

What Can a Farm Animal Biography Accomplish? The Case of *Portrait of a Burger as a Young Calf*

ABSTRACT

Agricultural reports and guides, nonhuman animal welfare studies, and animal rights reports attempt to document and convey the condition of nonhuman animals in agriculture. These disciplines tend to resist a prolonged and methodically versatile examination of individual animals. In his pioneer work, Lovenheim (2002), *The author produced such a biographical documentation of calves in the dairy and meat industries. He provided an exceptionally prolonged and detailed tracing of their lives as individuals, establishing an emotional attachment in both documenter and reader. Yet, sentiments for the farmers, typical urban conceptions of communication with nonhuman animals, and difficulties in obtaining the relevant information limit Lovenheim's success and imply similar difficulties in other cases.*

Any personal and social concern for others, nonhuman animals included, depends on a combination of sentiments, values, and empirical knowledge. A compassionate attitude and a sense of justice are never enough. One needs to know what to be compassionate and just about—who are the entities in question, what are their social circumstances and problems, what can we do about it, and what is the cost of such involvement. The problem of knowledge evidently becomes crucial regarding animals who are exploited

institutionally in great numbers—most of them animals on the farm.² Our knowledge about these animals is restricted by a sweeping combination of biological gap, anthropocentric and consumerist ideologies, and social and technological reality that entails physical separation from them (Signer, 1990; Mason & Singer, 1990; Serpell, 1996; Noske, 1997).

If you want to know about the life and experience of animals on farms, conducting your own field research is likely to be neither practical nor sufficient because of lack of relevant resources and training. Apparently, it is necessary to survey existing literature: (a) agricultural manuals and studies; (b) animal welfare science and applied ethology studies; and animal rights and animal welfare groups' reports. All these information types have their advantages as well as their flaws. In brief, agricultural texts originate in a steady proximity with the animals; yet, they relate to the animals in an extremely reifying manner, ignoring any experiential aspect of their lives beyond "productivity"-related issues. Animal welfare and applied ethology studies of farm animals echo the public unease with animal suffering and sometimes regard the growing scientific interest in animal cognition. The scientific methods enable them to illuminate phenomena far beyond intuitive observations. However, most of these studies have a narrow focus and yet seek for generalizations within the field of focus at the expense of individual cases. Additionally, the animals predominantly are perceived as controllable objects, and they are examined with extreme caution—and even hostility—in respect to their mentation.³

Finally, because of sympathy for the animals and critical sensibility, animal rights and animal welfare reports expose overlooked facts. Nevertheless, they tend to generalize, trying to squeeze billions of animals' lives into a few pages and relying heavily on agricultural and scientific literature as a source of information and "serious" status (Singer, 1990, p. 97). Animal rights literature and videos also include exposés that present particular, yet mostly fragmented, observations. These observations usually are made under harsh conditions of a single visit to an agricultural facility (Animal Liberation Victoria, 2003a, 2003b). Undercover investigators publish some rare exposés (Compassion Over Killing, 2004) or industry whistleblowers deliver rare reports (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, 2003), again summing up briefly an overview of the whole facility in question, with a tendency to focus on highlight incidents.

All these sources of information are instructive, especially by providing systems' overview. Yet, they do not provide particular stories of individual animals. Now particular stories of individuals have a special moral significance, because they are by far more empathy-stimulating than are attempts to represent a mass event or an entire site of misfortune—as media reporters, authors, or filmmakers know well (Nussbaum, 2001, pp. 119-125; Höjjer, 2004).

Such stories have a triple function: illuminating particular experiences of the victim that overall representations tend to miss; creating a narrative that is easy to follow, thus suggesting a comprehensible order within an alien system; and facilitating an emotional attachment in the recipient. These qualities of personal stories make them a favorite genre for any popular representation of oppressive systems.

