

# The Pig's Squeak: Towards a Renewed Aesthetic Argument for Veganism

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**Abstract** In 1906, Henry Stephens Salt published a short collection of essays that presented several rhetorically powerful, if formally deficient arguments for the vegetarian position. By interpreting Salt as a moral sentimentalist with ties to Aristotelian virtue ethics, I propose that his aesthetic argument deserves contemporary consideration. First, I connect ethics and aesthetics with the Greek concepts of *kalon* and *kalokagathia* that depend equally on beauty and morality before presenting Salt's assertion: slaughterhouses are disgusting, therefore they should not be promoted. I suggest three areas of development since Salt's death that could be fruitfully plumbed to rebuild this assertion into a contemporary argument: (1) an updated analysis of factory farm conditions, (2) insights from moral psychologists on the adaptive socio-biological benefits of disgust as a source of cognitive information, and (3) hermeneutical considerations about the role of the audience that allow blameworthiness for slaughterhouse atrocities to be laid upon the meat-eater.

**Keywords** Vegetarianism · Animal ethics · Aesthetics · Sentimentalism · Virtue ethics · Aristotle · Henry Stephens Salt

## Introduction

In November of 1931, Mohandas Gandhi spoke to the London Vegetarian Society on the importance of grounding vegetarianism on a moral foundation, rather than on pragmatic concerns about personal health. In his opening remarks, Gandhi paid tribute to the book that first “showed me why apart from a hereditary habit...it was right to be a vegetarian” (Gandhi 1931). Although he admitted that health-based arguments can be intellectually fulfilling, Gandhi argued that, from his perspective,

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those vegetarians who most frequently fell back into meat-eating habits were those who merely possessed such habitual reasons and lacked a more personally satisfying foundation for their principles; so he insisted that “for remaining staunch to vegetarianism a man requires a moral basis” and he thanked the man seated next to him—Henry Stephens Salt—for his book *A Plea for Vegetarianism* that showed the Mahatma “...why it was a moral duty incumbent on vegetarians not to live upon fellow-animals.”

This sentiment—that effective arguments must be existentially satisfactory as well as logical if they are to spark genuine change—characterized much of Salt’s humanitarian career. A one-time professor of classics at Eton College, Salt is most well-known today for his efforts as a social activist, speaking out in support of causes ranging from prison reform to anti-war efforts to animal welfare. A founding member of the Humanitarian League, Salt struck a new chord in the then-burgeoning vegetarian and anti-vivisection movement by reframing the ethics of non-human-animal treatment in terms of rights rather than paternalistic welfare; any who today consider themselves a champion for “animal rights” owe a debt to Salt’s pioneering perspective. Yet Salt was an apologist first and a philosopher second; he was happy to employ a wide swatch of reasons, the sum force of which might sway his audience’s opinion rather than systematically concentrate on the soundness of a single argument. His 1906 publication of *The Logic of Vegetarianism* lays out no less than five separate proofs in just over one hundred pages for the moral superiority of the vegetarian position, but with the careful remembrance that “the appeal of vegetarianism, as of all humane systems, is not to heart alone, nor to brain alone, but to brain and heart combined, and that if its claims fail to win this double judgment they are necessarily void and invalid” (Salt 2012: 3).

At present, three of these proofs—the hygienic, economic, and nature-based arguments—can be temporarily set aside. However interesting, they focus on pragmatic and not Gandhi’s existential concerns; for this, Salt’s humanitarian and aesthetic arguments must be considered. Though he himself would have likely not been familiar with the term, Salt appears to have had meta-ethical sentimentalist leanings—he argues, for example, that “...vegetarianism is not primarily based on any such hard-and-fast formula, but on the conviction, suggested in the first place by instinctive feelings, but confirmed by reason and experience” (Salt 2012: 9). Consequently, it should come as no surprise that he considered his humane and aesthetic arguments to be “twin branches of the same stem” (Salt 2012: 51), both appearing to him first as obviously the case, only to later be explained rationally upon reflection.

