not us.”* Then the gods

saw this post as a thunderbolt; they raised it up against them; fearing it they came back; verily even to-day they come up to it. Thereafter the cattle served the gods for slaying as food. Cattle serve for slaying as food him who knows thus and for whom knowing thus the post continues standing. (Aitareya Brāhmaṇa 2.3, emphasis added)

. . . *the [sacrificial] victim as it was borne along saw death before it, and was not willing to go to the gods*; the gods said to it, “Come; we shall make you go to the world of heaven.” It replied, “Be it so; but let one of you go before me.”⁷¹ (Aitareya Brāhmaṇa 2.6, emphasis added)

We can perceive three distinct moments in the establishment of sacrifice with respect to the victims: (1) resistance, (2) coercion, and (3) voluntary submission. The *paśus* in the first passage resist and run away from the sacrificial post, knowing that it portends death, only to be coerced back through fear of the sacrificial post-cum-thunderbolt, with their subsequent “serving” as food narrativized as a voluntary act. In the second passage, the *paśu* “saw death before it, and was not willing to go to the gods,” hence was aware of their imminent death and immediately resisted it. In this case the *paśu* is not aggressively coerced through the threat of violence, but is rather coaxed through the promise of obtaining the “world of heaven” through slaughter in the sacrifice. Brian Smith asserts that this third and final moment—voluntary submission—“propounds a truism of sacrificial cults worldwide: the victim is to submit voluntarily to his own execution for, ultimately, it is to his advantage anyway.”⁷² Notice how this echoes the previously cited Vedic and then Dharmic claim that sacrificial “killing is not [really] killing” (or perhaps “harming is not [really] harming”) since the result of the killing—a superior rebirth—sufficiently compensates for the pain and death inflicted upon the victim. In the Dharma literature, for

⁷¹ See an alternative translation for AB 2.3 in Smith 1994, 255; Cf. ŚB 3.7.3.1–5 and ŚB 4.6.9.1–5.

⁷² Smith 1994, 255. As Smith advises, see Smith and Doniger 1989; Jonathan Z. Smith 1980; For a contemporary example of the questionable consent of animal victims, see Govindrajan 2018. Govindrajan writes: “Puran, and later the priest, explained to me that by being inducted into the family *gotra*, the goat had taken a *samkalp*, a vow to complete a particular religious task. The goat was, in essence, taking a vow to sacrifice himself to a deity on behalf of the family of which he was now part” (33); It may be fruitful to compare this *samkalp* to that of the *satī*, another site of potential coercion (Weinberger-Thomas 2000).

example, the voluntary submission of the victim is apparently not necessary for justifying their slaughter. In the Mānava Dharmaśāstra, what matters is the presence of compensation, with a *paśu*'s slaughter being “to his advantage anyway” by propelling the *paśu* towards more pleasure and less pain, a better birth, and perhaps even an expedited liberation. In contrast, in the second cited narrative from the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, the animal victim voluntarily submits after being offered the promise of heaven. In the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa passage, the consent of the victim is crucial. Nevertheless, in either case—consent or compensation—the charge of violence is mitigated—and more precisely justified—by an appeal to the welfare of the victim, who either consents to killing or is subjected to it with the promise of future benefits.

What these passages from the Brāhmaṇas evidence, in addition to a consequentialist undercurrent, is the recognition of animals' capacity for volition and consent alongside an awareness of their own mortality. The animals dispute and resist their fates, even fleeing from their human aggressors. They return only by means of coercion, prodded by the stick (thunderbolt) or by the carrot (heaven), but otherwise they attempt to flee the doom of sacrifice. One could argue that these origin stories for animal sacrifice are mythological rather than philosophical or ethological, akin to how animals are presented in various human-like ways with various human-like qualities in the Pañcatantra, Purāṇas, and Jātakas. But I would argue that such an analogy is inappropriate in this context. Descriptions of animals' verbalizing “Ye shall not slay us, not us” and “Be it so; but let one of you go before me” may of course be viewed as creative embellishments, as the *paśus* certainly did not speak these words or understand the words allegedly spoken to them. However, I would argue that the authors are employing these embellishments in order to justify how animal slaughter must be justified, specifically because it was common knowledge (then and now) that animals do not wish to be harmed, fear and avoid their own deaths, and would prefer not to be sacrificed if given an alternative fate. In

sum, the mental complexity of animals—including an ability to consent—is admitted in the Vedic, Dharma, and renouncer. These texts understand the ethical relevance of various types of bodily and mental pleasure and pain, and they therefore require elaborate apologetics to deal with the ethical dilemma of harming and killing animals.

The Goals of Human Existence

Hopefully we now understand how the intrinsic disvalue of pain is critical to the concepts of *dharmā*, *karmā*, and *ahiṃsā*. However, many of the preceding sections were predicated on an acceptance of *mokṣa*, liberation, as the ultimate religious goal, and since pleasure and pain are not reliable means to the achievement of that goal, then pleasure and pain must at least be partially intrinsically valuable and disvaluable, respectively. I noted that pleasure and pain could also be viewed as means towards the achievement of other worldly ends that have intrinsic value. In this section I will focus on the *puruṣārthas*, or “goals of human existence,”⁷³ which I maintain are foundationally predicated on the intrinsic value of pleasure and the intrinsic disvalue of pain. In short, the *puruṣārthas*—even the “unworldly” goal of *mokṣa*—admit the same principles discussed earlier. The *puruṣārthas* “goals” insofar as they relate to the production and prevention of *sukha* and *duḥkha* of various sorts. I contend that any Hindu traditions that elevate any of these goals admit the intrinsic value of pleasure and the intrinsic disvalue of pain and thus also, logically, accept the moral stranding of animals.

The four *puruṣārthas* is a well-known concept in Hindu traditions. The four life goals are *dharmā*,⁷⁴ *artha* (wealth and power), *kāma* (sensual pleasure), and *mokṣa* (liberation), here listed in a

⁷³ *Puruṣa* means “human” and *artha* means “goal.” *Artha* could alternatively be translated here as “aim,” “purpose, or even “reason.”

⁷⁴ I here leave *dharmā* untranslated due to its religio-cultural specificity and its numerous meanings, both “naturalistic” and “normative” (Holdrege 1991, 12–13).

common but by no means immutable sequence.⁷⁵ *Dharma* is a complex category, yet predominantly refers to righteous action that is righteous insofar as it is consistent with, and conducive to upholding, the purported cosmic and social order of the world. *Artha* includes wealth but also includes other forms of power and status that follow from economic, political, and social accomplishment. *Kāma* is more straightforward insofar as it signifies experiences of bodily (especially sensual) and mental pleasure. *Mokṣa* is permanent liberation from the phenomenal world and its cycle of birth, death, and rebirth.

The first three of these goals surface in the ancient Vedic literature, collectively referred to as the *trivarga*, or “set of three.” *Mokṣa* is a subsequent addition to the triad, thereby expanding the *trivarga* into the *caturvarga*, or the “set of four,” a modification resulting from the rise of *śramaṇa* traditions and their developing theories of *karma*, *saṃsāra*, and the final aim of liberating oneself from the cycle of rebirth.⁷⁶

The Dharma literature juggles various perspectives on contending worldviews worldview and goals, and, more importantly, attempts a synthesizing of these perspectives under a strict Brahmanical rubric. Holdrege’s “Dharma” and Olivelle’s “Social and Literary History of Dharmaśāstra” comprehensively detail how legal texts nod to the Vedic valuation of sacrifice, the emerging ascetic valuation of liberation, and the more materialistic valuations of wealth and sensual pleasure.⁷⁷ The latter two values—*artha* and *kāma*—constitute not only royal and warrior (Kṣatriya) values but also “common,” materialistic, this-worldly values. In chapter 2 I argued that these values emerged and

⁷⁵ I will use the Sanskrit words for the remainder of the section particularly owing to the confusion of referring to “*kāma*” as “pleasure” (even as “sensual pleasure”) when that is the word I have used throughout for “*sukha*”; For more elaborate discussions on the topic of the *puruṣārthas*, see Hiriyanna 1975, 2001; Krishna 1996, 2001; Sharma 1982.

⁷⁶ Hiriyanna 1952, 67–68; Sharma 1982, 11.

⁷⁷ Holdrege 2004; Olivelle 2012.

proliferated owing, at least in part, to the influences of urbanization and Lokāyata traditions.⁷⁸ The four *puruṣārthas* are at times connected to the four social classes (*varṇas*) and four stages of life (*āśramas*). The *puruṣārthas* are linked to the *varṇas* through the claim that the life goals apply particularly to men of the three higher *varṇas*, excluding Śūdras. However, the *puruṣārthas* are also represented more broadly as realizable for all *puruṣas*, all human beings.

The connection with the *varṇas* at times includes the notion that there are *arthas* particularly suited to different classes and to different stages of life. Olivelle has argued against the suggestion of any fixed and intimate relationship between the two: “[T]here is no historical connection between the scheme of the four *puruṣārthas* and the system of the four *āśramas*. At least in the present case—and, I suspect, frequently elsewhere—the juxtaposition of one set of four with another set of four is purely an act of scholarly imagination.”⁷⁹ However, a connection between the two is described in the Dharma literature, and Charles Malamoud discusses the “revolving hierarchy” of the *trivarga* and argues that depending on one’s perspective each of these three values can be viewed in turn as the governing principle that encompasses the other values and provides a framework for understanding their interrelationship. Malamoud emphasizes that one’s perspective is determined by three types of considerations: (1) semantic considerations, (2) the particular status and stage of life of the person being considered, and (3) the type of doctrine being propounded.⁸⁰

While for the present analysis it is unnecessary to substantiate or debunk purported connections between the life goals and the stages of life and social classes, it is important to note that the *puruṣārthas*

⁷⁸ Sharma also connects the *puruṣārtha* of *kāma* to the Cārvākas, citing T.M.P. Mahadevan: “Of the four *puruṣārthas*, the Cārvākas reject *dharma* (virtue) and *mokṣa* (spiritual freedom). They regard only wealth (*artha*) and pleasure (*kāma*) as the rational ends of man. Of these two, wealth is not the ultimate end; it is good only as a means to pleasure. Pleasure, then, is the *summum bonum*” (1982, 2).

⁷⁹ Olivelle 1993, 219; For an extensive study of the *āśramas*, see Olivelle 1993.

⁸⁰ Malamoud 1981, 41–43, passim; Holdrege 1991, 15–19.

appear to dictate what the “ideal” human ought to pursue, even if in reality the question of who exactly constitutes this ideal human has been and remains contested. The present objective is simply to establish the life goals as broadly accepted “goods” or things of value—including *artha* and *kāma*—two “worldly” goals that are often viewed potential impediments to the achievements to the “spiritual” goals of *dharma* and *mokṣa*.⁸¹

In the voluminous Indian epic, the *Mahābhārata*, Bhīṣma informs the hero Yudhiṣṭhira that the *trivarga* did not exist in the Kṛta Age. During this ideal period in the history of the world, there was no strife among creatures and everyone obeyed *dharma*. However, degeneration set in, which led to the violation and decline of *dharma*. The gods became worried and sought out the world-engineer Brahmā, who responded:

“I shall think about what is best. Your fear be gone, O bulls among the Gods.” He then composed, out of his own mind, a hundred thousand lessons describing Law [*dharma*], Profit [*artha*], and Love [*kāma*].⁸²

The three original *puruṣārthas* emerged with the fall of the original Vedic *dharma*. Later in the same *adhyāya* (“lesson”), the hero Yudhiṣṭhira asks his four brothers and Vidura about the relative priorities of *dharma*, *artha*, and *kāma*: “People behave in concerted ways toward Law [*dharma*], Riches [*artha*], and Love [*kāma*]. Which of these is the most important? Which is in the middle? Which is the least important? To which of these must one commit himself in order to conquer the group of three?”⁸³ Little clarity emerges from this discussion, with Yudhiṣṭhira eventually expressing the superiority of *mokṣa*, liberation. Elsewhere in the *Mahābhārata*, and repeatedly so, *dharma* and *artha* are extolled as the superior *vargas* relative to *kāma*: “Pursue the Pleasure [*kāma*] by which neither Law [*dharma*] nor

⁸¹ Sharma 1982, 10.

⁸² Mbh 12.59.29–30, Fitzgerald 2003, 305.

⁸³ Mbh 12.161.1–4, Fitzgerald 2003, 587.

Profit [*artha*] are diminished.”⁸⁴ At other times the superiority of *dharma* is upheld, even as the precondition for *artha*: “If one wishes his Profit [*artha*] to work out fully, he should from the beginning stick to the Law [*dharma*], for Profit does not stray from the Law, as the Elixir does not stray from heaven.”⁸⁵ Yet overall the relative priorities of the *vargas* and conclusions about which one is the basis of the others is far from clear in the Mahābhārata.

The well-known Indian treatise on desire and pleasure, the Kāmasūtra (200–300 CE⁸⁶) begins with a discussion of the *trivarga* and includes the origin of these three goals similar to that stated in the Mahābhārata.⁸⁷ For the purpose of teaching the *trivarga*, the creator Brahmā’s son, Manu, composed a treatise on *dharma* (Mānava Dharmasāstra), Brhaspati composed the treatise on *artha* (Arthasāstra), and Nandin produced the original Kāmasūtra, or treatise on *kāma*. The Kāmasūtra, while devoted primarily to desire and pleasure, quickly asserts the superiority of *dharma* over *artha* and *kāma* but also states that “power, in the form of wealth, is the most important goal for a king—because it is the basis of social life—and for a courtesan.”⁸⁸ The Arthasāstra (500–125 CE), the treatise on statecraft, concurs with the superiority of *artha*, but owing to a different basis: “Success (*artha*) alone is paramount,” says Kauṭilya, ‘for Success is the foundation of Law (*dharma*) and Pleasure (*kāma*).’⁸⁹ The Mānava Dharmasāstra also recognizes the *trivarga* and describes the relative priority of the three: “He should abandon any activity relating to Wealth (*artha*) or Pleasure (*kāma*) that is in violation of Law (*dharma*), and even activities sanctioned by Law when they will result in future unhappiness or are repugnant to

⁸⁴ Mbh 5.39.48, van Buitenen 1978, 281

⁸⁵ Mbh 5.37.44, van Buitenen 1978, 276.

⁸⁶ For the KS, see Doniger 2009, xi; For the AŚ, see Olivelle 2013, 28–29; For the MDh, see Olivelle 2008, 52, 20–25.

⁸⁷ KS 1.1.5, Doniger 2009, 4.

⁸⁸ KS 1.2.15, Doniger 2009, 9

⁸⁹ AŚ 1.7.6–7, Olivelle 2013, 72.

the world.”⁹⁰ Both *artha* and *kāma* are subservient to *dharma*, which is unsurprising given the text’s focus on right conduct. A central focus in the literature on the *trivarga* and the *puruṣārthas* are discussions concerns about the relative priority and superiority of one goal over another, whether superiority owes to simply the greater value of a goal or the fact that one goal is foundation for the other two goals. While this “rocks-paper-scissors arrangement”⁹¹ is intriguing and worthy of exploration, my own interest lies not in analyzing the proposed hierarchies of the *puruṣārthas* but rather understanding the basis of any and all of them as life goals.

Sukha and Duḥkha and the Value of the Puruṣārthas

Dharma is the trickiest *puruṣārtha* to unpack in terms of intrinsic and instrumental value, and hence I will discuss it last in the context of *sukha* and *duḥkha*. Regarding the remaining three life goals, *kāma* (sensual pleasure) is a form of *sukha* itself, *artha* (wealth) is a means to pleasure and other potential ends, and *mokṣa* (liberation) results in the alleviation of present *duḥkha* and prevention of future *duḥkha*.⁹² Even if these three *puruṣārthas* are translated differently, all invariably gesture to the attainment of *sukha* or the alleviation of present *duḥkha* and/or prevention of future *duḥkha*.

While *sukha* is not included as a *puruṣārtha* itself, it appears to be the basis of at least the two *puruṣārthas* of *kāma* and *artha*. *Kāma* as a state assumes the presence of bodily and perhaps also mental *sukha*. *Kāma* is intrinsically good because it is a specific form of *sukha*, which is always intrinsically good. Roy Perrett writes the following statement with reference to the life goal of *kāma* but

⁹⁰ MDh 4.176, Olivelle 2005, 133; Interestingly, in this verse *dharma* should be discarded in situations where following *dharma* adds to future “unhappiness” (*asukha*).

⁹¹ “The three aims form a sort of rocks-paper-scissors arrangement, in which is constantly trumping the other in an eternal merry-go-round” (Doniger 2009, 205); Again see Malamoud 1981.

⁹² Whether the state of liberation is simply devoid of pain or also contains pleasure is a debatable topic, but the desirability of the permanent absence of pain is virtually a pan-Indic principle. For a discussion of the nature of *mokṣa* in this respect, see Chakrabarti’s “Is Liberation (*Mokṣa*) Pleasant?” (2001).

it is equally convincingly when applied to any experience of *sukha*: “pleasure (*kāma*) is surely an intrinsic value and the Indians do not seek to deny this.”⁹³ Leaning on Hiriyanna, Arvind Sharma describes the overall notion of intrinsic value: “The intrinsicity of the value does not derive out of its ultimacy or even its satiability, but from the fact that of it the question ‘what for?’ cannot be asked.”⁹⁴ Sharma’s references to “ultimacy” and “satiability” specifically relate to the value of sensual pleasure (*kāma*), but the widely applicable point is that one cannot reasonably ask “Why pleasure?” or “What is pleasure good for?” with respect to either *kāma* or *sukha*. The simple response, “Because pleasure is pleasurable,” suffices. Nothing needs to be offered by means of explanation. The experience of pleasure, not being reducible to some other good for which it is exclusively a means, has intrinsic value.

Artha is slightly more complicated. *Artha* in the sense of wealth clearly has instrumental value, for it is a common and reliable means to the attainment of other ends that are themselves intrinsically good. I can use my wealth to buy apples to taste, bread to smell (and taste), and skin massages to feel. I can also use my wealth to achieve mental goods such as the satisfaction of restoring my father’s old car, establishing a philanthropic foundation, or securing a sizable inheritance for my children. In each of these cases, wealth operates as an instrument to experience various types of *sukha*. We could also feasibly posit wealth as an intrinsic good, with a person experiencing forms of mental pleasure from the mere possession of wealth.⁹⁵ Reflecting on one’s one wealth—and perhaps also status, reputation, power, and so on—one experiences pleasure that is not tied to the immediate use value of that wealth. Perhaps the pleasant feeling of security that accompanies the hoarding of wealth (as well as the absence of the painful feeling of financial precarity) makes wealth intrinsically good, if only in a loose sense. If

⁹³ Perrett 2001, xiii.

⁹⁴ Sharma 1982, 9.

⁹⁵ Sharma cites Mahadeva’s example of the miser who also supposedly sees wealth as an end in itself (1982, 7).

so, one could argue that *artha* is intrinsically good in addition to its indisputable function as an instrumental good.

Artha and Kāma as Prescriptive or Descriptive Goals

I opened this discussion implying that the *puruṣārthas* are the “proper” goals of a human life, but this assumes that the life goals are prescriptive goals and not descriptive goals. However, the *puruṣārthas* may be understood not only the goals that human beings ought to pursue, but also the goals that humans “naturally” pursue. This distinction is key for discussing *artha* and *kāma* relative to *dharma* and *mokṣa*.

Daya Krishna asks:

There is, of course, the problem as to how the word *puruṣārtha* itself is to be understood. Is it to be taken, for example, in a descriptive sense, that is, as describing what men actually pursue in their life? Or, is it a prescriptive word which suggests what men ought to pursue in order to be worthy of being human?

Krishna then concludes:

Perhaps, the best way might be to construe it [the theory of the *puruṣārthas*] as being both *descriptive and prescriptive*, thus reflecting the human condition itself wherein the determination by norms and ideals, and the striving towards them is inbuilt into the condition itself.⁹⁶

Krishna accepts *dharma* and *mokṣa* as prescriptive *puruṣārthas* and *artha* and *kāma* as descriptive *puruṣārthas*. For Krishna there is a rather obvious problem in suggesting that *artha* and *kāma* are life goals that a human being ought to pursue:

However, to bring a prescriptive element into *kāma* and *artha* would not be to bring them under *dharma* or make them subservient to *mokṣa* as, say, in *tantra* as has usually been understood but rather to say that each human being has to pursue them for the utmost flowering and fulfilment of his being, and if he does not do so because of any reason, it is a deficiency that ought to be rectified as soon as possible. This, however, does not only run counter to the dominant thrust of Indian thought in the field, but also runs against the difficulty that it is not clear what sort of ends are meant by the terms *kāma* and *artha* in

⁹⁶ Krishna 2001, 14–15.

the theory of the *puruṣārthas*, which is supposed to be India's profoundest contribution to thinking about the ends of human life.⁹⁷

In the paragraph preceding the cited passage, Krishna highlights that “one naturally pursues them [*artha* and *kāma*] and needs no great exhortation to do so. And if one does not pursue them with great zeal or intensity, one is normally praised and not admonished for not pursuing them.”⁹⁸ The lack of resolve required to pursue and achieve these two goals, coupled with the social fact that their abandonment is generally commended, makes *artha* and *kāma* unconvincing as prescribed goals for one’s life. Moreover, Krishna believes that in order for *artha* and/or *kāma* to be prescriptive life goals, “each human being has to pursue them for the utmost flowering and fulfilment of his being.” Krishna thus asserts that because *artha* and *kāma* are “natural” pursuits—pursuits neither celebrated when pursued or criticized when unachieved, whose lack of pursuit and fulfillment does not detract from one’s flowering and fulfillment, and whose “ends” are unclear—then they cannot be considered as prescriptive goals according to “India's profoundest contribution to thinking about the ends of human life.” However, while this conclusion about the purely descriptive nature of *artha* and *kāma* may not be wholly inaccurate, we could reasonably challenge the assumption that prescriptive goals cannot align with “natural” tendencies and also the assumption that they must be directly conducive to an “utmost” end of one’s life. Things could be desired simply because they have intrinsic value and/or the potential to be instrumentally valuable. Hence, without arguing for or against *artha* and *kāma* as prescriptive goals, I maintain that insisting on the purely descriptive nature of these two goals obscures the fact that *artha* and *kāma* may still be regarded in Hindu traditions as intrinsically and/or instrumentally good, even if they are not the highest goal and may also at times be instrumentally bad for achieving that goal.

⁹⁷ Krishna 2001, 15.

⁹⁸ Krishna 20001, 15.

While *artha* and *kāma* may not be the goals highly valorized in certain hierarchical framings of the theory of the *puruṣārthas*, their subordination does not nullify their intrinsic or instrumental value.

Hiriyanna also appears to cast *artha* and *kāma* as merely descriptive goals, unless they are pursued “knowingly” and not “instinctively”:

These two values of *artha* and *kāma* are sought not only by man, but by all sentient creatures. The only difference is that, while man can seek them knowingly, the other creatures do so instinctively. In this distinction, we find the characteristic feature of *puruṣārthas* or ‘human values’, viz. that they represent ends that are consciously pursued by man.⁹⁹

When these ends (*artha* and *kāma*) are not pursued consciously by human beings, then “they may remain values [*arthas*] but cease to be *puruṣārthas*.” Hence *artha* and *kāma* remain “values” but cease to be “human values” when they are sought unconsciously by humans or nonhumans—that is, when they issue from “the character of an animal” and when the impelling “urge is natural, rather than spiritual.” Disregarding the question of whether or not animals—and which animals—seek *artha* and *kāma* consciously, Hiriyanna’s point is different from Krishna’s. While not stating that *artha* and *kāma* are necessarily prescriptive, Hiriyanna asserts that they only become *puruṣārthas* if and when they are consciously pursued by sentient beings, and human beings are the only sentient beings who can pursue them in such a way. Hence while animals and humans may both seek these two ends “instinctively,” the conscious pursuit of them is what transforms them into true *puruṣārthas*. Thus, Hiriyanna suggests that the fact that they are pursued knowingly by humans does not necessarily mean that they *should* be pursued by humans. They are *puruṣārthas* only because they are goals knowingly sought by humans, not because they should be sought by humans. However, the situation is not so simple.