Documentary as well as fictional life stories of individual nonhuman animals are published rather uncommonly, and life stories of animals in mass exploitation systems—such as intensive agriculture—certainly are rare. These animals seldom are perceived as worth representing in detail. Indeed, fictional representations of local episodes in the lives of individual animals on the farm are rather common, especially in children's culture; yet, these representations usually are less empathic than other animal representations (Paul, 1996; Johnson, 1996). In the absence of first-hand testimonies by the animals, the gap between the overall system of, say, the broiler industry and the local experience of a single chicken within it may impair any attempt to construct a comprehensible story of an individual chicken.

A few exceptions—such as the films *Babe* (1995) and *Chicken Run* (2000)—are considerably detailed and daringly expose agricultural cruelties. Yet, typically, the plot of such fictions tends to be located in a pre-industrial environment where the heroes may perform actions freely (even the prison-camp-like location of *Chicken Run* is a relatively luxurious, free-range yard). Thus, such representations are alien to intensive agriculture. Their extensive use of anthropomorphism is an effective tool for arousing sympathy for the animals; correspondingly, however, misrepresentations persist in accordance with human interests and symbolic meanings. One exceptional, relevant story is Davison (1931), who writes a strikingly realistic fiction about a cow's life, relying on a profound knowledge of Australian free-ranging cattle and impressively reconstructing cows' actions and psychology in a

non-anthropomorphizing manner. Yet, Davison represents a practically wild (feral) animal. Sterchi (1983), another realistic fiction, does refer to the Swiss gradually industrializing agriculture, with some horrifying, vivid descriptions of cows and pigs being slaughtered en masse. Yet the major cow character is more of an object of human actions and thoughts than an autonomous subject.

In short, some enlightening stories of individual farm animals certainly have been created, but documentary stories of individual animals within intensive farming systems are a new territory yet to be explored. Hence, Lovenheim (2002) is a precious, pioneer work. In fact, I am not aware of any similar project. Therefore, the topic of farm animal biography requires a detailed analysis of Lovenheim's work.

Lovenheim's (2002) project started after he visited a McDonald's restaurant with his daughter and was puzzled by named dolls of a bull and a cow that were given to children customers. "Were children really expected to hug and play with a toy cow while eating the grilled remains of a real one?" wonders Lovenheim, and adds that the situation "revealed a deep disconnect between what we eat and where it comes from." The incident motivated him to "connect the dots and actually observe up close the process by which living animals become food" (p. xii).

In the resulting book, Lovenheim (2002) documents the lives of twin calves, born on a dairy farm in New York State. The calves were considered as surplus (the male does not produce milk, and the female—as a male's twin—is likely to be infertile) and, therefore, were sent to be fattened for slaughter on another farm. Lovenheim's documentation covers the first two years of their lives. An experienced journalist and mediator, he reached an agreement with the dairy farm owners and with the fattening farmer (who fattens some cattle for additional income) that allowed him to enter the farms at any time to watch, interview, and document as he pleased. Part of the deal was buying the calves and owning them until slaughter.

The greater part of the present essay concerns the project's limitations, as a case study of the challenges likely to appear in farm animal biographies. Yet, it is necessary to start with spelling out Lovenheim's (2002) ground-breaking achievements.

Lovenheim's (2002) extensive attempt to follow his subjects, from the father's sperm "collection" to the consumption of the calves' dead bodies, led him to observe places and practices that almost no other medium of documentation notes. Thus, he competes with overviews of the industry (Webster, 1993; Webster, 2000; Stookey & Watts, 2004; Garry, 2004), surpassing scientific studies, animal rights investigations, and typical agricultural experience. Unlike Lovenheim (pp. 166, 189, 190, 213, 233, 234), the farmers he met never have attended a cattle auction or slaughter. Visiting them weekly, Lovenheim reached a considerable level of personal familiarity with the twins and their particular life-story in a way that promoted some level of care, empathy, interest, and understanding—these attitudes also conveyed to the reader.

Lovenheim's (2002) observational techniques are versatile, without any crystallized—and limiting—method or theory; therefore, he recorded details that may have evaded professional observers of any discipline. Lovenheim followed a worker who kills "downed" cows, noticed that he failed to kill by a single gunshot, and—by a friendly conversation—learned that the worker used to take up to 10 shots to make a kill (pp. 227-229). That is exceedingly slow killing compared to slaughterhouse audits information (Grandin, 2004).