Much of Salt’s legacy has focused on his humanitarian concerns—what would today fall under the category of ethics. His language of animal rights rings loudly to anyone with even a passing familiarity with contemporary arguments for veganism and his sentimentalism is championed in a much more developed form today by philosophers like Daniel Jacobson, Justin D’Arms, Michael Slote, and others. His aesthetic concerns, however, seem to have fallen by the academic wayside. I suggest that—particularly with the “affective turn” in recent moral psychology—it is time for this oversight to be reconsidered. Whereas Salt’s aesthetic argument essentially consisted of his listing many disgusting atrocities found to be commonplace in the

abattoirs of his day and thereby concluding that “one would think it incredible that any lover of the beautiful could doubt that the national sense of beauty must be seriously impaired by these disgusting and degrading sights” (Salt 2012: 56), contemporary advances in aesthetic theory (as well as evolutionary biology) can help to provide philosophical support for his polemical proclamations. When conjoined with an updated assessment of habitual practices in modern-day slaughterhouses, we will be able to approach a rehabilitated and updated version of Salt’s century-old aesthetic argument for vegetarianism.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Nobility of Aristotle’s *Kalon***

Salt’s association of aesthetic concerns with humanitarian or moral concerns likewise associates him with a philosophical tradition far more removed from him than he is from us: Aristotelian virtue ethics. As John Milliken has argued, Aristotle’s usage of the Greek concept *kalon* spans the gap between ethics and aesthetics that Kant later tried to establish, referring as it does to something that is both “beautiful” as well as “functioning excellently”; Milliken points out that Aristotle refers to all virtuous actions being done for the sake of the *kalon* (e.g. “Now virtuous actions are noble and done for the sake of the noble,” Aristotle 1120a23) and concludes that people or “things that are functioning excellently are described as *kalon* because functioning excellently *is* beautiful” (Milliken 2006: 327). Phenomenologically, there is no need for the virtuous agent to rationally assess the normativity of a virtue for its attractiveness is a sufficient ground for its pursuit; again from Millikan, “the virtuous agent steps back and sees, not the embodiment of a principle of reason, but an instance of aesthetic perfection. He is moved not by the reasonableness of an act, but by its beauty. The noble [*kalon*] is fundamentally an aesthetic concept...it is a matter of perception and not one of calculation” (Milliken 2006: 327). And although Jessica Jaques Pi (2012) has argued that even Kant’s definitions are connected to Aristotelian notions of aesthetic appreciation, it was the eventual rise of Kantian disinterestedness in aesthetics that led to the extrication of moral sentiments from aesthetic discussions and vice versa.

In Aristotle’s day, aesthetic and ethical concerns were easily intertwined, as demonstrated by the rare but honorable term *kalokagathia*. Weiler (2002: 11) has traced some of its limited usage in antiquity, referring sometimes to the god Zeus, but typically to male members of the Greek nobility who were, as Plato puts it in the *Lysis*, “worthy to be called not just beautiful, but imbued with *kalokagathia*” (Plato 207a). This compound superlative is derived from the Greek words *kalos* and *agathos*—beautiful and good—and appears to have only been earned by someone who exemplified both qualities to the uttermost. Later Neo-Platonists Christianized the concept in the Middle Ages by internalizing the beautiful elements in an attempt to mystically draw attention to a transcendent God, thereby laying the groundwork for

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<sup>1</sup> Although Salt was concerned specifically with abstention from animal flesh, the argument as it will be presented here will conclude in defense of abstention from any commodity obtained via a factory farm, including eggs and dairy products.

Kant's eventual disinterestedness, but this all post-dates ancient Greece (Dürriegl 2002: 209). In the *Politics* (1259b34-1260a4), Aristotle himself essentially equates *kalokagathia* with *arête*, using this complex notion of beautiful/moral/nobility as a synonym for virtue (Dover 1974: 44).

Individually, this should be familiar territory, for the recognition of a virtue as such is manifestly an aesthetic experience. Aristotelian virtues are not identified through rational determination (as utilitarian or deontological values typically are), but are simply seen to be what they are in the same manner as aesthetic experiences; as Aristotle says in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1109b20), the right thing to do “is not easy to determine by reasoning, any more than anything else that is perceived by the senses; such things depend on particular facts, and the decision rests with perception.” As Millikan (2006: 330) summarizes, “the virtuous agent does not calculate what the *kalon* is; rather, he sees it. The form all *kalon* actions share, then, is not something grasped with the mind, but, so to speak, with the heart. The virtuous agent acts for the sake of the beautiful.”<sup>2</sup> It should come as no surprise that many of the most prominent defenders of ethical sentimentalism today also consider themselves virtue ethicists.

