

Witnessing the Animal Moment

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Why Animals in Social Theory? And Why Now?

In a 1928 article entitled “The Culture of Canines,” sociologist Read Bain made the case for a serious “animal sociology” (Bain, 1928, 545-56). He suggested that, along with other nonhumans, dogs possessed a distinct culture that was the result of dog-dog as well as dog-human interaction and socialization processes. Canine behaviors such as responding to a whistle or giving a paw when greeting a human were “not unlearned instinctive responses, nor are they individual habits, but they are common to practically all civilized dogs in America ... resulting from the acquisition of culture traits” (Bain, 1928, 554). He described visiting white friends in Texas whose terrier, although friendly to white children barked and snarled at African American children passing their home. Observing the approbation (stroking, patting) with which the dog’s white mistress responded to this aggressive behavior, he raised the possibility of “sectional” canine culture, and noted:

I suppose the dog was no more oblivious to the import of these tonal and motor gestures than I was ... I wondered if this might be a case of canine “race prejudice.” Upon inquiry, I discovered several people who had observed similar white (sic) canine responses to Negroes. If this is true, it would seem to be a clear case of canine race prejudice, a culture trait

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acquired by all dogs socially responsive to that particular culture trait of their white masters (Bain, 1928, 555).

Chiding his fellow social theorists for failing to consider animals, Bain suggested that “the persistent attempt to set human phenomena distinctly and widely apart from all other natural phenomena is a hang-over of theoretical teleology, an instance of organic ego-centrism, a type of wishful aggrandizement and self-glorification” that belonged “in the realms of valuation, not in the realm of science” (Bain, 1928, 554). He predicted that “the denial of culture of subhuman (sic) animals is probably a phase of anthropocentrism” (Bain, 1928, 556).

At the end of the twentieth century, Bain’s prediction has come to pass. The multiple and nefarious linkages between human and nonhuman animals have become provocative and of growing, serious concern to American and European social theorists. Why are animal-human relationships suddenly so topical and central to social theory? What political and intellectual purposes are served by studies of the “animal question”?

In this [essay], we provide some [...] answers to these fundamental questions. Theoretical debates and positions are deeply engrained in the environmental, material, and political circumstances of time [and] place. We therefore begin, in the chapter’s first part, by considering economic contexts surrounding the rise of the animal question in social theory. Economic globalization, industrialization, and environmental destruction on a world scale have stimulated a politics of resistance based on vast animal suffering, loss of wilderness, and fears about the “end of nature” which we detail in part two. This politics of resistance has multiple sites of contestation, and the movement’s branches address problems of animals both as species and as individual beings. It has both inspired and been influenced by specific theoretical challenges to modernist epistemologies. In the final section, we argue that the resulting shifts in social thought have had the effect of suddenly bringing animals into sharper theoretical focus. Feminism and postmodernism, in particular, have undermined the beliefs that defined modernism, rendering the boundaries between humans and animals erected by intellectualism much more fluid and contestable. Freed from these theoretical tethers, we are now led, inevitably, to the animal question.

The Animal Economy: Environmental and Ethical Dilemmas

Over the past two decades, the animal economy has become simultaneously both more intense and more exclusive. More profits are squeezed out of each animal life, more quickly, while the reach of animal-based industries has grown to include most of the developing world. In the sections that follow, we consider animal economy, its environmental impacts, and the ethical dilemmas it raises.

A major part of this economy involves traditional uses of animals, as clothing and especially food. Due to the globalization of the animal food economy, animal-linked food production is growing rapidly as western meat consumption norms spread world-wide. The rise of factory farming, which creates pervasive environmental problems and poses profound moral choices, is one result. Meat-driven agricultural practices with devastating implications for environmental quality and habitat loss are another. In addition, however, more general modes for economic development have put enormous pressure on old and new lands, eliminating or degrading spaces critical to wildlife populations and species and calling the models' logic into question. And the wild animal trade, some of it involving smuggling and poaching, is big business that kills hundreds of thousands of animals each year, bringing some species to the brink of extinction.

Animals are also central to biomedical research, and its spin-off, biotechnology. Through biotechnology, animals in some transgenetically altered form become living commodities, the new products of biomedical research and bioengineering enterprises stimulated by heavy investments from private and public entities convinced of their profitable future. More animal-based "biologicals," continue to use huge numbers of animals for development and production of medicines, vaccines, and consumer products. The ethical implications of animal-based biomedical labs, products research, and biotechnology have loomed increasingly large, especially as the potential consequences of reconfiguring animal bodies shaped over millions of millennia become apparent.

Globalization and the World Diet

Globalization has augmented dramatically the circulation of animal bodies (whole and in parts) as western food norm and development strategies together create a "world diet" predicated on grain-fed animal proteins for the rich and starvation and food insecurity for the poor. The average meat-eating person in the US consumes 112 kilograms/year in beef, pork, mutton, lamb, and poultry; this consumer also directly or indirectly consumes fish as well as crustaceans and mollusks, silkworms, horses, goats, turkey, pigs, geese, and/or ducks, mice, rabbits, and rats. The world average meat consumption is 32 kilograms/year, with consumption steadily rising. Global meat production has quadrupled since 1950 (population has doubled), and world-wide cheese consumption has doubled since 1970 (Durning and Brough, 1991, 11).

Demand for meat has stimulated a profound shift in grain production, as animal feed grains now account for almost 40 percent of all grain production, and many poor nations which used to be grain exporters are now net importers. Demand for meat among urban affluent consumers has skyrocketed; by 1981 the Food and Agriculture Organization estimated that 75 percent of Third World grain imports went to feed animals (Durning and Brough, 1991, 14, 31). This process, which Mexican agronomist

David Barkin terms *ganaderización* or livestockization, has threatened food security throughout the 'Third World' (Barkin et al., 1990).

Some of these animal products are produced and consumed locally, but many others arrive from far-flung spots spanning the globe, for example, the "world steer" or "global steer" (Rifkin, 1992). Worldwide in 1990, 64 million tons of pork, 48 million tons of beef, and 34 million tons of poultry were "produced" – the top producers being the US, China, the European Community², and the countries of the former USSR. The aggregate size of the globalized, animal economy is enormous: the world trade in cows alone (their flesh, skin, organs, and hooves) employs 200 million people and involves approximately 1.3 billion cattle, who take up almost a quarter of the earth's landmass. In the US alone, the cow trade is a [US]\$36 billion industry (Ehrlich and Ehrlich, 1990; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 1990).

