

## Pigs in Paradise

### Local happy people raising (happy, local) pigs?

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**ABSTRACT** | This paper approaches the topic of *local*, *ethical*, and *sustainable* food, an alimentary conception that is particularly salient at present, given recent trends regarding thoughtful, environmentally-sensitive consumption. And yet each of these concepts – *local*, *ethical*, and *sustainable* – can have multiple interpretations. In this paper, we articulate and defend a somewhat surprising claim about some potential implications of such alimentary commitments – namely, that they may lend support to some varieties of “conscientious carnivorism.” We focus on an especially illustrative instance of (potentially) moral meat-eating: the case of *Cinta Senese*, a once-endangered pig that holds a special place in the cultural and environmental landscape in Tuscany, Italy. In Tuscany, *Cinta Senese* constitute a robustly local food product (in a genealogical sense), where they, plausibly, lead quite happy lives (in a welfarist sense), and the recent revival of their dwindling populations clearly represents a “sustainability success” (in a conservationist sense). Thus, we argue that locavores with welfarist and conservationist proclivities may actually find that they have considerable reason to support (rather than to oppose) this form of animal agriculture – as well as others relevantly like it.

**KEYWORDS** | Local Food; Food Ethics; Welfarism; Sustainability; Conservationism; Cinta Senese Pigs; Tuscany

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Our subject is what one might term “*local, ethical, and sustainable food*” – an alimentary conception that is surely of interest to many readers (and eaters), both lay and learned. Such a conception is particularly salient at present, given recent trends in both food scholarship and popular sentiment regarding thoughtful, environmentally-sensitive consumption (see, for example, (Furrow 2016; McWilliams 2009; Oppenlander 2013)). However fashionable such a conception might be, it still stands in need of significant elucidation. For each of these concepts – *local, ethical, and sustainable* – can have multiple interpretations. Herein we will articulate and defend a somewhat surprising claim about some potential implications of such alimentary commitments – viz., that they may lend support to some varieties of “conscientious carnivorism.” But to do so, we must first unpack our key terms.

In this paper we are concerned with “local food” in what we term the *genealogical* sense of that phrase.<sup>1</sup> On this conception, food is *local* insofar as its character is thought to be at least partially, and significantly, constituted by its etiology. Local food in the genealogical sense is food *from* a particular place (and maybe also a particular time); it could not be (re)produced by just anyone, growing or making it just anywhere, at just any time. Foods that are “non-local” (in this sense) are, by contrast, spatio-temporally “generic,” place-less.<sup>2</sup> Such foods could be of, or from, anywhere – or nowhere. They might be mass produced, assembled from geographically diffuse inputs, or produced via processes that are indifferent to their origins. Food that is local in the genealogical sense bears the indelible stamp of the time, place, and manner in which it was produced – and, perhaps, sometimes literally, the stamp of the persons who produced it (Figure 1). Foods that demonstrate *provenance* are conceived of as “local” in the genealogical sense precisely because the particular circumstances of their production impart a certain *terroir* (Trubek 2008). Certain flavors, aromas, and/or textures distinguish that food as being *from* or *of* a particular time or place; these properties are valued explicitly because of their place- and production-based characteristics.

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<sup>1</sup> Local food can be conceptualized in multiple ways (see, e.g., (Morgan, Marsden, and Murdoch 2009)). Three familiar specifications are as follows: locality as geographical distance between producer and consumer; locality as typicality; and locality as a short social distance between producer and consumer. (For a recent, careful, and thorough analysis of these three specifications – there termed the “relative spatial,” the “absolute spatial,” and the “social” dimensions of locality – see section III of (Borghini, Piras, and Serini 2021).) The conception employed in this paper is most closely attuned to “locality as typicality” – though, as explained in the text, it incorporates further elements as well.

<sup>2</sup> This “place-less” state being part and parcel of a wider “geography of nowhere” (Kunstler 1994) and postmodern “global sense of place” (Massey 1994) that has been thoroughly discussed in geography circles and beyond.



Figure 1: Five-point crown stamp of certified Parma prosciutto ham, a geographically-indicated food product from Italy (image from [https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/food-safety-and-quality/certification/quality-labels/eu-quality-food-and-drink/prosciutto-di-parma\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/food-safety-and-quality/certification/quality-labels/eu-quality-food-and-drink/prosciutto-di-parma_en)).

