

David Sztybel - A Defence of Welfarism?

I recently read through David Sztybel's 'Animal Rights Law: Fundamentalism versus Pragmatism' (which can be accessed online [here](#)). I'm always excited to read through a piece like this, as it claims to be a defence of welfarism, more or less, which has seemingly spotted some flaws that make the abolitionist approach merely an idea of 'fundamentalists'. So I was disappointed to see it just consisted of the basic level of objections to abolitionism, which on the most part do no more than assume it is 'fundamentalist' in nature and then draw criticism from similar assumptions (which is incredibly inaccurate and invalid as a method). I find this a big let down, as I consider myself a pragmatist, of sorts. Or at least I consider myself not to be a fundamentalist - it's my opinion that if welfarism does work towards abolition, or at least decreases the numbers of animal used without significantly harming the path to abolition, then I would whole-hearted support it. However Sztybel has not wholly tried to counter the points made by the likes of Francione in his abolitionist approach, or the logic used to get there, and on the rare occasions he has, he has made huge errors in the example or arguments he uses. I'll start from the beginning of the paper, and state some general objections, which I think detract a huge amount from his actual argument.

Fundamentalists?

Firstly, on the very opening page, there is this difference he draws between *animal rights fundamentalists* and *animal rights pragmatists*. Something he refers to back and forth throughout the article, and in my opinion most of his persuasive sounding points are drawn from this notion that the abolitionist approach is wholly fundamental. This is completely unfounded, and as a result his entire article is based on this flimsy assumption. I can't speak for other abolitionists, but I agree with the abolitionist approach as it speaks clearly, compellingly and logically about how individual sentient creatures (for which he says fundamentalists, like those who support the abolitionists approach, don't value - instead he supposes we value the idea of 'rights' more) can not be significantly better off because of welfare campaigns in the times which we live, and that also it is these very campaigns that pave the way for further individuals to be 'traded off' for the lives of those currently being used to not be significantly improved.

I say this as welfarism/new welfarism generally leads to higher numbers of animals being used full stop (slight evidence for which comes from a [previous article I have linked to](#), but also from the fact that we use more animals today than at any time in

history). So in giving hens slightly larger amounts of space, or other essentially negligible standards which never get close to approaching the huge amounts of suffering which the hen is forced to endure (or help the millions of male chicks which never live past a day, for those hens to grow into egg producing machines), we trade off the lives of thousands, possibly millions more hens or other animals to be born into these unjust situations themselves. This logical calculation is not one of fundamentalists, neither is it one of ignoring the individual creatures in favour of an abstract idea of 'rights' - it is simply pointing out that more individuals will have to suffer as a result of this action.

Sztybel, throughout his issue, comes back to appealing to notions of 'moral dilemmas' and situational examples to back up his point (though in his defence he does state these are not enough to prove a theory). But his argument could be summarised with a fairly decent analogy too. Let's substitute these hens for human slaves. Would we campaign to ban a caged human, in favour of a non-caged human (who was still enslaved to the same degree) but with a slightly larger space to live, and in return allow the slavers a moral righteousness in the eyes of the public, which allowed them to bring more slaves into their control?

I suggest Sztybel would have two responses. Firstly he would state, a rather ambiguous idea that we should not be responsible for the actions of others in response to the things we do to gain superior moral treatment for individuals. This makes sense on one level - of course we can not be to blame for, say, saving a man from suicide on train tracks who then goes on to kill five children on the way home. But this is not that situation. In this situation, we know outright that higher welfare standards (or 'illfare' as Sztybel has quite intelligently identified it should perhaps be called) do increase the public happiness, and therefore willingness to support the suffering of these individuals.