Factory farms have multiplied to meet the expanding demand for meat in an increasingly competitive internationalizing livestock market. Agro-industrial production of animals is energy intensive: one kilogram of US pork not only requires 6.9 kilograms of grain and several thousand liters of water, but 30,000 kilocalories – the equivalent of about 4 liters of gasoline (Durning and Brough, 1991, 17-18). Factory farming also has created its own set of environmental damages, such as heightened greenhouse gas levels (with farm animals accounting for 15-20 percent of all global methane emissions) and groundwater pollution (especially nitrates). Some European countries are so bogged down by manure that they have been deemed "manure surplus" nations by the European Community.

The environmental and potential health disasters associated with factory farming have become big news. During the 1996 US presidential campaign, for example, contenders for the Republican presidential nomination faced a barrage of angry constituents in pork-belt states where huge hog factories were decimating traditional smaller scale operations. Furious neighbors have been left behind to face the air and water pollution from the vast open cesspools of animal waste mixed with drugs and food additives flowing from factory farm operations. Factory farms have also undermined the popular image of the farm homestead; as news of factory farm techniques have spread, such farms have been transformed in the popular consciousness into animal concentration camps. In this regard, the 1995 British mad cow crisis served not only to awaken the public about the health threats associated with factory farms, but to project images of bioengineered cannibalism – feeding herbivorous animals their rendered, sanitized, and granulated brethren down on the factory farm – into living rooms around the world.

² Editors' note: now called the European Union.

Economic Development and Habitat Loss

Wildlife loss and extinction resulting from industrialization and models of “development” predicated on massive exploitation of land and natural resources have been another context for public alarm, debate, and action over animals. Biodiversity loss is expected to escalate as countries join a “race to the bottom” in environmental protection in an effort to secure the economic gains of trade. Land-use intensification and frontier expansion, development strategies employed throughout the world, have generally entailed the subdual or removal of existing peoples and the elimination or control of animal populations. In European Russia and Siberia, the United States, Australia, South Africa, India, Brazil, China and other parts of the world, the outcome has been the same. “Explorers” and prospectors led the way for commodity extractors; settlers plowed grasslands or semi-arid lands, drained wetlands, built dams, and cleared forests. The forests of Brazil and Indonesia, as well as northern lands of the Arctic Circle, are perhaps the last land frontiers. The major ecosystems in the Indo-Malayan realm are estimated to have lost 70 percent of their original vegetation and 30 percent of the region’s coral reefs are considered degraded (Singh, 1995, 35-48). The US has lost over 50 percent of its coastal and freshwater wetlands and many parts of Europe have lost nearly all wetlands. Chad, Cameroon, Niger, Bangladesh, India, Thailand, and Vietnam have lost more than 80 percent of their freshwater wetlands (Tolba, 1992). Overall, nearly as much land was converted from natural habitat to agriculture from 1960 to 1980 as had been converted prior to 1960 in sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, South Asia, and South-East Asia (Repetto and Gillis, 1988).

Historically, in some areas like the southern High Plains of the United States or most of the British Isles and the Mediterranean, nearly all of the landscape was altered following human colonization. Accompanying such development was an ecological cleansing in which large mammals (except for deer, elk, and other select ungulates) were eliminated by hunting, poisoning, trapping, and urban settlement. The litany of “last killed” animals in these European-settled lands is extensive and provocative (for example, the last Arizona grizzly was killed in 1939; the last wolf was killed in Great Britain by 1509; the last quagga (lesser-striped zebra) died in the Amsterdam zoo in 1883; the last Carolina parakeet died in the Cincinnati zoo in 1914). Rates of animal loss have accelerated rapidly. Amazon deforestation and the coincidental projections of species elimination, for example, soared in the 1980s; in 1986, Simberloff (1986, 165-80) estimated that 66 percent of plant species and 69 percent of Amazon birds would be lost by the year 2000, given current estimates of deforestation.

Hunting for ivory, fur, hides, and other animal commodities also puts tremendous pressure on animal populations, and at various times during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has caused the near extinction of numerous species from North American beaver to South African elephants. Fishing and whaling, in conjunction with pollution, have destroyed several fisheries and caused a reduction in the number of many other species due to current net technology. Prior to the passage of the US Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, the US tuna fishing industry was killing over

360,000 dolphins annually (85 percent of the total) in the eastern Pacific (Constance et al., 1995, 23). Whale population was decimated by commercial whaling. Only the minke whale, the smallest species, survives in commercial numbers today. Blue whale populations have never recovered, even after twenty-five years of protection. At the height of the “taking” of blue whales, 30,000 animals were taken in one season alone (Blaikie and Jeanreneaud, 1996).

Introduction of industrial chemicals has augmented the potential and actual spatial scales of destruction. Acid rain, which poisons water and kills forests on a regional scale, alteration of atmospheric chemistry, and ozone depletion increase the threat to wildlife. The very bases of the world’s food chains – for example, phytoplankton and zooplankton – may be affected. Just which biome boundaries will remain where they are currently is highly uncertain, but the outlook for wildlife in the face of renewed and continuous human pressure upon the land from such shifts is onerous. Some estimates place the number of extinctions at 20 percent of all species by the year 2000 (Peters and Lovejoy, 1990).

The Wild Animal Trade

Hunting, trading and raising wild animals for circuses, laboratories, pets, trophies, sport, and other uses is big business. The international trade in live wild animals and body parts alone is estimated at [US]\$7-8 billion a year. Most of the business is legal, but about one quarter to one third depends upon poaching and smuggling, usually across borders (Seager, 1995, 125).

The number of animals (including fish) involved in the trade is estimated at nearly half a billion annually. Some 50,000 primates a year are on the market, as well as 6-7 million live birds and about 350 million tropical fish. Furs, leather, and ivory are also traded in huge quantities. Tusk ivory from an estimated 70, 000 African elephants is on the market annually, plus some 10 million reptile skins and 15 million pelts (Kirwin, 1994, 44-5)³.