## Salt's Argument

With only a few notable exceptions (such as Kuehn 2004; Telfer 1996; Irvin 2008), contemporary philosophical defenders of vegetarianism or veganism seem to restrict aesthetic concerns to the periphery of their cases; not so for Salt, whose “practical desire to abolish the horrors of the slaughter-house” (Salt 2012: 46) led him to co-opt as many avenues as possible to his cause—including a critique based on his target's ugliness. Ridiculing the “so-called” aesthetes to whom “the sight of an ugly house, for example, is a sore trouble and grievance, but the slaughter-house, with all its gruesome doings, is a matter of supreme unconcern” (Salt 2012: 52), Salt laid out an argument that appeals to the experience of disgust at the discovery of abattoir processes and products as sufficient evidence that said processes are wrong. Like Upton Sinclair had already done in his novel *The Jungle*, Salt detailed at length the dreadful scene inside the average Chicago meat factory of his day, listing horrors ranging from the sight of blood gushing from open wounds and the stench of walls soaked through with the spray to the heaviness of the thick and steamy air filled with the sounds of tens of thousands of animals screaming in pain daily to conclude that any system built on such squalor should not be allowed to continue existing. Moreover, Salt believed that any properly –thinking person with the initiative to look for themselves would come to the same conclusion; with a wit that previewed an often-quoted line from Peter Singer years later, Salt quipped “If it be true that ‘hunger is the best sauce,’ it may also be said that the *bon vivant's* most indispensable sauce is *ignorance*—ignorance of the horrible and revolting circumstances under which his juicy steak or dainty cutlet has been prepared” (Salt 2012: 30).

<sup>2</sup> Millikan concludes his essay with the observation that “if we don't *feel* the right way it is impossible for us to consistently *behave* the right way,” which sounds very similar to Gandhi's above observation.

Salt's aesthetic concerns were not exhausted there, for he was also concerned to criticize the product of such processes, in part by nodding to his friend Bernard Shaw's line about "scorched corpses...displayed on polite dinner tables when the dish-covers are removed" (Salt 2012: 54), but also by appealing to the formative effect on the human agent who is daily exposed to such aesthetic horrors. Though certainly only referring to his own experience, Salt argued that one need only to "compare the face of the typical slaughterman with that of the typical gardener" to determine which is the more honorable profession (Salt 2012: 54).

Finally, one of Salt's most common ripostes in *The Logic of Vegetarianism* is the case of cannibalism and the revulsion that such a notion typically generates, as he says "the flesh-eater generally affects to look on cannibalism as something monstrous and abnormal, a dreadful perversion of taste which has no connection with the civilised meat-diet on which our welfare is supposed to depend..." (Salt 2012: 97). Salt was quite quick, however, to point out that many kreophagist arguments are equally justifying of the consumption of human flesh.<sup>3</sup> Though he lived several decades before the term "speciesist" had been invented, Salt employs that very concept to criticize this inconsistent aesthetic experience on the part of non-human-meat-eaters and insisted that "the glories of the old English roast beef may be instructively compared with the glories of the old African roast man" (Salt 2012: 97).

Altogether, Salt believed that the force of these considerations required, at the very least, "to clear oneself of all complicity in the horrible business of the slaughterhouse" (Salt 2012: 11), trusting that the cumulative weight of each line of thinking would combine to persuade his audience. While this may very well be the case, it hardly makes for a valid philosophical proof. At present, what follows will not attempt to reconstruct Salt's argument into something more formal, but will instead present three areas of development since Salt's death that could be fruitfully mined for the later development of such an argument or collection of arguments.

After first establishing that modern-day slaughterhouse conditions are at least as abhorrent as those of Salt's time, the secondary concern will consider recent contributions to the philosophy of disgust (influenced in large part by evolutionary biology) that helps to explain the aesthetic revulsion experienced by slaughterhouse witnesses. Finally, the relationship of aesthetic appreciation to the responsibility of a work's audience can shed some light on Salt's assumption of complicity in the grotesqueness of the abattoir, as highlighted by the adaptation of a reader-response hermeneutic to the aesthetic experience of animal slaughter.

## Some Updated Considerations

### Current Conditions

First, any update of Salt's argument will obviously be made in light of a considerably different supply chain for meat-based dinners. Advances in both

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<sup>3</sup> Although it has since fallen out of fashion, "kreophagism" was the term Salt and his contemporaries used to refer to the practice of eating meat. With its etymological roots in the Greek term *kreas* ("flesh"), the word is roughly akin to today's "carnism".

technology and public policy have reshaped the meat industry since the days of Sinclair's muckraking, ostensibly for the better, yet it is certainly still possible to sink one's teeth into contemporary versions of Salt's concern for the gruesomeness of both slaughterhouse processes and products.