The sheer volume of Lovenheim (2002) and his lack of fixed method or theory allow him to present many observations as a relatively raw material—complex anecdotes awaiting the reader's interpretation, not reducing observations into theory-laden conclusions as most reports do.

Lovenheim (2002), like animal rights documenters and unlike animal welfare scientists, keeps a standard level of interest and potential ethical criticism with regard to many economically indispensable agricultural practices, such as the mother/calf separation.

Lovenheim (2002) unveils a great deal of human motivations behind actions, which are performed on the cattle; additionally, he is remarkably honest about his own motivations.

If such a genre develops, all these characteristics in Lovenheim (2002) may become typical of farm animal biographies (except for the author's self-exposure, which may not be essential for the genre). All bear some advantages in comparison with other modes of documentation. Nevertheless, the book has some significant and nearly inevitable limitations, which I now will review.

A Documenter's Morality

Lovenheim's (2002) documentation is highly interesting because—among other reasons—he seemingly is an ordinary, urban guy. His sensitivity certainly is unusual: His doubts about meat eating led him to eat “less meat” (p. xi), and his childhood memory of a humane society presentation at school indicates that he has been more sensitive than others (pp. 142, 143). Nevertheless, beyond his valuable gut sensitivity, he does not exhibit ethical insights concerning his moral position in relation to the calves. He seems unfamiliar with animal rights theories, rejoicing to come across a random philosophy professor, hoping to get some ethical guidance from him (pp. 223-225). Some critical ethical arguments do appear in the book—as quotations from a colorful, American rock enthusiast who runs a Hindu ashram and “lectures” and “screams” his critique; incidentally, this is the only person in the book whom Lovenheim seems to disdain (pp. 207-209, 216).

Lovenheim's (2002) moral loyalties and choices remain conventional throughout. In fact, he is embarrassed to reveal and probably even feel an interest in the calves' fate—a latent feeling that rarely is exposed. One such rare occasion is a visit to a hospital, where he met the fattening farmer's wife who worked there. Merely because the place is a site for humans who are sick, Lovenheim felt ashamed of his wish to discuss the calves (pp. 201-203). Another incident occurred when Lovenheim thought that he caused the male calf to get his head stuck in the pen's fence; Lovenheim's violent attempts to free the trapped calf were motivated not by compassion but by embarrassment in case the farmer discovers his clumsiness and may have to dismantle the fence and fix it (pp. 215, 216).

Finally, Lovenheim's (2002) consideration of the calves' fate was influenced strongly by his wish to fulfill the original mission (following them “from conception to consumption”) and when considering a change of plan—by the farmers' statements that they will not be offended by the change (pp. 151, 152, 199, 213, 214, 221, 225). These incidents expose the web of feelings and attachments—of which, interest in the calves' welfare and lives is rather modest. Thanks to Lovenheim's comprehensive expression of his thoughts and feelings throughout the text, such insights are possible. This kind of conscious self-exposure is totally absent from scientific animal welfare texts, which con-

ceal the presence of the observer-writer as much as possible, and even from animal rights exposés, which tend to follow the scientific concealment of the observer-writer or, alternatively, display that person as purely compassionate. Lovenheim, who does not seem admirable in his attitude toward the calves, nevertheless portrays himself honestly. Therefore, we can learn how to approach his report.

The Lovenheim (2002) case may imply what could be expected from other, less self-revealing reports. Some powerful emotions may lurk behind any sort of report about a farm animal's condition: enthusiasm to fulfill the documentary mission at the animal's expense, a feel that caring for the animals essentially is worthless or contemptible, and strong sentiments of obligation and affection for people such as farmers and butchers, the animals' direct offenders. These emotions unavoidably inhibit the documenter's ability to be with, and attentively to observe, the animal, thus setting limits on the attainable knowledge.⁴ In other words, moral attitudes, essentially influenced by prior knowledge, determine any further process of acquiring morally relevant knowledge. So, as a biography of calves, Lovenheim is bound to miss many details. Yet, the book is an excellent lesson regarding the limitations of farm animal representations: The book's limitation demonstrates what an urban observer—an exceptionally motivated one—may notice when making an effort to study the experience of a farm animal.