The effects of the trade include placing some animal species in danger of extinction and causing hardships to those that are used as pets, circus animals, and laboratory experiments. African elephants, horned oryx, Kemp’s Ridley sea turtles, and northern bald ibis are some of the most threatened and endangered species. Perhaps the most endangered species are the black rhino, which has been reduced by 95 percent since 1970, and the northern white rhino, of which there are only 20 left. Asian and African rhino horns sell at [US]\$1,000 an ounce or more for medicines and

³ Based on data from the 1990 Trade Records Analysis of Fauna and Flora in Commerce, developed by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), Washington, D.C.

aphrodisiacs. Traffic in pelts of endangered feline species such as jaguars, ocelots, and pumas, is contributing to the gradual disappearance of these animals from other countries, notably Mexico.

Animals do not fare well in the trade circuits. An estimated 50-80 percent of the live animals die en route to their destinations. Animals maintained in captivity may thrive in some cases, but in others do not. Elephants in the wild may live seventy years; in circuses, their average life is reduced to fourteen years because of stress, traveling in circus boxcars, and being stabled in unsuitable quarters (Newkirk, 1994). Between 4,000 and 5,000 chimpanzees are incarcerated around the world. For every infant that survives a year at the final destination, ten die in transit or on arrival, or are killed in the wild by poachers (Vines, 1993, 39). Many animals do not reproduce in captivity, a problem besieging many captive breeding programs.

The major buyers of live animals are the US, Japan, and Europe. The US is the largest importer of live primates; other big primate importers include Canada, Japan, France and the Netherlands. The Netherlands is the largest importer of live birds, and Japanese dealers purchase the biggest supplies of reptile skins. Main suppliers are located in Latin America, Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Indonesia is the largest exporter of live primates; Senegal is the largest exporter of live birds; and China is the largest exporter of reptile skins. The UK and US are also primary exporters of reptile skins. The United Arab Emirates, Taiwan, Paraguay, Bolivia, Yemen, Laos, Myanmar [Burma], Vietnam, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and China are important middlemen for illegal wildlife trade, as was Amsterdam until the Netherlands joined the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (CITES) in 1984. Hunters and cartels in French Guiana, Bolivia, and Paraguay are also movers of illegal birds and other animals (Seager, 1995, 81).

CITES has, since 1973, done a great deal to mitigate the threats to animals in trade. It has been signed by over ninety countries. Nevertheless, many animals are not covered by the convention, and even countries that have signed are incapable of policing the illegal trade. Poaching is a problem throughout the world. In US parks, poaching is at an all-time high. An estimated three thousand American black bears are taken illegally every year, primarily for bear paws and bear gall bladders (one gall bladder may fetch as much as [US]\$64,000 for Asian medicinal purposes). Current prices for ready-to-mount bighorn sheep can go as high as [US]\$10,000; grizzlies can go for [US]\$25,000. Snake poaching is a multimillion-dollar industry in the US alone, and, as we write, reptile-skin shoes, belts, and purses are high-fashion again in the spring of 1996 (van Biema, 1994).

Recreational hunting also contributes to the animal economy. Hunting-based tourism continues to earn profits, and not just in “traditional” countries in Africa and Asia where colonial sport hunting gained its highest acclaim. “Canned hunts”, as they are called, can now be found in many states of the US. In Texas alone there are some five hundred ranches where exotic animals are bred for killing. With either bows or high-powered rifles, “hunters” from America and elsewhere can obtain African game

hunt trophies without ever having to endure the hardships of going to a ‘Third World’ country. A perhaps less exotic example of this type of hunting, again in the US, is the boom in prairie dog safaris. The skill it takes to down them is the attraction. These “boutique hunts” are not inexpensive, however. Just like the exotic animal hunting, which can cost up to [US]\$35,000 or more per animal, prairie dog hunting requires rifles that can easily cost [US]\$5,000. And one need not go to the prairies to be outfitted: Dog-town varmint supplies of Newport Beach, California, offers everything from hunting clothes to high-powered rifle scopes to the services of gun technicians who will answer questions by phone.

Biotechnology and the Transgenic Animal Kingdom

Biomedical research laboratories, product testing companies, and drug manufacturers have long used animals for experimentation, testing, and production purposes. Exact numbers of animals who die as a result of these uses are difficult to determine. Estimates of world use of laboratory animals in the 1970s ranges between 100 and 225 million; in the US the figure during the mid 1980s is estimated by Rowan (1984, 65-71) to have been about 71 million.

Despite an increasing emphasis on replacement, refinement, and reduction of animal use in traditional biomedical, product testing, and pharmaceutical production labs – through in vitro methods, for example – biotechnology is a fresh arena for animal experimentation and production. Indeed, biotechnology has become a major growth area in advanced industrial economies and the hot new promise of international development planners. The rise of biotechnology has upped the ante on animals to support healthy living and beautiful human bodies, and, generally, to produce more for less. Given its potential to become a bigger earner than traditional sectors such as the chemical industry, virtually every developed country and many developing countries have identified leadership in biotechnology as a national goal.

Animal biotechnology companies were expected to reach annual revenues of [US]\$150 million for US sales and close to [US]\$500 million worldwide in 1996 (Mather, 1996). Current developments, such as transgenic animals, including the patented mice bred for specific predispositions to cancer, add new twists to the old debates about animal welfare versus human health. In agriculture, genetically altered rhizobia (designed to enhance nitrogen fixation) have already been added to millions of hectares of farm land. Farm animals are targets for bovine growth hormones and more body weight with less feed. Transgenic chickens and pigs are expected to inundate the market by 2015, earning billions of dollars in the US market alone (Mather, 1996, 23).

Arguing that bioengineering improves rather than mimics nature, its proponents claim that it will remedy the failures and inefficiencies of industrial agriculture (Gibbons, 1992). New plants and animals will be created that are more resistant to the

old pests, diseases, and stresses. These new forms of life, created by transplanting genetic material, are and will be “owned” by their engineers and corporate founders, a development that has already caused a furor among people in a number of countries. In addition, the ethics of “creating” new animals is under serious scrutiny: should animals be so quick to tinker with the results of the evolutionary process, and to what end? And, looming in the background, how long until the androids arrive?