⁹⁹ Hiriyanna 2001, 2; Hiriyanna’s phrasing is telling: “The case is quite different as regards *dharma*, for its appeal is restricted to man. While it is virtually unknown to the lower animals, man may be said to be innately aware of it” (2001, 3).

Using *kāma* as an example, Hiriyanna states: “But not everything desired is necessarily desirable” and provides the example of unhealthy foods that may furnish a person with some temporary pleasure but are ultimately detrimental to their overall health. Hiriyanna continues: “... though appearing to be a true value of life, it [*kāma*] may not really be so or even prove to be a disvalue.”¹⁰⁰ Interestingly, Hiriyanna seems to be suggesting that when *kāma* is knowingly pursued but the object of that *kāma* is “undesirable,” then *kāma* is (1) no longer a *puruṣārtha* and/or (2) proves to be disvaluable. The first claim is peculiar because Hiriyanna remarks earlier in the essay that the *puruṣārthas* are goals consciously pursued by humans but not necessarily those goals that should consciously be pursued by humans. In this manner, Hiriyanna aligns with Krishna. However, at this point Hiriyanna maintains that *kāma* ceases to be a “true value” if it involves sensual pleasure that presumably hinders other legitimate forms of sensual pleasure or the execution of *dharma* or the achievement of *mokṣa*. This perspective would imply that “true” *puruṣārthas* are all prescriptive, and *kāma* is only a *puruṣārtha* when the pleasure experienced is legitimately valuable in itself or supports one’s execution of *dharma* and/or achievement of *mokṣa*. Again, Hiriyanna admits that *kāma* is only a “true value” when it is in accordance with *dharma*. Therefore, it is not the experience of *kāma* itself that grounds its “true value” but rather the fact that the *kāma* is in alignment with *dharma*. This position appears to undergird the second claim that certain forms of *kāma* “may even prove to be a disvalue.” Presumably these forms of *kāma* are disvaluable because they prevent one’s execution of *dharma*. In this perspective, the “true value” of *kāma* is its instrumental value for the execution of *dharma*.

Even if we provisionally accept the assertion that *kāma* only amounts to a *puruṣārtha* when it supports *dharma*, we still need not accept the claim that *kāma* lacks intrinsic value altogether. Hiriyanna

¹⁰⁰ Hiriyanna 2001, 4, emphasis in original.

admits as much, referring to how *artha* is an instrumental value whose “satisfaction is *kāma*, which is an intrinsic value, since it does not admit of the question ‘why?’ We may, for example, ask why we seek food; but we cannot similarly ask for what we seek the satisfaction arising from the partaking of it.”¹⁰¹ The satisfaction experienced from eating food has intrinsic value. As such, outside of Hiriyanna’s purported “true” context of the *puruṣārthas*, *kāma* still has intrinsic value even if it is instrumentally disvaluable for other things of intrinsic value, such as overall health. The fact that eating candy or smoking cigarettes will most likely negatively impact my overall health does not necessarily make them intrinsically disvaluable or undesirable, for their enjoyment is certainly immediately pleasurable for me as the experiencer. Hence it is not contradictory to claim that the pleasure produced by eating candy or smoking cigarettes are legitimately desirable, while also recognizing that their enjoyment may have adverse consequences—and thus may be undesirable—for the experience of other things sought by the experiencer.

If we accept Hiriyanna’s idiosyncratic perspective, the sole concession is that *kāma*-as-*puruṣārtha* is only instrumentally valuable for *dharma*, yet *kāma* remains intrinsically valuable outside of the context of the *puruṣārthas*. The critical positions of both Hiriyanna and Krishna emerge from a view that *artha* and *kāma* may be counterproductive to the performance of *dharma* and/or the achievement of *mokṣa*. Yet the fact that pleasure may at times be instrumentally disvaluable does not alter the fact that it is also intrinsically good. We cannot excise the intrinsic nature of a thing simply because its pursuit may be instrumentally harmful to other more preferred religious ends. The problem is that such a view denies the intrinsic value of pleasure and intrinsic disvalue of pain, which, I contend, are constitutive aspects of *artha* and *kāma* as legitimate goals.

¹⁰¹ Hiriyanna 2001, 2.

The “Religious” Life Goals

Mokṣa is unique in the sense that its value as a *puruṣārtha* derives neither from its production of *sukha* or its own nature as pleasurable but rather in its alleviation of existing *duḥkha*, prevention of future *duḥkha*, and own nature as being devoid of *duḥkha*. *Mokṣa* as an event of liberation is instrumentally good insofar as it is the sole means to alleviate and prevent all present and future *duḥkha*. As an eternal state of isolation from phenomenal existence, *mokṣa* is intrinsically good (or at least free from any intrinsic disvalue) due to its complete and permanent freedom from pain. Thus, whether viewed as an event or a state or as both, *mokṣa*’s desirability derives from its relationship to *duḥkha*. *Mokṣa* does not generate bodily or mental *sukha* like *kāma* and *artha*, but rather permanently frees one from, and prevents rebirth in, the world of *duḥkha*, whose painful nature far exceeds the value that any bodily and mental pleasure may offer. This fact registers *mokṣa* as the ultimate goal in several Hindu (and non-Hindu) traditions.

Dharma is more complicated, for while it is often framed as a means to the three other *puruṣārthas*—*dharma* leads one to pleasure, wealth, and liberation—it is also posited as an end in itself. Distinct from the other three *puruṣārthas* that are valuable due to their relationship to *sukha* and *duḥkha*, *dharma*’s intrinsic or even instrumental value may be posited independent from appeals to *sukha* and *duḥkha*. Sharma, following Hiriyanna, highlights how the two Mīmāṃsā schools—Kumārīla Bhāṭṭa and Prabhākara—disagreed regarding *dharma* is an intrinsic good or only an instrumental good, with only the Prabhākaras maintaining the former.¹⁰² *Dharma* posited as an intrinsic good insists that *dharma* is “its own reward,” and the fact that *dharma* may also lead to pleasure or wealth or even liberation does not efface its own intrinsic value. Simply put, *dharma* is good because it is good; *dharma* is a good in itself. Yet Hiriyanna reasonably counters: “But how can anything be its own

¹⁰² Hiriyanna 2001, 5-6; Sharma 1982, 4-6.

consequence?”¹⁰³ This argument of *dharma-for-dharma*’s sake was not the view of all Mīmāṃsākas and certainly not non-Mīmāṃsākas. With the subsequent addition of *mokṣa* into the *varga/puruṣārtha* model, Sharma (citing Hiriyanna) states that through “a further revaluation of *dharma* by making it subserve what is known as *mokṣa*, *dharma* ceased to convincingly operate as an intrinsic good.”¹⁰⁴ With *mokṣa* as a new life goal—now the greatest of the four life goals—*dharma* survives in certain Hindu traditions as only instrumentally valuable for the attainment to liberation.

While the argument for *dharma* as an intrinsic good is dubious, one would be justified in criticizing the assumption—which I have adopted up to this point—that an end can only be instrumentally good if “the good” is reducible to the promotion of the intrinsic value of *sukha* and the prevention of the intrinsic disvalue of *duḥkha*. The assumption requires that we conceive Hindu ethics exclusively in hedonistic terms, or “the thesis that a being’s welfare depends only on how much happiness or suffering it experiences.”¹⁰⁵ The hedonistic view demands that the “what for?” question in the context of “a being’s welfare” can only be answered with references to positive or negative bodily or mental experiences. However, the view assumes that Hindu traditions conceive value and disvalue only in terms of *sukha* and *duḥkha*. But what about knowledge? Or friendship? Or truth? Or beauty? Are these things fully and indisputably reducible to bodily and mental forms of *sukha* and *duḥkha*?¹⁰⁶

Charles Goodman has credibly argued—albeit in the context of Theravāda Buddhist ethics—that virtues are also regarded as having intrinsic value (and vices as having intrinsic disvalue) and their

¹⁰³ Hiriyanna 2001, 6.

¹⁰⁴ Sharma 1982, 6.

¹⁰⁵ Goodman 2009, 30.

¹⁰⁶ Krishna asks a similar question: ““But whether *svarga* is treated as transcendently sensuous or nonsensuous in character, there will remain the problem of characterizing nonsensuous, non-transcendental objects of desire. How shall we characterize, for example, desire for knowledge or understanding? Shall we treat it as a *puruṣārtha* under the category of *kāmet* or not?” (2001, 12–13).

value is not necessarily reducible to pleasure and pain. This feature of early Buddhist ethics is crucial for Goodman's study as they are intent on demonstrating that Buddhist ethics constitute a very early form of consequentialist ethics, as opposed to a type of virtue ethics as suggested by scholars such as Damien Keown. If virtues cannot be reduced to pleasure and pain, then how can we understand their desirability as goals? Goodman argues that the intrinsic value of virtue can be enfolded into a "consequentialist theory that is based on a two-fold theory of well-being that assigns intrinsic values to both happiness and to virtue,"¹⁰⁷ thereby not having to surrender the argument for a consequentialist Buddhist ethics. Hence even if *dharma* (which included the notion of religious virtue or religious righteousness) is accepted as an end and not merely a means, and also as an end that cannot be reduced to pleasure and pain, then it can still be accommodated by a not-strictly-utilitarian consequentialist framework. The upshot would be that an action that maximizes *dharma* (among and alongside other possible goods) would be considered a right action even if its maximization is not necessarily a maximization of pleasure and absence of pain.

My investigation is not as ambitious as Goodman's, although I do anticipate similar conclusions regarding Hindu ethics and its orientation as predominantly consequentialist if not also utilitarian. Nevertheless, all that is required for the moment is the acknowledgment that the *puruṣārthas*' general plausibility as goals appears to hinge on the acceptance of the intrinsic value of *sukha* and intrinsic disvalue of *duḥkha*, even if this claim may be wholly, partially, or perhaps even completely inapplicable (in the Prabhākara case) to *dharma*. In the case of *dharma*, we could accept, with little consequence, that while *dharma-as-puruṣārtha* may be considered in some Hindu traditions as only instrumentally valuable, it may still cultivate other intrinsic goods, such as virtues, whose intrinsic value

¹⁰⁷ Goodman 2009, 70.

is not reducible to pleasure and pain. Despite that possibility, I maintain that my overall assessment about *sukha* and *duḥkha* as the foundation for the *puruṣārthas* is accurate. If this assessment is true, then we have reached a significant conclusion regarding a historical milieu bubbling with conflicting perspectives on metaphysics, soteriology, death, knowledge, truth, ritual, and *dharma*, among other issues. The conclusion is this: despite myriad ideological and behavioral differences between various Hindu traditions—religious and nonreligious, materialistic and nonmaterialistic—there remains a broad and fundamental acceptance, evidenced by the *puruṣārthas*, of the notion that pleasure is intrinsically good and pain is intrinsically bad and, *ceteris paribus*, the former should be promoted and the latter prevented. This generates a *prima facie* duty (“at first glance” duty) to promote *sukha* and discourage *duḥkha* even if (1) the question of whose *sukha* and *duḥkha* matters and how much they matter remains contestable, and (2) one may have an *ultima facie* duty (an “all things considered” duty) to prevent *sukha* or cause *duḥkha* under certain circumstances. Importantly, as *sukha* and *duḥkha* can only be promoted and prevented by considering the “wholes” or the sentient beings who experience pleasure and pain, then these traditions accept the moral necessity of considering the well-being of all sentient beings in themselves, including animals. This general duty to promote *sukha* and prevent *duḥkha* may thus be viewed as the basis for *ahiṃsā* and subsequently the impetus behind prohibitions against killing and consuming animals

The ethic of *ahiṃsā* does account for the circumstantial nature of its performance, admitting that harming may be the ethical course of action in situations in which there are no reasonable alternatives and nonharming would result in even worse consequences for animals and other sentient beings. The Mānava Dharmasāstra’s guidelines on meat-eating evidence how causing pain to animals is regarded as impermissible or permissible owing to the extraordinary or mundane nature of the circumstances.

Recapitulation

The three authors of the Vedas were buffoons, knaves, and demons [*niśācara*].

All the well-known formulae of the pandits, jarpharī, turpharī, etc.,

And all the obscene rites for the queen commanded in the Aśwamedha,

These were invented by buffoons, and so all the various kinds of presents to the priests,

While the eating of flesh was similarly commanded by night-prowling demons [*niśācara*].¹⁰⁸

This chapter has not discussed the views—or hypothetical views—of Lokāyata traditions (discussed in chapter 2) regarding meat-eating. However, the above verses from the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* (fourteenth century CE), attributed to Bṛhaspati, the alleged founder of the “Cārvākadarśana” (“perspective of Cārvāka”), expresses a disparaging perspective indeed. One might expect Lokāyata skeptics to denounce any insistence on vegetarianism since they rejected both *śramaṇa* dogmas and Vedic dogmas. These skeptics ridiculed the purported existence of a “Self” (*ātman*), the accumulation and shedding of *karma*, and the possibility of liberation. If the decision to refrain from eating meat derived from an interpretation of Vedic commandments or, more likely, from a desire to avoid karmic effects that obstruct one’s attainment of liberation, then by snubbing all of these ideological commitments—as Lokāyatas did—wouldn’t these skeptics be free to consume tasty animal flesh with a clear conscience? If “eat, drink, be merry” was in fact the rallying cry of the Lokāyatas, as is sometimes assumed, then why wouldn’t they indulge in well-prepared meats?

As these verses indicate, however, eating animal flesh was considered a demonic practice by some Lokāyatas. Meat-eating was performed by the same “demons” who produced the Vedas with all their nonsensical utterances and rituals. While I cannot offer a text-based Lokāyata argument against

¹⁰⁸ Cowell and Gough 1882, 10–11.

eating meat, it seems reasonable to contend that Lokāyatas maintained similar empirical (as opposed to metaphysical or “religious”) sensibilities as those present to those present in the Dharma literature and the Pātañjala Yogaśāstra. In particular, I would suggest that Lokāyatas also admitted the intrinsic value and *sukha* and the intrinsic disvalue *duḥkha* as well as the direct moral standing of animals. The condemnations against meat-eating espoused by all of these traditions—evidenced in the rise of the esteem associated with the practice of vegetarianism—owes in part to the emergence and broad acceptance of “new” philosophical principles and ethical norms.

In this chapter I have discussed how the theory of karmic rewards and punishments relies on specific views regarding intrinsic value. The acceptance of the intrinsic value of pleasure and the intrinsic value of pain is not only evident in how pleasure and pain are described in relation to reward and punishment but also in how neither are considered reliable means to the achievement of liberation. If pleasure is intrinsically valuable and pain is intrinsically disvaluable, then the two should be promoted and prevented in the case of all beings who can experience pleasure and pain. As such, all sentient beings, including animals, must be considered for their own sake when humans are deciding what to do.

Regardless of the anthropocentrism and speciesism prevalent in many textual passages of the period, *karma* theory and the related ethic of *ahiṃsā* are remarkably species-inclusive (or conversely, species-“blind”) at their core. Their orientations express a moral philosophical concern for sentience first and foremost, thereby logically generating an ethical perspective of sentientism rather than humanism. This perspective is evident in passages on harming and meat-eating in the Mānava Dharmaśāstra and the Pātañjala Yogaśāstra. Nevertheless, the extent to which animals must be considered ethically, or, to put it another way, the extent to which their direct moral standing matters for humans when the latter are deciding what to do, remains an open question. In addition, I have discussed how the theory of the *puruṣārthas* serves as a tool to encapsulate other accepted social goods and goals of the period, which

are themselves grounded in the same principles of intrinsic value and disvalue. Specifically, I have argued that there was a broad acceptance in certain post-Vedic Hindu traditions of the intrinsic value of *sukha* and the intrinsic disvalue of *duḥkha*, and *artha*, *kāma*, and *mokṣa* are only plausible as goals with the acceptance of this understanding of intrinsic value and disvalue. The goal of *dharma* presents a slightly more complicated case given the occasional claim by certain traditions that *dharma* has intrinsic value and is an end in itself. In the following chapter I will discuss the concepts of speciesism, equal consideration of interests, subalternity, and the exclusion of animals from social justice theory and discourse.

Chapter 4: Before They Were Food: Cows and Other Animal Subalterns

In chapter 1 I examined how the human-determined ontological categories “village animals” and “sacrificable animals” express truth claims about the world. These categories represent naturalized expressions of power, as Judith Butler remarks: “Having or bearing ‘truth’ and ‘reality’ is an enormously powerful prerogative within the social world, one way that power dissimulates as ontology.”¹ Through the instrument of ontology, the historical institution of domestication and the interrelated phenomenon of sacrifice are erased as human projects, as intentional practices of domination over animals. Alternatively, these practices are described as natural and neutral features of the world, of the world as it always was, is, will, and should be. In chapter 2 I suggested that in the post-Vedic period—at least as evidenced in the Dharma literature—numerous factors led to a movement away from dogmatic allegiance to the letter of Veda. The Dharma literature expresses a new valuation of rational, naturalistic, and empirical thinking, specifically regarding its understanding of residence, sacrifice, and consumption. I argued that a concrete “Hindu ethics” emerged in this period owing to the prevalence of a new ethical compass extrapolated from humans’ actual experiences of, and determinations about, the lived world, as opposed to a *dharma* exclusively determined by what the Veda stipulated as *dharma*. Chapter 3 claimed that Hindu ethics accepts the intrinsic value of *sukha* (pleasure) and the intrinsic disvalue of *duḥkha* (pain), and this founding principle establishes the direct moral standing of all sentient beings due to their capacities to experience pleasure and pain. As a result, Hindu ethics accepts that human beings must consider, or care about, all sentient beings when they are deciding what to do. Without entirely abandoning the language of “moral standing” and “moral

¹ Butler 2004, 27.

consideration,” in this chapter I pivot to the language of “care.” I use the terms “consider” and “care about” synonymously. Both terms—as I use them—accept that objects of ethical consideration or ethical “caring about” matter in themselves, for their own sake.

I begin by arguing how dominant cow protectionist ideology and rhetoric lacks a consistent or coherent concern for the lives of living animals (or humans), in particular bovines. A serious “caring about” bovines and other animals must extend well beyond the narrow and calculated foci of cow slaughter and beef consumption. First, as has been highlighted by Radhika Govindarajan, Yamini Narayanan, Krithika Srinivasan and others, there is no “beef industry” proper in India.² Indian milch cows and buffaloes are slaughtered for meat and other substances once they cease lactating since at that point they become economically unviable and thereby burdensome. In short, the Indian beef industry is a byproduct of its dairy industry. Second, any proposed corrective to “retire” aged bovines in shelters or sanctuaries—a proposed method to address the “bovine burden,”³ a feat practically impossible even if hypothetically sidestepping the requirement of slaughter—neglects the inescapable issue of exploiting cows, and other mammals, *at all* for lactation and other purposes. Animals remain confined, manipulated, and bred for milk, even if slaughter is not their fate.⁴ I argue that “protecting” cows only from slaughter disregards their “biobovinity” and continues to instrumentalize them as economic and religious assets without acknowledging their moral claims as cows. I note how Mohandas Gandhi, who was concerned with the plights of both marginalized animals as humans due to conflicting “food choices” on the subcontinent, nevertheless propounded a religious ethic of nonharming that minimized

² Govindarajan 2018, 65; Kasturirangan et al. 2014; Narayanan 2018a; Narayanan 2018b; Narayanan 2022 (forthcoming).

³ Robbins 1999, 407.

⁴ Narayanan 2022 (forthcoming); In the context of dairy farming in the United States, see Gillespie 2018, 51–74, *passim*.

the moral weight of animals' interests. I proceed to argue, by means of a question, that the legitimate moral claims of animals are also consistently disregarded across the political spectrum, in India and abroad, from Left to Right. With a South Asian studies flavor, I ask: Why aren't nonhuman animals considered marginalized and oppressed populations, or more technically and geographically relevant, subaltern subjects?⁵ Through a historical overview and theoretical analysis of Subaltern Studies and subalternity, I contend that the label "subaltern" accurately fits bovines, all domesticated animal populations, and indeed all animals given the devastating impact of human culture on global ecosystems. To conclude, I invoke the work of Will Kymlicka, Sue Donaldson, and Claire Jean Kim to confront why and how animals have been denied a seat at the table of social justice, and to explore how "multi-optic" vision integrates animals into a nonspeciesist and noncompetitive program of social justice advocacy.

⁵ At the time of completing this dissertation, a new Subaltern Studies text titled *Subaltern Studies 2.0: Being against the Capitalocene* (Banerjee and Wouters 2022), slated for publication in September 2022, came to my attention. This volume is somewhat, and uncharacteristically so, nonhuman inclusive. The analysis and critique presented in this chapter do not take this unpublished work into account. However, a few statements from the text (I was able to obtain a pre-publication draft), illustrate how this turn in Subaltern Studies is beginning to take oppressed nonhumans into account: "If we define colonialism as a form of systematic exploitation that invades and subordinates another political system and legitimates this conquest through ideology, then the first colonialism that human beings perpetrated was undoubtedly over the animal world." (83); "Domestication certainly involved both coercion and allure. Subsequently, similar techniques of domestication were applied on humans themselves." (83); "Today, however, owing to industrial capitalism, human colonialism of the animal world has become genocidal—it is no more a traditional monarchy. In the modern dairy industry, male cattle are often slaughtered at a young age rather than emasculated, with females allowed to survive for their milk-producing capacity. Seven billion male chicks are slaughtered annually because they do not lay eggs. Female ducks are often killed because they are less useful than males in foie gras production. No decolonization shall be complete until this genocidal imperialism, this highest stage of capitalism, is overthrown" (86).

Meat-Eating and Cow Protectionism

To begin, I emphasize that my claims regarding the connection between Hindu ethics and cow protectionism does not imply that a “true” or “real” Hindu tradition does seriously care about animals. I am not suggesting that what is necessary or advisable or contemporary Hindus—much less India as a whole—is a “return” to some purported Hindu roots. There are several problems with assuming this type of messaging in my analysis. First, religious traditions are embodied social realities whose practices define them much more than philosophy or the logical conclusions of their ethical perspectives. Hindu traditions are a product of what Hindus think and say and do, rather than what logical analysis—even of canonical texts—assumes that they should think and say and do. Second, the violent activities currently undertaken by some Hindus against other humans in the name cow protectionism or “India” would remain condemnable even if executed for “real” Hindu reasons. Third, as described in chapters 2 and 3, the foundations of Hindu ethics that I highlight are not exclusive to Hindu traditions. Charles Goodman has emphasized the consequentialist and utilitarian bent of Buddhist ethics, and I would surmise that a similar ethical leaning applies to Jain traditions, as well as to what we know about Lokāyata traditions.⁶ Thus, the species-inclusive implications of the moral relevance of pleasure and pain extend far beyond Hindu ethics and Hindu traditions. Fourth, one of my objectives in underscoring the foundations of Hindu (and non-Hindu) ethics in South Asia, and specifically their “caring about” animals, is that concerns for care also pervade the worldviews of groups targeted by cow-protectionist violence. In

⁶ While this is not the venue for an extended discussion of Jain ethical traditions as utilitarian, provided the analyses of *ahimsā* and *karma* in the previous chapter, as well as the corresponding *prima facie* duty to promote pleasure and prevent pain, then it is not difficult to perceive the Jain maxim “*ahimsā paramo dharmah*” (“nonharming is the highest duty”) as advertising the utilitarian basis of Jain ethics. Regarding the pervasiveness of *ahimsā* in Jain traditions, Chapple summarizes: “This [*ahimsā*] is the prime practice in Jainism of overcoming past actions, and all dimensions of the religion and the philosophy, including its logic, reflect a concern for *ahimsā*” (1993, 10).

short—and this is a virtual truism—in South Asia caring about animals is not an exclusively Hindu affair.