He would perhaps have a stronger case if this were the only thing we could do for animals' welfare- but unless Sztybel can correctly state that the only way to gain better welfare standards for animals is by trading off the lives of other animals then he has no case at all. And of course he wouldn't, and indeed couldn't do this. He knows as well as the rest of us that vegan education and an abolitionist movement for animal rights are vital - and he also knows that these things, if done effectively, will convince people about animal rights, and stop many buying animal products, and so force companies to make incremental changes like introducing welfare standards to keep sales high. If we want to fight for welfare standards, and do so without trading off the lives of other animals in the process, we can do so through using an abolitionist approach - Sztybel does not take this into account, and in doing so he

leaves strong the big point that Francione could use to level his argument in one fail swoop.

In fact, by choosing a welfarist campaign, given the mountain of evidence that shows it encourages people to use more animals, whilst an alternative like abolitionism exists, we can show it to be immoral. After all, a good analogy would be of child abuse. If child abuse were widespread, wouldn't it be immoral to offer child abusers some sort of protection if they guaranteed the children they abused a certain amount of 'breaks' during the abuse, or half a paracetamol after their first beating of the day? I would argue this is always an immoral offer, but moreover if there was also an alternative which logically seemed like it would reduce child abuse, but which hadn't been widely tried before - whilst the trade off to the child abusers had been done for many years with only a rise in child abuse - then it becomes quickly apparent that it is acting immorally to offer an abuser protection in exchange for a standard of "welfare" for the children involved. The classic welfarist response in this situation would be 'what about the children who will be abused now, we need to help them and an abolitionist stance won't do this'. But this is a false dilemma. The welfarist points to one individual, who they can see, and deems it immoral not to help them. But many more will be bought into that situation, and simply because their identities are not known doesn't make them any less deserving of rights or protection. In fact this entire idea of ignoring the subjects we can not see is a main factor in why people can happily eat and use individuals raised on farms. It would be foolish to think that this perspective could help us out of the problem it perpetuates.

Dilemma legislative options

One other place that I think Sztybel comes up short, begins on page two where he states that one form of incremental step toward animal rights that could be taken would be "Suffering-reduction laws which substantially improve conditions for animals under oppression by at least curtailing suffering without necessarily obtaining animal rights or proto-rights". I have already stated why I think this could not be seen as anything but a step against animal rights - after all, welfarism could only be a step toward animal rights if it is a ploy by companies to stop people going vegan or turning in favour of animal rights, and this can not be the case whilst "animal rights groups" support it. So I can't come up with any reason to support welfare reform whose method is the trading off of animals lives - at least not while it is very intuitive that by supporting the abolitionist approach, or a similar theory of animal advocacy, these welfare changes will occur in response *without* trading off these lives. Stating that

supporting welfarism is 'necessary' to improve the lives of animals today, is only so strong as the argument that beating children is necessary to get them to obey moral laws - in both cases there are better methods of getting the result, and in both cases it is incredibly deceptive to state that the subjects are better off.

I would also, however, take issue with the idea that animals can be substantially better off through welfarism in the current legal situation. I think Francione argues this very well, and it's something Sztybel has not significantly countered. Francione would state that a non-human animal can not be better off through welfarist tactics due to the nature of what they do, and it's difficult to say that he is wrong. After all, animals are not persons with interests in the eyes of the law, they are property. They have no interests at all, not in themselves. The only protection they can be afforded is incidental, and is either through recognition of the interests of the owner, or the interests of other owners in some cases. There is no welfare law in the entire world that could be passed otherwise - it would be entirely illogical for a welfare law to be passed, whatever the wording, that recognised the interests of an animal as they are not individuals in the eyes of the law, they are instead things. A lot of people don't seem to grasp this, at all.

It doesn't mean that all animals can be better off through chance, due to the fact that an owners interest may also happen to protect them. It means that their interests can only be met if, and only if, the owner is somehow better off because of it. A law which affects farmers, therefore, is only going to be passed if it makes it easier or cheaper for him to use (exploit) his things (enslaved individuals).