Animal Politics: Sites and Social Movements

The threats of massive environmental degradation and species extinction and the commodification of billions of animals as the economy goes global, have led to a turbulent politics surrounding animals. Animal-related issues have increasingly found their way into the public agenda, and as a result the state now plays a major role in protecting animals from suffering, minimizing species loss, and balancing economic and environmental objectives. Yet the globalization of the economy and changes in the international division of labor since the 1970s have produced or coincided with a substantial reduction in the states’ control of national affairs in both economic and noneconomic realms (Harvey, 1990).

Free trade agreements like the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) may be used to further weaken the ability of activist to promote animal protection through state governance. The dismantlement of dolphin protection by way of the US Marine Mammal Protection act of 1972 is a case in point. The act required tuna fleets to adopt dolphin protection programs; embargoes on imports of tuna caught by foreign fleets (from Mexico, Venezuela, and Vanuatu) were established until those fleets came into alliance. Mexico charged that the US was protecting US fishers rather than dolphins, and a GATT panel found in favor of Mexico. The Clinton administration, with the support of Greenpeace and other activist groups, quietly retreated from the dolphin protection issue. Friends of Animals, the Sea Shepherds, and other groups are opposed to the resultant changes in the act because of the impact this will have on dolphins and the precedent set for erosion of animal protection in a globalized economy.

In general, revelations about the scale of habitat loss and endangerment, and animal death and suffering, along with the unwillingness or inability of the state to stop or effectively regulate the slaughter, have catalyzed a wave of social movements. Although some have long histories (especially wilderness conservation groups), such movements can be characterized overall as “new” social movements, which address broad quality of life issues rather than purely economic concerns (such as wages, worker protection, workplace discrimination, and so on). Like other social movements, the animal movement comprises a broad spectrum of organizations that range from large bureaucratic institutions to small-scale informal collectives, and have varied political orientations and causes: wildlife and wildlife conservation organizations, animal protection societies, animal rights groups, wildlife habitat restoration projects,

farm animal protective leagues, wildlands and forest protection campaigns, and animal rescue operations. Despite this enormous diversity, to some extent all animal social-movement organizations contest the harmful human treatment of animals, and the destruction and degradation of their habitats.

In the sections that follow, we consider contested sites of animal politics. Then, we focus on two domains into which much of the organized activism has tended to fall: wildlife and wilderness protection groups within the larger environmental movement, whose primary aims are habitat and species conservation; and animal protection groups concerned with the protection of individual animals or classes of animals.

Contested Sites of Animal Activism

The sites of animal politics range from Western to non-Western, local to global. In non-Western localities, debate sometimes revolves around domestic animals, such as cattle in India, whose religious statue simultaneously protects them from slaughter and exposes them to the depredations of hunger and disease. More often, political conflict centers on how local subsistence economies can coexist with wild animals protected for their ability to attract rich Western ecotourists. Conflicts also arise between resource managers and subsistence dwellers living on or near newly created bioserves, whose traditional practices are suddenly redefined as illegal poaching, or who are removed from their homelands to make way for bioserve establishment. And battles erupt between Western conservation organizations and national governments intent upon cashing in on their unfungible wildlife resources, including whales and elephants (Freeman and Krueter, 1994). In northern Sulawesi in Indonesia, for example, the World Bank and the World Wildlife Fund (now called Worldwide Fund for Nature) sponsored the establishment of a reserve (destined to become a national park) which entailed the eviction of some seven hundred families from the area, many of whom were indigenous Mongoneow who had been forced into the highlands because of pressure from the resettlement and migration of other Indonesians.

Local conflicts in the US are often over how and where to manage local wildlife and how to prevent species endangerment in the context of urbanization-driven habitat loss and fragmentation. Urban wildlife, especially large predators in a suburban setting, presents a particularly troublesome and delicate problem. Bears, coyotes, deer, moose, and alligators – to name just a few – are expanding their ranges and experiencing human encroachment upon existing ranges. Eliminating and shooting such animals is not the foregone conclusion it once was, given the zoophile spirit that infuses our contemporary culture. The result is often a pitched battle between pro-hunting forces, wildlife management agencies, ordinary residents, and animal rights activists to determine how “problem” wildlife and developments will be handled.

At the regional and national levels too, the US norm is chronic political conflicts between environmentalists and animal advocates, land managements

agencies, pro-growth factions, or industry interests. The battles are over wildlife conservation, land management practices, wildlife management techniques, and the impacts of resource extraction and land development on animal habitat. Some high-profile examples include the sharpshooting of mustangs in the American West and the spotted-owl controversy in the Pacific Northwest. Continual battles occur between animal welfare and rights lobbies on the one hand, and livestock interests, rodeo and circus groups, bioengineering companies, and pharmaceutical interest on the other; these wars tend to be waged in statehouses and Congress, since legislation governing animal welfare, livestock transport, products and drug testing, and patents is written there.

Animal politics also rage in the international arena, where struggles revolve around efforts to protect endangered species and eliminate smuggling and poaching. For example, the ivory-trade ban, initiated by placing the African elephant on the Appendix I listing at the 1989 CITES meeting, is another extremely controversial issue. Undertaken to protect elephant populations, which were declining during the 1980s, the bans has received considerable criticism (and support) from Westerners and non-Westerners. One of the criticisms is that Western countries, through the World Bank and nongovernmental organizations, were directing land use and wildlife policy against the interests of the people living alongside the elephants. Consequently, more efforts are being made to share tourist dollars with people living around parks, to ensure that people are not moved off their lands and to generally try to find people-friendly and socially equitable ways to protect biodiversity.

Protecting Wilderness and Wildlife Species

One of the most sustained political efforts around animals has been the battle to conserve wildlife and prevent species endangerment. The attempt to conserve and protect wildlife species has a long and complicated history, beginning well before the twentieth century. Bird protection leagues and hunting societies in Europe and the US were among the first conservation groups to concern themselves with the protection of wild animals. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature and the World Wildlife Fund, for example, grew out of British and French interest in maintaining species within their empires. Such groups were prominent in politics during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but after achieving some successes in establishing reservations and protective legislation declined in membership and public visibility.

