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The Power of the Visual

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> *We live amid bewildering complexities. Obtuseness and refusal of vision are our besetting vices. Responsible lucidity can be wrested from that darkness only by painful vigilant effort, the intense scrutiny of particulars.*
>
> *Martha Nussbaum*

> *We need to become aware of, and to compensate for, the habitual denial of suffering.*
>
> *Jamie Mayerfeld*

Humans are visual creatures, and this is reflected in our patterns of moral motivation and response.[1] We're troubled by suffering that we learn of through prose and statistics; but our unease remains vague, sporadic, and practically inert. We respond in dramatically different ways to suffering we *see*.

Many teachers witness this routinely. Students who consider animal suffering, human destitution, and other forms of misery react with mild consternation to written accounts, but rarely with passion or action. The same facts presented in photographs or films, however, often occasion moral epiphanies. Those who were only mildly interested or even indifferent before a visual encounter with suffering become intensely engaged, empathic, and stirred to personal and social change. Others alter their moral perspective in that they come to recognize a visually presented subject as *serious*, when beforehand they might have dismissed it.

This is both heartening and frightening. It's heartening because it shows the latent empathy and moral concern of people who can otherwise seem callous or indifferent. But it's frightening in that without visual prompts, it seems that empathic concern can remain

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dormant indefinitely.[2]

While the power of the visual is frequently observed, no one (to my knowledge) has explored the moral implications of this truth. In this essay I examine the nature of the moral insight(s) provided by the visual, the problematic nature of our disparate responses to facts that are seen and unseen, and our responsibilities to enliven our imaginations when images are absent.[3]

What the Visual Provides

What is it that the visual provides that is absent in other ways of learning?

At the most fundamental level, "seeing is believing." Contemporary agents are subject to an overwhelming blitz of information through television, newspapers, the Internet, and other media. Some of this "information" later turns out to be false. We know that factual error, misinterpretation, unconscious bias, and outright deception corrupt what we read and mislead us; this knowledge feeds a general cynicism, or at least caution and suspension of belief. When reformers tell of horrific practices in factory farms or garment factories, listeners' involvement with those industries (*via* the purchase of their products) adds a self-interested motive for convenient skepticism. Even when we are not so directly complicit, threats to our comfort and conscience strengthen the tendency to avoid and mistrust presentations of painful subjects.

Images make skepticism and avoidance temporarily less possible. Presented with detailed images of factory farms, the student who dismissed horror stories as activists' exaggerations is forced to acknowledge the neglect and brutality that she had heard of as real. Confronted with photographs of emaciated infants and children, the person who regarded the hungry as lazy or otherwise at fault can no longer deny that innocents are starving. It's true that rationalization, self-deception, and denial can follow such shocks of realization with disheartening speed: the student can decide that the film is unrepresentative, and the person who is moved by starving children can convince herself there's nothing she can do. But visual presentations elicit a necessary condition of moral response: belief that a problem exists.

In this way, the visual enhances moral perception. As Margaret G. Holland explains, moral perception is one's construal of a moral situation: "how one sees the particulars of the circumstances with which one is confronted."[4] This interpretation constitutes "the beginning of engagement with the moral dimensions of a situation." and initiates reflection about it in light of moral principles or values (p. 301).

Since it identifies morally relevant features of a situation, "the

quality of moral perception … plays a formative role in the quality of the deliberation, judgment, choice, and conduct which follow" (p. 302). Dim or distorted perception may result in an inadequate response to a situation, or the absence of response when one is called for.

In our culture, it's difficult to attain adequate perceptions of our circumstances. Since many forms of suffering are hidden, and we are not trained to look for clues to hidden problems, we harbor misunderstandings of common practices. We fail to perceive facts that are directly relevant to values of humaneness, seeing (for example) a counter full of packaged meat or a display of inexpensive clothing as morally neutral, when a more informed observer might see them as symbols of cruel mistreatment. Or we may understand that production of these products entails harm and exploitation, but only dimly, with no grasp of the varieties and extremes of suffering involved. We harbor inadequate and erroneous perceptions of our surroundings.

It's true that one may witness conditions in factory farms or garment sweatshops with stunted powers of imagination, so that one might fail to imagine (for example) what it would feel like to experience multiple pregnancies and births in total confinement, to be cut into pieces while still conscious, or to work twelve hours a day in a poorly ventilated warehouse. Images alone do not produce acute perception. But for persons with average powers of imagination, images make possible a richer and more adequate awareness than may have been present before.