Without question, the capacity of the modern slaughterhouse, with its assembly-line methods and efficiency experts, greatly exceeds anything seen in Salt's day, but there has been little corresponding innovation to improve the living conditions of the creatures being processed; as Singer (2009: x) describes, roughly ten billion animals are killed each year in the United States after living shortened lives, being fed in unsanitary ways (that, as Katz (2006: 260) describes, promote the growth of antibiotic-resistant diseases), and living in cages just barely big enough to fit inside.<sup>4</sup> In Matthew's Scully's account of touring one of Carroll Foods' pork production facilities in the early 2000s, he related how he saw

“sores, tumors, ulcers, pus pockets, lesions, cysts, bruises, torn ears, swollen legs everywhere. Roaring, groaning, tail biting, fighting, and other “vices,” as they're called in the industry. Frenzied chewing on bars and chains, stereotypical “vacuum” chewing on nothing at all...and nest-building with imaginary straw. And “social defeat,” lots of it, in every third or fourth stall some completely broken being you know is alive only because she blinks and stares up at you...” (Scully 2002: 267–268).

And whereas governmental regulations do exist to ensure a safer, more humane industry, they are, at times, laughable. Consider how as recently as 2006, rabbits were classified alongside poultry by the USDA—a category unprotected by the Humane Slaughter Act of 1958. This meant that the meat packers were allowed to speed up production and reduce considerations for rabbits, two facts that led to the common need to process fully-conscious creatures (Eisnitz 2007: 310–311).

In fact, such a slaughter method is sometimes the goal, as Wirzba records how some slaughterhouse managers seek to avoid an animal being “too dead” at the time of processing: “the ideal, it seems, is to have a heart pump for a little while so that the blood can drain quickly and speed up the line” (Wirzba 2011: 176).<sup>5</sup> This expectation, combined with the messiness of haste and poorly-trained workers, contributes strongly to the ease with which Eisnitz found references in her interviews with factory workers to live animals running loose through killing floors and sticking pits with open wounds and exposed entrails dragging on the ground (Eisnitz 2007: 196). It was precisely this sort of behavior which Salt presciently condemned when he pointed out that “it is impossible to transport and slaughter vast numbers of large and highly-sensitive animals in a really humane manner” (Salt 2012: 40) or, we might add, in a way that is anything other than gruesome.

And, following Salt, the product of this atmosphere is likewise concerning. When product quantities are stressed over quality, oversights in the production chain can allow meat contaminated with a variety of inedible elements and pathogens to slip

<sup>4</sup> Singer's updated classic (2009: xii) lists only three states that have passed laws to change such practices.

<sup>5</sup> Eisnitz (2007: 122–123) both confirms and critiques this practice.

past the safeguards put into place to prevent such things (Schlosser 2002: 217). Not only can such contaminants find their way onto consumer's plates (Prayson et al. 2008), but in October 2015, affidavits obtained by the Government Accountability Project revealed that USDA inspectors have come to expect such results; as one anonymous inspector (Anonymous 2015b) related, "...contamination such as hair, toenails, cystic kidneys, and bladder stems has increased under HIMP [a pilot program under review]," or from another, "On numerous occasions I witnessed them [company inspectors] fail to spot abscesses, lesions, fecal matter, and other defects that would render an animal unsafe or unwholesome" (Anonymous 2015a). And while policies are in place to prevent such contamination, these same policies categorize feces as a "cosmetic blemish" that factory workers are allowed to simply wash off (Eisnitz 2007: 167). Regardless, line speeds according to the inspectors, are typically "running so fast it is impossible to see anything on the carcass."

### The Psychology of Disgust

Why do we recoil in horror at hearing stories of such gruesomeness? The emotional response to hearing of hatcheries searing off chicken beaks to prevent the animals from pecking each other to death (Eisnitz 2007: 165) or to stuck pigs chaotically spraying blood over the workers and customers surrounding them (Eisnitz 2007: 71) certainly contradicts our idyllic notion of happy Old MacDonald's farm, but, beyond childhood disappointment, the experience of disgust carries certain powerful sociobiological cues—cues that any proper philosophy of disgust will have to consider, as Nina Strohminger's recent castigation of Colin McGinn's *The Meaning of Disgust* strongly indicates. As Strohminger (2014) points out, with a considerable reference list to support her point, "disgust is an emotion whose principal function is to help us avoid contaminants and disease—a kind of behavioral extension of the immune system." Politically speaking, this same principle appears to hold true on the societal level, with antisocial human behavior likewise relating to this emotion. Consequently, any assessment of the experience of disgust in light of the pursuit of Aristotle's *kalon* will need to consider this evolutionary history as well.

