

## Consensual Cannibalism as a thought experiment for understand the custodial ethic of animal agriculture

A human community might rationally consent to letting its eldest members be harvested for food consumption by a superior species in return for care in an environment in which they could not survive. This scenario could be used as an analogue for a hypothetical custodial ethic underlying animal agriculture. It would support a welfarist position without supporting a liberationist position. But it would not support the conditions under which industrial meat is currently raised in the US, which often bears little relation to animal welfare, understood in terms of having room to pursue "natural behaviors". In other words, it might be rational, under suitably extreme conditions of survival such as domesticated animals face, to allow ourselves to be eaten, but we would not therefore, allow ourselves to be tortured and degraded in the process. Under those conditions, we might, rationally, seek "liberation". This could be seen as anthropomorphizing animal choice, but a reply argument could be advanced that it models animal choice on the basis of desire for continued sentience, something animals express compellingly by their behavior rather than by anthropomorphic extension.