In May 2017, Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi issued a nationwide ban on the selling and purchasing of cattle at animal markets. The Prevention of Cruelty of Animals (Regulation of Livestock Markets) Rules, 2017,⁷ defines “cattle” as “a bovine animal including bulls, cows, buffalos, steers, heifers and calves and includes camels.”⁸ The “Rules” specifically target animal markets and not the much smaller-scale and private sale of bovines and thus represent a de facto assault on all large-scale slaughterhouses that cannot realistically operate outside of market channels.⁹

Anti-slaughter and cow-protection politics are nothing new in India, having a long and storied history prior to Indian independence, emerging with Swami Dayanand Saraswati and the Arya Samaj Hindu reform movement of the 1880s.¹⁰ The religious roots of the “holy cow” motif stretch back millennia to before the Common Era for, as described in chapter 2, the canonical R̥gveda extols the cow for its key role in humans’ nutritional, agricultural, and ritual sustenance. Although cow flesh was consumed rather regularly throughout the Vedic period, gradually food proscriptions sought to exempt cows—or at least some cows—from killing and consumption. The reasons for this increasing sensitivity to cow slaughter and consumption are various and contested, but what remains undeniable is the use value cows have had, and continue to have, for the inhabitants of South Asia. Apart from cow flesh, cow milk, ghee, urine, and dung are staples in the everyday lives of millions of humans of the region.

⁷ Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change Notification, “Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Regulation of Livestock Markets) Rules, 2017.

⁸ On camels, see Narayanan 2021b.

⁹ *The Wire*, “Centre Imposes Nationwide Restriction,” May 26, 2017.

¹⁰ De 2018, 123–168; Also see Adcock 2010; Copland 2005; Copland 2017; Tejani 2019, 145–153; On the Arya Samaj, see Jones 1976.

The lactation value of cows cannot be underestimated, not only in a nutritional sense but also in an affective register. Cows in India are widely perceived to “give” milk to humans akin to the way in which they provide milk to their own bovine offspring. By “nursing” humans with their milk, similar to how human parents nurse their own infants, cows occupy the symbol as “mother” to those who use and rely upon her for their physical and ritual well-being. Govindrajan notes, following Peter van der Veer: “The belief that the cow is a protective mother figure, for instance, is stimulated by the consumption and use of cow’s milk. The materiality of the substance thus plays a crucial role in its symbolic enactment.”¹¹ The slaughter of cows thus becomes tantamount to a symbolic and material assault on those who use, value, and religiously revere cows—namely Hindus.¹²

Christophe Jaffrelot summarizes the enduring centrality of cow protection for Hindu ethno-nationalism: “Protection of cows, that most sacred animal in Hinduism, is an article of faith for defenders of Hindutva—and even for their nineteenth-century predecessors.”¹³ As early as 1875, in *Light of Truth (Satyārtha Prakasha)*, Dayanand Saraswati tied the notion of an ancient, pure, peaceful Āryan (read: Hindu) India to cow protection, and blamed cow slaughter and beef consumption on the British foreigners who invaded and colonized India:

When the Aryas were in power, these most useful animals were never allowed to be killed. Consequently, man and other living beings lived in great peace and happiness. Because, milk and butter, and such animals as bullocks being plentiful, there was abundance of food and drink (as milk, etc.). But since the meat-eating, and wine-drinking foreigners—the slayers of kind and other animals—have come into this country and

¹¹ Govindrajan 2018, 71.

¹² On visual cultural impacts, see Pinney 1997. Pinney remarks: “The movement’s geographic reach was combined with its insertion of Cow Protection into the spaces of the everyday: ‘no space, no occasion, it seemed, was inappropriate to organize and direct attention toward the issue of the cow’. This colonisation of quotidian space replicated the way the body of the cow itself was invested with the divine; in numerous lithographs the cow becomes a proto-nation, a space which embodies a Hindu cosmology” (841). See images on 842, 845.

¹³ Jaffrelot 2019, 160.

become the ruling power, the troubles and sufferings of the Aryas have ever been on the increase.¹⁴

The sufferings of the Āryans/Hindus are intimately connected to the meat-eating of foreigners, who through their rapacious meat consumption have depleted the once rich “supply” of cows (and other animals) as well as extracted derivatives such as milk and butter. Meat-eating (and wine-drinking) is a foreign custom—nationally and religiously, for Muslims and Christians are also purportedly to blame—that has only increased the “troubles and sufferings of the Aryas.”¹⁵

In contrast to the perspective of Dayand Saraswati, others credited the capacity of the British to invade and rule India to the latter’s meat-eating, alleging that eating meat developed masculine strength lacking in an allegedly meat-free India.¹⁶ Reflecting on the prevalence and persuasiveness of such thinking about meat-eating, Gandhi recalled:

A doggerel of the Gujarati poet Narmad was in vogue amongst us schoolboys, as follows:

Behold the mighty Englishman

He rules the Indian small,

Because being a meat-eater

¹⁴ Saraswati 1906; See also Alvi 2021, 77; Note the similarity in 1920s cow protection rhetoric: “Krishna Mishra, general secretary of Hindu Sabha and of Garhwal Radha-Krishna Gaushala, remarked: Today our mother cow is being slain by the infidels [British colonizers, Indian Muslims, and low social castes] in innumerable numbers. . . .Our helplessness, mental weakness and physical impotency is explicitly telling us that among the many reasons for such changes [today], the main one is the decline of cow wealth” (Alvi 2021, 83).

¹⁵ Tejani 2019, 145; “Since Hindus formed a majority of the Indian population, the view that meat-eaters (Muslims, Dalits, and other lower-caste groups) were accomplices of the colonizers—sharing their food habits and serving their militaries—dominated Indian social identity and linked food to Indian nationalism” (Alvi 2021, 77).

¹⁶ An interesting effect of this perspective: “[T]he British theory of vegetarian inferiority influenced colonial military ideology and recruitment strategies in India, making Punjabis, Pathans, and Dalits (who consumed meat on a daily basis) desirable for military purposes, shaping regimental recruitment strategies in the subcontinent” (Alvi 2021, 76).

He is five cubits tall.

All this had its due effect on me. I *was beaten*. It began to grow on me that meat-eating was good, that it would make me strong and daring, and that, if the whole country took to meat-eating, the English could be overcome.¹⁷

According to this perspective, India's colonization was facilitated by the superior diet and resultant physical strength of the British, who, if emulated gastronomically, could be overthrown by those living under their subjugation. The British feat of colonization was relatedly attributed to the physical, sexual, religious degeneration—if not also longstanding feebleness—of Hindu men on the subcontinent.¹⁸ Still, many Hindus, especially high caste Hindus, staunchly distanced themselves from British culture owing to the latter's "habit of eating pork and beef," a practice that called their "purity" into question by associating them with the "lowest social strata"¹⁹ of the Hindu world.

Other Hindu spokespersons sought a type of synthesis, or at least a selective appropriation, of British culture specifically for the objective of achieving national independence. Swami Vivekananda was perhaps the most notorious exponent of this position, encouraging "beef, biceps, and Bhagavad Gita":

We speak of many things parrot-like, but never do them; speaking and not doing has become a habit with us. What is the cause of that? Physical weakness. This sort of weak brain is not able to do anything; we must strengthen it. First of all, our young men must be strong. Religion will come afterwards. Be strong, my young friends; that is my advice to you. You will be nearer to Heaven through football than through the study of the Gita. These are bold words; but I have to say them, for I love you. I know where the shoe pinches. I have gained a little experience. You will understand the Gita better with your biceps, your muscles, a little stronger. You will understand the mighty genius and the mighty strength of Krishna better with a little of strong blood in you. You will understand the Upanishads better and the glory of the Atman when your body stands firm upon your feet, and you feel yourselves as men. Thus we have to apply these to our needs.²⁰

¹⁷ Gandhi 2018, 78–79.

¹⁸ Alter 2011; Alvi 2021; Roy 2002; Sinha 1995; Nandy 2009, 4–11.

¹⁹ Alvi 2021, 77.

²⁰ Vivekananda 1958, "Vedanta in Its Application to Indian Life," 242.

Vivekananda links physical fitness to effective activity, mental acuity, spiritual achievement, and masculinity. Conversely, physical weakness engenders passivity, mental lethargy, spiritual stuntedness, and femininity. On meat-eating specifically, Vivekananda writes:

The taking of life is undoubtedly sinful, but so long as vegetable food is not made suitable to the human system, through progress in chemistry, there is no other alternative but meat-eating. So long as man shall have to live a Râjasika (active) life under circumstance like the present, there is no other way except through meat-eating...[Let] those belonging to the upper ten, who do not earn their livelihood by manual labor, not take meat; but the forcing of vegetarianism, upon those who have to earn their bread by labouring day and night, is one of the causes of the loss of our national freedom.²¹

Even while promoting meat-eating for the sake of “national freedom,” and clearly assuming that meat consumption leads to greater physical strength and vitality than vegetarian foods, Vivekananda nevertheless acknowledges the circumstantial nature of this nonvegetarian prescription. Vivekananda confesses that vegetarianism is preferable (1) if it were “suitable to the human system”; (2) if it could adequately satisfy the “Râjasika (active)” lifestyles required in the present; and (3) if individuals didn’t have to “earn their livelihood by manual labor,” labor presumably requiring more than plant-based foods alone. Here Vivekananda could be interpreted as making an argument for sufficient caloric intake (and other nutrients) among those who lack—owing to societal inequalities—the time or means to subsist on a regimen of available plant foods. Manual laborers require a heartier physical constitution and diet than elites, with the latter demanding significantly less nutrition and energy given their lifestyles of relative ease and leisure.²² In a sense, Vivekananda appears to be arguing for circumstantial and

²¹ Vivekananda 1944, “Letter to Srimati Sarala Ghosai, B.A., Editor, *Bhârati*,” 372.

²² According to Roberts, Dalit women in the Chennai slums hold a similar understanding of why working men need alcohol and meat: “Though women too accepted that, for the laboring man, drink was a necessity, they would not readily admit this to their pastors or to the social workers who sometimes came to the slum to conduct surveys and dispense advice about “upliftment,” as noted in chapter 1. It was in fact only excessive (and therefore costly) drinking, or drinking that led to unruly and erratic behavior, that slum women opposed. Otherwise drink was accepted as being necessary to endure

class-specific meat-eating only—à la the Mānava Dharmasāstra—through an appeal to “times of adversity” or conditional necessity. Vegetarianism may be the ideal diet in ideal times, but the real world in the present demands a different approach. While perhaps satisfying Dharmasāstric standards for “adversity” in advance of committing otherwise ethically questionable acts, Vivekananda’s “medical” prescription for meat consumption relies upon common, and dubious, assumptions regarding “chemistry,” biology, physiology, and the health benefits of animal flesh and other animal-derived substances.

However, this perspective about the net benefits and virtues of meat (specifically beef)-eating has waned in India in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries as cow protectionism and vegetarianism have been elevated as critical components of a “true” Hindu tradition to be fiercely defended. Hindu ethnonationalism has resulted in the already ongoing marginalization and violent targeting of those humans who engage in cow slaughter, partake in postmortem activities such as skinning and transporting bovine carcasses, or simply consume beef. The argument could also be made, convincingly so, that cow protectionism and vegetarianism have been endorsed, at least in part, to further marginalize and violate non-Hindus—Muslims, Dalits, and Christians—who traditionally, yet also owing to caste oppression, undertake these activities. The scale, frequency, and severity of brutality inflicted upon these communities have a long, dark, and lethal history that endures very much in the present.²³ Jaffrelot summarizes the current reported statistics: “IndiaSpend120 estimates that in 2017 there were thirty-four bovine-related incidents, compared to twenty-five in 2016, thirteen in 2015, three in 2014, one in 2013, and one in 2012. Twenty-four out of the twenty-eight yearly victims during the period ending in June

a life of *utalulaippu* (bodily toil)—as necessary, indeed, as meat. Only those who ‘do not work’ could survive on the vegetarian diet of high-caste Hinduism” (2016, 86).

²³ Alvi 2021; Ghassem-Fachandi 2012; Human Rights Watch 2017; Jaffrelot 2019, 206–210, 211–247; Narayanan 2019; Pandey 1983; Parikh and Miller 2019; Sur 2020; Tejani 2019.

2017 were Muslim.”²⁴ A quick Google search for “cow protection vigilante” or “cow vigilantism” or “cow protection violence” generates story after story, case after case, of violence perpetrated against humans in the name of cows, nonviolence, and “India.” The violence is so rampant and routine that “revulsion fatigue” has set in, resulting in reduced attention from the media, who now find it far less titillating and marketable than they once had.²⁵

The Absence of Cows in Cow Protectionism and Anti-Cow Protectionism

Hindu nationalism and vigilante cow protectionism perpetuate discriminatory ideologies and violent behaviors, yet what is often omitted in discussions of Hindu nationalism vis-à-vis Muslim, Dalit, and Christian oppression and resistance, as well in general discussions of religious tolerance/intolerance and food politics, are the positions, perspectives, and “rights” of bovines themselves.²⁶ It is challenging to locate media or academic articles, essays, blogs, edited volumes, or even monographs that consider the issue from the “cow’s hooves” and raise ethical questions about the practice of exploiting cows for any purposes whatsoever. Most sources detail how animal exploitation is performed by specific humans and how cows and their related substances are instrumentalized by human groups for various religious and political ends. Yet we have compelling reasons to foreground the plights of cows and other exploited animals themselves, especially as worldwide they are collectively subjected to the greatest degree—

²⁴ Jaffrelot 2019, 207–208.

²⁵ Halarnkar 2017.

²⁶ Srinivasan summarizes: “This is evident in critical social science scholarship on animal agriculture in India: only 15 sources in the social science dataset of 126 works dealt seriously (beyond passing references) with animal wellbeing (of which 5 are by the same author) and 3 with ecological issues. A review of coverage in the year 2019 across three major Indian news outlets (The Hindu, Indian Express, and The Wire) presents a similar picture: out of 285 articles, only 14 were on ecological issues, 8 on animal welfare, and 9 on both social and more-than-human concerns.” (2021, 15); See also Arcari et al. 2021; For examples of standard secondary literature on the topic, see Chigateri 2008; Robbins 1999; Sathyamala 2018; Staples 2018; Staples 2020.

qualitatively and quantitatively—of physical and psychological violence.²⁷ The living conditions of most farmed animals are unimaginably harsh and grim. Approximately seventy billion land animals are killed each year for food, with the great majority of them chickens. Aquatic animals are killed by the trillions annually, with exact data difficult to ascertain as aquatic animals are counted in live weight and not by “head.” Claire Jean Kim, in the context of the debate over indigenous whaling off the coast of British Columbia, poses the question plainly: “What about the perspective(s) of the grays themselves?”²⁸ In our context, we may ask the same question: What about the perspective(s) of the bovines themselves?

Cow protectionism and vegetarianism are often framed—appropriately so—as issues of religious intolerance and culturally-informed “food choices.” Yet there remains the unproblematized assumption within these discourses that cows or any other “food animals” are always already food. There is scant discussion of the “foodification” of the animals occupying the center of the conflict, with the situation commonly portrayed as clash between human groups and their dissimilar ideas, traditions, and practices. This omission or trivialization of the plight of the animals themselves recalls a topic discussed in chapter, wherein the category “village animals” was identified as an ahistorical ontological category that curiously omits how animals originally became associated with the village—namely through human intervention. The Vedic worldview posits that the village and its animals have always existed, and thus “village animals” have always been—generally speaking—usable, sacrificable, and consumable by humans. In a similar vein, cow protectionist/anti-cow protectionist and vegetarian/anti-vegetarian politics consistently assume cows to be ontological “food animals,” beings who are undoubtedly justifiably exploitable for milk, ghee, urine, and dung, if not also for their flesh. Categories

²⁷ Sanders 2020; Singer 2009.

²⁸ Kim 205, 244.

such as “food animal,” “dairy animal,” “pack animal,” and even “companion animal” rhetorically ontologize the instrumentalization of animals, thereby anthropocentering the discursive function for human benefit and, oftentimes, conscience.²⁹ These categories cleverly efface the historical processes of the human manipulation of animals, even in their fundamental dynamics. For example, animals are described as “farm animals” rather than “farmed animals” and “pack animals” rather than “packed animals.” Yet how are animals conceivably “farm animals” prior to being farmed? How do the “farm” and the “pasture” become mere facts of natural geography rather than engineered sites of the human manipulation of animals? Similarly, how are animals conceivably “pack animals” before being “packed” by humans? These processes of “farming” and “packing” inherently require the infliction of harm and frequently death upon animals, and thus these phenomena ought to be open to ethical scrutiny. Therefore, I ask a general question, yet one very pertinent to this inquiry: How do we think about and discuss “food animals” *before they were food*?

“Cruel” and “Unnecessary” Harm

The omission of animals from socio-political debates relates to the pervasiveness of *speciesism*, or the concept of discrimination against others based on species membership alone.³⁰ I will discuss this idea later, but for the moment remember the conclusions reached at the end of chapter 3: Hindu traditions widely accept that pleasure is intrinsically good and pain is intrinsically bad, and, *ceteris paribus*, the former should be promoted and the latter prevented. As a result, Hindu ethics carries a *prima facie* mandate to promote pleasure and discourage suffering, even if (1) the question of whose pleasure and pain matters and how much they matter remains debatable, and (2) one may have an *ultima facie* duty

²⁹ On the history of anthropocentrism in Western philosophy, see Steiner 2010; On “anthropocentrism” as a topic in animal studies, see Probyn-Rapsey 2018.

³⁰ Horta 2010; Ryder 1970; Singer 2009; Wolfe 2003.

to prevent pleasure or cause pain to individuals under certain circumstances. As evidenced in the Vedic, Dharma, and Yoga literature, animals are universally acknowledged as sentient beings who experience both bodily and mental forms of pleasure and pain. Accordingly, since there is a *prima facie* duty to promote pleasure and discourage pain, animals must be considered—for their own sake, physically and psychologically—by humans when deciding what to do. Or, in the terminology adopted in this chapter, humans must “care about” animals (for the latter’s own sake) when deciding what to do. I remind us of these conclusions because while cow protectionism and vegetarianism are often touted by Hindu nationalists as values—if not pillars—of Hindu traditions to be fiercely “defended” on the basis of the harms inflicted upon animals, specifically bovines, how much are these animals actually cared about through cow protectionism and lacto-vegetarianism?

An article in *The Wire* published shortly after the passage of the aforementioned “Rules” raises a few questions regarding the distinctions and gaps contained therein:

Though the rules have been issued in the name of animal welfare, what is not clear is why cruelty to animals has been equated with slaughter but only for “cattle” sold in animal markets and not for cattle that are slaughtered as part of a private sale wherever such sale is legal, or for other animals that are killed for food such as goats, sheep, pigs and chickens.³¹

This passage broadly gestures to the rather arbitrary, logically speaking, value judgements made in the “Rules” regarding “cruelty,” venues of harm, and morally relevant species. In this passage, the focus is on slaughter and how the “Rules” regard slaughter as “cruel” only when the animal victim is (1) a bovine (or camel), and (2) sold and purchased at an animal market. The authors of *The Wire* article rightfully wonder why selling an animal for slaughter—which incontrovertibly causes pain and

³¹ *The Wire*, “Centre Imposes Nationwide Restriction,” May 26, 2017.

suffering in addition to terminating the animal's life³²—is only a “welfare” or “cruelty” concern when satisfying these two conditions. By what criterion is the sale of bovines (and camels) for slaughter classified as “cruel” but not the sale and subsequent killing of other mammals and nonmammals slain for food and other purposes?³³ And why is a bovine's sale for slaughter considered “cruel” only when performed at an official animal market and not through private transactions between individuals? From the perspective of the animal victims, their inevitable killing is no less painful or terminal when executed after their purchase from a private seller than from an animal market.

The “Rules” additionally provide examples of nonlethal practices that are “cruel and harmful,” as well as practices that cause nonlethal “unnecessary pain or suffering.” Slaughter is most likely a very serious harm and cause of pain, yet pro-dairy/anti-beef advocates—besides obscuring the direct link between the dairy and beef industries—frequently assert “clean hands” due to the alleged absence of slaughter in dairy production. Yet there remains plenty of suffering present in the various manipulations of animals that do not lead to their immediate or inevitable death. The “Rules” acknowledge this, and the prohibited nonlethal practices that it enumerates cover not only “cattle” but also other animals such as “poultry,” here denoting “live birds of domestic fowls, turkeys, geese, ducks, and guinea fowls.”

The “Rules” prohibit the following due to being “cruel and harmful”:

animal identification methods such as hot branding and cold branding; (b) shearing and painting of horns, bishoping in horses and ear cutting in buffaloes; (c) casting animals on hard ground without adequate bedding (during farriery); (d) use of any chemicals or colors on body parts of animals; (e) sealing teats of the udder using any material such as adhesive tapes to prevent the calf from suckling; (f) any person forcefully drenching any

³² The philosophical question of whether death is bad—or a harm (*hiṃsā*)—for the one who dies is complicated one, even if death is commonly accepted as perhaps the most serious harm one can inflict on another sentient being. For a short summary and discussion of the Epicurean/Lucretian argument that death is not bad for the one who dies, see Benatar 2017, 92–127 and Benatar 2008, 213–218.

³³ This is a moral philosophical question, not a historical, psychological, or cultural one. While the contents of the book offer psychological and cultural explanations, the title of Melanie Joy's popular 2011 text illustrates the situation quite simply—*Why We Love Dogs, Eat Pigs, and Wear Cows?*

fluids or liquids or using steroids or diuretics or anti-biotics, other than by a veterinarian for the purpose of treatment; (g) forcing animals to perform any unnatural acts, such as dancing; (h) putting any ornaments or decorative materials on animals; (i) use of any type of muzzle to prevent animals from suckling or eating food; (j) injecting Oxytocin into milch animals; (k) castration of animals by quacks or traditional healers; (l) nose-cutting or ear slitting or cutting by knife or hot iron marking for identification purposes other than by veterinarian; (m) castration of equines by quacks; (n) tying rope around penis; (o) tying nose bags as feeding troughs.

In addition to these practices, the “protection of animals from injury or unnecessary suffering” requires that:

(1) No person shall cause or permit any injury or unnecessary pain or suffering to an animal in an animal market.

(2) It shall be the duty of the person in charge of an animal in an animal market to ensure that the animal is not, or is not likely to be, caused injury or unnecessary pain or suffering by reason of——

(a) the animal being exposed to the weather; (b) inadequate ventilation being available for the animal; (c) the animal being hit or prodded by any instrument or other thing; nose ropes or nose pegs or bits are pulled, yanked and jerked, causing immeasurable pain and suffering or any other cause; (d) being tethered on a short rope for an unreasonable period; (e) thirst or starvation.

Following these two lists of prohibited practices are additional lists concerning “handling and trying animals,” “control of animals,” “penning and caging of animals,” and other circumstances requiring the identification of those activities that are “necessary,” “unnecessary,” “excessive,” or “sufficient.” However, one wonders how these isolated practices categorically differ from the myriad routine manipulations of bovines and other animals in dairy or other food industries. “Painting horns” and “casting animals on hard ground without adequate bedding” are listed among the cruel and harmful practices, but the “Rules” do not classify as “cruel and harmful” a range of other practices including confining animals for their entire lives, routinely handling their bodies and reproductive organs, limiting their social interactions, and, most centrally, dictating relationships between parents and their young. There is a prohibition against “forcing animals to perform any unnatural acts, such as dancing,” yet

should we not include among these “unnatural acts” (if “natural” and unnatural” have any stable meanings at all³⁴) the forced milking of animals by humans, that is, the entire process of dairying, from start to finish?³⁵ There are prohibitions against “unnecessary pain and suffering” caused by weather, ventilation, prodding, tethering, thirst, and starvation, yet these determinations are all dictated by what humans deem “reasonable” and “unreasonable” at a particular moment in history.³⁶ What precisely is a “reasonable” period of tethering, and who decides? Is tethering reasonable when it is not in the interest of the animals (or human) themselves?