For those who *already* knew about a problem and perceived its relation to their moral values, the visual provides a different service: transforming abstract ideas into knowledge that is *felt* and absorbed. Visual aids remedy what Shelly Kagan calls "paleness of belief": a condition in which our beliefs are not fully absorbed, or do not fully register with us.[5] Much of the time, our beliefs about suffering are "pale." As Jamie Mayerfeld says,

> our perception of … victims and their suffering [lack] flesh and blood. We [see] the victims as stick figures … not as individuals with their richly distinguishing characteristics. And we [fail] to imagine in concrete, sensuous detail the circumstances of their suffering.[6]

Images of the suffering give substance and emotional power to our beliefs about them. Intellectual knowledge that there is a problem becomes, at least for awhile, something more: a detailed grasp of what that fact entails and a deeply disturbing and salient awareness. When we see that "inhumane slaughter" entails the struggles of

exhausted pigs to escape workers who kick them, beat them, and cut them apart while they are conscious,[7] abstract knowledge becomes richly informed and emotionally powerful awareness.[8] Seeing individual hungry children who live in shanties with anxious parents cuts through the obfuscation of knowing (only) that there are "starving masses."[9]

The most familiar and dramatic benefit of visual presentations is that they block avenues of escape from emotionally painful awareness of a problem. Because it is difficult to overlook or misinterpret facts that are right before our eyes, those errors no longer shield us from outrage, sorrow, shame, and empathy.[10]

Sometimes we already knew not just the generalities, but the particulars of brutal practices, free of misinterpretation. Nonetheless, when details intellectually understood are witnessed, we attain a level of moral motivation that either wasn't there before, or that far surpasses earlier concern in urgency and power.[11]

How is it that images effect this transformation? Part of the answer is that they remind us that mistreated beings are *conscious* and suffering.

Didn't we know this before? Yes and no. We may have known it in the abstract, but our belief was "pale." Josiah Royce explains the situation well.[12] Royce observes that we habitually regard other beings not as centers of consciousness, but as automata that externally affect us. We go about daily affairs under the illusion that our own experiences are the only real ones. But occasionally, given proper guidance or moved by pity or love, we see through our customary "veil of illusion." What we realize at such moments is "the reality of our neighbor" as an experiencing being:

> He too is a mass of states, of experiences, thoughts, and desires, just as real as thou art…. [H]is pains are as hateful, his joys as dear [as thine to thee]…. The truth is that all this world of life about thee is as real as thou art. All conscious life is conscious in its own measure. Pain is pain, joy is joy, everywhere even as in thee. (pp. 157-160)

Royce regards the attainment of this insight as rare and fleeting, quickly overcome by passions and overwhelming tendencies to selfishness:

> We see the reality of our neighbor, that is, we determine to treat him as we do ourselves. But then we go back to daily action, and … we straightway forget what we have seen. Our

> neighbor becomes obscured…. He is unreal. We are again deluded and selfish…. Moments of insight, with their accompanying resolutions; long stretches of delusion and selfishness: that is our life. (pp. 155-156)

Although he sees the struggle between moral insight and solipsistic delusion as unavoidable, Royce also thinks that appropriate awareness is to some extent within our power, and exhorts us to strive for it. Here is his advice:

> Take whatever thou knowest of desire and of striving, of burning love and of fierce hatred, realize as fully as thou canst what that means, and then with clear certainty add: *such as that is for me, so is it for him, nothing less*. If thou dost that, can he remain to thee … a picture, a plaything … a mere Show? Behind that show thou hast indeed dimly felt that there is something. Know that truth thoroughly. (p. 158)

The effort is incumbent on us because the awareness it can yield reveals our moral duty, for Royce. "Seeing the oneness of this life everywhere, the equal reality of all its moments, thou wilt be ready to treat it all with the reverence that prudence would have thee show to thy own little bit of future life" (p. 160).[13]

We may doubt that awareness of others' reality will by itself provide the motivation to treat them as we do ourselves—even, as Royce says, "if only for that one moment of insight" (p. 161). Moral corruption, laziness, or sheer indifference may come between factual clarity and moral resolve. But for agents of compassion and conscience, the insight is a crucial--and often, strangely, missing--element in moral motivation.