We are furthermore concerned with “ethical food” in an *animal welfarist* sense of the phrase. According to this perspective on the ethics of food production and consumption, it is unethical to consume – let alone produce – food whose production involves undue levels of harm for the (sentient) animals involved in that production.<sup>3</sup> The welfarist perspective allows wide latitude for different conceptions of the relevant sorts of *harm* involved here. For example, is a non-human animal “harmed” by having its life artificially (albeit, perhaps, painlessly) shortened? Do deprivations of opportunities for species-typical behaviors qualify as harms, even if these deprivations aren’t associated with physical pain? Or do only physical

and emotional pain and anguish qualify as harms in the relevant respect? (And so forth ...) Likewise, the welfarist perspective is compatible with a wide range of practical conclusions *vis-à-vis* animal-consumption practices. (For instance, persons committed to welfarism may be led on those grounds to embrace, in turn, a *vegan* lifestyle, or a *vegetarian* lifestyle, or a *pescatarian* lifestyle, or a “happy meat” lifestyle, or ...)

Finally, in this paper we are concerned with “sustainable food” in a conservationist sense of that phrase. This conception rests on what, among environmental ethicists, is frequently called an *ecocentric* axiology, whereupon various biotic (and maybe some hybrid a/biotic) *collectives* are understood to be the bearers of inherent, or at least intrinsic, value.<sup>4</sup> One type of hybrid biotic/abiotic collective

<sup>3</sup> Admittedly – at least on its “consumption side” – this rendering of the welfarist perspective assumes a (perhaps overly naïve) ethical premise: what Anne Barnhill, Mark Budolfson, and Tyler Doggett call (in introductory material appearing in both of their jointly-edited volumes) the “Simple Principle” (Barnhill, Budolfson, and Doggett 2016) about consumer ethics. As these authors put it in their (Barnhill, Doggett, and Budolfson 2018, p. 9), this principle holds that “if something is produced in a way that is wrong, then it is always wrong to be a consumer of it.” They go on to argue persuasively, though, that this principle appears inadequate, and that, as a consequence, the ethics of consumption are considerably more complicated.

<sup>4</sup> On our understanding, something has *inherent* value when it bears that value “objectively,” independently of the valuing activity of any “value-able” subject. Something has *intrinsic* value, on the

entity that might bear value, on this view, is the *ecosystem* – jointly composed of a collection of (abiotic) soils, air, and waterways, together with the (biotic) populations of organism residing in and around them. But the paradigmatic example of a (wholly biotic) collective entity thought to bear inherent value, standardly cited by ecocentrists, is the *species*. Species (and their preservation) are often claimed to have a kind of inherent or intrinsic value, over and above the value borne by each of their individual members. A collective entity, like a species or a population, may have interests that are served by events that are contrary to the interests of (some of) their individual members – as when a herd is benefited by the culling behaviors of predators in a fashion that forestalls overpopulation and its concomitant resource depletion.<sup>5</sup>

Our principal contention is that the conjunction of locavorism (in the genealogical sense), welfarism, and conservationism generates a position in *culinary or cultural ethics* that is as theoretically well-grounded as it is under-appreciated: viz., that certain sorts of “local meats” are to be *supported* on ethical grounds. That is, certain animal-raising and -slaughtering practices may deserve our ethical approval, precisely *because* of the welfare and conservation effects that they generate for the animals involved—not only for the non-human animals that are (humanely) raised and (painlessly) slaughtered, but also for the *human* animals that derive their livelihoods, their identities, and perhaps even tremendous satisfaction from the roles they play in this practice as well.