Harm, Duty, and Consent

Kathryn Gillespie emphasizes with respect to the dairy industry in the United States, but with applicability worldwide: “The connection between dairy and slaughter is one that is under-recognized in public consciousness, just as the many facets of dairy production—artificial insemination, semen production, feeding, tail docking, castration, dehorning, birthing, milking, transport, sale, slaughter, and

³⁴ For an extended treatment of the term “natural,” see Levinovitz 2020.

³⁵ As a representative for New Harvest, a research institute dedicated to cellular agriculture states on the controversy around what is “natural”: “Based on whatever you say natural is, I would say that farming thousands of animals in the same room is not natural and feeding them things they wouldn’t normally eat is not natural, and giving them tons of antibiotics is not natural. And by contrast, a cell dividing, I think, is very natural. And if we can make cells divide in a different environment, then it’s up for you to decide if it’s natural or not. But under the microscope I don’t think that the meat itself is any different from what it would be from an animal, and it’s just about whether cells divide within an animal versus outside” (Jönsson et al. 2018, 12).

³⁶ “As Francione (2000) and others have argued, the resulting standards of cruelty are theoretically arbitrary. There are no credible grounds for saying that confining hens for the entire duration of their life in a 500-cm² metal cage is cruel, but that confining hens for their entire life in a 750-cm² cage is not cruel. . . . To claim that the smaller cage is cruel and the larger cage is not cruel is a statement about what forms of treatment of hens the majority in a society at a given time finds discomfiting or distressing. There is no content to the idea of cruelty in this context apart from this appeal to majority sentiment” (Kymlicka and Donaldson 2014, 127); For a similar case with defining the word “torture,” see Wadiwel 2016, 214.

rendering—are largely absent from the popular image of dairy production.”³⁷ Moreover, the link between dairy and slaughter is not only under-recognized but also outright denied, not only in the United States but also in India. As Narayanan remarks:

When asked to explain empirically [in India] how temples regard the role of milk in cow slaughter, the religious and political protectionists alike refused to consider milk as having any role at all. A *gaushala* manager of a Krishna temple in Visakhapatnam insisted that milking and slaughter were entirely separate aspects of dairying in India. He claimed that via seminars and public cultural/educational programmes, the temple’s protectionist role was purely to advocate against cow slaughter—and nothing else. His response was archetypal in demonstrating the confusion arising out of the single-issue campaigning against cow slaughter, whereby *only slaughter* is regarded as violent.³⁸

The dairy-to-slaughter pipeline aside, Gillespie underscores that there is no way to escape the fact that even the “best [nonlethal] practices” within the dairy industry, and “the way things operate on their *best days*,”³⁹ involve numerous forms of incontrovertible violence against animals. Some, if not all, of these practices are routine in Indian dairy production as well as in animal industries worldwide. No matter the conditions of the farm or factory, there remains the fundamental fact—inherent in the very concept of “dairy”—that cows, against their will, must be confined and consistently manipulated for the extraction of their milk. The common framing adopted by dairy farmers worldwide, and perhaps no more transparent than in classical Hindu description of human-cow relations, is that milk is “given” by cows to humans, with the latter “receiving” rather than taking the milk from the former. There is an embedded assumption of consent on the part of bovines and other mammals, a voluntary contracting into their own confinement and manipulation by humans. It is almost as if cows *want* to be milked out of a parental desire to assist the health of their human “children.” Naisargi Dave’s retired military

³⁷ Gillespie 2018, 17–18; See also Cusack 2013; Murray 2018; Narayanan 2018a; Narayanan 2018b; Narayanan 2022 (forthcoming); Staples 2019; Srinivasan 2021, 9–10; von Keyserlingk and Weary 2007.

³⁸ Narayanan 2018b, 13, emphasis in original.

³⁹ Gillespie 2018, 21.

informant exclaims: “We have an obligation to accept her gift.”⁴⁰ If alleged consent is not reason enough, or persuasive enough as a reason, then an appeal to an eternal “bovine *dharma*” is not infrequently encountered. A *gaushala* (“cow sanctuary”) manager of a Krishna temple explains: “Every living entity has got its particular duty to do. Duty in the sense, it is to co-operate with the will of God. Like that cow has got its own set of particular duties. One of its important duties is, the cow is giving us milk.”⁴¹ Narayanan responds: “Milk, however, is never voluntarily ‘given’ by cows to humans; it is consistently ‘taken’ by humans by removing the calf from his or her mother.”⁴² Even without the necessity of the removal of the calf from their parent for sufficient milk extraction, milk is nevertheless “taken” from cows by humans for the latter’s benefit.

Discussions about manipulation, consent, and violence regarding human-animal relations certainly require sensitivity to complexity and nuance. However, is it important to recall how the *Mānava Dharmaśāstra* 5.46 states: “When someone has no desire to tie up, kill, or cause pain to living creatures and seeks the welfare of all beings, he obtains endless bliss.” According to this classical Hindu text, even the mere restraining of animals, in addition to other forms of causing pain, is undesirable and discouraged, and is only permissible in extraordinary circumstances. The question of “ordinary” and

⁴⁰ Dave 2019a, 222.

⁴¹ Narayanan 2018b, 13; On “bovine *dharma*,” see Jain 2014; Dave’s informant’s response is emblematic of this perspective: “Why would you not drink your mother’s milk? That is why she is here! What else is she going to do?” (2019, 223); Also see Dave 2017, 39; Also consider the notion of “patriotic motherhood,” whereby human mother and cows have a national (read: Hindu) duty to “serve” the nation with milk and other substances and actions. Narayanan writes: “The instrumentalisation of motherhood follows a Hindu patriarchal line of reasoning whereby female Hindu bodies—women or bovine—are burdened as mothers to preserve an upper-caste Hindu cultural and religious purity (Dhruvrajan 1990). In his analysis of Hindu motherhood as ‘patriotic motherhood’, Thomas Blom Hansen (1994: 87) argues that Hindu patriarchy regards ‘women and first and foremost mothers’, and to serve the children and her husband is the ‘supreme duty of any woman.’ Motherhood is indeed ‘a patriotic duty’ as it is the women who uphold Hindu values and culture, and are passing them on to the children” (2019a).

⁴² Narayanan 2018a.

“extraordinary” circumstances courses through nearly every discussion—political or otherwise, in India and elsewhere—regarding animal use and killing. Recently the topic has been raised on the Tibetan plateau, and while the context is teeming with political motivations and implications, there remains an *ahiṃsā*-inspired movement away from consuming yak flesh due to urbanization and the increased availability of alternatives to animal products.⁴³ In addition, Mi’kmaq scholar Margaret Robinson discusses how “indigenous veganism” is not merely a convenient response to evolving material conditions for indigenous communities; rather the recent turn to veganism within these communities flows from traditional stories that describe how animals’ prior consent to their own slaughter and consumption by humans is contingent upon conditions of absolute necessity—that is, the presence of extraordinary situations for humans.⁴⁴ One avoids animal-derived foods not merely because there are plant-based alternatives available or because one chooses to be “kind” to animals, but because the consent (perhaps even the speculative consent) of the animals is required in advance of their killing and consumption. Outside of conditions of absolute necessity, it becomes dubious to assume that animals would consent to their slaughter as they had in extraordinary times past. Therefore, under quite different contemporary conditions, the previous “contract” is inapplicable, if not altogether void. What happens when the extraordinary times of “adversity”—in the language of the *Mānava Dharmaśāstra*—become unextraordinary? Gandhi remarks: “I consider that God has not created lower forms of animal life for man to use them as he will. . . . I have no right to destroy animal life if I can subsist healthily on vegetable life.”⁴⁵ Christian scholar Matthew Scully succinctly states: “When substitute products are found, with each creature in turn, responsible dominion calls for a reprieve. The warrant expires. The

⁴³ Barstow 2017; Gayley 2017; Standaert 2021; Wei 2016.

⁴⁴ Robinson 2013; See Dunn 2019 for another case of “indigenous veganism.”

⁴⁵ Gandhi 1958–1994, “Letter to Asaf Ali,” January 25, 1920.

divine mandate is used up. What were once ‘necessary evils’ become just evils.’⁴⁶ I include a reference to the Mānava Dharmaśāstra in this context not to imply that its ethical orientation and mandates ought to be heeded by other religious traditions, but rather to suggest that there is a widely shared sensitivity to necessity and nonnecessity when it comes to using, killing, and consuming animals for food and other purposes.

Within the context of Hindu South Asia, by citing the Mānava Dharmaśāstra I also do not mean to imply that Hindu cow protectionists should return to the letter of the Dharmaśāstra. As is quite well known, the Mānava Dharmaśāstra is deeply discriminatory, particularly as it “extols and reinforces every form of birth-based inequality—social, economic and gender.”⁴⁷ Moreover, the Mānava Dharmaśāstra has itself been instrumentalized by Hindu cow-protectionist vigilantes to justify the promotion and pursuit of a Hindu ethnostate, which at times has involved the infliction of violence against marginalized populations—in particular Muslims and Dalits—working in the cow trade.⁴⁸ My own objective—as described in chapter 3—is to emphasize that there is a nondogmatic, rational, ethical sensibility in the Dharma literature concerning *himṣā* (harming) and *ahimṣā* (nonharming), a sensibility shared by numerous religious and nonreligious traditions of the period. It is certainly true that in the Dharma literature this sensibility emerged alongside the promotion of deeply discriminatory dogmatic ideas, prescriptions, and proscriptions, specifically regarding class, caste, gender, and ability. My point is not that this ethical sensibility regarding harm in Mānava Dharmaśāstra ought to be heeded simply

⁴⁶ Scully 2003, 43.

⁴⁷ Ali 2020; For a discussion of how “birth-based” inequalities implicate animals in various ways, see Narayana 2018b on “casteised speciesism.”

⁴⁸ Gandhi regularly commented on the hypocrisy of Hindu condemnation of—and violence towards—Muslims who slaughter and consume cows: “In my opinion the cry against the Mahomedan slaughter on the Bakr Id is unbecoming so long as we Hindus remain dumb about the daily slaughter going on in the public abattoirs. We strain at a gnat and swallow a camel” (1958–1984, ‘Letter to Asaf Ali,’ January 25, 1920).

because it is expressed in the Mānava Dharmaśāstra, but rather because Hindu ethics (and other non-Hindu South Asian ethics) both logically and expressly includes caring about animals that extends far beyond prohibitions against slaughter. We may therefore justifiably ask: Is a genuine concern for cows in themselves—meaning a concern for the cruelty, pain, and suffering they may experience—what motivates staunch cow protectionism? Is cow protectionism about protecting cows, or is it about other things entirely?

Biocommodity, Biobovinity, Biodivinity

In an earlier chapter I cited Emma Tomalin’s notions of biodiversity and biodivinity, underscoring how the divinization or sacralization of an animal, tree, river, or any other nonhuman entity frequently omits serious consideration and protection of the entity in and of itself. In the case of biodiversity, entities—even sentient entities—are viewed as instruments for human welfare, whereby the “health of the ecosystem” more precisely refers to the health of the ecosystem insofar as it impacts and serves human interests. In the case of biodivinity, entities are regarded both as sacred physical sites to be vigilantly defended and as transcendent entities liberated from their own materiality. For example, from certain Indian perspectives, on the one hand the Ganges River should be protected and purified because it is a sacred site; on the other hand, the river need not be physically decontaminated because its essential nature is transmaterial and so too are its healing powers. Kristofer Rhude notes: “Confident in the healing powers of the divine river, they believe nothing could compromise the purity of their goddess. For them, Mother Ganges exists to wash away the impurities and pollution of earth and thus can cleanse herself.”⁴⁹ Similarly, cows should, on the one hand, be protected from physical slaughter by humans but, on the other hand, their divine status and “service” to humans renders them unaffected (that is,

⁴⁹ Rhude 2018; Scrutton 2007; Srivastava 2019.

unharméd) by the physical manipulation by humans for milk and other commodities. In short, animals survive either as resources or divinities (or both), but hardly ever as animals with interests consistent with their psycho-physical constitutions. In other words, the bioanimality of animals is denied. In the context of cow protectionism and opposition to cow protectionism, a cow's *biobovinity* is denied.⁵⁰

The term “biodiversity” is notably problematic with respect to animals, not merely owing to the aforementioned anthropocentrism embedded in allegedly biocentric terminology, but also because the protection of animals under the banner of biodiversity typically applies only to “wild” animals and not to the trillions of animals—land and aquatic—confined in human food, laboratory, and recreation systems. “Biodiversity” does not apply to farmed animals.⁵¹ Thus is more accurate to conceive bovines in India as either “biocommodities,” biodivinities, or both. Cow protectionism is predicated on both of these categorical assignments, for “protection” is regularly justified on the basis of both economic impact and religious import. Invoking Donald Sharpe, Narayanan writes that “bovines’ very godliness derives from their overwhelming productive importance as a resource for human society,”⁵² a theme we encountered previously in chapter 2. As biocommodities, cows are indispensable economic assets, and thus, like plant commodities such as wheat or rice (in terms of indispensability), they are regarded as sacred biocommodities. But as biocommodities, bovines’ actual material, biological nature—namely,

⁵⁰ I recognize that “biobovinity” as a concept is problematic in the same way as “humanity.” These concepts rely upon the existence of the classes “bovine” and “human” respectively, which both assume “normal” class characteristics, thereby assuming the existence of a “normal bovine” or “normal human.” Such thinking runs the risk of ableism towards both bovines and humans.

⁵¹ “[U]nlike the ‘wild’ mammals, birds, insects, organisms and other nonhumans that are commonly the subjects of research that explores, and laments, the increasingly de-natured state of urban environments, these more utilitarian animals are not subjected to the same ethical considerations of care” (Arcari et al. 2021, 10).

⁵² Narayanan 2018b, 9.

their sentience and concomitant interests—is generally elided and they remain commodities like any other.

Given the assumed necessity of cow-derived substances for the optimization of human health, or even the basic survival of humans—a claim propounded in early Indian medical traditions and enduring in the present—the commodification of bovines is defended even outside of religious appeals. Yet the apologetics of biodivinity that I highlight cooperate to justify the commodification of cows’ actual material lives. Cows are held uniquely to warrant protection because they are more than “mere” cows, more than “just” animals. Cows are surrogate mothers for humans, eternally “providing” milk and other substances for human welfare, existing and operating as divine protectors of all Hindus and all of India. Gau Mata (“Mother Cow”) is more than a cow; she is a mother, a near goddess, India’s mother and goddess. One of Narayanan’s informants, the cow protection manager of the Simhachalam temple in Visakhapatnam, expressed the following concerning biodivinity (and simultaneously expressed the nativism and ethnonationalism operating in cow politics): “‘*Desi* (indigenous) cow is not a cow, she is not an animal, she is a goddess, she is a mother. Only [the] jersey cow is an animal. . . .’⁵³ With this exclamation of biodivinity, the informant disregards the lived reality of cows, casting them as objects, even if divine objects. If cows are conceived as subjects at all, they are imagined as transcendent divine subjects. Actual bovine subjectivity—more precisely, the subjectivity unique to each individual bovine subject—is neglected in favor of the imposition of a generalized “divine mother cow” motif that effaces both biology and individuality.⁵⁴ This elevation of cows above all materiality renders their material

⁵³ Narayanan 2018b, 13.

⁵⁴ Narayanan 2018b, 11; It is important to resist viewing “cows” or “bovines” as a mass of interchangeable, nearly identical items. As Gillespie states regarding their own study: “My aim here is to make legible the stories of the manifold ‘one’—the singular animals in the dairy industry. . . .” (2018, 17).

exploitation as human resources morally moot, for divine beings cannot “actually” be affected by manipulations to their material frames.

As already described, biodivinity traffics in the language of consent and duty. It is helpful to recall Brian Smith’s claim that the consent of animals to their own killing in the context of sacrifice is a “truism of sacrificial cults worldwide.” Even in a nonsacrificial context, the purported voluntary and eternal submission of cows to human manipulation—even if not to their own slaughter for beef—is invoked to justify their mass scale commodification. From this perspective, not only are biodivine bovines not harmed by material practices but they allegedly always consent to the exploitation of their material frames, or at least understand such submission as their dharmic responsibility.⁵⁵ Yet since the divinity of cows and their alleged consent or duty to submit to dairying do not include a submission to slaughter, then slaughter—and only slaughter—emerges the politicized single-issue “scapegoat” of the cow-protectionist Hindu Right.

While running as a candidate for Prime Minister in 2014, Modi warned of Congress’s facilitation of a “pink revolution” in India:

This country wants a Green Revolution. But now those at the Centre want a “Pink Revolution”. Do you know what it means? When animals are slaughtered, the colour of their flesh is pink. Animals are being slaughtered and being taken to Bangladesh. The government in Delhi is giving subsidies to those who are carrying out this slaughter.⁵⁶

The “pink revolution” refers to the manners in which the government in 2014 sanctioned the ongoing slaughter of Indian cows. The single-issue campaigning against the slaughter of cows for beef again occludes the inherent problems involved in milk production and, historically and geographically

⁵⁵ A duty that ostensibly confers a corresponding right to humans to take that milk. Narayanan critically highlights: “The use of calf lactation for these purposes is both a human right and a bovine duty” (2018a).

⁵⁶Balchand 2016; Bhatt 2014; Jaffrelot 2019, 80, 160.

speaking, India's own dairy revolution. Operation Flood, initiated in 1970, developed into the largest dairy development program in the world, so vast and impactful that it later become known as the "white revolution."⁵⁷ While Operation Flood had immense positive socio-economic consequences, especially for small farmers in India, the project had significant effects on bovine futures. Between 1972 and 2019, the total bovine population in India rose from approximately 236 million to 302 million (28 percent increase), with notably a much larger increase in buffaloes than cows. During this period the Indian cow population rose from 178 million to 192 million (8 percent increase), while buffaloes increased from 54 million to 109 million (102 percent increase),⁵⁸ with buffaloes producing more milk than cows by 1995.⁵⁹ Per capita milk availability grew from 178 gm/day to 394 gm/day between 1991 and 2019. In 2019 India was not only the world leader in milk production, but it surpassed the second greatest produce—the United States—by approximately 90 million tons per year. Moreover, artificial insemination has increased over the years, having clear ramifications for the ever-increasing number of bovines in the dairy industry.

Curiously, in an otherwise comprehensive study of Operation Flood, Bruce Scholten dedicates very few words to concerns about the well-being of cows themselves. Scholten remarks, following a few sentences about Indian resistance to cow slaughter and artificial insemination: "Today the dairy industry in rich countries is beset by a backlash of concern for animal welfare among consumers, and many universities libraries list Peter Singer's 1975 book *Animal Liberation*. One wonders if the 'live and let live' inter-species ethos prevalent in India could eventually prevail in rich countries."⁶⁰ Provided the absolute necessity of slaughter in nearly all large-scale dairy industries, especially in a nation like India

⁵⁷ Scholten 2010.

⁵⁸ National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) 2017.

⁵⁹ Scholten 2010, 10–11.

⁶⁰ Scholten 2010, 15.

with a standing herd of over 300 million bovines, coupled with the numerous nonlethal harms intrinsic to dairying, we may reasonably question Scholten's claim that India boasts anything resembling a "live and let live' inter-species ethos."⁶¹ Not only does India's "white revolution" resembles a greater threat to bovine welfare than its "pink revolution" but the phenomenon of mass cow slaughter is itself a consequence of that "white revolution."

Gandhi and Biobovinity

In this section I do not comprehensively evaluate Gandhian interpretations of *ahimsā* and how Gandhi's understanding of the ethic extends to animals.⁶² Rather, I highlight Gandhi's recognition that the welfare of biological bovines—their biobovinity—is discounted by Hindus and non-Hindus alike in the context of cow slaughter and cow protection. Even while recognizing both the economic sacrality of cow-as-commodity and the religious sacrality of cow-as-giver/mother, Gandhi also emphasized the absolute necessity of considering the experiences and interests of cows as "profane" flesh-and-blood sentient beings:

Those who want to stop others from sinning must be free from sin themselves. Hindu society has been inflicting terrible cruelty on the cow and her progeny. The present condition of our cows is a direct proof of this. My heart bleeds when I see thousands of bullocks with no blood and flesh on them, their bones plainly visible beneath their skin, ill-nourished and made to carry excessive burdens, while the driver twists their tails and goads them on. I shudder when I see all this and ask myself how we can say anything to our Muslim friends so long as we do not refrain from such terrible violence. We are so intensely selfish that we feel no shame in milking the cow the last drop. If you go to dairies in Calcutta, you will find that the calves there are forced to go without the mother's milk and that all the milk is extracted with the help of a process known as blowing. The proprietors and managers of these dairies are none other than Hindus and most of those who consume the milk are also Hindus. So long as such dairies flourish and we consume the milk supplied by them, what right have we to argue with the Muslim brethren? It should be borne in mind, besides, that there are slaughter-houses in all the big cities of India. Thousands of cows and bullocks are slaughtered in these. It is mostly

⁶¹ See the NDDDB 2017 stats on livestock statistics beyond bovines.

⁶² See Burgat 2004 for the most pointed discussion of Gandhi on animal domestication and exploitation.

from them that beef is supplied to the British. Hindu society keeps silent about this slaughter, thinking that it is helpless in this matter.⁶³

How can we say anything whatever to others so long as we have not rid ourselves of sin? Do we not kill cows with our own hands? How do we treat the progeny of the cow? What crushing burdens do we not lay on bullock! To say nothing of bullocks, do we give enough feed to the cow? How much milk do we leave for the calf? And who sells the cow [to the butcher]? What can we say of the Hindus who do this for the sake of a few rupees? What do we do about it?⁶⁴

There are several distinguishable themes in these excerpts: Hindus' roles in enacting violence against cows; the misguided blame placed on Muslim butchers and meat eaters; Hindus' support of British beef consumption; "blowing" practices; the various harms inflicted on bovines used for dairy and labor. Our focus here is the final theme. Florence Burgat summarizes this basic concern of Gandhi: "On the whole, the livestock is badly treated."⁶⁵ For Gandhi, the treatment of cows-as-cows is critical in discussions of dairy production, drafting and other labor practices, and cow protection. In the language of chapter 3, cows (and all animals) have direct moral standing; therefore, humans must care about cows and not merely according to practices that have become societally acceptable.⁶⁶

Gandhi states, with specific reference to dairy "blowing" practices and those that deprive calves of access to their parent's udders: "So long as such dairies flourish and we consume the milk supplied by them, what right have we to argue with the Muslim brethren?" Gandhi implies that Hindus have no right to claim a moral high ground relative to their Muslim neighbors if they consume the milk produced by dairies involved in ostensibly "unnecessary" and "cruel" practices. I have reproduced

⁶³ Gandhi 1958–1994, "Speech on Cow-protection, Bettiah" around October 9, 1917, vol. 16, 54 (cited in Burgat 2004, 235).

⁶⁴ Gandhi 1958–1994, "To the People of Bihar," August 22, 1921, vol. 22, 12 (cited in Burgat 2004, 236).

⁶⁵ Burgat 2004, 236.

⁶⁶ On the problem of how what is considered socially "acceptable" is typically dictated by dominant majorities, see Kymlicka and Donaldson 2014, 124 and Srinivasan 2021, 15–16.