In the 1960s and 1970s a second wave of the environmental movement was catalyzed by the chemical insecticide killing of birds, mammals, fishes, and other forms of wildlife. Existing groups – such as the US National Wildlife Federation and the Audubon Society, the Italian League for the Protection of Birds, the French Society for the Protection of Nature, and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds – were reinvigorated and many new wildlife-oriented organizations – Greenpeace, Friends of

the Earth, Mouvement Ecologique, and Robinwood – also sprang up to protect animals and wilderness areas.

These new groups, along with the older conservation societies, are characterized by white, middle- and upper-class, membership and white male leaderships. They tend to run the political gamut from left to right. In general, the organizations are interested in “conservation,” “ecology,” or a mixture of the two. The ecology groups have been most sympathetic to the ideas of the new left, while the conservation groups tend to split between green, new left, and several other ideological orientations (Dalton, 1994).

These groups differ in their political strategies as well. Practices of the wilderness and wildlife preservation groups range from the more staid letter-writing campaigns, to educational programs and lobbying, to illegal direct actions. One large grassroots organization, Earth First!, includes “ecotage” among its major tactics. Ecotage involves blockades, taking over equipment, sitting in trees scheduled to be cut down, pulling up survey spikes, cutting down billboards, doing damage to logging equipment and bulldozers, and destroying traps. Australian Earth First! Members have buried themselves up to their necks and chained themselves to logs in front of bulldozers. Both Greenpeace and Canadian Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, funded in part by the Fun for Animals and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, have also taken direct action and rammed whaling and factory-fishing boats. These dramatic actions have succeeded in bringing international media and government attention to a number of issues, including sealing, illegal whaling, scientific abuse of whales, and dolphin slaughter. They have also resulted in these more militant groups (including Germany’s Robinwood) being targeted by governments as dangerous and subject to a variety of covert and official investigations.

More traditional groups – Friends of the Earth (with offices throughout the world), the US Defenders of Wildlife, and the British-founded Worldwide Fund for Nature, for example – have opted for political lobbying and public relations in their campaigns to protect wild animals. The nonmilitant groups have pursued a more litigious route towards ensuring some measure of protection from endangered species and habitats.

Pressures from these environmental organizations and the public led many countries to pass wildlife protection legislation in the 1970s. In the US, for example, Congress passed the Endangered Species Act in 1966, amending and strengthening it in 1973. The act is based on the assumptions that each life-form may prove valuable in ways not yet measurable and that each one is entitled to exist for its own sake. In 1973 the list of threatened and endangered species numbered 109; now the total is over 900 (more than 14,000 counting foreign species) and some 3,700 officially recognized candidates await review. While this legislation has been a boon to animal protection, critics claim that due to lack of funding the act has never been implemented as it was intended. During the first eighteen years of the act, annual funding for the program

averaged [US]\$39 million – “about enough to build a mile of urban interstate highway, or about 16 cents per year from every taxpayer” (Chadwick, 1995, 9).

With the slowdown in growth experienced by many of the industrialized nations in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the environmental impulse was stifled by governments that veered off to the far right. In Britain, Germany, and the US, in particular, wildlife protection legislation and other environmental regulations were scrutinized for the brakes they put on private development. These sentiments echoed those of farmers, developers, and timber industry groups that had for years tried to reverse regulation. Oppositional groups, like the Wise Use Movement in the US with its antigovernment and anti-elite philosophy, gained some prominence through their own high-profile campaigns. Anti-environmental backlash came from the populist left as well. In response, both local and global conservation groups, such as the Worldwide Fund for Nature, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, and especially Greenpeace, have tried to become more “grassroots” in their ideologies and programs. Community-based conservation is now the word on the street; however, neo-liberal approaches that rely on the market (which means only animals that can pay their own way can stay) are also in the ascendant.

In Defense of Individual Animals and their Rights

The other major arm of the animal social movement is dedicated to animal protection, specifically the protection of individual animal lives, the reduction of animal suffering, and, in some cases, the “liberation” of captive animals. Unlike wildlife conservation and habitat protection efforts, this branch of animal-oriented activism did not originate as part of the broader environmental movement (although firm linkages now exist). Rather, animal welfare groups as a part of the animal protection movement emerged along with early abolition, suffrage, and especially social welfare and child protective societies (in fact, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals predated, and was used as a model for, child protective associations of the late nineteenth century). In the 1820s, for example, British women held campaigns opposed to vivisection. By the 1870s opposition to vivisection and other forms of animal suffering stimulated the growth of organizations including the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection, the Victorian Street Society, and the Royal Society for the Protection of Children and Animals. Such organizations expanded rapidly throughout the US, Britain, and other countries of the industrialized West, becoming powerful national bodies with political influence and venerable local institutions, attracting charitable donations and volunteers. Later, during the second half of the twentieth century, the protection movement expanded to include animal rights organizations. The efforts of these groups, who sought the liberation of captive animals and extended rights as well as protection for animals, were often modeled on the civil rights campaigns, as well as women’s liberation movements, and other progressive political struggles of the 1960s and 1970s.

Animal protection organizations range widely in terms of philosophy. Traditional animal welfare-oriented societies tend to perceive their activism on beliefs in the virtue of human kindness and the evil of suffering (human or animal), while animal rights groups are steeped in ethics supporting the intrinsic value of animal subjects and their rights to equal consideration. Some of these latter groups seek legal standing for animals and oppose many conventional animal practices that involve captivity (including pet keeping and animal-based entertainments). Traditionally, most animal protection groups were oriented toward domestic animals and animals hunted for sport or trapped for fur. Over time, however, animal protection organizations have also become deeply involved in the protection of wild animal lives.

The animal welfare movement is one of the biggest coalitions of activists in the West and has spread to many other areas of the world. In Britain, there are hundreds of pro-animal groups, and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals alone has five hundred thousand supporters. In the US, while traditional groups such as the Humane Society, the Anti-Vivisection League, and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) are still active, among the new groups that have sprung are People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), with a membership of around three hundred thousand), the Gorilla Foundation, the Humane Farming Association, Farm Animal Reform, Alliance for Animals, Citizens to End Animal Suffering and Exploitation (CEASE), Trans-Special Unlimited, the Digit Fund, and many more. In other places around the world, animal-welfare/rights organizations are active, for example, the Philippines' National Society for the Protection of Animals; South Korea's Animal Protection Society; and Japan's Animal Welfare Society. Similar Organizations exist in the Ukraine, the Czech Republic, Mexico, India, Russia, and many, many more locales.