Human Attraction, Story Attraction

Lovenheim's project (2002) was launched when the author decided to "connect the dots and actually observe up close the process by which living animals become food" (p. xii). Dissatisfied with relying on relevant literature alone, he was willing to go out and witness cows at firsthand. Thus, a cow's biography may be seen as the reasonable project for his interests. However, Lovenheim's definition of the project splits into two quite contradictory missions: One is, "to see if it was possible to move backwards from 'billions and billions served' to just one—one live animal, and to follow that one animal all the way from birth to burger." The second mission is to "meet the people who raise and care for these animals, watch them as they work, learn their thoughts as they labor to feed the rest of us" (p. xii).

Both missions are presented adjacently and are intermingled throughout the book. Lovenheim (2002) seems not to notice the conflict between following a cow as a subject and associating with people whose occupation relies on objectifying her; it is doubtful whether he discerns two distinct tasks at all. For him, as an urban documenter, the rural world is one package of farms, farmers, and farmed animals: Similarly, all are alien, and all are worth investigating to a similar degree. Therefore, overcoming the “deep disconnect” from both farmers and farmed animals is what he perceives as, “understand deeply a process” (p. xii).

Accordingly, Lovenheim (2002) training for his project, took an 8-week “Herds-person Training” course that, indeed, helped him to communicate with the farmers. The selected bibliography and some comments in the book suggest that Lovenheim read some material about the feelings, welfare, cognition, and behavior of cows. Obviously, that was secondary to his interest in agricultural education. His conformism with respect to animal agriculture brings about his failure to perceive a fact obvious to anyone interested in any human-exploited group: The exploiter is not a credible source of information about the circumstances and experience of the exploited (Said, 1978; Spivak, 1988; Alcoff, 1991-1992). It seems that Lovenheim fails to see that agricultural workers and scientists, in spite of their intimate proximity to cows, in many ways are the least appropriate people to testify about the animals as subjects of feelings and will. Maybe Lovenheim even is naïve enough to believe that dairy farming training is the proper way to learn all there is to know about cows. This view is not mentioned explicitly, but Lovenheim presents farmers as, “the people who raise and care for these animals”—not as, “the people who exploit these animals to death for money.” That implies how moral conceptions determine the horizons of factual perception.

A mission that started with puzzlement regarding the transformation of living animals into food ended up in a book of roughly 50% personal, human stories, some of which related but loosely to the agricultural topic. This shift has to do with Lovenheim’s (2002) high regard for humans—farmers in particular—while relatively disregarding cows. However, more than banal anthropocentric preconceptions are involved here: The urban journalist, playing the role of a participant anthropologist, finds himself in a fragile position when entering a well-integrated rural community in which everyone is more expe-

rienced, qualified, and socially integrated than he; he has to work hard to gain their trust, ever anxious of losing it. A sense of awe facing these hospitable, professional, exceedingly hard-working people is constructed easily and merged into a romanticization of their, “labor to feed the rest of us” (p. xii).

No similar attitude influenced the Lovenheim-calves relationship (Lovenheim, 2002). This contrast is not inevitable—it is the result of the agricultural circumstances and Lovenheim’s uncritical acceptance of them. When Lovenheim noticed how big cows are compared to him, he felt afraid of them (pp. 14, 48, 248, 249). Such fear—which Steeves (1999) justly regards as a very likely element in forming a relationship with animals of other species—could have functioned similarly to the role of the farmer community’s superiority over the outsider journalist.