Burgat’s phrasing that “the livestock is badly treated” since it underscores how, even for Gandhi, the phenomenon of animal “farming” (“livestock”) is apparently not a problem in itself. For Gandhi, it is not necessarily unjust *that* humans treat animals as exploitable commodities but rather only *how* some humans treat animals as exploitable commodities that makes the practice unjust. In other words, there are ethical ways for animals to be manipulated for human benefit, and in particular practices “necessary” for dairy milk production and extraction. Anything beyond “necessary” manipulations of “livestock” amounts to “unnecessary pain and suffering,” with select practices being isolated as “cruel” due to particular aspects of their performance. However, what is unclear is why a recognition of the direct moral standing of animals, in this case cows, and the resultant caring about cows’ biobovinity do not call into question all of the routine nonconsensual manipulations involved in dairy production. Again, one is left to wonder why the practices isolated by Gandhi, or those selected in Modi’s “Rules,” qualify as “unnecessary” and “cruel” but not those regularly performed in dairying “on their best days.”

The assumption of the ultimate reducibility of animal’s life value to their use value—even by Gandhi—is visible in Gandhi’s consideration of buffaloes vis-à-vis cows.⁶⁷ While the protection and survival of cows are crucial for Gandhi, the case is dissimilar for buffaloes. Gandhi writes in *Young India*:

My article was not intended to throw the buffalo by the board, it suggested the stopping of buffalo-breeding in her own interest. In other words, it meant freedom of the buffalo from its bondage. We have domesticated the cow for our own uses and therefore it has become part of our religion to protect her. . . . But our duty is clear. We must not increase our responsibility by breeding the buffalo where we can do with the cow alone. We must therefore content ourselves with the use of cow’s milk only. . . . [W]hy should man, having regard to his own needs, make himself responsible for breeding the buffalo? And having regard to the need of the buffalo, why should we needlessly keep her in bondage? Or to put it more simply, why should we press her in our service?⁶⁸

⁶⁷ See Narayanan 2018b on casteism and buffaloes.

⁶⁸ Gandhi 1935, from May 19th, 1927, 184–185.

This essay from 1927 illustrates Gandhi's recognition of the bovine—and different bovines—in all three valences: biocommodity, biobovinity, and biodivinity. With respect to buffaloes, Gandhi admits their material “bondage” as domesticated animals under human hands (biobovinity), a human “duty” to consider and address their suffering as sentient beings (biobovinity), buffaloes' lack of sacrality ([non]biodivinity) for “our religion” as Hindus,⁶⁹ buffaloes non-necessity as a human resource (biocommodity), and, following from these points, an alleged logical responsibility to cease breeding buffaloes and “press[ing] her in our service.” Regardless of the purported differences between buffaloes and cows with respect to milk yield, quality, and nutritional potency; temperament; topographic and geographic adaptability; water consumption; and any other factors (all which are raised by the questioner to whom Gandhi is responding), there remains the fundamental question of why Gandhi's ideas regarding buffaloes ought not also apply to nonbuffalo bovines, or any other “servicing” animals for that matter?⁷⁰ Why should we “needlessly” keep any animals in “bondage”? Why should we press any animals into our service? Given Gandhi's own prescription, as part of our ethical imperative, why should we continue to breed cows if it is decided that it is unethical to continue breeding buffaloes?

Gandhi's isolation of the cow from the buffalo does not seem to hinge on a difference in biobovinity or the suggestion that physical and psychological bondage is somehow less harmful to cows than buffaloes, thereby rendering the use and breeding of the former less ethically problematic than that of the latter. Nor is there a strong appeal to biodivinity for justification, as Gandhi cites the historical fact

⁶⁹ There is also an obscuration of both the economic “sacrality” of buffaloes as well as their cultural sacrality among non-upper caste Hindus. See Ilaiah 2004, 141–142; Krishna 2010; Narayanan 2018b, 5.

⁷⁰ Ilaiah asks a similar question, albeit from a different angle: “Why does the buffalo not find a similar place to the cow with regard to individual and collective protection in the agenda of a national ruling party? . . . Between the cow and the buffalo which eat the same grass, why has the buffalo spiritually and politically becomes untouchable, why has only the cow become so preferred?” (2004, 242).

that “[w]e have domesticated the cow for our own uses” as the basis for the adoption of cow protectionism as part of Hindu religious ideology and practice. Hence the cow’s multifaceted and unquestioned indispensability as a biocommodity (“we can do with the cow alone”) is the reason why cows must remain in “bondage” and “service,” whereas buffaloes should cease being manipulated and bred for human purposes because their commodification is comparatively unnecessary. The accuracy of these two factors: (1) the ability of cows and cow-derived products to satisfy all of the use values afforded by buffalo farming, and (2) the necessity (or even near-necessity) of cows and cow-derived substances for human sustenance, on both the individual physiological level and the collective national level, could feasibly ground the assertion that the continued use and breeding of cows are “necessary evils,” even satisfying the classical Hindu legal exception for “times of adversity.” If dairy and other cow-derived products were absolutely necessary for human sustenance, then it may be preferable to keep cows in bondage. But are cows and cow-derived substances “necessary” for human sustenance? If so, how necessary?⁷¹ And if not necessary, then should not cow use and breeding be ceased as well?

I do not invoke Gandhi as an authority to make an argument for the immediate cessation of all cow use and farming, and any such argument would clearly have to acknowledge the actual political, economic, agricultural, and nutritional realities of humans living in India and elsewhere. The issue is extremely consequential for those already disadvantaged humans in India who rely on cow-derived products for their survival with no viable alternatives readily available. Rather, I include Gandhi’s

⁷¹ Interesting also is the question of the “suitability” of cow milk if and when alternatives exist. As a representative for Oatly, a contemporary Sweden-based oat milk company, remarks: “. . . if you look upon the composition of our mothers’ milk, it’s completely different when it comes to the proportions of macronutrients. I think that says a lot. It’s maybe three times more protein in cow’s milk. So, cow’s milk is definitely made for calves, whatever the milk industry says. It’s a fact, right? When we observed this we thought, okay we should not copy cow’s milk. It’s not suitable. That was not an ideal copy” (Jönsson et al. 2018, 11).

perspective to underscore the fact the recognition of cows' biobovinity and direct moral standing pose challenges to conceptualizing them as biocommodities, especially when their coerced "service" as a nutritional or economic necessity for human beings is questionable. Hence the Hindu Right's concern about the mass slaughter and subsequent consumption of cows—both made possible and pragmatically encouraged by the dairy industry for the sake of efficiency—omits the more basic question whether cows should be used for any human purposes.

Speciesism and the Orphans of the Left

The preceding sections have aimed to stress how the animality of animals is overlooked in economic, political, and religious discourses. Relatedly, political theorists Will Kymlicka and Sue Donaldson have described human animal advocates as "'orphans of the Left,' championing a progressive cause that is shunned by other progressive movements."⁷² I follow Steven Lukes's characterization of the Left as "a tradition and a project . . . which puts in question sacred principles of social order, contests unjustifiable but remediable inequalities of status, rights, powers and condition and seeks to eliminate them through political action."⁷³ While Kymlicka and Donaldson specifically confront Leftist resistance to animal rights and animal liberation politics, they also underscore the common basis of all political actors for shunning not only the interests and pleas of human animal advocates but also the interests and pleas of animals themselves:

Put another way, people on the Left are not immune to either "species-narcissism" or self-interest—these are both "human, all too human" reasons for ignoring the claims of animals that cut across the ideological spectrum.⁷⁴

⁷² Kymlicka and Donaldson 2014, 116.

⁷³ Lukes, 2003, 611.

⁷⁴ Kymlicka and Donaldson 2014, 118; Also see Sanbonmatsu on animal rights and the Left (2011, 13–20).

Kymlicka and Donaldson refer to the speciesism that—whether religious or nonreligious in origin—spans the “ideological spectrum,” even within those religious traditions (for example, Indigenous American or South Asian traditions) or nonreligious philosophical traditions (for example, any “anti-cruelty” ethos) that claim to take animals’ well-being seriously.

The term “speciesism” was coined by Richard Ryder in 1970, and since then Oscar Horta has arguably undertaken the most rigorous and comprehensive attempts to achieve a sound and functional definition. Horta and Albersmeier’s definition of “speciesism”—which I accept as well—is as follows (in both “simple” and “elaborated” forms):

*Speciesism*_(simple) is the unjustified comparatively worse consideration or treatment of those who do not belong to a certain species.

*Speciesism*_(elaborated) is the unjustified comparatively worse consideration or treatment of those who are not classified as belonging to a certain species (or group of species) whose members are favored, or who are classified as belonging to a certain species (or group of species) whose members are disregarded.⁷⁵

In the more conventional vocabulary of social justice, speciesism is *discrimination against* those who do not belong to a certain species.⁷⁶ The most prevalent—and fundamental—form of speciesism is anthropocentric speciesism, which is discrimination against those do not belong to the human species.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Horta and Albersmeier 2020, 3–4; See Horta 2010 for an almost identical definition as “*Speciesism*₁” (2). Also see Horta and Albersmeier 2020 and Horta 2010 for discussion and analyses of alternative definitions; Some scholars have argued that speciesism, akin to racism and sexism, refers to an institution or structure, and is not merely a personal psycho-ideological disposition (Dickstein et al. 2020, 7; Wolfe 2003, 7). Yet the word has been employed in both valences, and here I refer predominantly to the personal psycho-ideological disposition.

⁷⁶ The “elaborated” definition reads “those who are not classified as belonging to a certain species,” but as the idea of “species” is a human conceptual construction, the “belonging to a certain species” is functionally equivalent to “being classified as belonging to a certain species.” On the concept of “species,” see Wilkins 2009.

⁷⁷ Horta and Albersmeier add more precision: “In fact, anthropocentric speciesism would be discrimination against those who do not belong to a certain genus, *Homo*, and not just to a certain species, *Homo sapiens*, so in addition to being a form of speciesism it would also be an instance of what we can call *genusism*, discrimination against those who do not belong to a certain genus” (2020, 8).

I find that anthropocentric speciesism is the most fundamental form of speciesism as the innumerable ways in which human beings discriminate *among* nonhuman species flows from how humans have already situated themselves as uniquely distinct from all other species, and thus their own perceived distinctiveness dictates how they differentially interact with other species. Most human-animal relations are exploitative in one way or another, yet the nature of these various forms of exploitations is vastly different. For example, most Americans do not care—or even think—about the fact that approximately 300 chickens are slaughtered every second in their domestic food systems. However, the killing—not to mention the consumption—of even a single dog tends to elicit widespread sympathy, if not also outrage, depending on the context of the killing. What may initially be regarded here as a case of cognitive dissonance—holding inconsistent thoughts or attitudes in the context of two seemingly similar instances (the killing of chickens and the killing of dogs)—avoids such a charge if there is an implicit assumption that a dog’s life inherently carries greater moral value than a chicken’s life (if the latter’s life has any value at all). However, because anthropocentric speciesism frequently assumes that human beings can do with other animals virtually whatever they like — on the basis of the latter not being human — the differential moral valuations of nonhuman species issue from the types of anthropocentric relationships humans have initiated between themselves and other species. In the United States, dogs are “pets” or “companion animals” while chickens are “food animals,” and these two designations indicate both specific forms of exploitation and concomitant weights of moral consideration. Historical and cultural practices together with speciesist ideological frameworks generate these weights of moral consideration. “But we don’t eat pets” is not an atypical response from those asked why they consume bovine or porcine flesh but would never consider—or tolerate—the consumption of canine or feline

flesh.⁷⁸ It is clearly speciesist to unreflectively support (and not care about) the mass killing of chickens, on the one hand while, on the other hand, decrying (and thus caring about) the killing of a single dog—a judgment that is based entirely on the species assignments of chickens and dogs. And it is anthropocentric speciesism that gives rise to speciesism among different nonhuman species—in this case, chickens and dogs.

When evaluating humans’ relationships with animals and admitting that historical and cultural patterns do not justify, on their own merit, present and especially future prescriptions and proscriptions, it is crucial to recognize how much speciesism contributes to rationalizing these relations. Singer has famously argued that a commitment to equality (such as espoused by the Left) requires that we apply a principle of equal consideration of interests to all individuals affected by a certain course of behavior. To deny a being moral consideration based on species classification alone is not unlike denying a being moral consideration based on sex, gender, class, or race classification alone:

The essence of the principle of equal consideration of interests is that we give equal weight in our moral deliberations to the like interests of all those affected by our actions. This means that if only X and Y would be affected by a possible act, and if X stands to lose more than Y stands to gain, it is better not to do the act. We cannot, if we accept the principle of equal consideration of interests, say that doing the act is better, despite the facts described, because we are more concerned about Y than we are about X. What the principle really amounts to is: an interest is an interest, whoever’s interest it may be.⁷⁹

The “who” of “whoever’s interest it may be” extends to all beings who have interests, namely all sentient beings, including animals. The denial of “who-ness” to animals has been the result of anthropocentric speciesism and is not a conclusion based on the biology or capacities or behaviors of nonhuman sentient beings. Animals’ “what-ness” is simply prefigured as an assumed consequence of

⁷⁸ For example, see the debate around the Yulin Lychee and Dog Meat festival (Howard 2016); Also see the satirical Twitter account, “Elwood Organic Dog Meat” (<https://twitter.com/ElwoodDogMeat>) and website (<https://www.elwooddogmeat.com>).

⁷⁹ Singer 2011, 20–24.

their not being human. Yet as sentient beings with interests, animals too are “who”s and their interests must also be taken into proper account. Animals must be cared about and treated accordingly—or cared *for*—in the relevant situations and in the appropriate ways.⁸⁰

Animal Subalterns

Up to this point I have discussed perspectives on ethics and human-animal relations derivative from either traditional Hindu ethics, or, with terms such as “speciesism,” from Western moral philosophical traditions. In what follows I intend to explore how alternative perspectives, and particularly the framework of subalternity, entail the serious consideration of animals’ interests. For decades, feminist care ethicists, while accepting the concept of speciesism, have encouraged a movement away from “interests” and “rights” discourse in favor of terms such as care, relationality, and entanglement. In the epilogue I will discuss these ideas in particular, but for the moment I focus on the concepts of subalternity and “caring about” animals from a subaltern perspective.

Subalternity and Subaltern Studies

My analyses and conclusions regarding human-animal relations and animal ethics could be criticized as elitist given how the literature I have investigated has focused on classical Brahmanical texts, whether from Vedic, Dharma, or Yoga traditions. In short, they represent pre-Hindu or Hindu perspectives and values, and hence only have normative relevance for those who associate themselves with those perspectives and values. However, I have also emphasized that it is not the affiliation with Brahmanical values that generates serious concerns for animals but rather the fundamental acceptance of certain basic principles. These principles are the intrinsic value and disvalue of pleasure and pain, respectively, and consequently the direct moral standing of any beings who feel pleasure and pain. Nevertheless, even

⁸⁰ Importantly, the equal consideration of interests does not dictate equal treatment (Singer 2011, 22).

this position could be labeled Eurocentric, given its insistence on terms such as “intrinsic value” and “direct moral standing” and their purported indispensability in founding and dictating ethical relations with others. At this point, instead of arguing these points philosophically, I opt to perceive human-animal relations through the lens of subalternity, which, minus a few exceptions, has hitherto assumed the validity of anthropocentrism and excluded animals from its gaze. I ask if there is any sound justification for this exclusion.

My focus is on subalternity as a categorical construction and not Subaltern Studies as a historical, academic, and activist phenomenon. In the introduction to their edited volume, *Reading Subaltern Studies*, David Ludden provides a concise yet remarkably comprehensive summary of the genesis and history of Subaltern Studies in final quarter of the twentieth century. Emerging in the 1970s, led by Ranajit Guha, Subaltern Studies began with Indian and English historians interested in writing histories of South Asia “from below.” Guha states:

What is clearly left out of this un-historical [elitist] historiography is the *politics of the people*. For parallel to the domain of elite politics there existed throughout the colonial period another domain of Indian politics in which the principal actors were not the dominant groups of the indigenous society or the colonial authorities but the subaltern classes and groups constituting the mass of the labouring population and intermediate strata in town and country — that is, the people. This was an autonomous domain, for it neither originated from elite politics nor did its existence depend on the latter.⁸¹

The focus of Subaltern Studies was on people’s histories and not merely history and politics as authored by—and centered on— elites. Beginning in 1982, edited volumes under the title *Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian History and Society* were published by Oxford University Press in Delhi, and by 2001 eleven *Subaltern Studies* volumes have appeared.⁸² Ludden notes how “before 1985 no

⁸¹ Guha 1982, 4; Guha 1997, xiv–xv.

⁸² Ludden 2001, 1.

consensus definition of subalternity had emerged in the project.”⁸³ Around 1700, “subaltern” referred to inferior military ranks and peasants, in general, and in the following centuries historians would write histories *about* subalterns. The term “subaltern” was later used by Antonio Gramsci in their *Prison Notebooks* (written between 1929-1935 and first translated into English in 1966), which “began to weave ideas about subaltern identity into theories of class struggle.”⁸⁴ In the early 1980s, and significantly owing to the work of Raymond Williams, Gramsci’s ideas had become well known and many were adopted by Subaltern Studies historians.

In 1985, in *Subaltern Studies IV*, Dipesh Chakrabarty defined “subalternity” as “the composite culture of resistance to and acceptance of domination and hierarchy.”⁸⁵ According to Ludden, in the years that followed, the meaning of “subalternity” in Subaltern Studies continued to shift as the field and term expanded transnationally, with “subalternity” increasingly applied to diverse populations and cultures oppressed under colonialism. Moreover, Ludden notes that the rigid theoretical barrier between “elite” and “subaltern” has consistently remained a thorn in the side of Subaltern Studies’ framing of subalternity, adopting a somewhat facile binary that effaces the differences between different subaltern social histories and contexts.⁸⁶ In 1993 Darshan Perusek noted that while Subaltern Studies strove to establish subaltern groups as “agents” and “subjects” in their own histories, and even history writ large, for subaltern historians “‘subalternity’ as a theoretical concept seems to lend itself more as description of identity as an oppressed group rather than difference in degree in the kind of oppression suffered, or the divergence of interest within that group once a particular source of oppression is removed.”⁸⁷

⁸³ Ludden 2001, 17

⁸⁴ Ludden 2001, 5.

⁸⁵ Chakrabarty 1985, 376 (cited in Ludden 2001, 18).

⁸⁶ Ludden 2001, 19.

⁸⁷ Perusek 1993, 1935.

Emphasizing the “political significance” of subaltern resistance, Persuek continues by stating that “[i]t is not enough for subaltern historians to prove, by recounting ‘people’s revolts’, that the oppressed have never liked being oppressed. . . .”⁸⁸ While I agree that attention to both contextual difference and subversive efficacy—politically speaking—is key for any adequate analyses of subalternity, my own questions are more basic and precede these anxieties. I ask instead: Why has subalternity, even as a problematic concept when subjected to stricter scrutiny, been restricted to “the human”? Why is subalternity, in its basic formulation, not a species-inclusive category? And even if subalternity is merely a “description of identity as an oppressed group,” why have animals been denied membership in this “oppressed group”?⁸⁹

My interest at present is in subalternity as an analytical concept and not as an identity marker determined and deployed by subaltern human populations in their own lives and struggles. After reviewing descriptions of subalternity offered by subaltern historians themselves, I ask why these descriptions are not species-inclusive. I then pivot to the perspectives of a few contemporary scholars who do extend the category of subaltern to nonhuman populations.

Species Exclusivity and Inclusivity

In the preface to *Subaltern Studies 1*, Ranajit Guha defines “subaltern”:

The world ‘subaltern’ in the title stands for the meaning as given in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, that is, ‘of inferior rank’. It will be used as a name for the general attribute of subordination in South Asian society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, gender and office or in any other way.⁹⁰

Guha also states in a note in “On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Ancient India”:

⁸⁸ Persuek 1993, 1936.

⁸⁹ For an explicitly intervention in “writing the history of animals from below,” see Hribal 2007.

⁹⁰ Guha 1982, vii.

The terms “people” and “subaltern classes”... represent the demographic difference between the total Indian population and all those whom we have described as the elite.⁹¹

Following criticisms regarding the aforementioned simplistic binary of elite/subaltern as well as “the introduction of this concept [the Gramscian concept of subaltern] into modern Indian historiography,”

Sumit Sarkar clarified that

“Subaltern” is no more free of ambiguities and problems than its rough equivalents (for example “popular”, “mass”, “lower-class”); it does have the advantage however of emphasizing the fundamental relationships of power, of domination and subordination.⁹²

In *Subaltern Studies IV*, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak discussed the tricky question of a “subaltern consciousness” (which does not deny heterogeneity in subaltern consciousness), which may be described broadly as an “emergent collective consciousness,”⁹³ specifically among the nonelite. Several years later, in an interview with Leon de Kock, Spivak expressed a more nuanced viewpoint given the critical response and blowback to her seminal article “Can the Subaltern Speak?”⁹⁴ Spivak remarked that while “the oppressed” is often used as a synonym for “subaltern,” the former term does not accurately capture the sense of “voicelessness” that Spivak associates with subaltern identity: “Now, who would say that's just the oppressed? The working class is oppressed. It's not subaltern.”⁹⁵ Spivak continues: “When you say cannot speak, it means that if speaking involves speaking and listening, this possibility of response, responsibility, does not exist in the subaltern's sphere.”⁹⁶

⁹¹ Guha 1988, 44; By “elite,” Guha means “dominant groups, foreign as well as indigenous.”

⁹² Sarkar 1984, 273.

⁹³ Spivak 1985, 343.

⁹⁴ Spivak 1988.

⁹⁵ For a comprehensive discussion of “subaltern” in comparison and relation to other categories such as “people,” “popular,” “multitude,” and especially “*damnés*,” see Mignolo 2005.

⁹⁶ Spivak 1992, 45–46.

The idea of “voicelessness” is also common to animal rights and animal liberation discourse. A once prominent animal advocacy group, “Anonymous for the Voiceless,”⁹⁷ received fierce criticism for its assertion of animals as being “voiceless” when in fact—as critics claimed—animals’ “voices” are on full display whenever they cry, fight, and struggle to survive under human oppression. Disability and animal liberation writer and activist Sunaura Taylor notes how the widespread attribution of voicelessness to animals—particularly *within* animal advocacy—may be linked to a popular pro-animal poem composed by Ella Wheeler Wilcox in 1910. The poem, titled “The Voice of the Voiceless,” begins, “I am the Voice of the Voiceless | Through me deaf and dumb shall speak,” and continues with “And I am my brother’s keeper | And I shall fight their fight | And I speak the word for beast and bird | Till the world shall set things right.”⁹⁸ Wilcox’s prose is well-intentioned yet Taylor criticizes the language and notion of “voicelessness” from both anti-speciesist and anti-ableist perspectives, and the two are intertwined. Taylor repeats Arundhati Roy’s pronouncement that “[t]here’s really no such thing as the ‘voiceless.’ There are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard.”⁹⁹ Supplementing stunning accounts of animal resistance from Jason Hribal’s *Fear of an Animal Planet: The Hidden History of Animal Resistance* with additional examples, Taylor expresses the rather obvious, but nevertheless overlooked, facticity of animals’ “voices” of defiance:

Animals express themselves all the time, and many of us know it. If not, factory farms and slaughterhouses would not have to be designed to constrain any choices an animal may have. We deliberately have to choose not to hear when the lobster bangs on the walls from inside a pot of boiling water or when the hen who is past her egg-laying prime struggles against the human hands that enclose her neck....Considering animals voiceless betrays an ableist assumption about what counts as having a voice—an

⁹⁷ <https://www.anonymousforthevoiceless.org/>

⁹⁸ Taylor 2017, 61; See the original poem in Wilcox 2002.