This issue is where Sztybel's argument really grasps at straws. He states the example of Sweden, who have 'banned factory farming', which he claims on this issue is 'meaningless neither semantically nor in terms of it's significance for animals'. He goes onto state numerous "advances" for animals that have come about in Sweden, and that 'animal interests are protected and valued in Sweden even if it means less profit for farmed industries'. I would love to have the time to do a detailed analysis of Sweden's farming industry, and the financial burdens which this ban must have bought, but unfortunately I do not have the time of a professional philosopher (who hasn't looked at this either though, incidentally!). What I will say, though, is that the Swedish legal system does not, and indeed could not 'protect and value' the interests of an animal above human interests. If laws have been passed which seem to protect the interests of animals, I suggest you look further into it. I, as I say, haven't been able to find information on sales of animal products in Sweden - but I will straight away ascertain that sales of those industries concerned did indeed rise after the 'banning of factory farming', or that they will rise hugely in the future. It would be illogical were they not too given the nature of the interests they would have to serve. And hence, Sweden is indeed not an example which can stand against the abolitionist

view point. And in fact, the nature of legal systems and animals' status means that no welfare law can prove the abolitionist approach wrong - that's one of the strengths of a theory that is primarily rooted in legal theory.

A 'kind society'

Sztybel's other main support for welfarism is also, unfortunately very ambiguous. It is the idea that welfarist campaigning helps to create a 'kind society' and helps to move away from a 'cruel society', and that this itself is a step toward animal rights. His main evidence is in the fact that countries like China, with poor animal welfare records, also has fewer vegan and animal rights sympathisers.

Again, this is flawed on a very basic level, as of course effective vegan education and abolitionist campaigning can also make a society 'kinder'. As I have stated before, it's obvious that if vegan education is conducted efficiently and logically, then people who hear it will listen. Similarly, companies will respond with welfarism, and again we have a form of welfarism which we don't to trade off lives of other animals to get. In the process, we also have a 'kinder' society. And hence welfarism does nothing abolitionism doesn't do, except for make immoral trade offs.

I would also argue that this guide of 'kinder' and 'crueler' societies is a little bit narrow minded. After all, if we consider the lives of animals, and compare the two countries - we will find that the only big differences, come in things like categories of animals used, or degree of welfare standards in place. But of course, the two societies are far more alike than they are different. In both, animals are still enslaved (whether it be in cages, or dark sheds), slaughtered for the will of their owners, and suffer tremendously horrendous lives. To argue that the UK, for instance, is kinder than China because we allow our chickens a horrific life, but in doing so give them a few further inches to walk in, is to argue semantics in the bigger picture. It's also to argue deceptively. Would Sztybel also argue a cold blooded murderer is kinder than a rapist-murderer, by virtue of the fact that the former inflicts less suffering? He would be deemed not just erroneous, but highly bizarre to think so - despite the difference in suffering involved, you certainly could not realistically rate them on a scale of kindness - suffering, or perceived suffering, does not equate to kindness. His ideas about 'kinder' societies aren't just ambiguous, they are also unrelated to animal rights due to the semantic *difference in levels* of cruelty.

I wouldn't like to take words out of his mouth, or assume that he would spend his time reading a blog like this, but undoubtedly his answer would be that human analogies are not representative here. But I would beg to differ. He would be quite right that humans are not regularly raped or killed in society, and it definitely isn't condoned. However even if they were, would we see a cold blooded killing of animals as kinder than a raping then killing of animals? Less suffering is involved, but it certainly isn't any kinder. Thus, he may be right in asserting certain 'abstract' levels of suffering are lowered in one society, but not that society is any kinder or any closer to adopting animal rights. There's no reason to suggest the UK is any closer than China in this respect, without appealing to a certain amount of prejudice about the two cultures, which I presume is what his efforts were to do.