Today's animal protection activism has expanded its focus from the initial targets of anti-cruelty campaigns (pets, working animals, and animals killed in blood sports) mounted by humane societies of the nineteenth century and still waged by many traditional groups today. In the US, animal experimentation and fur-wearing have become important targets of campaigning, while for British groups, factory farming and the trans-shipment of animals have loomed large. Groups in other countries illustrate a range of concerns, from trying to solve the problem of whales caught in fishers' nets (Republic of Korea), to anti-vivisection (Japan and the Czech-Republic), to enduring dog poisoning in urban areas (Peru and Portugal).

The emergence of concern and activism around so-called food animals reveals the erosion of lines that historically divided the animal world into those worth protecting because they were seen as either part of nature (wildlife) or the human community (pets), and those not worth protecting because they were neither (farm animals) and constituted sources of profit and value. The status of commodified domestic animals such as cattle, sheep, pigs, and chickens, once excluded from spheres of moral concern and legal protections, is being re-evaluated. And because of the environmental damage inherent in large-scale factory farming, campaigns around farm

animal welfare and farming practices are increasingly waged by coalitions of green and wildlife conservation groups on the one hand, and animal welfare/rights organizations on the other.

Like some wildlife conservation organizations, many of the animal protection groups engage in civil disobedience as well as educational campaigns and animal rescue/sanctuary works; some even engage in violence. The Animal Liberation Front, last Chance for Animals, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, Band of Mercy, and True Friends are some of the groups considered “terrorist” by the US Federal Bureau of Investigation and the New Scotland Yard (Loeb et al., 1989). Most pro-animal activists, however, disclaim violence although the scientific community and the media have tended to lump all activists together as extremists.

In the US and Britain, the vast majority of animal protection activists are middle-class women. Feminists have a long history of association with animal welfare and anti-vivisection societies (Donovan, 1993; Lansbury, 1985). Recognizing similar sources of oppression for both women and animals, ecofeminists have attempted to walk a thin line between not romanticizing nature or animals and yet refusing a reductionist reason in such considerations. Though generally considered a middle-class affair, animal protection activism has had its share of working-class collaborators. The Brown Dog riot of the nineteenth century in Britain involved trade unionists and others fighting medical students in the streets of Battersea to preserve a statue erected in memory of a terrier that was vivisected. According to Carol Lansbury and Matt Cartmill, the Brown Dog riot symbolized “the power that doctors and other men of wealth and influence exerted over the poor” (Lansbury, 1993, 142). Recently, Ted Benton and Simon Redfearn argued that the Brightlingsea protests of 1995 in resistance to live exports of animals could be seen as an opportunity for left politics. Attempting to do something – even something so apparently moderate as these campaigns have tried to do – brings protesters up against the power of capital and the full force of the law (Benton and Redfearn, 1996, 57). With few exceptions, however, the left in the US and in Britain has remained wary and dismissive of animal protection activism.

Animal protection activists have achieved some measure of success. Several countries, including the US and Great Britain, passed stronger regulations for animal care in research and on the farm during the 1980s. The cosmetic companies Revlon and Avon agreed to stop the Draize test in 1989. After PETA’s Heartbreak of America campaign in 1991, General Motors agreed to stop the world’s last animal test-crash experiments. By some reports, fur sales decreased during the 1980s but have risen again in the 1990s. Scandinavian Airlines Systems and British Airways have refused to ship animals destined for laboratory experiments. Nevertheless, the battles still rage in the face of continued vast animal suffering and death.

Critiques of Modernism: Opening Theoretical Space for Animals

Modernity and modern social theory reached their zeniths in the West during the twentieth century. Western modernity as a historical epoch was characterized by rapid developments in science, machine technology, and modes of industrial production that together led to unprecedented living standards, dependence on inanimate energy sources, the political system of the nation-states, and the rise of massive bureaucracies. Modernism as a set of values for human behavior emphasized rationalism, individualism, and humanism, while modernist norms for social order were predicated upon the possibility of liberal democracy and secular culture. Modernization (or “development”) thus entailed following a path of social and technological change that maximized these values and norms. By the 1970s, however, the legacies of modernity and modernist ways of knowing were under severe attack. Critics argued that the achievements of modernity rested on race, class, and gender domination, colonialism and imperialism, anthropocentrism and the destruction of nature. The legitimacy of modernity as a system of thought was simultaneously undermined. Given some of the more horrific of modernism’s “achievements” – namely, the twentieth century’s “age of camps,” to use Zygmunt Bauman’s term in reference to Auschwitz and the Gulag – criticism of the modernist project unfolded with exceptional force and passion, if not always with pristine clarity.

Many strands of this critique – feminist, multicultural and postmodern – have created spaces for reconsidering animals. It is not so much any one theorization that has set out to produce these opportunities, but rather discourses about several general themes have converged to make a consideration of animals appropriate if not inevitable. In the sections that follow, we consider some of the most important critiques of modernism with crucial implications for thinking about animals. These critiques have aimed to challenge the hegemony of the material as foundational to social life and, by extension, the assumed irrelevance of everyday cultural forms such as play, advertisements, and fictionalization as carriers of profound social meanings; [these critiques] question the notion of the unitary subject and expose intertwined dualisms, which together have served to silence a multiplicity of different voices, foster human conflict, and engender environmental degradation; and [they] unveil aspects of the modernist vision of social progress as inimical to global safety and security. We treat each of these elements of the critique in turn below.

Reasserting the Relevance of Cultural Forms

Traditionally, animals have been dismissed as too down home, too trivial, too close to nature for most serious intellectuals to consider, even the most avant-garde. In a reflection on animals and children’s literature, for example, Ursula LeGuin (1990, 8) claimed that

If you want to clear a room of derrideans, mention Beatrix Potter without sneering ... In literature as in real life, women, children, and animals are the obscure matter upon which Civilizations erects itself, phallogically If Man vs. Nature is the name of the game, no wonder the team players kick out all these non-men who won't learn the rules and run around the cricket pitch squeaking, and barking, and chirping!