Firstly, it is to be admitted that aesthetics since Kant intentionally divorces questions of beauty from those of the sorts of utility with which evolutionary questions are concerned; but adaptationists and evolutionary psychologists like Tooby and Cosmides have begun to approach this question from a different angle. Arguing that the human brain has two primary modes of cognition—an external/functional mode and an internal/organizational mode—Tooby and Cosmides suggest that aesthetic notions do not relate to the former, but to the latter. Typically, questions of evolutionary usefulness are focused on external behaviors that lead to an organism's survival, however attention must also be paid to the internal cognitive processes that filter, categorize, interpret, and respond to sensory information from the external world. As Tooby and Cosmides point out, "The lack of correspondence between aesthetically driven behavior and useful outcomes in the external world is exactly what you would expect if the system driving the behavior is designed to produce adaptive internal changes, when the external price is not too great" (Tooby and Cosmides 2001: 16).

This is easy to relate to the emotion of disgust as an internal preventive measure relative to the potential dangers of disease and bodily harm when we consider certain classic examples of disgust-inducing disease-filled objects like fecal matter or a rotting corpse—our internal emotional state interprets the data to initiate an externally-directed avoidance response. And, given that “the evolved architecture of the human mind contains functionally specialized, content-dependent cognitive adaptations for social exchange,” our disgust-response may have prosocial benefits as well (Cosmides and Tooby 1995: 220).

By way of a negative example, consider another disgusting product of the contemporary factory farm: the recent identification of a link between slaughterhouse employment and arrest rates for violent crimes, especially sexually violent crimes, which has lead researchers to suggest that the data may imply that “the work done within slaughterhouses might spillover to violence against other less powerful groups, such as women and children.” Not only do stories of rape and abuse offend our moral sensibilities, but they turn our stomachs, and the idea that the habitual abuse of one type of creature might predispose a person to abuse other creatures is not only a point that Carol Adams (1994) made over two decades ago, but is a phenomenon that has only continued to accrue statistical evidence (Fitzgerald et al. 2009: 175). This so-called “Sinclair Effect,” rings very close in tone to Salt’s observation a century ago that the meat-packing houses of his day “are sickening beyond description. The men in them are more brutes than the animals they slaughter” (Salt 2012: 49).

Similarly, moral psychologists like Alexandra Plakias, Jonathan Haidt, Hanah Chapman, Adam Anderson, and others, have identified a promotive connection between disgust and moral judgment. Experimentally, feelings of disgust have been induced in test subjects who were then asked to assess the morality of a wide variety of scenarios (such as in Schnall et al. 2008; Silvia and Brown 2007; Chapman and Anderson 2014); as the body of literature continues to grow, the evidence is continuing to accumulate that, in the words of Chapman and Anderson (2014: 347), “Although disgust may have originated in defending the body against poison and disease, its role in morality appears to extend far beyond this sphere.” Indeed, by most accounts (certainly in daily practice) the biological-aesthetic experience of disgust is often interpreted as sufficient evidence that an action is antinormative, whether for personal or social reasons. And while Joshua May (2014: 130) cautions against drawing far-reaching conclusions from as-yet-minimal data points, even his concession that “such data only warrant something like the conclusion that disgust *amplifies* moral judgments in the direction of condemnation” still admits that disgust only appears to be affective in a negative direction; it would be problematic to this case if *kalokagathia*-possessing individuals interpreted disgust as an attractive reason to do something, but we have no evidence to this point that this is the case.

Consequently, it is a rather small leap to conclude that our response to the gruesomeness of the abattoir stems from this internal/organizational cognitive process that recognizes the wrongness of both the processes and the product of the contemporary slaughterhouse, just as Salt’s aesthetic argument assumed a century ago.



## Complicity and Reading the Abattoir

However, an important concern for a cognitivist theory of disgust like this is the very real possibility that an agent could genuinely feel disgusted at a stimulus that does not merit such a response; if the emotions that theoretically contribute to one's pursuit of the Aristotelian *kalon* cannot be trusted to accurately correspond with the external world, then the trustworthiness of emotional cognitive content is in danger. To consider what sort of responsibilities an agent has in interpreting her affective states, and to unpack Salt's assumptions about the complicity of an eater in the activities of the abattoir, some insight from the field of hermeneutical aesthetics will be helpful.