Noske (1997) explains that in some circumstances—such as studying large apes in the wild or, still better, being raised as a small child by a flock of non-human animals—humans must adapt to the animals’ society. Yet, Lovenheim made very modest efforts—if any at all—to become accepted by the calves and cows on their own terms. Now, this is not only because he is no Diane Fossey or because cows are no apes. It has to do with the farm animals’ being deprived of much of their potential power and sociality; therefore, some extra efforts are required to acknowledge these qualities. More important, farmers and agriculturalists unavoidably mediate the agricultural reality inside agricultural facilities; hence, it is very difficult, emotionally as well as cognitively, not to perceive farm animals as manipulable, agricultural objects.

In addition to avoiding any participant-anthrozoologist relationship, Lovenheim (2002) had no qualification as a detached, consciously non-participant observer, typical of scientists such as ethologists. As a city dweller, however, he was able to communicate with the calves as companion animals (as I will demonstrate shortly)—a status that did not compete with human attachments but, nevertheless, ascertained a greater concern than did the agricultural attitude. Some feeding attempts and mutual touches had an emotional effect on both sides; these actions did not provide very much information, as Lovenheim restrained himself; yet, they did result in some time together in the pen, followed by gloomy reflections on the human-calf relationship in the agricultural system: “has anyone ever come here and just stood still?” (p. 141).

So far, I have examined Lovenheim's (2002) attraction to the human over the bovine in terms of values and emotions. Yet, Lovernheim reveals a structural source of human attraction that elucidates further difficulties in acquiring knowledge about nonhuman animals. A key sentence, somewhere in the middle of the book (p. 170), says it all: "I was so taken with Joe's story, I'd forgotten there were animals back there." The occasion was a drive with a man whose job is to move cattle to auction for fattening and slaughter. The back of the truck was loaded with ailing cows and a few days-old calves. During the journey, the driver shared his life story with Lovenheim, carrying the reporter's attention from the calling cows and calves nearby. It is the appeal of words that caused the distraction.

Words easily sum up an entire life story. They allow introducing questions and receiving immediate answers about events distant in space and time. In minutes, they make possible the construction of a detailed narrative. In contrast, the animals in the trunk hardly can communicate their present momentary distress to a human: virtually no narrative, no access to events beyond the here and now, no question-answer dialogue. Now I do not claim some essential superiority of language over non-lingual communication as means of delivering information. Indeed, words can communicate some information (such as abstract concepts) that cries and bodily gestures cannot; yet, this does not compel anyone to overlook the latter. The key issue here is language's greater convenience because of its essential merits and also because of training; habits; and—maybe—prejudices, which affect the recipient's attention; and her further efforts to listen, watch, understand, and document.

To approach non-lingual animals and become able to tell their story, the documenter has to be with them continuously, join personal impressions moment by moment, and compose them into a narrative. Now witnessing a live event may be attractive (Peters, 2001, pp. 718-720), but only if it is reasonably comprehensible and originally believed to be important; otherwise, consuming a ready-made dramatized story is, by far, more attractive.

Hence when faced with a choice between writing down human memoir and documenting present moments of a calf, expectedly Lovenheim (2002) was drawn to the easier solution. Because he is a skilled interviewer, it especially was easier for him. Yet, some of the most efficient methods for obtaining information about nonhuman animals are alien to him: distancing oneself

from the object of observation, prolonged hours of “ambush” for interesting events, and lingering silences. Lovenheim was drawn to stories whenever he could get them. Luckily for his project, dairy farms record accessible data about the “productive” life of each cow, accumulating into a technical narrative. Lovenheim collected such data, as well as oral reports by farm workers, summarizing past events for him. So he managed to write a calves’ biography, while leaving trails of the limitations of his relevant documentation powers—and not only his own limitations.

Origins of Compassion and Responsibility

Up to the dramatic turn at the end of the book, Lovenheim (2002) may be read as a thriller. Will Lovenheim spare the calves? Could a man who got to know the animals personally send them to slaughter? Surely, he could: That is what cattle farmers do, even those who are exceptionally compassionate, as Lovenheim strikingly demonstrates in descriptions of the conflicts endured by the fattening farmer’s wife (pp. 66, 67, 75-77, 93, 202). Yet for the urban Lovenheim, who perceives nonhuman animals by different categories, personal relationships with a nonhuman animal classify her as nothing but “pet.” There are different views about the ethical value of human-pet relationships, from denunciation of it as exploitative (Salt, 1980, pp. 41-43; Tuan, 1984; Danten, 1999) to others that recognize in it a possibility for positive mutuality (Budiansky, 1992). The Lovenheim-calves case demonstrates both aspects of the pet phenomenon.