⁹⁹ Roy 2004, 1.

assumption that many disabled and nondisabled people alike often make about animals.¹⁰⁰

Spivak is surely cognizant of the various ways that oppressed humans (and presumably animals) express their displeasure and resistance to oppression, and in this manner sustain some form of “voice.” In the same interview, Spivak also remarked that “[t]he third thing, which is the worst, that is, you don't give the subaltern voice. You work for the bloody subaltern, you work against subalternity.”¹⁰¹ Spivak’s comments may seem confusing, or even contradictory, on the topic of the voice of the subaltern. On the one hand, the subaltern cannot speak, but, on the other hand, you don’t give the subaltern a voice. But Spivak is specifically concerned with the fact that “the possibility of response, responsibility, does not exist in the subaltern's sphere.” The subaltern subject—insofar as the subaltern subject is recognized at all by the elite—exists as a “person,” but not one whose voice must be taken seriously, or whose voice commands serious listening, or whose voiced needs and wishes require any type of response. Hence, “you” must work for the subaltern by amplifying rather than supplying their voices.

However, the case is significantly, but not entirely, different in the case of animals. While advocates such as Taylor rightly signal the dangers of attributing voicelessness to animals—first and foremost to prevent further ingraining of the myth of animals’ nonsubjectivity—the fact remains that animals’ voices are hardly cognized as “proper” voices at all. The expressions and actions of most animals are received as little more than biomechanical grunts, snorts, and barks, hardly indicating the presence of a person, much less of an acknowledged voice. Consequently, there is no prospect of

¹⁰⁰ Taylor 2017, 63; Also see Wallace 2004 for a “neutral” meditation on the “voices” of lobsters and other animals; The Facebook group “Animal Resistance” provides contemporary and international examples of animal resistance against human exploitation (<https://www.facebook.com/Animal-Resistance-274600716411737>).

¹⁰¹ Spivak 1992, 46.

“response” in Spivak’s sense. An objective of most anti-speciesist advocacy is to assert the legitimacy of animals as individual subjects in political and legal senses,¹⁰² but also, and much more fundamentally, on an immediate inter-personal level owing to observation and common sense. Hence the impossibility of response facing the subaltern subject is even more striking in the case of animals for whom there is virtually no recognition of subjecthood whatsoever.

This distinctively abject position of animals has prompted Shefali Rajamannar, in *Reading the Animal in the Literature of the British Raj*, to posit that “the animal is the ultimate subaltern.”¹⁰³ I have no desire or intention of “proving” Rajamannar’s proposition of “ultimate” subalternity. Still, it is important to emphasize how discourses about, and issuing from, human subalterns regularly involve references to “dehumanization” or “subhumanization” by the dominant class. These terms are euphemisms for the also popular term “animalization.” The *social* concept—which is not the same as the *biological* entity¹⁰⁴—of “the animal” positions animals as the valueless, as the justifiably exploitable, as the remorselessly killable. The pole of valuelessness at the low end of the human-animal binary is indispensable for any subaltern counter-discourse condemning any “dehumanization” or “subhumanization” of humans. These discourses rely upon and repeatedly reinscribe—even if unintentionally—the figure of the human, and only the human, as the valuable, as the unjustifiably exploitable, as the unkillable (or at least the remorsefully killable).¹⁰⁵ In short, “human” denotes the “superior mode of being” contra the animal.¹⁰⁶ Syl Ko writes: “If human is the definition of value itself,

¹⁰² Francione 2008.

¹⁰³ Rajamannar 2012, 7.

¹⁰⁴ See Ko 2017, 106–119 for the key distinction between biological animality and social-conceptual animality.

¹⁰⁵ Philosopher Jeff McMahan critiques the perspective that deems animals as “freely violable” whereas persons (in this case, only human persons) are “fully inviolable” (2002, 265).

¹⁰⁶ Ko 2017, 45.

then, following the golden rule of the human-animal opposition, the animal is the definitive representation of the absence of value itself. That's not to say that we can't value animals. It's just to say that *if* animals are to be given any value, it's because they are of some value to us."¹⁰⁷ Rajamannar's contention that animals are the ultimate subalterns is not necessarily a claim about the extreme extent to which animals—qualitatively and quantitatively—are oppressed, but rather it suggests the protected ontological category “human” only emerges in tandem with the exploitable ontological category “animal.” Nor is any claim of ultimate subalternity a statement about the historically first or *ur*-subaltern, but rather this claim suggests that “animal” and “human” operate as thinly-veiled codes for justifiably oppressable and unjustifiably oppressable. Scant critical thought is devoted, unfortunately, to the legitimacy of the human-animal binary and, most tangibly, to the oppression of the actual, living animal.¹⁰⁸ Provided the implications for race-, gender-, ability-, and class-based oppression based on this binary—in addition to the immediate consequences for animals—Ko states: “For this reason, I have advised against the strategy of ‘humanizing’ groups of color, or gaining protections for vulnerable groups on the basis of *their humanity*.”¹⁰⁹ Ko underscores the fundamental problem with the human-animal binary and issues a warning about reinscribing the ontological subalternity of “the animal” in anti-racist advocacy, given the ramifications for both oppressed humans and animals.

In addition to exceptional work on “casteised speciesism,” which details the intertwining of caste and race in what are often thought to be purely animal-related issues, Narayanan promotes a “subaltern animism” that enfolds animal geographies into geographic justice. Narayanan describes subaltern animism as “the formulation of new multispecies-inclusive geographies or planning theories

¹⁰⁷ Ko 2017, 111.

¹⁰⁸ For example, slogans such as “They put us in cages like animals” uncritically assume the moral acceptability of putting animals in cages.

¹⁰⁹ Ko 2017, 47, emphasis in original.

that recognise the agency and personhood of nonhumans, as well as the ways in which they claim and occupy space.”¹¹⁰ In recognizing the agency and personhood of animals, Narayanan stresses that animals matter in our geographical decision-making—not because they have been granted instrumental value by humans (as Ko notes), but because they have value in themselves. In short, humans must care about animals and caring about animals is not an act of preference or benevolence.

In *Zoopolis*, Donaldson and Kymlicka envisage our moral responsibilities to animals and their political implications on the scale of the state, framing animal rights in terms of citizenship theory:

Thinking about human-animal relations in light of the familiar categories of citizenship theory—such as citizens, denizens, aliens, sovereigns—can help us identify both the distinctive claims that certain animals have upon us, and also the distinctive sorts of injustices we visit upon them.¹¹¹

Donaldson and Kymlicka not only insist on the personhood of animals, but also on the necessity of recognizing animals’ diverse and appropriate statuses when enfolding them into our political geography. A species-inclusive, nonspeciesist orientation—on the hypothetical stage of the utilitarian or and the actual socio-political stage—does not call for a “radical equivalency”¹¹² of all animals, whereby all species of animals and individuals within those species are afforded the exact same statuses, protections, forms of care, and even responsibilities. This would be as absurd as allowing human toddlers to operate automobiles or be prosecuted for assault merely on the basis of their being human. Rather, a species-inclusive ethics and polis demand a keen attention to difference. Any serious

¹¹⁰ Narayanan 2017, 488. I remain unclear as to why Narayanan chooses the term “subaltern animism” over “subaltern animalism.” Narayanan states: “The notion of subaltern animism is based on the assumption that animal-inclusive critiques of space will render possible new notions of spatial justice, but also, that planning itself can reveal and allow a greater understanding of species-specific needs and vulnerabilities” (2017, 489). If the important point is “animal-inclusive,” then the term “subaltern animalism” (including both human and nonhuman animals) both seems more fitting and avoids the problem of defining and explaining “animism.”

¹¹¹ Donaldson and Kymlicka 2013, 50.

¹¹² Dave 2017, 51.

consideration of the subjectivity of animals requires attention to their differential subjectivities as well as to how their political subject-statuses will differ based on their psychophysical subjectivities, their geographic locations in the material world, and their historical engagements with, and relative dependence upon, humans.

Resistance to Animal Subalternity

The question remains as to why the suggestion of “animal subalterns” seems inappropriate or problematic to some. Perhaps at root the issue is not so much one of validating animals as subalterns but rather validating them as any type of oppressed population, whether “subaltern” or, as Walter Mignolo discusses, “people,” “popular,” “multitude,” or “*damnés*.”¹¹³ If the Left is predominantly concerned with oppressed populations such as exploited laborers, the enslaved, and the incarcerated, it remains challenging to understand how and why animals are not included within these three categories, among others.

Anthropocentric speciesism is undeniably prevalent in Leftist thought and discourse, but this tendency alone cannot explain the resistance to including animals in considerations about “the oppressed.” Raising animal-relevant issues is not absent among those on the Left, but discussions about these issues still relegate animals to a fringe position in which animal *industries* are the targets due to the devastating affects they have on human populations. For example, industrial pig farms have been lambasted for their “hog lagoons,” massive waste pools containing feces, urine, blood, and vomit that pollute the air and water quality for local human residents who have already been marginalized owing to class and race.¹¹⁴ Rarely do these criticisms include concerns for pigs themselves, who are simply the

¹¹³ Mignolo 2005; Also consider how Wadiwel (2015) describes animals as the victims of a human “war” against them.

¹¹⁴ Bullers 2005; Cole et al. 2000; Davis 2018; Montefiore et al. 2022; Nicole 2013.

inputs and products of the targeted industries and hence are conceptually and ethically considered no different than other commonplace inputs and products such as corn or cotton. It is true that there are myriad nonanimal-centric reasons for leftists (if not everyone) to oppose industrial animal agriculture, including, but not limited to, environmental degradation, human labor exploitation, food supply inefficiency, and negative health outcomes for consumers—problems that particularly impact marginalized human communities.¹¹⁵ These issues are serious and urgent but so too is the issue of the direct exploitation of animals. Thus, we may still ask why the plight of animals is not centered—or even seriously considered—in discourses about problems for humans that only emerge from the institutional exploitation of animals.

As already mentioned, there is the brute fact that the Left (and non-Left) “does not believe that these injustices [against animals] are of any real significance.”¹¹⁶ This starting point informs all of the forms of resistance the Left has to embracing animals as oppressed populations deserving of serious moral consideration and just treatment. Kymlicka and Donaldson highlight several of the worries of the anthropocentric Left when it comes to animal rights, all of which involve purported deleterious effects that animal rights “agendas” will have on human populations who, presumably, carry lexical priority in all situations. I borrow “lexical” from John Rawls, who describes a “lexical order” as “an order which requires us to satisfy the first principle in the ordering before we can move on to the second, the second before we consider the third, and so on. A principle does not come into play until those previous to it are either fully met or do not apply.”¹¹⁷ Anthropocentric lexical priority (which could also be called “absolute anthropocentrism”) stipulates that any and all humans’ interests outweigh any and all animals’

¹¹⁵ Dickstein et al. 2020; On the problems of “meatification” and numerous reasons for “de-meatification,” see Weis and Ellis 2022.

¹¹⁶ Kymlicka and Donaldson 2014, 126.

¹¹⁷ Rawls 1971, 42–43.

interests, no matter the numbers of individual humans or animals involved, the nature of the interests, and the nature of the harms threatened. In short, all human needs and wants must be satisfied before we should consider any of the needs and wants of animals. Even if some human justice advocates concede that animals' fundamental interests cannot be trumped by trivial human interests (as evidenced, for example, in the widespread opposition to trophy hunting), when more significant human interests are involved there is a tendency to quickly evict any concerns about animals from the conversation.

Kymlicka and Donaldson first highlight Leftist worries about the “displacement” and “trivialization” of human justice issues through the elevation of animal rights. Viewed together, both of these concerns stem from the reflex fear that social justice advocacy is a zero-sum game that pits marginalized populations against one another in competition for a limited pie of moral consideration, legal rights, and political statuses.¹¹⁸ “Displacement” refers to “the concern that if the Left commits time and resources to animals it will come at the expense of time and resources devoted to, say, fighting racism.”¹¹⁹ The concern for displacement is both categorical and practical. First, by inserting another advocacy category, in this case “animals,” into the social justice puzzle, we ostensibly endanger the welfare of other groups by adding another class of “competitors.” Second, time, energy, and resources

¹¹⁸ Kim also summarizes the situation well: “Disavowal, an act of dis-association and rejection, can range from failing to recognize that one is causing harm to the other group to refusing to acknowledge that the other group suffers or has valid justice claims to actively and knowingly reproducing patterns of social injury to the other group.

The posture of mutual disavowal is unsurprising in one sense: politics as a struggle over scarce resources (material, symbolic, and other) is by its very nature oppositional — one is always mobilizing for and therefore against something, so disavowing an opponent’s claims and perspective is par for the course. The rub arises when one is mobilizing not against an oppressive majority but rather against another subordinated group (or, in the case of animal advocates, those representing a subordinated group)” (2015, 181).

¹¹⁹ Kymlicka and Donaldson 2014, 118.

are not inexhaustible, and any efforts dedicated to animal rights means that less efforts will be dedicated to other, human-focused—and lexically prioritized—issues.

“Trivialization” refers to the concern that “including animals in the Left’s pantheon of just causes will diminish the very currency of justice and thereby erode the moral seriousness with which human injustices are treated. If we add the liberation of animals from oppression and enslavement to the Left’s causes, the result will be to debase the currency of ‘liberation,’ ‘oppression,’ and ‘enslavement’ in human contexts.”¹²⁰ The argument from trivialization, if presented “philosophically,” merely repeats the speciesist assumption that animals matter less—if at all—and thus by linking or analogizing human-experienced injustices with those committed against animals, we transgress the strict hierarchy of value that prioritizes humans’ interests above all animals’ interests. Yet even without an appeal to absolute or near-absolute anthropocentrism, the trivialization argument maintains that the more that humans are likened to animals, the more already “dehumanized” or “animalized” human populations are at risk of being even further oppressed by the elite, whose “humanity” and superior status have never been subject to doubt and danger. Kymlicka and Donaldson respond to this concern that “the evidence suggests otherwise. The more sharply people distinguish between humans and animals, the more likely they are to dehumanize human outgroups, such as immigrants. Belief in human superiority over animals is empirically correlated with, and causally connected to, belief in the superiority of some human groups over others.”¹²¹ We must also acknowledge that concerns about displacement and trivialization are

¹²⁰ Kymlicka and Donaldson 2014, 119.

¹²¹ Kymlicka and Donaldson 2014, 120; Bastian et. al 2012; Costello and Hodson 2010; Marino and Mountain 2015; Theoretically, Gross references Giorgio Agamben and Jonathan Z. Smith, who both caution that “the mechanism of separation [between humans and animals] is often executed in the name of preserving human dignity...but ends up accomplishing something quite different. Rather, it splits the world into ‘human beings (who are generally like-us) and nonhuman beings (who are generally not-like-us), into the ‘we’ and the ‘them’” (2014, 91).

hardly ever, especially on the Left, accepted as sound justifications for ignoring or devaluing the justice claims of a marginalized human population. Why then for animals? And if the human-animal binary historically, conceptually, and rhetorically functions to demarcate “others” who may be exploited at will by those in power, should we not—as Ko suggests—dismantle the social human-animal binary altogether?

Second, Kymlicka and Donaldson discuss how the Left is also concerned with “cultural imperialism” and “racial bias” in animal advocacy. They succinctly remark: “This perception that animal advocacy involves performing whiteness informs the Left’s moral anxiety about animal rights.”¹²² There are a few problems with this moral anxiety (which is not to say that it lacks any historical grounding), perhaps the most obvious of which is that caring about animals and animal rights is not exclusively a “white thing.” The ways in which some White Western animal advocates and organizations have promoted and pursued their animal rights agendas are certainly guilty of performing cultural and racial bias. Accordingly, White Western advocates should be ever watchful and critical of persons and agendas that may alienate human social justice advocates who are open to—but still new to—the plights and justice claims of animals.¹²³ However, White Westerners are not the only humans advocating on behalf of animals’ interests and are certainly not the only ones making personal lifestyle choices with those interests, among others, in mind.¹²⁴ Irrespective of the various ways in which some

¹²² Kymlicka and Donaldson 2014, 123; Kim 2011; Kopnina 2017.

¹²³ “The crucial danger I observe is that of deepening the belief, already established among many progressive race activists and scholars, that the animal liberation movement is white, politically speaking—that is, that it is composed of white people who are indifferent to and ignorant of racial justice struggles and whose activism reinforces white privilege” (Kim 2011, 332).

¹²⁴ Numerous outlets have reported on how Black Americans are the largest growing vegan demographic in the United States. For one example, see Reiley 2020; From another angle, and from another region of the world, Dave highlights how “as Leela Gandhi has shown, animal activism in India has also been part of a radical practice of anticolonialism” (2017, 52).

human advocates have insensitively (at best) or discriminatively (at worst) advocated “for the animals,” their faults should not deter us from acknowledging the cogency, urgency, and seriousness of the justice claims of animals themselves. By way of analogy, the racially-neglectful faults of “White feminism” have not invalidated the cogency, urgency, and seriousness of the feminist struggle broadly speaking, but rather have signaled the necessity of expanding the feminist vision to encompass all of the individuals and issues implicated by its principles, agendas, and rhetoric.¹²⁵ Kymlicka and Donaldson reasonably suggest that “[i]n some cases, this purported concern about performing whiteness is simply an excuse for people on the Left to avoid thinking about animal rights.”¹²⁶ Is this perhaps not the same motivation for excluding animals from the category of the “subaltern” or “oppressed”?

Moral Monism and Caring About Animals

Returning to South Asia, and Hindu South Asia in particular, *ahimsā*—specifically in its embodiment as vegetarianism or veganism¹²⁷—is commonly viewed as a form of “moral monism.” Yet this perspective ignores the extant multiplicity of religious and nonreligious ethics determining humans’ relations with animals. Even the reflex conclusion that *ahimsā* mandates vegetarianism, or that a singular univocal ethic of *ahimsā* exists, is questionable. In a survey of secondary literature on Hindu traditions and ecology, and citing Paul Robbins, Gavin Van Horn notes how an insistence on a singular understanding of *ahimsā*, in common interpretation or in principle, could perpetuate a “moral [Hindu] monism” that conflicts with “a ‘plural ethic’ that he [Robbins] sees as being consistent with India’s history of rich and varied relationships to animals, including a view of *ahimsa* that provides an ethical

¹²⁵ “This requires conscious efforts at inclusion, dialogue, cross-cultural learning and listening, a commitment to consistency and self-reflective inquiry, and epistemic humility, and equally conscious efforts to avoid tokenism, essentialism, and exoticism” (Kymlicka and Donaldson 2014, 125).

¹²⁶ Kymlicka and Donaldson 2014, 123.

¹²⁷ On defining “veganism,” see Dutkiewicz and Dickstein 2021.

economy for both producer and animal.”¹²⁸ The claim here is not only that India contains numerous cultures and traditions that do not subscribe to *ahimsā*-based orientations towards animals, but that some Indic interpretations of *ahimsā* permit the “production” of animals and animal-derived substances in an “ethical economy.” In the previous chapter I detailed how traditional presentations of *ahimsā* in both Dharma and Yoga literature pose a challenge to nearly all of the ways in which animals are “produced” and “economized” given these ways’ inability to satisfy as “extraordinary situations.” At the outset of this chapter, I continued by highlighting that even though slaughter is most likely a very serious form of harm, even more undisputable (as forms of harm) are the numerous ways in which “food animals” are treated prior to slaughter, specifically in the dairy industry. Furthermore, it is difficult to imagine nonspeciesist-yet-historical-faithful interpretations of *ahimsā* that sanction such blatant forms and institutions of harm towards animals. The much more convincing aspect of the claim by Robbins is that subjecting all of India to a Hindu (or Buddhist or Jain) *ahimsā* “moral monism” commits, at its best, religious insensitivity and, at its worst, “spiritual fascism.”¹²⁹

Nevertheless, caring and not caring about animals’ interests is a relevant topic for all religious and nonreligious traditions and all instances of human-animal relations, for at least some form of speciesism operates within them. In Nathaniel Roberts’ account of caring in the almost exclusively Dalit slums of Chennai, slum dwellers commonly referred to themselves as “the poor” and nonslum dwellers (and non-Dalits) as “the privileged” or “the rich.” Roberts remarks that through these categories “slum dwellers asserted that the difference between themselves and others was one of accident, not essence,” and even “[c]aste is a mere lie [*verum poy*]. . . . All people are the same . . . all have the same blood.”¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Van Horn 2006, 33; Robbins 1998, 235–237.

¹²⁹ Ilaiah 2004.

¹³⁰ Roberts 2016, 63.

Slum dwellers claimed that they were essentially human just like their nonslum-dwelling neighbors, all of whom shared a “species identity” that “entailed moral claims about the fundamental equality and value of all persons, and a sense of our potential to connect with one another across political and cultural divisions.”¹³¹ Being “merely human” was thus—in the terminology of chapter 3—the fundamental ground for direct moral standing. Roberts adds that slum dwellers’ understanding of the category “humanity” included references to care that are absent in many Western ethical frameworks:

To be human was to be vulnerable and susceptible to harm. It was also to care instinctively about those who were in need, whoever they might be, and to feel called upon to care for them. And finally, to be human was to be oneself worthy of being cared for by others.¹³²

All humans, by virtue of their “same blood,” are worthy of being cared for by others. Humans also instinctively care about those in need since other humans are similarly vulnerable and susceptible to harm. I highlight this example from the Chennai slums to illustrate how this ethical concern among Dalits, who do not lean on Western moral philosophy or traditional notions of *ahimsā*, flows from a recognition that certain beings can be harmed and for that reason humans have a responsibility to care about them. Whenever and however possible, those beings who are vulnerable and susceptible to harm should be appropriately cared for by others.

The lingering question is why appropriate “care” is restricted to human beings and not extended to all sentient beings who are capable of suffering and who would benefit from being cared for by others. Any insistence that essence (species identity) and not circumstance (class identity) determines a being’s fitness for moral consideration runs into at least two significant problems. First, insofar as

¹³¹ Roberts 2016, 77.

¹³² Roberts 2016, 78; Note how Spivak’s sensitivity and this notion of care converge in de la Bellacasa’s description of care: “[C]are connotes attention and worry for those who can be harmed by an assemblage but whose voices are less valued, as are their concerns and need for care” (2011, 92).

species identity finds an “essence” at all, how is species identity any less circumstantial than class identity? While it is true that class mobility is possible whereas species mobility is not, one’s birth as a human rather than a goat is not a feat engineered by oneself. We are all—human and nonhuman alike—thrust into this world without our foreknowledge or consent, bearing no personal responsibility for our species assignments. Second, and more importantly, the slum dwellers’ description of care hinges upon vulnerability and susceptibility to harm. Human beings are not the only sentient beings who experience the various harms of the world and are thereby worthy of care. To assume as much reveals a trend of speciesism operative in the slums similar—although by no means identical—to those operating outside of the slums. Slum dwellers, commenting upon the neglectful ethical gaze of “elites,” remark: “They don’t *see* us.”¹³³ Likewise, animals are not “seen” as “having the same blood” and are thereby denied proper visibility, whether as subalterns or as oppressed populations more broadly construed.

A Seat at the Table

Up to this point I have emphasized the ethical invisibility of nonlethal harms inflicted upon animals as well as animals’ consistent exclusion from categories such as “subaltern” or “oppressed.” I have attributed these trends to various expressions of speciesism, including a disregard for the animality of animals in favor of equating animals with insentient “nature,” inert commodities, or divine beings unaffected by manipulations to their material forms. Animals (via their human advocates) have been denied seats at social justice tables owing not only to anthropocentrism, but more specifically to an anthropocentrism that lexically prioritizes human interests over animals’ interests and views the latter as

¹³³ On how care relates to seeing, Roberts remarks: “What I gloss with the English word care corresponded to no single word in slum dwellers’ lexicon. It summarizes a constellation of interrelated words and concepts. One such word was *par*, which literally means “seeing” or “looking at,” but which also means “attending to” someone out of concern, acknowledging that person’s presence, treating him or her as consequential” (2016, 78).

relevant only when human justice issues have been resolved. Even when animals' interests are recognized as having claims to ethical and political attention, pragmatic anxieties about the effects animal advocacy may have on human justice advocacy typically limit genuine concern.