Whether or not any such locavorist practices actually are justified on welfarist and conservationist grounds, we cannot say – the authors ultimately will remain agnostic on the question. But we do believe that this is a plausible possibility, worthy of serious investigation. So our aim in this paper is simply to illustrate how one might attempt to defend certain versions of (carnivorous) locavorism on animal welfarist and conservationist grounds – using the example of *Cinta Senese* pigs in Italy as a case study. We shall proceed as follows: In Sections I and II we adapt Roger Scruton’s encomium to the lifeways of the English countryside (and the “happy meat” produced thereby) to the context of Tuscany – explaining why we think *Cinta Senese* pigs provide an even better illustration of Scruton’s thesis than

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other hand, insofar as it is valued intrinsically (rather than *instrumentally*, or “extrinsically”) by some valuing subject. (Rolston III 1994) offers one example of the former view – an ecocentrism premised on the objective, inherent value of the non-human natural environment. (Callicott 1986) defends a more “subjectivist” account of the (intrinsic) value of various a/biotic collectives.

<sup>5</sup> Our embrace of both welfarism (in the preceding paragraph) and ecocentrism (in the present) indicates that, in terms of broad moral frameworks, our analysis proceeds in a largely *consequentialist*, or at least *teleological*, vein. For a defense of the sort of consequentialist framework that might successfully comprise both the specifically welfarist and ecocentric commitments that we’ve taken on here, see (Hiller 2016).

do Hertfordshire cattle. In Section III we articulate and address the most obvious objection to our thesis: *viz.*, the seeming (and unfortunate) parallel to arguments that might have been used to justify, e.g., human chattel slavery. Our response to this objection also provides an answer to a different criticism: *viz.*, that the pigs' premature deaths would still constitute a harm, even if it were shown that their captivity doesn't lessen their welfare. A brief Section IV concludes that – *if* our arguments in Sections I and II are sound, and if our responses to objections in Section III are successful – we will have shown that eaters with *locavorist*, *welfarist*, and *conservationist* tendencies may have heretofore underappreciated reasons to endorse certain forms of animal husbandry.

## I

(Scruton 2004) has argued persuasively that livestock raised in the traditional manner of the English countryside, at least as he has depicted it, lead lives that are not only wholly worthwhile in their own rights, but are also centrally constitutive of a shared form of (human and non-human) life with much to commend on ethical, humanitarian, ecological, environmental, and even aesthetic grounds. It is therefore worth quoting him at length.

Consider the traditional English beef farmer, who fattens his calves for thirty months, keeping them on open pasture in the summer, and in warm roomy barns in the winter, feeding them on grass, silage, beans, and maize, attending to them in all their ailments, and sending them for slaughter, when the time comes, to the nearby slaughterhouse, where they are instantly dispatched with a humane killer. ... Such animals, tended in the traditional way, by a farmer who houses them together in the winter, and allows them to roam in the summer, are as happy as their nature allows. (Scruton 2004, p. 87)

Understood in this way, Scruton argues,

Livestock farming is not merely an industry – it is a relation, in which man and animal are bound together to their mutual profit, and in which a human duty of care is nourished by an animal's mute recognition of dependency. ... Anybody who cares for animals ought to see this kind of husbandry as a complex moral good, to be defended on the one hand against those who would forbid the eating of meat altogether, and on the other hand against those carnivores who prefer

the unseen suffering of the battery farm and the factory abattoir to the merest suggestion of personal risk. (Scruton 2004, pp. 88–89)<sup>6</sup>

After allowing that this form of agriculture is not always as idyllic as he has just portrayed it, Scruton proceeds to argue that

Nevertheless, as with all forms of husbandry, cattle farming should be seen in its full context – and that means as a feature of the total ecology of the countryside. Traditional livestock farming involves the maintenance of pastureland, properly enclosed with walls or hedges. Wildlife habitats spring up as the near-automatic by-products of the boundaries and shady places required by cattle. This kind of farming has shaped the English landscape, ensuring that it retains its dual character as producer of human food and complex wildlife habitat, with a beauty that is inextricably connected to its multifarious life. In this way, what is, from the point of view of agribusiness, an extremely wasteful use of land, becomes, from the point of view of the rest of us – both human and animal – one of the kindest uses of land yet devised. (Scruton 2004, p. 89)

Scruton concludes his paeon to the English countryside with a gesture towards the existence of yet other similar practices un-analyzed, and yet further benefits not elucidated: “I have abbreviated the story. But it could be expanded into a full vindication of livestock farming, as conferring benefits on all those, the animals included, who are part of it” (Scruton 2004, p. 89). Just such an expansion is what we shall attempt to effect in the next section – illustrating how the localized (as well as distant) welfare gains created by (genealogically) local food are exemplified to a perhaps even greater extent by the porcine practices observed in Tuscany, Italy.