Abstract suffering

I used the word 'abstract' in the last paragraph to describe the suffering welfarism abolishes, in order to point out another error Sztybel makes (something which a lot of welfarists would agree with him about actually). 'Abstract' suffering in my opinion is what welfarism aims at, as we wouldn't suffer less if we were the individuals living in them, and hadn't known worse. And this is the position of the animals who are born into these conditions every day, who never know what came before. The idea that suffering is reduced somehow is incredibly abstract, as no less suffering occurs in the case of welfare raised animals in a real sense. We see an animal out of cage, in a slightly larger amount of room than one inside a cage, and we see that that the one outside the cage is suffering less. But she isn't in any real sense. She has never suffered any less, she has suffered 100% of the suffering she has felt. The pain, the confinement she endures, the horrid life she lives - none of these things will suddenly become less than 100% of the mental and physical suffering she has ever known, simply because she has not been placed into a smaller area, or been made to touch a metal cage her whole life rather than the skin/feathers of other hens.

Welfarism reduces suffering in the abstract sense that 'she could be suffering to x degree, but instead she only suffers to y degree'. However when the immorality is at such a level that individuals' lives are spent entirely enslaved, and in horrendous conditions, and held from all the behaviours and emotions they could naturally cherish, before having their lives ended at a shamefully early age, these degrees of suffering are reduced into abstract oblivions. After all, the hen has not received

anything significant which means she no longer suffers the same amount, she suffers differently - to that hen, we are still speaking of 100% of her suffering. The fact this 100% is of a different type (ie suffocation in a larger area, or death in a slightly less painful manner - but nevertheless a painful death) has no real meaning.

To Sztybel, this point must be absolutely damning. Time and time again, he criticises the 'fundamentalist' abolitionist view point as it approaches an 'abstract theory of rights' rather than 'individual sentient beings'. Upon reflection, something quite opposite appears. The 'abstract rights' he refers to, are the interests of sentient creatures. Which he has ignored. In favour of 'individual sentient beings', which are actually abstract levels of an emotional difference so semantic that the individuals they refer to could not benefit from the identification of.

Abolitionism is speciesist

A further claim Sztybel makes, is that abolitionism is speciesist - to the degree that in it's perfect world, animals would not be exploited or used by humans, but would have no welfare laws to protect them like humans would. Of course, this is rather presumptive. Using 'welfare laws in a future place which bares no practical resemblance to this one' to state that arguments about welfarism are wrong is quite poor.

Similarly, Francione might argue in return (it is a criticism of Francione in particular when Sztybel makes this claim) that if animals weren't being used in society, they wouldn't need welfare laws. Anarchists might argue that a future world in which animals weren't being used, would be one where 'welfare laws' weren't required. Similarly, one could argue any number of things to defend the fact that welfare law wouldn't be required in the future. However, I would simply state that it isn't relevant. We have no idea whether the world that abolishes animal use would require welfare laws for other animals, however it doesn't make the argument for welfarism *now* any stronger that it would require them. Similarly I could argue that we might need to hunt animals in the future in order to prevent widespread human hunger - hunting being something I assume Sztybel disagrees with. However to do so would be hearsay, and highly unuseful to this discussion - it certainly wouldn't make it wrong to disagree with hunting in the meantime.

PETA

This is just a small point, but Sztybel claims PETA successfully 'advocate animal rights in the short-term for individuals and animal rights law in the long term'. PETA claim to do this, as well as they claim to do a lot of things. However, you can not judge a group by it's claims. If you look to the 'why animal rights?' pages that PETA holds, and hence the theory that props them up, it becomes clear that they do not follow a theory of animal rights. Their motto's and statements may be one thing, but their whole philosophy is one of utilitarianism, the same type that is backed by Peter Singer - someone who unapologetically doesn't believe in animal rights, or want to see animal use abolished.

PETA can not usefully claim to be for the rights of animals, and then back their position up with a theory which doesn't even agree with animal rights - let alone mention the morality of using them. And similarly, a considered article should not use evidence of what people say they do when their actions and publicised beliefs contradict this.

