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Consider the Chicken

My sister recently sent me a video of her with her chickens. They're at the age where they start to look like actual chickens and not just fuzzy 2-legged kittens, so they're becoming less cute. I assumed I'd find them less interesting to watch. However, a funny thing happened when I saw happy they were, exploring their new outdoor coop with all that space in the fresh Spring air. One of them hopped up on her lap and snuggled in, and it was kind of amazing. Since I wasn't raised around chickens, they always seemed a bit... boring. Bland. You know, they had personalities that tasted like chicken, so to cluck. Buh-Kawk!! But, after watching that video, I can never un-see what I saw: these animals were happy, affectionate, and CLEARLY friends, not food.

Up to now, whenever I've thought of chickens, I mostly envisioned the factory farm scenario, and even the so-called "free range" birds left me with the impression of them being little more than a product. My sister's video was a turning point. If you've read my previous posts that touch on animal rights, particularly "Food for Thought" (June 2014) and "Lobster Lives Matter" (January 2022 - a post evidently overlooked by my friend Tenzin, who surely would've burst a blood vessel at ~~the~~ ^{the infant circumcision portion} of that one, lol! 😊), then you'll already know that I feel strongly that the case for vegetarianism is a moral issue, and I'm very uncomfortable with my lifelong and apparently incorrigible carnivorousness. Chicken is certainly a favorite, so I guess I've had to subconsciously keep pretending that these birds had very little going for them, ~~sentence-~~ ^{sentence-} wise. Trust me, I knew this was self-serving: even if they really did have just a meagre consciousness, I was still well aware that they experienced pain, probably fear, certainly thirst and hunger... all of which are great reasons to not murder a creature (or condone its murder) just because I like its taste. But chicken meat IS everywhere, it's cheap ("Cheep Cheep!" ... ugh, sorry!), and often it's delicious, so I suppose I've tended to shut down the moral machinery to facilitate an unperturbed enjoyment of the yummy fowl flesh. But... it's getting ever harder to pull off that trick of self-delusion.

The prime impact of this video on me has been this realization: that little chick who jumped up into my sister's lap and then related in full trust and dependence, that bird was not

unique. Given the chance, any of the millions of those doomed animals crammed into horrific commercial conditions, force-fed and pumped full of hormones with barely any space to themselves and absolutely no respite from this torturous existence between the day they hatch and the moment they're slaughtered for my "Happy Meal" ... literally any one of them could be my sister's beloved little bird-buddy. Suddenly it became so clear — there's simply no difference between the avian consciousness of the ill-fated "food animals" and that cuddly little chick I saw in the video, which means ... actually, no. It's almost too painful to think about. I don't need to spell out what it means.

I hope beyond hope that either those new meat imitations like Beyond Meat and Impossible Foods become cheaper, more accessible, and more widely accepted than actual corpse ~~cuttings~~, or that lab-grown real muscle tissue develops to where it's truly tasty and doesn't cost a zillion dollars to feed a family of four. We need this, our species does — it's a genuine moral imperative. We know — even when we block it out for peace of mind — we know that animals suffer, and that they have the potential to trust and love, to enjoy life and be happy. I think we must finally acknowledge that we simply have no right to rob them, on such a massive, profit-driven scale, of their right to a fair shot at these existential pleasures, certainly not just for our gluttonous convenience.

You can write me!

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