## II

Some foods are iconic; they represent a people or a place so fully that we cannot think of one without the other: maple syrup in Vermont, cheese in Wisconsin,

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<sup>6</sup> For all intents and purposes, Scruton’s allusion to the “battery farm” is a reference to what will be, for many readers, the more familiar notion of a “factory farm.” It is of course important to acknowledge that pigs raised under industrial conditions on such so-called factory or battery farms may be so badly mistreated over the course of their upbringing that to consume their flesh is perhaps to be complicit in great wrongdoing. However, we follow Scruton in simply setting aside such cases, and focusing on the case of so-called “happy meat.”

wine in California, lobsters in Maine. The concept of terroir indicates that some places make tastes, and while originating with wine (Sommers 2008), the concept has been more widely applied more recently, being recognized as pertinent to an array of local and regional foods and products (Trubek 2008). The proliferation of geographical indications attests to the salience of the linkage between place and taste, whether culturally, economically, or environmentally driven (Morgan, Marsden, and Murdoch 2009).

One especially illustrative instance wherein these place-taste linkages are in evidence can be found in Central Italy, where pigs hold a special place in the cultural and environmental landscape. Porcine products are core to the foodways of the place. Moreover, human-animal interactions with one species in particular provides a salient example of (potentially) moral meat-eating: the case of *Cinta Senese*, a once-endangered pig, in Tuscany, Italy. The near-extinction status of *Cinta Senese* (Franci, Gandini, and Bozzi 2004), recognized in conjunction with the overall environmental (and cultural) importance of preserving and promoting biodiversity within livestock species, especially among indigenous breeds (Franci, Gandini, and Bozzi 2004), led to a place-based porcine population resurgence founded on a purposeful reinvigoration of their agricultural production. In Tuscany, *Cinta Senese* constitute a robustly *local* food product (in a genealogical sense), where they plausibly lead quite happy lives (in a welfarist sense), and the recent revival of their dwindling populations clearly represents a “sustainability success” (in a conservationist sense). We shall therefore look at their case in some detail.<sup>7</sup>

At least as traditionally depicted,<sup>8</sup> these animals and their caretakers jointly exhibit the many virtues we have just seen Scruton attribute to English farmers and their cows. The following account, from a web series covering “Italian delicacies,” describes the life of the *Cinta Senese*, the “pigs in paradise,” pretty well (**emphasis** in the original):

These animals are reared strictly out-of-doors, in woodlands of various tree species, especially acorn bearing holm oaks. The pigs are reared in **wild or semi-wild conditions**, where they are left free to pasture in woods planted with small shrubs. Outdoor farming ensures that these animals grow healthy and stress-free. A sow has no more than 6-8 piglets per year compared to the 25 piglets produced by the Large White, the most widespread Italian pig breed.

<sup>7</sup> As a theoretical, philosophical undertaking, this paper rests on extant representations of pigs and published reports on their caretaking rather than on direct observations or other primary data.

<sup>8</sup> One such traditional depiction can be found at <http://cintasenese.blogspot.com>.

Regulations stipulate that no more than **ten adult animals can occupy one hectare of land**. Another important norm regulates their feed: **60% of their nourishment must come from Tuscan products**. In their woodland pastures, they find leaves, acorns, olives, and locally grown grains. Finally, the animals may not be butchered before one year of age. The resulting product is a small pig of average size, with thin black bristles and a characteristic white band around its breast and forelegs. Its snout is elongated and narrow and its ears hang over its eyes to protect it from bramble bushes and brushwood.<sup>9</sup>

Based on this description, these pigs seem to live as good a life as a pig could expect to live. They are also, presumably, *happy* – at least insofar as they are well-fed and living a peaceful, authentic life. Moreover, these pigs live a life that is enriched by – and enriches – the local food system, especially insofar as it supports healthful eating and a tidy profit. The high-flying reputation of the animals allows growers to earn a similarly high return, fostering an opportunity to glean even greater value from an animal that is often used “from snout to tail,” both as fresh cuts of meat and as cured meat products. The online “taste atlas” describes *Cinta Senese* this way:

The gamey meat of pasture-raised Cinta pigs isn’t built up with toxins, but packed with healthy unsaturated fats and, compared to other pork, it can cost up to three times as much! Apart from common pork cuts, the exceptional quality of this succulent meat makes it well-suited for charcuterie of all kinds, including the remarkable *Soppresata Toscana*: an uncured brawn-like salami made from boiled pig heads and leftover parts (nothing goes to waste!).<sup>10</sup>

As the preceding demonstrates, *Cinta Senese* pigs foreground several concepts at play in this analysis. First, locavorism is betokened in multiple senses: these pigs create products with a distinctive *terroir* largely because *they themselves* eat predominantly locally (in every sense of that term). Further, we observe valorization of the local environment via the quality of the pigs and their resultant food products.

As for the welfarist perspective, and the wider consequentialist framework in which it is embedded: we might augment our previous observation regarding these animals’ tranquil lifestyle – replete with species-typical behaviors – with some

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.finedininglovers.com/article/italian-delicacies-cinta-senese>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.tasteatlas.com/cinta-senese-1>



rather “indelicate” ruminations on the culinary *delicacies* that they are used to generate, post-mortem. *Cinta Senese* pigs are typically grown for geographically-indicated cured meats like salami and prosciutto. Such meats are considered something of a delicacy, and accordingly are sold, served, and consumed in small portions – but to considerable enjoyment and gustatory delight. (And, as just noted, at considerable per-unit cost!) Thus, pound-for-pound, *Cinta Senese* pigs punch above their weight class (relative to, say, Hereford cattle, most likely) when it comes to producing Epicurean pleasures. One pig raised in the central Italian countryside might yield enough servings of prosciutto to satisfy the (highly - cultivated) tastes of many more consumers, compared to what might be similarly effected by the slaughter of a single English cow. Simply put, each *Cinta Senese* pig is a more efficient generator of (marginal<sup>11</sup>) culinary or gustatory pleasure than is each Hereford cattle – or so one might argue, at any rate, and not without plausibility – and thus perhaps each sacrifice of a single porcine life generates comparatively more resultant pleasure, and contributes more greatly to hedonic welfare.<sup>12</sup>

However, it’s of course worth noting that the pleasure-maximization argument might wind up going the other way too. For “pound-for-pound” pleasure is not the same as “life-for-life” pleasure, and it can only be this latter dimension that gets priority in the welfarist calculus. A slaughtered cow yields far more meat than does a slaughtered pig ...and so it may still be the case that – though the slaughtered pig wins the “pound-for-pound pleasure” competition (because each pound of its cured, dried flesh yields a greater degree of pleasure (and income) than does the correlative pound of beef) – the cow generates a sufficiently greater volume of beef, such as to correspondingly generate a greater “volume” of overall gustatory pleasure. And thus, on this view of things, its sacrifice purchases for its future human consumers and even *greater* aggregate quantity of pleasure – and it therefore “wins” the “life-for-life” competition.

Finally, the welfarist position is augmented by a conservationist perspective

<sup>11</sup> The “marginal” pleasure created by a portion of prosciutto is the surplus pleasure that serving generates, over and above the next-best option that its consumer might expect to derive from any alternative food item. The *marginal* pleasure created by a serving of meat, then, should not be confused with – and is always smaller than – the “total” or “absolute” level of gustatory pleasure it creates. This recognition affords the anti-carnivorous welfarist an important maneuver in her arsenal, as it restricts evaluations of meat-generated gustatory pleasures to their (smaller) marginal values – and thus diminishes to a considerable degree the hedonic welfare accruing from meat-consumption to which the defender of omnivorism might wish to appeal in defending his preferred animal-consumption practices.

<sup>12</sup> For an illuminating analysis of the notion of *culinary value* being deployed here, see Engisch (forthcoming). It should be noted, though, that Engisch ultimately rejects the “Hedonic Model” of culinary value we may be seen here as tacitly endorsing. We thank an anonymous reviewer for calling this paper to our attention.

since, in the case of *Cinta Senese*, the pig production is indeed a form of species preservation. If it weren't for the consortium convened to protect them (or at very least, the wider social movement that eventually gave rise to this consortium), they may well have gone extinct.<sup>13</sup> (At any rate, there would likely be far fewer specimens of them currently in existence.) But for the parties raising and selling these pigs and their products to people willing to eat them, *Cinta Senese* would not have flourished – and might not even have persisted – as a species.