Treating the twins as pets certainly was more patronistic than participatory, as revealed when Lovenheim (2002) brought the bull calf some fresh grass as a bait to make him approach and get petted—a random gift for a penned animal who otherwise was denied such essential food and, therefore, was desperate for it (pp. 126, 139, 140). However, it is more enlightening to see the power of the pet status by following Lovenheim’s reluctance—maybe even fear—to go all the way into “petizing” the calves. His sympathy for them (especially for the less timid male) grew quite against his will. His refusal to name them (he insisted on calling them by their ear tag numbers, “8” and “7”) was of great emotional importance for him: (a) not to get attached; (b) not to challenge the agricultural worldview; and (c) not to transform their beef-to-be status, as countless other clues and statements in the book indicate.

Of course, slaughtering and eating a pet is unthinkable in the modern West (Fiddes, 1991). Free from any economic dependency on agriculture and being an outsider despite his efforts, Lovenheim remained unable to think agriculturally: He could not claim to be “a real cow person” and softly call cows “sweetie” while “culling” them routinely, as the dairy farm manager does (pp. 157-160, 165-167).

Nevertheless, Lovenheim’s (2002) inner struggle against his initial motivation was less the consequence of the growing personal familiarity with the calves and more the result of being their legal owner. Being officially in charge of their fate was on Lovenheim’s mind from the moment he physically marked the two newborns as “his” (p. 30). Lovenheim somewhat regretted it, because his proprietary status contradicted his plan to remain uninvolved (p. 251) and also because it meant much worry and conflict for him and the farmers.

As soon as Lovenheim (2002) perceived he was an owner, he started to worry for the calves’ welfare and wanted to interfere in their favor. In other words, before the formation of personal familiarity, a sense of responsibility may appear when no one else conveniently could be held responsible and when there are no distancing mechanisms such as division of labor, which may conceal the issue of responsibility altogether. Admittedly, such a caring response depends on the documenter’s ability to perceive his protégées morally in the first place. Therefore, Lovenheim justly was uneasy about his “owner” status: Without any loyalty for an exploitative paradigm (agricultural, scientific), economic power over the animals does change the documenter’s work, as it shifts the focus of attention from the events as they are observed onto plausible alternatives.

Moreover, once the documenter practically follows some alternatives, sooner or later the animals will be exempted from being farm animals. In that respect, writing a farm animal biography is similar to a reporter’s work in a (human) disaster zone, or an animal rights undercover investigation: a drive may arise to leave documentation aside and help instead. Yet when ownership is involved, intervening is not a matter of choice: owning someone is intervention indeed, as Lovenheim himself observed (p. 251). Consequently, the documenter must document his own involvement, as he is a central figure in the story. The extra attention for the calves’ welfare is therefore liable to compete with any

inclination to avoid a personal and morally laden involvement. These complexities are all present in Lovenheim.

Examining the opportunities initiated by Lovenheim (2002), the present review is not complete without mentioning some obvious, unexplored opportunities. Lovenheim chose the easiest subject for a biography of intensively reared farm animals: large mammals, who are recognized individually in the farming method, in mostly small, family-run facilities. There is no need to spot an individual bull among 50,000 others in a feedlot system or to follow a pig in the poisonous air of an enormous pen—not to mention broiler sheds or fish ponds. Such industries may impair any attempt for a prolonged documentation of an individual's life (although a shorter life). That is all the more important since Lovenheim (2002) concludes with a comment that suggests a reconciliation between the individual experience and the industry's overall view, recognizing that his encounter with those particular calves—although authentic—nevertheless was random. Eventually, “all calves are number 8” (p. 257). This insight would have been meaningless without the prolonged personal relationship, which constructed a perception of number 8 as a precious individual; it probably would have not evolved in a more industrialized system.