In the realm of resolving disputes, political scientist Claire Jean Kim warns against “single-optic” vision that “directs our focus to a specific issue in a particular way, even as it necessarily diverts our attention away from other concerns.”¹³⁴ Kim does not maintain that engaging a topic from a particular angle is inappropriate or unnecessary, but it can lead to “disavowing” the credibility, seriousness, and urgency of other injustices and the corresponding claims of other injured parties. By contrast, “multi-optic” vision encourages a recognition of all the parties, injustices, and claims present, while also supporting the evaluation and critique of the different parties' viewpoints and practices. In addition to the aforementioned tendencies to marginalize animal rights, especially on the Left, Kim highlights how a critique of critique also functions to excise animals' interests—though not only animals' interests—from ethical-political discourse. By “critique of critique,” I refer to the reflex problematization of *any* criticism made by one culture to another, “especially if one is criticizing a Third World or minority culture from within a Western or dominant culture.”¹³⁵ Suspicion and rejection tend to preclude any analysis of the content of the dominant culture's criticism, for it is the “imperial gaze” itself (from which the criticism emerges) that disqualifies the content. For example, the dominant culture' critiques of the production, consumption, and recreational practices of marginalized groups—for Kim, this involves critiques of Chinese-operated live animal markets in San Francisco, Makah whaling off the coast of British Columbia, and Michael Vick and others who engaged in dog fighting—are deemed illegitimate due to both the sources and targets of these criticisms, and the historical (and

¹³⁴ Kim 2015, 181.

¹³⁵ Kim 2015, 193, 193–197.

ongoing) relationships between the two. While this reflex mistrust is not only justifiable but also crucial, less clear is how the identity of the source of the criticism is sufficient on its own to justify a rejection of its content.

Criticisms levied by the dominant culture are also discounted on the basis of the dominant culture's own hand in oppressing both the humans and animals involved, as well its responsibility in creating the environmental crisis that has drawn attention to the practices (in this case, towards animals) in question. For example, the dominant culture may criticize indigenous peoples' fishing and whaling practices due to the harms committed against aquatic animals, the potential endangering of individual species, and the prospect of impending "fishless" oceans. Yet what about the even greater harms committed against aquatic animals by nonindigenous commercial fisheries? And have indigenous fishing and whaling practices had any serious role in endangering individual species or depleting the oceans, at least when compared to nonindigenous commercial practices? Kim cites Charlotte Coté, who asks in the context of nonindigenous critiques of indigenous practices: "Why should our culture and traditions be sacrificed upon the altar of the non-Indian conscience to pay for the environmental sins of the dominant culture?"¹³⁶ Coté's question is well-taken, especially if compliance with environmental regulations is solely, or disproportionately, demanded of indigenous populations and not of nonindigenous populations. However, from the animals' perspectives—aquatic animals or any others—we may reasonably ask how much the identity of the human who harms matters *to them*:

Animals suffer under minority practices just as they do under majority practices, and while the first type of suffering is no more important, morally speaking, than the second, it is no less so either. To return to Alison Renteln's chicken once more, we have no reason

¹³⁶ Kim 2015, 244. Kim cleverly replies: "Indeed, one could equally ask, 'Why should whales be sacrificed on the altar of Makah sovereignty and anticolonialism?'"

to believe that it makes a difference to the chicken if the person killing her is a Santería priest or a slaughterhouse worker. Harm is harm, no matter who is inflicting it.¹³⁷

Multi-optic vision requires attention to, at the very least, the situations three parties: the actors, those acted upon, and the critics. The use, exploitation, and killing of animals are not harmless acts, no matter who commits them. An exclusive focus on the identities of the humans promoting and criticizing the practices disregards the interests and claims of the parties most intimately threatened—the animals—by these practices.¹³⁸ In the case of a nonhuman third party being injured by a human group (majority or minority), the “insider” status of the humans involved does not, in itself, grant credibility to their claims and exonerate their actions towards animals.

That they [insiders] have access to different kinds of knowledge than outsiders seems plausible. Someone who grew up in a Chinese family that for generations purchased live animals for food might well have an intimate material knowledge of this practice as well as a close appreciation of its cultural meaning. But this knowledge, like all knowledge, is partial and contingent. An insider who has a deep appreciation of live food practices for that very reason lacks the critical distance that is one component of ethical evaluation. An outsider who has never eaten freshly killed animals and does not associate the practice with his most beloved relatives or his community’s survival is more likely to achieve this critical distance, even as he cannot fully grasp the practice’s cultural or social meaning. Insiders bring something to the table with regard to ethical evaluation, then, but so, too, do outsiders.¹³⁹

The admission of outsider critique seems appropriate, even when voiced by those from the dominant culture whose views and motivations should be received with great caution. Also, the mere admission of these critiques does not imply the patently false claim that all harms are created equal. The harming and killing of billions of animals in industrial factory farms is utterly deplorable and the gravity of this

¹³⁷ Kim 2015, 196.

¹³⁸ “[T]he trade-offs, potential conflicts, as well as the need to compromise is once again centered on vulnerable human communities and not about other living beings. The unproblematic category of ‘meat’ clearly applies to nonhumans only, and the choice is often framed between people, not between people and nonhumans” (Kopnina 2017, 14).

¹³⁹ Kim 2015, 194.

phenomenon commands the most urgent attention and intervention. Yet this gravity does not make the harming and killing of animals executed outside of factory farms immune to evaluation and critique, even if perpetrated by marginalized humans in the spirit of resistance, sovereignty, or anticolonialism.¹⁴⁰ An act is not exempt from criticism merely due to the fact that other acts are more oppressive, harmful, and reprehensible. Moreover, humans who have been historically discriminated against owing to sex, gender, race, class, species, or ability do not earn “by virtue of that subordination, a ‘get out of jail free’ card that licenses their participation in other forms of domination and exempts them from moral critique.”¹⁴¹

Returning to meat-eating in India, it is unsurprising that consuming meat—especially the meat of cows and/or buffaloes—is conceived and performed by Dalits as an act of nonelite group solidarity, if not also an act of resistance to dominant Hindu ideology (“purity”) and practice (vegetarianism as *ahimsā*, as “pure”).¹⁴² James Staples, while conducting fieldwork in Andhra Pradesh in the 1990s, observed how local Christians (Dalit converts) felt “snubbed” by Staples’s refusal to consume beef:

Not to eat beef, in the context of what she perceived to be her caste’s oppression by non-beef eating Hindus, was a snub; it implied I was taking a pro-Hindu stance and, in so

¹⁴⁰ Kim cleverly replies to Coté: “Indeed, one could equally ask, ‘Why should whales be sacrificed on the altar of Makah sovereignty and anticolonialism?’” (2015, 244).

¹⁴¹ Kim 2015, 196.

¹⁴² There is also the blatant hypocrisy in the fact that nonvegetarianism is clearly not an exclusively non-Hindu practice. The 2006 Hindu-CNN-IBN State of the Nation Survey found that among the near 15,000 respondents spread across 19 states, from both cities and villages, 60 percent were nonvegetarians, 9 percent consumed eggs and milk but not meat, and 31 percent were lacto-vegetarians. In addition, approximately 45 percent of Brahmins responded as nonvegetarians (“State of the Nation” 2006; Yadav and Kumar 2006). See also Bajželj and Bothra 2016 and Staples 2020; Dave comments on beef-eating as solidarity from “outsiders”: “All too often, what we do with that fact is to say that to oppose that kind of violence means to eat cows. It’s posited as a kind of solidarity with non-caste Hindus. But of course the Brahmin who decides, ‘I’m going to eat beef—or pork or chicken or whatever—’ will simply not be subject to the same kind of violence as someone who eats meat by tradition. What this high caste person doesn’t understand is that people aren’t subject to violence because they eat beef: They are subject to violence because they are Muslims or Dalits” (Dave 2019, 72).

doing, tacitly accepting that she was untouchable. To embrace and enjoy beef, on the other hand, was to celebrate a Christian identity, to reject the notion of untouchability, and to partake in modernity.¹⁴³

Staples remarks how this feeling is by no means peculiar to the region, and Roberts reports a similar experience in the Chennai slums, again specifically referring to meat-eating: “Had I refused to eat what was offered me by the people of Anbu Nagar, I would have at once marked myself as a caste person and treated them as pariahs.”¹⁴⁴ Much more publicly, beef festivals have been organized in India—generally by Dalits—in opposition to beef bans and the reproduction of casteism and Hindu nationalism through surveillance and control over others’ “food choices.”¹⁴⁵ Paul Robbins seems accurate in summarizing the revolutionary sentiment: “meat carries with it an impression of egalitarianism that promises, in Coetzee's words, 'an end of the stratification of society into those who hogged the supply of meat and those who had to stuff their stomach with grains.’”¹⁴⁶ Beef festivals have been repeatedly and violently disrupted by Hindutva instigators who take predictable offense at the fare served at these events, viciously attacking Dalits in the name of cows and country.

On the one hand, it may be argued again that marginalized humans do not earn a “get out of jail free’ card” when it comes to acts that have adverse effects on other marginalized populations. Anti-caste, anti-Hindutva beef-eating and beef festivals, while markers and acts of group solidarity and resistance, perpetuate logics and systems of exploitation against not only cows but animals in general. As such, from a narrow animal rights perspective, Dalits and other marginalized humans should

¹⁴³ Staples 2018, 63.

¹⁴⁴ Roberts 2016, 245.

¹⁴⁵ I highlight this phrase again for as it expresses how animals are conceived as always-already food. Ilaiyah writes: “No religious community can ban the food of another religious community until and unless a particular community turns cannibal. So also no caste can ban the food of another caste” (1996, 1445). Notice the embedded anthropocentrism of the “cannibal” exception; On beef festivals, see Natrajan 2018.

¹⁴⁶ Robbins 1999, 413.

consider refraining from meat-eating even if the act superficially resembles the customs of their enemies. From this perspective, Dalits would be urged refrain from flesh not for reasons of purity or religious affiliation but in the spirit of solidarity with their oppressed nonhuman kin. However, a narrow animal rights perspective oversimplifies an anything but simple issue. On the other hand, the case can be made that adopting food practices that even superficially resemble the customs of the dominant culture is tantamount to surrender or pseudo-conversion.¹⁴⁷ Moreover, Dalits are not the ones responsible for transforming the cow and cow flesh into charged political symbols. One might also foreground the fact that there is no robust beef industry in India and beef is predominantly the byproduct of the dairy industry. Consequently, targeting beef-eating as the essential injustice to bovines myopically neglects the principal institution that is responsible for the immense production of bovines on the subcontinent. Beef and beef-eating are not the source of the problem but rather dairy production and consumption. Still, this latter position does not satisfactorily address the situation of the many other mammals bred and killed in India for their flesh, such as goats and chickens. Nevertheless, a wider perspective does offer a starting point for a proper critique of the fundamental exploitation of animals that extends far beyond the issue of beef consumption. A singular focus on beef is misguided, whereas a wholesale critique of the dairy industry and the overall exploitation of animals for food warrants legitimate consideration.

Following Kim, a species-inclusive perspective takes into account all of the parties and dynamics at play, and this must include the animals who often suffer the most severely from human practices, whether exercised by dominant or minority groups. The issue of human actors having a “meaningful choice”¹⁴⁸ to not engage in debatable practices is certainly relevant—by which I mean the

¹⁴⁷ See Dave on the problems with hypocrisy and consistency (2019, 74–75).

¹⁴⁸ Kim 2015, 196–197.

practical ability of groups to pursue alternative practices that do not cause harms to animals and thus respect the latter's claims to moral consideration and treatment. In the vast majority of cases—including the production and consumption of animal flesh or dairy milk, whaling, hunting, or medical or recreational practices involving the exploitation of animals—there is usually a meaningful choice to act otherwise.

Recapitulation

In this chapter I discussed how caring about and caring for animals extend to concerns about the numerous harms inflicted upon them prior to slaughter. I argued that any concern for cow slaughter in India cannot omit the glaring fact that slaughter is a consequence of the dairy industry. Thus, cow protectionism that does not highlight the role of dairies in cow slaughter—and in fact promotes dairying—must be viewed with suspicion for in some cases cow protectionism has been implicated in a broader nonanimal-centric project for pursuing a Hindu ethnostate and further oppressing class, ethnic, and religious minorities. I then described how and why animal rights advocates and animals themselves are the “orphans of the Left,” and how they have been orphaned even by those concerned with social justice issues. The tendency to exclude animals ethically and politically is also common in discussions about subaltern or oppressed populations. I suggested that there are no nonspeciesist ways to exclude animals from these categories. I also argued that caring about and caring for animals is not only a White Western or classical Hindu ethical issue. Contemporary scholarship insists on the need to integrate, if not foreground, non-White, nonelite ethical perspectives to address the dire ecological circumstances that we currently face. A further integration of anti-speciesism with such perspectives offers an even more comprehensive multi-optic framework that includes the interests of all sentient beings—human and nonhuman—impacted by ideologies and structures of oppression.

Epilogue: Love and Entanglement

The common thread is our species' relationships with nonhuman others, and there is a fundamental dysfunction at the heart of these relationships that needs to be addressed before poeticized notions of mutually beneficial entanglements with a particular "nature" can hold water.¹

Juicy pieces of low-hanging fruit for eager animal advocates are the self-proclaimed "animal lovers" who buy, sell, eat, breed, and ride the animals they profess to love. Critics of animal lovers attempt to underscore the incompatibility of "loving" animals, on the one hand, and knowingly harming them, on the other. According to the alleged contradiction, even those who routinely attend to and care for animals, no matter how sensitively and arduously, cannot genuinely love animals if they continue to view and use them as instruments for human gain. The additional implication, even if not explicitly voiced by advocates, is that the advocates themselves are the true lovers of animals, no matter if they physically care for animals or have ever even intimately interacted with the animals they claim to love.² It is by virtue of advocates' principled stance against animal exploitation, their resultant choice to refrain from consuming animal-derived products, and their dedication to and engage in animal advocacy, that the advocates carry and perform a "true" love for animals.³ This advocacy perspective has not infrequently contributed to a caricature of animal advocates as privileged (and typically White) city

¹ Arcari et al. 2021, 9–10.

² In fact, a "love" for cows is frequently claimed as the motivation behind cow protection, even behind its violent manifestations. See Govindrajan 2021.

³ On "animal loving" among advocates and the relationship between love and ethics, see Dave 2015. Dave notes: "The phrase ["animal lover"]—needless to say, infantilizing, feminizing, and dismissive—is now ubiquitous. It is used to represent people who oppose mass dog culling, those who rescue livestock from illegal transport vehicles, those who protest KFCs, and the neighborhood auntie who feeds dogs at the street corner. What work does this attribution of love do? Why, even in a context as different as the anti-abolitionist movement in North America and its concept of the 'nigger lover' is the deliberate confusion of love and ethics so politically and psychically powerful (see Singer 1975)?"

dwellers who have never known and experienced the hardships of animal husbandry or what it means to care for the physical and psychological well-being of animals on a daily basis.⁴

If and when deployed, this advocacy approach resounds as both coarse and myopic (which is not to say it is not convincing to some). Not only does this viewpoint express a blanket mistrust of the professed *affective* states of strangers—in this case, the love of strangers for animals—but it also assumes an incompatibility between affective states and ethical principles. The embedded assumption is that the feeling of love for someone is irreconcilable with the performance of an act of (alleged) wrongdoing towards that loved one. But the claim that someone who has wronged us must not (in fact, cannot) not truly love us—merely on the basis of them committing that wrong—elides the fact that love can reasonably exist alongside “wrong” views and acts. As we know all too well, those who love us and whom we love often cause us the greatest distress when they wrong us, and this is so precisely because they have wronged us *despite* the fact that they love us. Even after being wronged we may still feel and believe that they love us and we are not necessarily misguided or delusional in feeling and believing that way. It may become difficult to trust someone’s love for us if they insist on their love while repeatedly wronging us, especially if they know in advance that what they are doing is wrong, avoidable, and will

⁴ “Perhaps unintentionally, activists often imply that animal rights is the natural domain of a cosmopolitan elite who must lead others into the light. This was a claim that I wanted to distance myself from even as I sought to understand why people sacrificed animals” (Govindrajan 2017, 60); “Thus, for example, the women with whom I had attended the cow-protection rally were skeptical, to put it mildly, of the volunteer’s claim that a cow naturally had milk in her udders for her children. After the volunteer had walked on to greet another group, a woman from the mountains sitting behind me snorted derisively and asked the others if they thought this woman had ever milked a cow in her life. ‘Which cow gives milk just like that?’ she asked, a tone of disbelief in her voice. One of the other women in our group *responded that the volunteer was clearly a woman from the city who didn’t understand the nature of farm labor*; she didn’t even know that there would be no milk without the labor of women and cows” (Govindrajan 2021, 211, emphasis added).

cause us great pain (for is love not *also* an action, after all?). However, we rarely deny that we can be wronged by those who genuinely love us.

I would also argue that there is little to gain and much to lose, practically speaking, by challenging the feelings of love of those who use, eat, and even kill animals. This is because the presence or absence of these feelings—even if providing greater nuance to situations of alleged wrongdoing—does not indict or exonerate individuals from acts of wrongdoing. Whether or not someone loves the individual they wrong is extraneous to the issue of whether their actions are wrong or not and to the issue of whether they are blameworthy or not. Therefore, when advocates isolate the affective facet of the situation—the “animal loving”—they engage in a rather irrelevant battle that often detracts from the animal rights claims they are typically intent upon foregrounding. By targeting feelings rather than principles, then those who are confident in their feelings of love towards animals may feel gaslighted and subsequently ignore any principled arguments about moral consideration and justice for animals. “Correcting” others about what they feel and don’t feel towards animals cannot avoid charges of arrogance, self-righteousness, and ignorance. These impressions will most likely hinder the ability of advocates to communicate any of their principled arguments.

However, much of the recent literature on human-animal relations does highlight notions and feelings of love and care. Thus I still feel the need to ask (delight in or forgive my Tina Turner reference): What’s love got to do with it? More precisely, how much, if at all, does love got to do with it? The “it” here refers to how we understand the ethicality of human-animal relations, the justice claims of animals on humans, and the need for internal and external intervention in cases of violence committed against animals. In this brief epilogue, I discuss how feelings of love and care, and related theories of “relatedness” and “entanglement,” have the dual effects of, on the one hand, enriching analyses of human-animal relations and, on the other hand, increasing the vulnerability of animals

owing to the very specific (read: speciesist) ways in which these lenses are employed almost exclusively in the contexts of humans' engagements with nonhumans. This is not too dissimilar to how the categories of "oppressed" and "subaltern" are hardly ever applied to animal populations, and explanations for violent human-animal relations tend to enlist a vernacular that is hardly ever applied to violent human-human relations.

More Messiness

In *Animal Intimacies: Interspecies Relatedness in India's Central Himalayas*, Radhika Govindrajan follows Donna Haraway in emphasizing the "relatedness" and "entanglement" constitutive of human-animal relations. The complexities of these relations generate a host of serious ethical questions, questions that cannot be easily answered by overarching normative principles. In the context of contemporary animal sacrifice in the Central Himalayas of India, Govindrajan underscores how feelings of love—specifically maternal love—not only inform relations between humans and goats but also complicate any evaluation of the ethicality of sacrifice due to the tension between normative principles and these prominent affective elements.

According to Govindrajan's informants, animal sacrifice is not a heartless mechanical transaction—offer a life and wait to receive what you request (or simply appease the wrath of the deity)—but rather it is a complex business infused with critical emotional ingredients. Of utmost importance is the sacrificer's maternal love (*mamta*) for the sacrificed animal, a feature vital for the blood offering to be efficacious. The local belief, as relayed by an informant named Neema, maintains that in past times the *devī* (goddess) demanded blood sacrifice in the form of a human child. Neema explained that when the time came for an old widow to appease the *devī*, she could not bear the thought of surrendering her only child. The widow pleaded with the goddess, offering to substitute the human

child with “animals that she had raised just like her own children.”⁵ The *devī* accepted these replacements. The local narrative illustrates the well-known trope of ritual substitution whereby a surrogate victim is offered in the place of the ideal victim. However, more significantly for our topic, the story highlights how the sacrificer must love the offered animals in the same way as they love their human offspring.

Govindrajan relays an altercation between Neema and her young nephew Girish. Girish fiercely denounces the family’s participation in animal sacrifice, describing the practice as “murder” and both “backward” and “barbaric.” Neema responds with an emphasis on her love for the goats that she sacrifices: “‘You may not concede my *mamta*,’ she said, finally, ‘but the *devī* can see it. She knows it was a true [*sach*] sacrifice for me . . . like watching a child die.’” The *devī* demands tears as much as blood and for Neema the deep emotional blow to the sacrificer cannot be casually omitted from an evaluation of the ritual. Neema adds that her *mamta* for the goats is evidenced in how much time, effort, and care she dedicates to their upbringing and sustenance. The goats are showered with *mamta* by Neema and the other humans who tend to them, and the goats eventually “repay the debt of my *mamta* [by dying for our family].” Govindrajan describes how the young Girish responds with “a sarcastic snort of laughter; he was visibly agitated. This talk of *mamta*, he said, was meaningless. After all, *mamta* didn’t prevent people from sending these animals to their death in place of their sons.”⁶

This interaction between aunt and nephew captures very well the contested terrain. On the one side, Neema not only defends the authenticity of her feelings of love and gestures of care towards her

⁵ Govindrajan 2017, 34.

⁶ Govindrajan 2017, 35; There is some irony here with Dave’s ethical critique of love: “love is an injustice, because when we love it is the one or ones who are special to us that we save” (2015). In this scenario, it is the caretaker’s love for their goats that makes them fit for ‘nonsaving,’ i.e., killing.

goats, but she also maintains that the goats incur a debt by receiving *mamta* from her, a debt that the goats square by *voluntarily* “offering” their heads to the goddess. In fact, to both guarantee and “prove” the goats’ consent to their own decapitation, prior to their killing each goat is sprinkled with a mixture of rice and water. After one or several sprinkling attempts, the goat invariably shakes their body, a movement known as *jharr*, and “[t]his *jharr* was read as a sign that the goat had consented to his own death and that the deity was pleased with and had accepted the sacrifice.”⁷ Combining the elements of *mamta*, obligation, and consent, Neema’s response to her nephew is thus both affective and principled, and the two are interconnected. First, Neema presents her undeniable love for the goats (and they undeniably love her) even though she eventually ushers them to slaughter.⁸ Second, the goats owe Neema and her family for the *mamta* that they have enjoyed throughout their lives, and they settle this debt by voluntarily forfeiting their heads to the *devī*.⁹

On the other side, Girish derides the authenticity of Neema’s *mamta*, labelling it “meaningless,” contending that love and sacrifice are plainly incompatible. He holds that any “love” that involves fatally sacrificing the loved one to appease a fanciful goddess is a perverse form of love. Moreover, he

⁷ Govindrajan 2017, 33.

⁸ Govindrajan includes a similar response from Bimla *chachi* at the close of the chapter: “When I told her there were people who loved animals and believed that sacrifice was a cruel practice sustained by those who didn’t really care about animals, she was visibly disturbed. ‘Why do they think that we do not know about love?’ she asked. ‘Have those people ever brought *pathiyas* (kids) into their home because they were worried that the leopard who came every night would eat the goats? Have they ever pounded *haldi* (turmeric) and applied it to a festering wound every day for a month?’ She looked down at the kid who was nuzzling her side, the same kid that she had helped bring into the world, and then looked back up at me. ‘Is this not love?’” (2017, 61).