### III

Our argument thus far relies on a pair of empirical claims, *full* defense of which lies outside the scope of our analysis. These two claims are that (i) *Cinta Senese* pigs do not themselves experience undue harm or suffering in the course of their customary upbringing; and that furthermore (ii) the lives of the Italian farmers who raise them (to say nothing of the Italian – and international – consumers who enjoy their products) betoken a significant amount of value. For pig farmers in Central Italy see themselves as heirs to, and preservers of, a long and noble local tradition – a longstanding embodiment of certain agrarian ideals. This lifestyle's disappearance would be the disappearance of an irreplaceable source of genuine human cultural value. Thus, to implement – or even to urge – a blanket prohibition on the consumption of pigs would be to effect a significant disruption of local agricultural life, insofar as the practices of pig-raising (no less than the practices of pig consumption) constitute a central facet of this lifestyle.

However, such an argument invites an obvious objection, particularly insofar as one focuses on the second empirical claim set forth above. Namely: the objection from Odious Analogy. It goes like this: Like the raising and slaughtering of pigs, human chattel slavery was *also* central to antebellum life in the southern states in the United States; discontinuing the practice of human slavery would (and did) have disastrous consequences for that way of life. However, this fact was no reason whatsoever to oppose (or lament) the elimination of the institution of slavery! But then, why should we think matters stand otherwise with the role of pigs in Italian agricultural life? If slavery's central role in plantation life in the US south provided no reason not to end the institution of slavery (as clearly it didn't), then why should the disruptive effects of eliminating *Cinta Senese* pig production give us any pause, if the mistreatment of the pigs involved is severe enough?

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<sup>13</sup> The (Italian-language) website of this consortium can be found at <https://www.cintasenesedop.it/>.

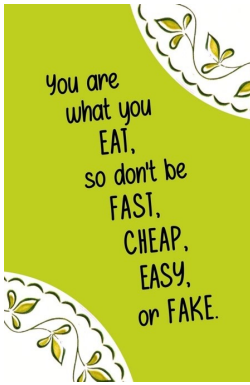


Figure 2: Popular meme that reads: “You are what you eat, so don’t be fast, cheap, easy, or fake” (image results from google search).

There is one relatively “cheap” or “easy” response to this criticism, which we would do well to resist. (After all, as the popular foodie meme suggests (Fig 2), when it comes to food, one should avoid that which is “fast, cheap, [or] easy...”.) It goes roughly as follows: “Well, actually, there *weren’t* any cultural aspects of U.S. antebellum plantation life that were particularly valuable and worthy of preservation; the destruction of this way of life, attendant upon the elimination of legalized slavery, did away with a great deal of injustice, and *nothing* in the way of countervailing loss of valuable forms of life. *All* parties – enslaved persons and enslavers alike – stood to gain (in terms of morals and values) from the elimination of this inherently unjust and soul-distorting way of life.” Now, this may or may not be apt as a diagnosis of the moral calculus attendant to the elimination of the legal institution of slavery. But even if so, this response succeeds only in evading the central issue at play here.

For surely there are *some* cases where some human practice passes out of existence, and where such passing is – all things considered – an instance of collective moral progress ... but where such passing nevertheless represents the elimination of some forms of human excellence or virtue, the absence of which represents a genuine loss. Consider, if you like, the following example: the passing away of the forms of life and social organization that formerly underlain the *courtly* or *chivalrous* virtues. A life of courtly virtue might represent a genuine mode of valuable human flourishing. But such a life, while perhaps genuinely embodying value, requires as a prerequisite certain inegalitarian modes of social organization incompatible with life in a modern liberal democratic polity. We may therefore endorse the passing away of various forms of social organization (serfdom, knighthood, the maintenance of the social status of *nobility*, etc.) that formerly made possible the exercise of various courtly virtues. But we may still, at the same time, lament the loss of the opportunities for certain parties to exemplify these virtues.