Responses to objections

One final part of the article I would like to look at, occurs on page 21, where Sztybel attempts to answer potential objections to his views. I have stated a good few ideas already, on how welfarism is not pragmatic in any useful sense, and how abolitionism certainly is. However I will bring up some further responses to his objections here:

(Objection 3, reply iii)He states that increased media publicity from welfarism will result in more people abandoning animal products altogether. This is a grand misrepresentation of the truth. Welfarism, as I, as well as many other abolitionists have stated countless times, offers people an appeasing choice. For any one person that gets into animal rights through welfarism, you're going to see far more appeased

from making that choice. It begs the question to say that using welfarism to pull in people to see a compelling, logical argument, is better than publicising the compelling, logical argument itself. We must admit that welfarism offers people an opportunity to act morally without doing what is necessary to act morally - the idea that human nature would choose to go over and above without a logical and compelling reason, or jump to the 'next level' as it were, is counteracted by the fact that groups like PETA have far, far more non-vegan members than vegans, and that their membership does not increase at a fast enough level for us to say that a large number of these members will go vegan in the future. Simply put - the fact welfarism garners more media publicity than abolitionism is directly in conflict with animal rights, as it publicises an 'appeasement' to a degree which the logical solution isn't publicised. If the argument for animal rights is compelling enough to turn most welfare interested people into vegans, then he has implied that it is a more compelling argument than the one for welfarism alone. If that's so, then that one should have been publicised in the first place. People don't hold beliefs on flimsy level-based ideas, they do it on the compelling nature of the argument, so it's odd to claim we need a weak entry level, unrelated argument in order to draw people in. This isn't a cult, and there's no reason it would need to work like one.

(reply iv) He states welfare standards will push up the price of meat, and so make it less accessible to consumers, and hence increase AR support. Again pure speculation. Moreover, it would never reach this price that it was unable to sell due to the fact that, as stated earlier, law will not do wrong by the owners for the good of things. The fact this is the case is good reason why 'cruelty free eggs' have not pushed up the price significantly - mainly because the hens haven't received anything that costs much to give them. As a result the public is appeased whilst the hens receive little or nothing in return. A classic result of welfarism, one that is echoed in all welfare laws ever passed.

(reply v) He states we will need to go through animal welfare to get to rights, so let's support the incremental steps to get there faster. This doesn't make sense, as the way to get companies to adopt more welfare and faster, is to not acknowledge that the steps they have made are sufficient and make them go further. Stopping at any stage and offering appeasement all round is a way of stalling progress, not helping it along. By promoting this, Sztybel makes a basic error in assuming that all welfare standards are necessary, despite the fact elsewhere he claims we should 'bypass' steps if need be. This contradicts his own point, as well as the logic he earlier points to.

(Objection 4 reply) He states the example of a campaign to give water to cows, in a situation where cows are thirsty, as a main reason why it's right to support an

incremental or single issue campaign. Firstly, it's important to note the animals in the example are not, and could not in our society be dying of thirst due to the nature of animal use - if they were you would not need a campaign to get them water, just the police - so there is no argument on the side of welfarism here. Yes, individual cows suffer here because of a lack of interests in the farming industry. However making a campaign to have them watered could only be successful if it was in the farmers best interests to do so (either to protect his property, or his eventual property margins). It is creating a false dilemma to say that if an advocate disagrees with trading off the lives of other animals to quench these cows thirsts, that they are acting immorally. What's immoral is focusing on those animals we can see, when we know it is damning many more animals that we can't. I might well make just as rousing statement that PETA ignore some animal abuse (and then describe the animals individual features) for the good of a larger amount of animals else where (and describe those animals too - but include a description of a baby animal in it). In that example, I could turn the tables on Sztybel intuition-inducing example, and show intuitions that support my argument instead of his. The tactic of using an emotion induced example is the only thing Sztybel is really alluring to here, and consideration of a counter example which does the same (ie shows that giving these cows extra water would hurt more, cuter cows elsewhere), shows this to be an inconclusive method.