⁹ The suggestion that human children and nonhuman “children” owe anything their parents and/or caretakers is a curious one. I am reminded of Mumbai executive Raphael Samuel who in 2019 attempted to sue their parents for bringing them into the world, specifically given the absence of their consent to be born (Piper 2019). Whether we are speaking about the breeding of humans or nonhumans, both come into the world in the absence of their consent, which is admittedly a tricky philosophical subject given the impossibility of a non-being giving their consent to becoming a being. On debates in procreation ethics, see Benatar and Wasserman 2015.

suggests that even *if* Neema's love is authentic, it does not alter the equally undeniable unfortunate fate of the goats. Overall, Girish challenges his aunt on both affective and principled registers. Not only does Girish question the legitimacy of the love that his aunt feels for her goats, but regardless of the authenticity of those feelings, Girish emphasizes how this love cannot erase the "murder" involved in the termination of the goats' lives. I would argue that Girish's general mockery of his aunt misguidedly fuses her affective and principled responses, and incorrectly assumes that the presence of a purported wrong nullifies the potential co-presence of feelings of love and care.

Interestingly, it is Neema herself who insists not only on the significance of *mamta* but also of a purported contract binding the goats to their human caretakers. The goats—no matter how fearfully or resistantly—fulfill their end of this agreement by sacrificing themselves for the sake of their caretakers. It would appear, as the sprinkling ritual and the necessity of *jharr* indicate, that a sacrificer's maternal love is insufficient in itself to validate the sacrifice on its own, as the offered animal must also consent to their own slaughter. As has been explored in previous chapters, the consent of the victim is a regular and crucial component of ritual sacrifice. However, in this instance (as well as in virtually any other), the goat's expression of consent is surely suspect. A local informant wonders: "We say that these animals consent to their sacrifice. But do they really? I don't know. Even a dog will shake if you sprinkle water on it."¹⁰ In the potential absence of consent, what should we make of this killing—or "murder," as Girish calls it? Is *mamta* enough to justify placing a loved one—against their will or at least against their

¹⁰ Govindrajan 2017, 59; The question of whether animals can even give consent is another issue altogether. But as is the case with humans whose consent to certain forms of harmful treatment is unclear or unverifiable (consider human children, severely cognitively impaired humans, or humans who cannot communicate in the relevant language), we generally—which is not to say historically—err on the side of the humans and do not subject them to harmful treatment unless it is in their best interest to be subjected to that treatment. It should go without saying that determining *who* gets to decide what is in another's best interest is an extremely fraught issue.

own interests—under the sacrificial blade? This is not a rhetorical question even if I do not offer an answer. I continue to wonder how we should we approach, ethically speaking, the complex relationships between Neema, her family, other sacrificers, and the goats themselves.

The Selectivity of Entanglement

Govindrajan and others—I included—remain troubled by the facticity of violence towards animals pervading human-animal relations, even within those relations that also involve great intimacy and genuine care. While attending a festival, Govindrajan recounts how she “was stunned by the sight of hundreds of severed goat heads with yellow eyes staring up at me. When I first lifted the camera to my eye, the sea of blood in my viewfinder made my hands tremble.”¹¹ Timothy Pachirat depicts a similar scene in their chilling account of an Omaha slaughterhouse: “Once severed, heads are hung on moving hooks that constitute a separate work line known as the head chain. No longer attached to a body, these heads float at chest level from the head severer to the head flusher, then to workers who remove the tongues and hang them on hooks next to the heads.”¹² For Govindrajan as well as Pachirat, it is impossible to ignore the reality of the mass harming and killing of animals present at various sites of human-animal “relations,” whether the site is the Indian temple or the American factory farm. However, operating throughout Govindarajan’s text—and also in Muhammed Kaveshe’s account of animal “keepers” in Pakistan—is a sensitivity to, and acceptance of, the unescapable “relatedness” and “entanglement” of human-animal relations. These notions of relatedness and entanglement owe predominantly to the work of Donna Haraway.¹³ Eva Haifa Giraud summarizes this entire body of work as one that “has emphasized the ways that human existence has always been knotted together with

¹¹ Govindrajan 2017, 59.

¹² Pachirat 2013, 70.

¹³ Haraway 2003, 2008, 2016.

the lives of other entities.”¹⁴ Ethically speaking, Haraway adds: “It is a question of cosmopolitics, of learning to be ‘polite’ in responsible relation to always asymmetrical living and dying, and nurturing and killing.”¹⁵ The situation is extraordinarily messy, in both theory and practice. Corresponding with Sharon Ghamari-Tabrizi in the context of lethal experiments on laboratory animals, Haraway replies: “I refuse the choice of ‘inviolable animal rights’ versus ‘human good is more important.’ Both of those proceed as if calculation solved the dilemma, and all I or we have to do is choose.”¹⁶ Haraway warns against oversimplifying ethically thorny issues by means of “calculation” and simply “choosing” the more attractive moral sum. I too acknowledge the complexity of the issues and have no wish at present to argue for a totalizing normative framework, whether it favor utilitarianism, inviolable rights, or an ethics of care. In step with Haraway and one of their staunch critics, Dinesh Wadiwel, I even admit the possibility that some instrumental relationships between humans and animals (and perhaps even between humans and other humans) are in fact ethically permissible, if not also preferable in select contexts. Yet at present I am interested in, sensitive to, and troubled by how the language, theory, and politics of “politeness”—and even more significantly, “violence”—are differentially applied to human and nonhuman actors and victims.

I share Wadiwel’s curiosity regarding how “the actual word ‘violence’ barely seems to figure in Haraway’s text.”¹⁷ As discussed in the previous chapter, the task of determining the meanings of words

¹⁴ Giraud 2019, 5; “My point is simple: Once again we are in a knot of species coshaping one another in layers of reciprocating complexity all the way down” (Haraway 2008, 42).

¹⁵ Haraway 2008, 42; Govindrajan states similarly: “A reparative love, I propose, refuses purity and coherence, and instead works through complicity and ambiguity. It demands ongoing embodied labor that is relational, “response-able,” and aspires to transformation even as it remains mired in violence.” (2021, 215).

¹⁶ Haraway 2008, 87.

¹⁷ Wadiwel 2015, 212, n. 38; It is peculiar specifically as “since clearly *When Species Meet* is a long meditation on how to frame violence in relation to non violence and what this means for ethics.”

such as “cruel,” “unnecessary,” and “excessive” typically lies in the hands of dominant majorities, in this case humans who typically perceive animals as intrinsically harmable. Wadiwel states: “[A] continuing challenge for our relationship with animals is how we unpack epistemic violence, particularly that violence which is rendered as ‘not violence’ through a pervasive system of truth.”¹⁸

At the one of end of this spectrum is a perspective not entirely insensitive to the welfare of animals, but nevertheless problematic to any coherent definition of the term “violence.” Kavesh’s account of animal keepers in Pakistan is representative of this perspective:

As a work of multi-species anthropology, the book focuses on the entanglement of the human and animal lifeworlds in rural Pakistan and argues that to explore such entanglement, we must pay attention to how human and animal lives unfold through a complex relationship of care and violence. Pigeon flyers, cockfighters, or dogfighters care for their animals by decorating their bodies and providing them protection and a good diet, and yet, since they engage them in competitive activities that may result in exhaustion, injury, or death, *this appears as violence to urban animal rights activists*.¹⁹

Kavesh criticizes the reflex labeling of pigeon flying, cockfighting, and dogfighting in Pakistan as acts of “violence,” raising and appealing to notions of *shauq* (delight, joy) and *izzat* (honor) in a manner similar to the way in which Govindrajan presents *mamta*.²⁰ These affective elements escape commonplace moral philosophical reductive reasoning and thus complicate standard conceptions of “violence” and subsequent calls for intervention or “justice.” What may be perceived as violence by those outside of these human-animal relations may “actually” constitute complex entanglements resistant to universal moral principles, since such principles fail to satisfactorily integrate various historical, cultural, and emotional factors. However, in the previous chapter I discussed how a staunch “insiders-only” stance runs into significant difficulty. Claire Jean Kim remarks: “That they [insiders]

¹⁸ Wadiwel 2015, 215.

¹⁹ Kavesh 2020, 7–8, emphasis added.

²⁰ Kavesh 2020, 1–11.

have access to different kinds of knowledge than outsiders seems plausible. . . . [But][a]n insider who has a deep appreciation of live food practices for that very reason lacks the critical distance that is one component of ethical evaluation.” Kim then summarizes: “Insiders bring something to the table with regard to ethical evaluation, then, but so, too, do outsiders.”²¹ Both insider and outsider perspectives boast strengths and shortcomings, and while we may have very good reasons to defer to insider perspectives, especially when they issue from marginalized human populations, outsider views cannot be discredited or ignored purely on the basis of coming from the “outside.”

In addition, in response to Kavesh, I underscore how referring to pigeon flying, cockfighting, and dogfighting (and animal sacrifice) as “violence” is not a rhetorical monopoly of urbanites, animal rights activists, or urban animal activists. Perhaps most significantly, I find it unsettling to claim that violence is no longer violence once we concede histories of entanglement, the co-presence of feelings of delight, honor, love, or care, and the “cultural importance” of various animal-using enterprises.²² Wadiwel warns: “Epistemic violence allows us to name these relations, almost without a moment of self reflection, under the guise of ‘friendship.’”²³ The implication is not only that the presence of friendship, love, and care in human-animals relations somehow neutralizes the presence of violence in those relations, but that the humans perpetuating those relations hold the authority to dictate what is and what is not “friendship” between humans and animals, and thus also what is and what is not “violence.”

Kim takes Wadiwel’s insistence on “self reflection,” and reflection more generally, very seriously. Kim has tackled the class and racial complexities involved in the infamous Michael Vick

²¹ Kim 2015, 195.

²² Kavesh 2020, 114.

²³ Wadiwel 2015, 220. Wadiwel does not deny that “friendship” between humans and animals may very well exist, but that “[t]he war against animals does, however, frame the terms for this friendship, and forces us to place our relations with non human companions in question” (2015, 220).

dogfighting case—including defenses of dogfighting that appeal to care and love—yet Kim neither elides or downplays the unmistakable violence embedded in this “sport,” no matter the ethical-political relevance of embedded situational complexities.²⁴ For Kavesh, by contrast, somewhat akin to our Vedic and Dharmaśāstra apologists, violence is still somehow not violence so long when viewed from the perspective of insider apologetics.

Haraway does not make the same argument, but rather admits that harm, and perhaps even violence, simply permeate human-animal relations. Haraway perceives the facticity of harm as an unavoidable phenomenon woven into the histories and futures of human-animal entanglements. Haraway also asserts that animals do not necessarily lose agency when forced into exploitative relations with humans. With respect to animals subjected to laboratory experimentation, and with some characteristic “elaborate wordplay,”²⁵ Haraway states: “People and animals in labs are both subjects and objects to each other in ongoing intra-action.” And then asks: “What happens if the *working animals are significant others* with whom we are in consequential relationship in an irreducible world of embodied and lived partial differences, rather than the Other across the gulf from the One?”²⁶

Wadiwel’s *The War Against Animals* interrogates this question of animal “others” as consenting and unconsenting “workers” in human industries and institutions. However, my own concern, one also voiced by Wadiwel (here in reference to Haraway), is the “shy[ing] away from naming a systematic form of domination that characterises our relations with animals.”²⁷ Kavesh

²⁴ Kim 2015, 253–289.

²⁵ Nocella II et al. 2014, xxiv.

²⁶ Haraway 2008, 71–72, emphasis added.

²⁷ Wadiwel 2015, 219, emphasis added; Haraway writes: “Cayenne and I definitely have different native languages, and much as I reject overdoing the analogy of colonization to domestication, I know very well how much control of Cayenne’s life and death I hold in my inept hands” (2008, 216, cited in Wadiwel 2015, 219).

apparently not only contests the accusation of a “systemic form of domination” but even the mere presence of violence in human-animal relations that intentionally subject animals to definite harms and the real possibility of a brutal death. Haraway seems more hesitant to concede the charge of domination than that of violence, and Govindrajan likewise does not deny the phenomenon of violence in animal sacrifices and other harmful human-animal relations. However, Govindrajan does pause before framing these relations as indicative of a systemic form of domination, of one-sided, avoidable, and senseless violence undertaken by humans “at war” with animals. Speaking generally, Govindrajan concludes: “This was the violence at the heart of relatedness, the expected outcome of a difficult yet inevitable entangling of lives and fates.”²⁸

Wadiwel is not the only critic challenging such appeals to entanglement. Several other scholars have drawn attention to how these framings foreclose the possibility of critique and intervention, particularly since “entanglement” appeals can deny “outsider” counterclaims about “violence” and “rights.”²⁹ While not rejecting the plausibility of entanglement as a descriptive or even prescriptive lens, Paula Arcari et al. appropriately ask:

(1) how do types of entanglement vary across species and between individuals within species? (2) to whose benefit, primarily, is the entanglement? (3) is there an option for another species to end or refuse the entanglement? and (4) who is being excluded from a particular conception of entanglement?³⁰

Regarding question 1, entanglement clearly differs across species and between individuals within species, and we perceive this through the various exploitative institutions in which goats, cows, pigs, dogs, and other animals live, “work,” and die. The terms “food animals,” “sacrificial animals,” “companion animals,” and “service animals” indicate distinct systems of entanglement, and within each

²⁸ Govindrajan 2017, 176.

²⁹ Arcari et al. 2021; Giraud 2019; Hollin et al. 2017; Wadiwel 2018; Weisberg 2009.

³⁰ Arcari et. al 2021, 16.

category there exist numerous sub-types differentiated by gender, age, ability, and geo-cultural significance.

Within these systems, and with respect to question 2, it is a truism that humans “primarily” benefit from the entanglements. The sites and terms of engagement have been initiated and orchestrated by humans to derive benefit from their use of animals. Instrumentalization is never philanthropic. The instrumentalization of animals by humans does not imply that animals do not also benefit in some ways from the entanglements, and in the case of companion animals it is virtually impossible to deny that many “pets” do experience love, joy, care, and friendship by virtue of their relationships with humans (although the case is much harder to make for industrialized “food animals”). Nonetheless, humans remain the privileged and “primary” beneficiaries, as they can shop for “pets” akin to other products and “return” them to breeders or shelters if the animal’s behavior fails to align with the satisfaction expectations of the consumer. “Good dogs” are typically those who obey the commands of their owners, remain quiet, walk “well” on a leash, and do not damage household property. Animals enjoy benefits insofar as they hold up their ends of a contract that pre-existed them and assumes their “natural” instrumentalization by humans.³¹

Regarding question 3, the answer is “no,” since animals generally lack the option to refuse or end the entanglements. Even companion animals, who are arguably treated the least poorly within

³¹ There lingers the interesting question of whether “pets” and other exploited animals live “lives worth living” even if they are involved in forced labor and forced companionship, even if they are eventually killed for food or other purposes. If their lives are worth living, then isn’t it better for them to be bred and born in order to live lives worth living? There is the initial and critical question of who and what determines a life worth living, and for whom this determination is made. Yet more relevant here is the question of whether the potential for a life worth living makes that life also a life worth starting (Benatar 2008). We might also ask whether we would make the same determinations about animals (and which animals) as we would for humans and, if not, then ask ourselves why we would make certain determinations for animals but not the same ones for humans.

human-animal entanglements, cannot leave their owners and pursue lives free from human dependency, surveillance, and control. One reason is legal, with animals existing as the legal property of their owners, who retain the right and freedom to generally do with the animals as they please.³² Another reason derives from the historical bio-engineering foundational to the entanglement—a process that over millennia has transformed “wild” animals into forced dependents, most of whom cannot survive either in “the wild” or within human cities or other settlements. Outside of these entanglements, most of these animal refugees simply have no place else to go.

Question 4, “Who is being excluded from a particular conception of entanglement?” raises questions discussed earlier in chapter 4. In that chapter I asked why animals are excluded from particular conceptions of “oppressed,” “exploited,” and more specifically, “subaltern.” I then proceeded to discuss the almost universal speciesist bias in discourses about animals, in which human justice advocates express concern that the elevation of animal-centric issues may adversely impact the extant social justice claims, and thus the well-being, of already marginalized human populations. In the case of the application of entanglement theory, we are confronted with a not too dissimilar question: If relations between communities and between individuals within those communities can be perceived as the products of complex historical entanglements irreducible to normative ethical principles, then what justifies excluding humans from this particular conception of entanglement, even when the relations are oppressive and harmful?

It is both odd and disconcerting that conceptions of entanglement are employed to describe human-animal relations but are either modified or omitted in discussions of human-human relations. I find it difficult to believe that those who are sympathetic to entanglement would accept a presentation of

³² Francione 1995.

human enslavement, labor exploitation, physical and sexual abuse, and various others forms of interpersonal violence as merely “intra-action,” with the harmed humans being, viewed in Haraway’s terms, “*significant others* with whom we are in consequential relationship in an irreducible world of embodied and lived partial differences.” Haraway is correct that oppressed animals and humans are not completely stripped of agency as a consequence of their oppression and remain “actors” despite their oppressive predicaments. However, even as actors they can still be unjustly harmed and denied the ability to “end or refuse the entanglement,” no matter how diligently or defiantly they struggle. Outsider intervention may thus become necessary, yet this intervention is precisely what is disparaged based on its purported insensitivity to local complexities. As Eva Haifa Giraud warns:

The problem is that relational approaches do not just make intervention difficult but actively problematize conventional modes of ethics and politics because relationality — as a conceptual commitment — is, in part, constituted by a resistance to ethico-politics that is perceived to lack this complexity. The paradox of relationality, in other words, is that it struggles to accommodate things that are resistant to being in relation, including forms of politics that actively oppose particular relations.³³

If those who elevate the idea of entanglement harbor resistance to conventional ethico-politics, then why do they not express a similar hesitancy in the context of human “justice” and “rights” and corresponding remedial interventions? Caste-based human discrimination and violence would not be tolerated, let alone exonerated, on the basis of its being viewed as a product of complexity, relatedness, and “entanglement.” Are violent Hindutva cow-protectionists and their Muslim, Christian, and Dalit victims simply enmeshed in a web of complexity that, while commanding sensitivity, care, and dialogue, nevertheless stands exempt from intervention due to the inability of principles motivating intervention to sufficiently account for the complexity of the “relations”? Or should we, following

³³ Giraud 2019, 7

Wadiwel, stress how these are not mere “contact zones” but rather “conflict zones” requiring action from inside and perhaps also from outside the relations?³⁴

In a later publication by Govindrajan, Mohini *chachi*, an informant who works intimately with cows, laments some of the regrettable conflicts operating in human-bovine “contact zones”:

What a thing God has made, this love. After a lifetime of doing work for animals [*jaanwaron ka kaam*] you come to feel such *moh-maya* [love³⁵] for them that you can't sleep at night thinking of them trembling in the cold. But in the end, we sell or let them loose after they stop giving milk. . . . This greed for milk is a terrible thing. I don't know if God will forgive us for thieving milk from their calves. . . . Maybe that's why we call it *moh-maya*.³⁶

Even in this scenario of complex entanglement, Mohini *chachi* admits their “undeniable ‘complicity’ in the violent extraction of animal labor.”³⁷ The ethical problem of “violent extraction” is not only an outsider invention and imposition, but is also a concern of the humans intimately involved in the daily lives of laboring animals, individuals who clearly love these animals yet remain troubled by their roles in the institutions and physical practices of animal substance extraction.

Govindrajan also contends that “it was precisely its lack of moral purity that imbued rural women's love for the cow with an ethical and political potential absent in *gau-rakshaks*’ [cow protectors] ‘pure’ and irreproachable love for Gau-Mata.”³⁸ This ethical and political “potential” may very well exist, yet an appeal to the impossibility of rural woman—or anyone for that matter—to live morally pure does not erase or absolve the problem of milk extraction, a problem keenly perceived by

³⁴ “Would it be better to talk about ‘conflict zones’ rather than ‘contact zones’? After all a conflict zone is also a space where agents interact and co-shape each other, but the idea of a ‘conflict zone’ highlights the ever presence of violence in shaping relations and stresses the structural antagonism between combatants” (Wadiwel 2018, 540).

³⁵ According to Govindrajan, *moh-maya* is “literally, the illusion of love” (2021, 213); Cf. Govindrajan 2018, 83, and n. 2 on 186.

³⁶ Govindrajan 2021, 213.

³⁷ Govindrajan 2021, 196.

³⁸ Govindrajan 2021, 197.

the embedded actors themselves. Nor is it convincing—as was discussed in the previous chapter—to imply a principle of “comparative desert,”³⁹ whereby some ethically questionable activities are exonerated based on the presence elsewhere of other more ethically problematic activities. A critical analysis of rural cow instrumentalization does not deny the love of rural women for their cows, especially in contrast to the “love” proclaimed by violent exponents of cow protectionism, nor does such an analysis insist on an immediate, noncompromising moral purity (or, as Dave terms it, a “tyranny of consistency”⁴⁰). A critical analysis merely suggests that it is possible to hold both positions at the same time: (1) an acceptance of the “contaminated,” “messy,” and “entangled” nature of the real world, and (2) the imperative to both admit and work towards an alternative ethical horizon, one in which we do not need, as Mohini *chachi* worries, God’s forgiveness for our violently exploitative relations with animals.

The dominant “ethics of exclusion,” highlighted by Giraud,⁴¹ operates in two contradictory ways, and in both cases discriminates against animals and in favor of humans. On the one hand, animals are denied a seat at the social justice table owing to speciesism and other—generally unsubstantiated— anxieties about the potential fallout for anthropocentric justice issues by embracing animal-centric issues. On the other hand, violent relationality, as in the case of caste-based violence, is framed as an urgent ethical issue demanding intervention—one that cannot be vindicated by an appeal to “intra-action”—*only* when humans are the victims of the entanglement. In short, animals are excluded from the conventional ethico-politics of “justice” on the basis of not being human, and humans are ultimately

³⁹ Kim 2015, 196.

⁴⁰ Dave 2019b.

⁴¹ Giraud 2019; Hollin et al. 2017.

excluded from nonconventional ethico-politics of “entanglement” on the basis of not being animals. The assumed species barrier is still very much at work.

...

In this study I have not presented systematic arguments for “animal rights” or “animal liberation.” I have argued, primarily from the perspective of Hindu traditions, that the interests, relationships, well-being, and lives of animals should be taken much more seriously than they are at present. One could reasonably claim that in no other point in history have concerns about animal welfare and animal rights so ubiquitously penetrated mainstream consciousness and politics. But one would also have to acknowledge that at no other point in human history have animals been so brutalized as they are in the present. Industrial animal farming is, qualitatively and quantitatively, in the words of Yuval Noah Harari, “one of the worst crimes in history.”⁴² John Sanbonmatsu’s question is still ripe and gripping: “What would it mean for us to come to terms with the knowledge that civilization, our whole mode of development and culture, has been premised and built upon extermination—on a history experienced as ‘terror without end’ (to borrow a phrase from Adorno)?”⁴³ While I make no claims about the entirety of human civilization, I find it hard to deny that the long history of human-animal relations has predominantly been a history of extermination, in one way or another, of the latter by the former, and thus, from the animals’ perspective, a history of “terror without end.”

When animals’ lives are considered at all, a reflex or otherwise uncritical anthropocentrism continues to minimize the seriousness of their claims to ethical consideration and corrective action. I have contended that even when humans are not given lexical priority over animals, their claims to moral consideration are frequently considered weightier than those of animals owing to species membership

⁴² Harari 2015.

⁴³ Sanbonmatsu 2011, 12.

alone. Even when multi-species scholarship attempts to take into serious consideration the reality of animals as actors and their vulnerability to the actions of others, human-animal relations are consistently described in terms of historical entanglement, relatedness, love, and care—frameworks that have the effect of liberating the relations from the kinds of ethical scrutiny applied to problematic human-human relations. I do not deny the relevance of these alternative descriptive and ethical lenses, including their importance when deliberating means of remedial intervention, but I do ask both why and how we continually apply these lenses differently when it comes to humans, and which humans, and animals, and which animals.

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