So let us simply grant, for the sake of argument, that antebellum Southern life did involve the partial embodiment of certain virtues – as, plausibly, certain other (all-things-considered) unjust modes of human life have done. (We are not thereby granting that slavery *per se* embodied any human values or virtues, of course.) Nevertheless, even so, *no one* would today (reasonably) maintain that

such virtues served to *justify*, or to *outweigh*, the great injustice of slavery. And in parallel fashion, some might argue, the “objectification” of pigs inherent in the very idea of animal husbandry – the fact that some pigs are created for the express purpose of being slaughtered, and (however “pain-free” their lives may be) are destined to serve as nothing more than instruments of human (cultural and gustatory) pleasure – serves to undermine the moral defensibility of this way of life, full stop ... just as the injustice of slavery served to undermine whatever alleged “values” may (or may not) have arisen from southern plantation life.

We argue, however, that this chattel slavery comparison is invalid since enslaved persons (even those – if such there ever were – who were extremely “well-treated”) could never have “as good a life as a human can have.” Autonomy is clearly a central and constitutive value of a good human life, and slavery clearly is not compatible with this value. But no parallel considerations preclude the claim that the life of a happy *Cinta Senese* pig – even though this life essentially involves captivity – is close to a fully flourishing one. Some animal advocates might argue that a pig could never achieve the level of well-being that it deserves, or reach its full hedonic potential, if it is ultimately destined for slaughter for human consumption. They might, in other words, argue that a “kept pig” still represents a moral wrong, even if the pig would never know it. (McWilliams 2014) offers a powerful expression of this position, arguing that – *contra* the central commitments of “food movement” luminaries like Michael Pollan, Mark Bittman, and Jonathan Safran Foer – small-scale, non-industrial animal agriculture is not, and *cannot be*, “humane,” so long as the eventual slaughter of its captive subjects is its central organizing concern. As well-treated as the animals on these family farms may (or may not!) be, says McWilliams, it is *not* after all possible for those farmers to (in the evocative words of his title) “love animals to death.”

We are not certain we agree – at least insofar as we are operating from within the welfarist paradigm (rather than, e.g., adopting the sort of rights-based approach associated with figures like (Regan 1983)). Scruton himself had considered this objection. We can little hope to improve on Scruton’s formulation of the basic relevant considerations here, so we shall quote him at length:

Surely, such a farmer [the “traditional English beef farmer”] treats his cattle as well as cattle can be treated. Of course, he never asked them whether they wanted to live in his fields, or gave them the choice of lifestyle during their time there. But that is because he knows – from instinct rather than from any philosophical theory – that cattle cannot make such choices, and do not exist at the level of consciousness for which freedom and the lack of it are genuine realities. (Scruton

2004, p. 87)

Beyond thusly dispensing with the “heteronomy” concern – to the effect that livestock “were not asked,” and therefore “could not have consented” to their lives of captivity – Scruton contends also with the “harm of premature death” concern – what’s now often called the *deprivationist* account of the badness of death. This refers to the claim that the principal harm visited upon (even putatively “humanely” raised) livestock is – not the suffering they endure during their (artificially shortened) lives – but the loss of that portion of their lives that they do *not* get to experience, owing to their untimely demise at the hands of the slaughterer. This worry is arguably much more on-target than the heteronomy one, particularly insofar as it *does* seem possible to firmly ground it within the welfarist framework. (For one especially clear and careful attempt to do so, see (McMahan 2008).) Once again, we can little hope to improve on Scruton’s response to this concern, so here again we shall quote him at length. Here is what he has to say on this matter:

Human beings are conscious of their lives as their own; they have ambitions, hopes, and aspirations; they are fatally attached to others, who cannot be replaced in their affections but whose presence they feel as a need. Hence there is a real distinction, for a human being, between timely and untimely death. To be “cut short” before one’s time is a waste – even a tragedy. We lament the death of children and young people not merely because we lament the death of anyone, but because we believe that human beings are fulfilled by their achievements and not merely by their comforts. No such thoughts apply to domestic cattle. To be killed at thirty months is not intrinsically more tragic than to be killed at forty, fifty, or sixty. (Scruton 2004, p. 88)<sup>14</sup>

The most promising means of resisting Scruton’s conclusion here (from within the welfarist paradigm) is to appeal to some version of what (following (Parfit 1984, p.