First of all, there are two possible ways that our emotional states could, in theory, "mis-fire":

- (1) We could experience disgust because of something that does not deserve it, or...
- (2) We could fail to experience disgust towards something that does deserve it.

In both cases, the agent's problem concerns a failure to understand the situation as it genuinely is, whether because of (a) the lack of information or (b) the belief of false information. For example, regarding (1), a person in the American South in the 1950s might well have been disgusted at the thought of an interracial marriage either because he (a) lacked relevant moral, anthropological, or some other type of knowledge that would have made interracial marriage sensible to him, or (b) held to certain false beliefs about the nature of marriage, racial identity, or some other factor relevant (in his mind) to the situation. However, this obviously does not require the conclusion that interracial marriage is immoral; it is certainly not the case that the feeling of disgust is indefatigable or that the mere presence of such a feeling necessitates certain moral or epistemic claims. The suggestion is simply that properly-functioning emotions are as equally valid sources of information as any other form of potentially untrustworthy sensory perception for drawing epistemic and moral conclusions.

Consequently, the subject's identification of the meaning of his affective state will, from a hermeneutical perspective, rely on the interplay of his beliefs and his surroundings as the former interprets the latter; as Gadamer says in *Truth and Method*, "The concept of taste undoubtedly implies a mode of knowing. The mark of good taste is being able to stand back from ourselves and our private preferences. Thus taste, in its essential nature, is not private but a social phenomenon of the first order" (Gadamer 2004: 32). We cannot simply assume that every sensation we experience is merited, but must inform ourselves of the reality of our situation in light of the facts so that we can respond appropriately.

And it is here that (2) becomes important. In much the same way as how it is easier to appreciate satire once the audience comes to understand the targeted situation, the grotesqueness of the meat produced by the factory farm becomes apparent once the facts of its manufacturing are recognized. And this, in light of some reader-response theories of criticism that center interpretative attention on the

product of an audience's response and the text generating the response, can bring us back towards Aristotle's *kalon*. Certainly, reader-response theories are more relativistic in tone, given that different readers will have somewhat different responses to the same text, but Aristotle was happy to affirm—to a degree—that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. The crucial difference, though, based again primarily on our biology, is that “for Aristotle we all have exactly the same eye” (Milliken 2006: 333).

However, if the agent is involved at all in the creation of meaning on the postmodern hermeneutic, then responsibility—and, therefore, complicity—become valid concerns when ethical questions are a part of the mix. If we consider the factory farm as the “text” that the disgusted witness is “reading,” we may make some headway towards explaining how Salt's suspicion of blameworthiness follows: any participation in the chain of factory farmed food production—including financial participation as the end consumer—becomes a tacit validation of the entire process. This aesthetic concept serves to undergird the even more obvious economic point that factory farms operate as they do in their pursuit of profit-bearing customers—to become a customer is to provide the impetus for the whole project.

## The Pig's Squeak

Notably, despite Gandhi's praises of Salt's insight, this line of argumentation will not require principled vegetarianism in every case—an eight year old girl who lovingly collects eggs from her pet duck in her backyard, for example, would almost certainly not be touched by this aesthetic critique—but the rarity of personalized food production in the West today and the prevalence of factory-provided meals make an aesthetic argument for *de facto* veganism, at the very least, relatively simple. Moreover, as Michael Pollan's account of his own backyard slaughter experience indicates, disgust can still be triggered on a small scale; reflecting on the repulsion he felt towards the disposal of his inedible slaughter waste, Pollan mused that:

no matter how well it is masked or how far it is hidden away, this death smell—and the reality that gives rise to it—that shadows the eating of any meat, industrial, organic, or whatever, is part and parcel of even this grassy pastoral food chain whose beauty had so impressed me. I wondered whether my disgust didn't cover a certain shame I was feeling about the morning's work (Pollan 2006: 237).

So, the aesthetic argument of Henry Stephens Salt, seated as it is at the confluence of moral psychology, evolutionary aesthetics, and social welfare, indicates that this branch of a critique of animal exploitation is a fruitful one for further consideration.

As Salt said, “It is much to be regretted that it is not found possible, in this enterprising establishment, to “can” the squeak, as well as the flesh, of the pig; for such a phonographic effect might suggest certain novel thoughts to the refined ladies and gentlemen who contentedly regale themselves on ham-sandwiches at polite supper tables” (Salt 2012: 55). So long as this is the case, an argument for veganism based on aesthetic experience deserves attention.

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