The fickle finger of fundamentalism

To begin closing a criticism of Sztybel, we must return to the tag of fundamentalism which is mentioned throughout his piece. The claim that the abolitionist approach suffers from being 'fundamentalist' rather than pragmatic, does not hold, for reasons I showed earlier. But one could certainly claim that Sztybel's 'pragmatic' theory holds a lot of the principles one might put forward of an idealistic fundamentalist. Consider a view that holds that "animal advocacy fundamentally helps achieve a kinder culture, which in turn captivates a progress towards helping animals". Then consider that this view asks it's followers to view those who adopt a different method for reasons of efficacy, as 'fundamentalists', despite the fact that the theories, beliefs and literature put forward by this other group appear to have mainly pragmatic arguments at their disposal. Without pointing fingers, this first group who defend traditional animal advocacy, with unintelligible claims to discredit it's rapidly occurring opponents, can not be seen as anything but fundamentalist in their aims.

Whilst I think the reasons put forward earlier are substantive enough to discredit welfarism in it's aims - mainly the fact that any advantage welfarism has can be

achieved through abolitionism, and that welfarism is always going to result in a trade off of further lives for living conditions etc, so it is immoral to choose the method which involved sacrificing lives - I think this last point is particularly damning for Sztybel. Throughout his article, he continually argues that abolitionism is fundamentalist, without accepting or approaching it's persuasive pragmatic arguments. If proving a critic to be more flawed by his own theory, than the theory he attempts to criticise, is not a good method of discrediting him, then I don't know what is. And I think I have provided good reason for suggesting this is the case.

This aside, Sztybel's own conclusion is still rather ambitious:

'People can respectively disagree on what is most effective, but my paper is intended to show at least that it is not immoral to argue in favour of the occasional efficacy of welfarism'

On the contrary, throughout the piece, Sztybel's arguing of this point is completely undermined by his lack of recognition of what the abolitionist approach offers. At no point has he given a reason why welfarism isn't a trade off in terms of giving lives for an abstract notion of 'suffering reduction' as he calls it. Instead he tries to justify this. But whilst abolitionism can achieve the same goals, but do so without trading the lives of innocent individuals, it is indeed immoral to support a campaign of welfarism. It isn't a choice of efficacy. Not in the slightest. It's a choice between trading entire lives for ambiguous (at best) "welfare increases", which is what welfarism does, or letting industry provide such ambiguous standards themselves whilst minimising the trade off by advocating an animal-free lifestyle all the way through. It's very clear where the morality is here, it certainly isn't a case of "levels of efficiency" any more than the choice between eating animals and eating plants are also different levels of getting the same things.

Conclusion

All in all, Sztybel's defence of welfarism isn't particularly successful. His argument is based on the points that

a) Animal welfarism contributes to a 'kinder' society, which is more conducive to animal interests and rights. However he doesn't make any clear argument as to why, which makes it incredibly ambiguous and merely a knee jerk idea rather than a thought out position. He also doesn't explain why welfarism creates a culture of kindness better than abolitionism would - welfarism is a trade off of lives and individuals rights in return for abstract standards, and so using this method when we could use abolitionism which doesn't make this trade off, is an immoral act. Incredibly immoral. Similarly a society which legislates to make the use of animals more efficient (and we must remember this is the only way welfare laws could be passed) is one that is learning to abuse animals more effectively. This argument shows welfarism doesn't promote kindness, and isn't approached by Sztybel. It proves to be damning for one of his main points.

b) Those who follow an abolitionist approach are fundamentalist, and a pragmatic approach is required, like welfarists have, in order to affect real change for animals. However this is easily disproved by the fact that abolitionism has a much deeper level of pragmatism than welfarism does. It recognises that welfare standards are more effective at reaching people, but goes deeper than that to state that in reaching these people with this method, it necessarily harms the interests of animals. The claim of fundamentalism is a poor one, and perhaps says more of how little Sztybel has looked into Francione and his allies arguments - they are steeped in ideas of pragmatism, and real world results and statistics. Abolitionism puts forward a strong case for a pragmatic fight for animal rights, and just because the welfarists have a more basic, less considered level of pragmatism, does not mean their opponents are not also arguing pragmatically.