<sup>14</sup> Expressed in the vocabulary in which some contemporary debates are couched, Scruton is here denying that the “deprivationist” account of the badness of death applies in the case of livestock. We must note here that this position is controversial, however. In recent years, a number of writers (e.g. (Harman 2011; Bradley 2016; DeGrazia 2016)) have argued that deprivationism about death *does* generate the judgment that livestock slaughter (even when painless) counts as a harm for those animals whose lives are prematurely ended. (Belshaw 2016), meanwhile, is perhaps the most prominent critic of this stance, arguing that such animals lack the sorts of “categorical desires” (a notion tracing back to Bernard Williams) that are required to sustain the claim that their loss of a valuable future constitutes a harm. (Bower and Fischer 2018) critique Belshaw’s argument, citing livestock behaviors they believe to ground the attribution of such desires.) (Solis 2021) provides a helpful overview of this debate – satisfactory resolution of which unfortunately lies beyond the scope of this paper.

387)) we might term the “Impersonal Total Principle,” or what philosophers sometimes simply call “the Total view.” This is the claim that (in Parfit’s formulation) “If other things are equal, the best outcome is the one in which there would be the greatest quantity of whatever makes life worth living.” But any such invocation is, at least in this particular case, likely to founder on the *conservationist* consideration previously described. Namely (and as Scruton alludes to in some of the above-quoted passages, in reference to English cattle) that each of these pigs – like all domesticated livestock, everywhere – owe their very being to the agricultural practices whose persistence has called them into existence. In the case of the *Cinta Senese* this is true, not only in the (welfarist’s) individualist sense that applies in the case of each individual organism, but also in the (ecocentrist’s) *collectivist* sense, which arises for the species as a whole. For, again: were it not for the extant (and recently-revived) practice of *Cinta Senese* pig farming, the species may well have gone extinct. The species (and the individual members thereof) ostensibly to be benefited by calls (like McWilliams’s) to eliminate pig-farming might not exist to be benefited in the first place, absent this agricultural practice.

#### IV

Putting this all together, our tentative argument runs as follows: that (a) assuming *Cinta Senese* pigs are not generally mistreated and do not suffer much physical pain or emotional anguish during their upbringings, and (b) since pigs (even notwithstanding their relatively advanced cognitive capabilities, especially relative to other forms of livestock) do not (and indeed cannot) experience their “captivity” as an autonomy-undermining form of harm, and (c) since their slaughter-induced premature deaths fail to constitute a genuine harm or mistreatment, then (d) the elimination of certain traditional agricultural practices related to the production of (genealogically) “local meat” in Tuscany would represent a “net loss” from the animal welfarist perspective: no grievous harms would be eliminated on behalf of – nor would any welfare-enhancing benefits be created for – the sake of the *Cinta Senese* pigs themselves. And at the same time, the lives, livelihoods, and interests of the non-non-human animal pig producers would be set back, resulting in (non-negligible) human harms.

The foregoing reasoning relies essentially on a number of empirical premises, of course. Our paper is not meant to be dispositive with regard to these important and difficult matters.<sup>15</sup> We leave the adjudication of those matters to another time

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<sup>15</sup> As an example of one of the difficulties in this neighborhood, we must acknowledge the existence of doubts recently raised in certain quarters regarding the veracity of the commonly-

and place – and, perhaps, to other parties, better-equipped than we to comment intelligently about, e.g., the empirical realities of Tuscan farm life or about animal psychology. Our point is merely conditional: *Granting* the truth of the empirical claims embedded in premises (a) – (c) – empirical truths that seem not implausible – locavores with welfarist and conservationist proclivities may actually find that they have considerable reason to support (rather than to oppose) this form of animal agriculture, and any others relevantly like it.

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proffered claims regarding Italian pigs' idyllic lifestyles. One recent exposé, released by an organization called Eurogroup for Animals, alleges widespread mistreatment of Parma pigs. (An industry group, the Parma Ham Consortium, of course disputes these allegations, and the representativeness of the images and footage released by Eurogroup for Animals.) This dispute is chronicled at <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/mar/30/row-erupts-between-italys-parma-ham-makers-and-activists-over-pig-welfare>.

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