Regarding this insight, it also is worth mentioning that Lovenheim (2002) concluded his experience with what seems to be unease with cattle meat eating—seemingly greater than his initial unease but, nevertheless, an attitude that existed before the farm experience. However, there is no clue to any change in his attitude toward milk products—in spite of his fresh, extensive knowledge about their production being an inseparable part of the system that slaughters calves who, “are number 8.” Therefore, the Lovenheim case implies that the common sense concerning “food animals” is too hard to breach. In any case, meat is recognized as a dead animal (Fiddes, 1991, pp. 2, 3), but other animal products stubbornly retain their miraculous “product” status: packed goods that seem to appear from nowhere, despite facts and sensibilities.⁵

Conclusion

Lovenheim (2002) sets precedence as a documentation of individual animal lives in industrial agriculture. In terms of perseverance and honesty, the book will not easily be matched. Naturally, as a single project, it has not exhausted the possibilities of documentary farm animal biographies. I suggest that further developments may be achieved according to three major lines:

1. Enrich the documentation techniques by comparing views of several documenters, using photography systematically, acquiring training in ethology and animal welfare science, and carrying out more frequent and continuous observations;
2. Explore various relations with the animals, from virtually non-involvement to uninhibited attachment; and
3. Reflect on the project in light of an extensive knowledge of animal rights theories and, possibly, through a dialogue with experts.

As we have seen, some of these suggested guidelines hardly may be applicable or mutually contradictory and virtually impossible to realize within a single project. Some of the contradictions are revealed in Lovenheim's (2002) work. His considerable merits as a farm animal biographer are persistently matched with corresponding weaknesses. Comfortably socializing with farmers indeed was essential for his prolonged project; yet, it enhanced an agricultural reification of the animals. Moreover, perceiving the calves socially, like pets, probably would have been impossible from within a detached, scientific framework. The life story of farm animals is definitely hard to recount.

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Notes

- ¹ Correspondence should be sent to Ariel Tsovel, The Cohn Institute for the History and Philosophy of Science and Ideas, Tel-Aviv University, Ramat Aviv, Tel-Aviv 69978, Israel. E-mail: ariel@anonymous.org.il
- ² I use the terms "farm animal" and "pet" as concise references to these animals' life circumstances. In everyday language, such terms may imply a reduction of the animals into their function in relation to human interests. I do not share this attitude but cannot overcome reductive connotations without excessive clumsiness of expression.

- ³ Some of these difficulties characterize science in general, a topic beyond the scope of the present paper. Many relevant difficulties have been comprehensively addressed concerning scientific attitudes to animal mentation in general (Griffin, 1981, pp. 111-138; Rollin, 1989; Clark, 1997, pp. 128-138, 141-153; Griffin, 2001, chaps. 1-2). Some of the critique was assimilated into science, especially in cognitive ethology, yet specialized critique of animal welfare science is rather sporadic (some exceptions: Stafleu, Grommers and Vorstenbosch, 1996; Fraser, 1999; Rushen, 2003). Individuality, subjectivity and autonomy in farm animals specifically are still overwhelmingly ignored in animal welfare science.
- ⁴ Some pro-animal opposites of these sentiments may also emerge: a lack of interest in the mission as a documentary one, caring to benefit the animals even at the expense of the mission, and enthusiasm to be highly regarded by animal rights activists. Such feelings, which do appear in the book but much less prominently, may enhance the documenter's ability to be with the animals, while, nevertheless, impeding her documentary objectivity.
- ⁵ This observation is in accordance with UK polls in recent years (The Vegetarian Society, July 2004; May 2005). Roughly 5-7% of the British population is vegetarian, compared with about 1% vegan. Yet moral motivations are central in the abstention from meat (for 51% of the respondents in a 2001 poll, 44% in a 1997 poll, and 81% in a 1991 poll) while they are negligible in the abstention from milk (2% in a 1998 poll).

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