c) Welfarist legislation, with especial mention of Sweden, has gotten results - for example factory farming was banned despite profitable interests in Sweden. He has neither backed this up, nor considered the effects of this 'factory farm ban'. The abolitionist approach has many theorists who would happily point out why industry poses as 'protesting' to welfare legislation, and similarly it would become obvious of the financial or cultural benefits for animal industry if a thorough analysis of the figures before and after the ban were looked into. Overall, Sztybel's argument here does not take into account the legal status of animals, and the necessary factors which must be in place for a campaign for the welfare of animals to be successful - number one on this list is that it would provide some sort of owner benefit. We could, arguably, fight campaigns for welfare which were significant in terms of animal's interests. Ie, we could fight a campaign which said all egg production must provide masses of space and forests to forage in, from where their eggs can be collected on a daily basis without threat to the hens. What Sztybel, and still many welfarists like him, don't understand though, is that this would never be successful regardless of support, as it is not going to be at all profitable, and as a result it could never be

passed as it is purely making appeal to what the law perceives as items of property, not individuals. Every welfare law in history can be traced back as having some sort of financial benefit, so putting forward any welfare legislation that makes farming less financially efficient isn't going to be making a good appeal to the law, and there is no reason why it would ever be successful. Working within welfarism like this simply means making animal use more and more efficient - it is incredibly optimistic to think that when we have reached such a level of efficiency that we can think of no more successful welfare laws, then people will stop eating animals, as by this time we would have spent hundreds and thousands of years ingraining the idea that animals are ours to be used. Only a turn towards abolitionism can make a u-turn away from this horrendous looking future, and we really have to begin leaving welfarism behind in order to progress like this.

It's difficult to see how Sztybel's argument has succeeded when all of his major points are either based on basic levels of logic which have ignored a deeper analysis, or ambiguous appeals (like to 'kindness') which most would say isn't anywhere near a sufficient reason to conduct a campaign which has such deep obvious flaws in other areas, and for which better alternatives exist. But then, the same goes for the argument for veganism - I personally have never encountered a reason why veganism isn't the right thing to do. All the arguments to not adopt veganism are lacking in a deeper level analysis, or rooted in myths or half truths. The abolitionist/welfarist debate is alarmingly similar. The fact that Sztybel's article is the best against abolitionism that I have read perhaps shows that there isn't a good argument against it.

Even the short time ago when I studied animal rights, the main argument was whether it was a moral decision to eat/use other animals, or not. It became very clear, very quickly that animal rights was just, to the degree that nowadays the big debate is no longer on whether animal rights is the right thing to do, but on what methods of animal rights advocacy are immoral. That too, for me, is on a similar line. Like those who oppose animal rights, individuals who oppose the abolitionist approach bring up ideas like tradition, myths about welfare, myths about abolitionism, and rousing sentences which aren't backed up by truth (the difference being those against AR appeal to nature and the such, whereas a welfarist appeals to ideas of fundamentalism and "helping animals now" instead). The point is the same though; there is a strong line of logic running through both debates.

In fact if we weren't, as advocates, a lot further towards being abolitionists in twenty years time, it would perhaps show that the tradition of campaigning and protesting is as deeply ingrained as the tradition of using animals in society. Both, unfortunately,

are intimately connected - omnivores and animal users directly demand animals to be exploited, whilst welfarists indirectly ingrain and promote the idea that this is not morally problematic. Opposing both of these things, it seems, is desperately needed for other animal's interests to begin being respected, or for any significant changes along this line to occur at all. Sztybel has provided a useful philosophical version of similar arguments that abolitionists have countered time and time again from their peers, but he's certainly done nothing to illuminate a different line of reasoning - but then how could he? At best he could hope to show welfarism isn't completely defunct as an animal advocacy idea in modern society, but in doing so he faces a task that will likely best him like it bested those of us who have already turned to abolitionism from his rapidly diminishing position.