Feminism and postmodernism, however, have managed to defy the old lines of reasoning regarding the privileged position of the material in explanations of social life and organization. What can and cannot be discussed seriously is now an open question. Postmodernism especially, with its emphasis on culture, has challenged the somberness of modernism and flung open the doors to deliberation on subjects ranging from gangsta rap and high fashion to world creation and the meaning of life. The feminist emphasis on the significance of the everyday, and the rents in modernity's materialist fabric produced by the "cultural turn," have allowed us to see and examine the rules imposed upon everyone and every life occasion. A denial of universalism lets us hear a choir of voices that sing no single melody, not even a harmonic chord; all sorts of folks now have their say, including those whose "pet" peeves and extended families include animals of myriad kinds.

Once one starts looking around the cultural landscape, the animal is everywhere. Comic strips like the *Far Side* and *Calvin and Hobbes* use animals to show us in good-humored fashions how silly, naïve and contradictory we are. Cat mysteries are hot sellers. Even a superficial review of folk traditions illustrates the prominence of animal teachers (and bad guys) in every culture. The Berenstain bears, Winnie the Pooh, Barney, Paddington Bear, Brer Fox and Brer Rabbit teach children morality, kindness, good manners, and self-respect. That animals are deeply ensconced in children's folk culture is a reality not lost upon toymakers, particularly those who manufacture soft, cuddly companions and children's books. Products for adults are equally susceptible to animal-based marketing campaigns, however. Black rhinos and vervet monkeys sell Nissan Pathfinders. Wolves and black panthers sell Jeeps, and an alligator with frogs on its tail walks off a pier with a case of Budweiser. A quick look at the movie industry's production of animal movies for family consumption illustrates a growing trend. Disney's *101 Dalmatians* is the seventh-highest-grossing film of all time. Animals, it would seem *are* serious business.

The legitimation of animals and human-animals interactions as appropriate subjects for scholarly investigation has led to a variety of feminist and postmodern critiques of the use of animals as cultural forms and the problems they pose for social relations; even the cultural politics of toys, children's culture, and TV marketing to children are now matters for serious study (Kline, 1993). Critiques of pet keeping and the anthropomorphizing of animals in cartoons, movies, books, and other media are also serious scholarship (see, for example, Shepard, 1995). Matt Cartmill's analysis of *Bambi* and the men involved in writing the book (Siegmond Salzman, a Jewish intellectual born in Budapest) and translating it (Whittaker Chambers, a Communist

Party member who later became Nixon's star witness in the Alger Hiss case) is a brilliant example of an "animal story" in which humanized animals reveal the "truth" about human nature (Cartmill, 1993, 161). The point is that "we know by now, or ought to know, that what gets us off as entertainment is rarely simple and never innocent" (Fred Pfiel quoted in Cartmill, 1993, 161). As works like those by Cartmill and Kline reveal, cultural forms including literature, film, and other types of entertainment exert a potent impact on the formation of ideologies of human-animal relations among children and adults alike.

Decentering the Subject and Debunking Dualisms

Writers such as Carol Adams and Steven Baker suggest that the decentering of the human subject is a major opportunity to see animals and humans differently. Adams, for instance, has argued that "the tumbling away of a unitary subject opens up space for discussing other-than-human subjects" (Adams, 1995, 12-3). Baker (1993, 26) writes that "the decentering of the human subject opens up a valuable conceptual space for shifting the animal out of the cultural margins. It does so precisely by destabilizing the familial clutch of entrenched stereotypes which works to maintain the illusion of human identity, centrality, and superiority."

The unitary subject rests on foundational notions of humanity, the subject and the citizen. Most postmodern and feminist theorists argue against the fiction of the essential man or subject, identifying this subject fiction as grounded in Kantian anthropology. Taking what could be considered an anti-humanist position, these theorists deny the existence of any such human nature or essence and see humans as an "ever-varying matrix of biological, social, and cultural determinants" (Johnson, 1990)⁴. Foucault (1973), in particular, denied the transcendent in the conjunction of discursive and nondiscursive practices. Such interrogations of "man" as "subject" have resulted in a clear picture of the exclusionary and often violent operations by which such a position has been established (Butler and Scott, 1992).

The idea of the unitary subject has been in part buttressed by the dualisms so characteristic and pervasive to modernist thought. The concept of dualism refers to "the construction of a devalued and sharply demarcated sphere of otherness" that stands in opposition to an essentialized and valorized sphere of identification (Plummer, 1993, 41). The operation of dualisms, analyzed most extensively by feminists and Derrideans, has historically relied on exclusions and denials of dependency, instrumentalism or objectification, and homogenization or stereotyping.

⁴ Editors' note: the page number reference is missing in the original.

As Luc Ferry explains in his splendid exploration of radical ecology, the “animal” is the first being encountered in the process of decentering the unitary subject and thus undermining modernity (Ferry, 1995, xxix). Why? Because the animal has stood in opposition to “man,” creating the fiction that man’s humanity resides in his freedom from instinct and even from history. But through the dualist lens of “constitutive otherness” we can see animals as constitutive of humans, revealing porosity of the distinction between human freedom and animal necessity. We can see animals as constitutive of humans, revealing porosity of the distinction between human freedom and animal necessity.

As the frontier between civility and barbarity, culture and nature increasingly drifts, animal bodies flank the moving line. It is upon animal bodies that the struggles for naming what is human, what lies within the grasp of human agency, what is possible, are taking place. Biological science has stood sentinel at the frontier, reading the animal and reporting its findings to psychologists and other normative gatekeepers. But, as Zygmunt Bauman points out, biology occupies a “hotly contested spot, pregnant with profound political and *weltanschauliche* controversies” (Baumann, 1995, 168). [As Donna Haraway (1991, 1989) has shown in primatology, the process of distinguish humans from nonhumans actually brings out substantive overlaps and ambiguities.]

Some question the porosity of the line between human and nonhuman animals, or otherwise argue that the boundary has always been avidly policed. Yet the history of human oppression is replete with examples in which specific categories of humans have been grouped with, and treated like, animals. Marjorie Spiegel, for example, delineates the self-conscious parallels drawn by slaveholders, who modeled the lexicon of slavery and its systems of surveillance and physical restraint on those used with animal captives (Spiegel, 1988). The British “simianized” the Irish and the Blacks, the Croatians forbade Serbs, Jews, Gypsies, and dogs to enter restaurants, parks, and means of public transport. In a new assault on the fungible border, bushman have become the most recent exhibits in the Kagga Kamma Game Park in South Africa. *New York Times* reporter Suzanne Daley wrote that the bushpeople were rescued from the squalor of a shantytown on the edge of the Kalahari Desert: “In a country that has treated them savagely for centuries, being in what feels very much like a zoo may seem like a step up” (Daley, 1996). The tourists spend [US]\$7 to view these people; the bushmen received [US]\$1.50 for the viewing. The photograph accompanying the story shows four “bush” youngsters, mostly naked, down on their hands and knees while a white boy stands over them, staring down at them as if they were *animals in a zoo*.

Exposing Modernist Myths of Social Progress

Grand stories of progress, humanity, wealth, creation, reason, and the unity of science are, among others, critical targets of postmodern, feminist, and other theorists.

Distrust of these narratives is not exclusively postmodern and can be identified throughout history from at least the sixteenth century on. Horkheimer and Adorno's critique of the domination of nature in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, published in 1947, is one example. Another is the critique of the Cartesian mechanism proffered in the seventeenth century by Margaret Cavendish and Ann Finch (Donovan, 1993, 178). Nevertheless, the sort of wholesale rupturing of modernity's bulk that has taken place within the last fifteen or twenty years has enabled a re-evaluation of systems of domination and the animal's place within them.

Generally, animals are part of the stories of progress, rationality, economic growth, and emancipation only by their eradication, sacrifices, bred domesticity, and genetic transfiguration. One humanitarian thread woven through the mantle of modernism had, or course, refused the Cartesianism that denied animals affectivity, sentience, and intelligence. A number of activist associations sought to reduce the gap that separated humans from animals, just as many fought scientific sexism and racism. Nevertheless, the humanitarian orientation was eclipsed by modernity's fear of death and the ascendancy of science. Death was the ultimate challenge to the modern ambition to transcend all limits and its refusal justified a hyperseparation of human and nonhuman animals. In his compelling anatomy of modernism, Zygmunt Bauman observes that "the angst bred by the inevitability of death was spread all over life-process, transformed by the same token into a sequence of death-preventing actions and lived in a state of constant vigilance against everything smacking of abnormality" (Bauman, 1995, 183).

Modern society throws enormous resources into death avoidance. Animal bodies are no exception. In fact, it is stunning to consider the extent to which animals serve to shield humans from death. The American Medical Association likes to point to the enormous importance of animals in medicine by observing that fifty-four of the seventy-six Nobel Prizes awarded in physiology or medicine between 1901 and 1989 were for discoveries and advances made through the use of experimentation on animals (American Medical Association, 1989). Neglected in the pro-experiment arguments are the billions of dollars earned by the drug companies (not to mention the medical industry) in selling the vaccines and other chemical substances derived from animal lives.

Biotechnology and genetic engineering promise to continue and heighten the human reliance upon animals for health and safety, with a Frankensteinian twist. In some ways this development in science and technology is a true transcendence of nature. *Time [Magazine]* published a story in November 1995 of a live mouse with a human ear growing out of its back, heralding the event as "the latest and most dramatic demonstration of progress in tissue engineering, a new line of research aimed at replacing body parts lost to disease, accident, or, as is sometimes the case with a missing ear, a schoolyard fight" (Toufexis, 1995, 60). Experiments creating chimeras have been done with mice, rats, monkeys, and other animals. Laws generally exist against human cloning, the creation of chimeras between humans and animal embryos,

and any trade or commerce involving human embryos or embryonic material. Memories of Nazi atrocities have prompted European legislators to be quite stringent on this issue, particularly Germany.⁵ But animal cloning and transgenics are not such a problem. As James O'Connor has so eloquently written,

(h)ere we enter a world in which capital does not merely appropriate nature, then turn it into commodities that function as elements of constant and variable capital (to use Marxist categories), but rather a world in which capital remakes nature and its products biologically and physically (and politically and ideologically) in its own image (O'Connor, 1994, 185).

Some may argue, correctly, that humans have always been dependent upon animals. What is modern, however, is the institutionalization and bureaucratization of this dependency at a scale significantly augmented from “pre-modern” dependencies. The hallmarks of this dependency are globalized commodity chains managed by large-scale industrial institutions and government bureaucracies cutting any link between animals and meat, medicine, famine, or environmental degradation. These chains are supported by powerful narratives about the centrality of food security, health, and corporeal beauty to happiness and progress. By such spatial and functional divisions of labor, and by bureaucratization and industrialization, the role of the individual human agency in producing evil is severely fragmented, eliding individual responsibility.

The modernist insistence on cool rationality and an objectifying attitude also promotes an insensitivity or indifference to suffering that makes factory farms and animal labs possible. As several students of the Holocaust have argued, such modernist codes allowed persons like Eichmann to undertake the infliction of pain on his fellows (Arendt, 1985; Vetlesen, 1984). Bauman, for instance, maintains that “emotion marks the exit from the state of indifference lived among thing-like others” (Bauman, 1995, 62). He suggests that the principal tool of the severance between moral guilt and the acts which entail participation in cruel deeds is adiaphorization: making certain actions, or certain objects of action, morally neutral or irrelevant – exempt from the category of phenomena suitable for moral evaluation. Artfully hidden behind factory-farm gates or research-lab doors, obscured by disembodiment and endless processing, and normalized by institutional routines and procedures, the thoroughly modern instrumental rationality that characterizes contemporary human-animals dependency has rendered animals both spatially and morally invisible.

When we do break through these surfaces, the resulting visibility is often excruciating. But actually seeing and understanding the vast extent of animal suffering

⁵ As a result, BASF opened its biotechnology headquarters in Worcester, Massachusetts; Baker similarly opened a lab in Berkeley, California

and death is unavoidable if we are to transcend the invisibility of animals, engage in corrective struggles, and bear witness to the animal movement.

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