Of course, we do not harbor a conscious belief that other beings are automata--that our experience alone is real or significant. But when we are unmoved by written accounts of cruelty and destitution, it is in part because we only "dimly" realize what they mean for subjects. If they focus on particular sufferers, photographs and films of slaughter and starvation bring home what we had not fully realized: their victims are individuals "as actual, as concrete," and as conscious as ourselves. Images help us to "know that truth thoroughly," if only for awhile.

In this way, visual presentations arouse the empathy of which most of us are capable, but that we ordinarily engage only in selected situations. Thus they help us to broaden the scope of our

compassion.[14] Some authors have observed that empathy has "the roots of universality within it at birth."[15] Prior to being taught that some groups have less moral standing and may be treated differently, children do not restrict their empathy to human beings or socially accepted groups. This suggests that given mental health and moral training, "there is no limit to the extent to which we can think ourselves into the being of another."[16] Yet while most of us have this potential, in day-to-day life we find that

> … there are people who have no such capacity (when the lack is extreme, we call them psychopaths), and there are people who have the capacity but choose not to exercise it.[17]

Some people choose not to empathize with others because of convictions about their unworthiness and insignificance. Racists may be kind to their own "kind," yet indifferent to others.[18] But in addition to such familiar refusals to empathize, another failing is more rarely noticed: some have the capacity to empathize, but fail to do so because they never *attend to* the other.

If this is the result of simple ignorance of others' plight, it may not be blameworthy. Social conditions can make learning about suffering really difficult,[19] and encourage us to be self-centered and inattentive. If, however, the ignorance is the result of a failure to uncover suffering one has strong reason to suspect, it is a moral failing. When carelessness, laziness, or fear keep us from investigating, our inattention manifests a vice.[20]

Images can overcome such shortcomings. Thus activists use them when they can, hoping to incite viewers to "stretch their capacity for compassion" by directing attention to suffering they had ignored or overlooked.[21] The underlying assumption is that most people can enlarge their empathy, and that fostering such growth is an effective way to work for social change. Images are catalysts for "the unfolding of compassion."[22] They do not by themselves produce either feelings of empathy or the disposition to help that compassion involves, but they promote a necessary condition for both: vivid awareness of individual suffering.

Worries

There are, however, variations on this theme. Images incite moral transformation in more than one way. Although many teachers report the kinds of change noted here that are set in motion by images of suffering--and especially by films--there are important differences between films, and in the ways in which they work.

One important difference is that between (relatively) straightforward documentary footage, on the one hand (sometimes accompanied by descriptive narration, and sometimes obtained secretly or illegally), and narrative and artistic films, on the other. Examples of documentary films include *The Animals Film*, *45 Days: the Life and Death of a Broiler Chicken, Pig Farm Investigation,* and *Hidden Crimes*;[23] examples of artistic films include *The Witness* and *Peaceable Kingdom* by Tribe of Heart[24]. A third category--what we might call "argumentative film"--incorporates documentary footage accompanied by overt moral arguments. For example, *Life Behind Bars* shows gestation crates, veal crates, and the treatment of "broiler chickens," accompanied by explicit arguments for the abolition of all three as "inherently cruel."[25] These categories are neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive. Many films that enhance moral perception of animal suffering in the ways that I've described combine documentary footage, personal narration, implicit and explicit moral appeals, and arresting sequences of images accompanied by powerful music.[26]

It is hard to overstate the power of the Tribe of Heart films, which arouse overwhelming emotion and a sense of moral transcendence in many viewers. The ending sequence of *The Witness* transfixes and transforms through a complex interplay of elements: scenes of animals being trapped and killed for fur (already familiar to the viewer from earlier sequences in the film but now distanced by being seen on television screens on Eddy Lama's mobile van); the reactions of horror on the faces of New York pedestrians who stop to look, recorded in slow motion; and the transcendent beauty of Sarah McLachlan's "Angel" floating over it all. It is a scene of surpassing beauty, not least because viewers know what the pedestrians are responding to, and because their horrified expressions manifest intense compassion. Many viewers feel overwhelmed with intermingled emotions at the end of the film: profound sadness at the agony of non-human innocents, admiration for Lama's creative activism, empathy with both humans and non-humans, and hope aroused by the evident horror of the passersby--a group varied in ethnicity, gender, profession, and age.

Some have criticized this scene as manipulative and propagandistic, precisely because of its supremely effective use of music, slow motion, horrific images, and our innate tendency to respond to facial expressions with like emotions and empathy (an evolutionarily useful, but sometimes morally blind trait); and precisely because it arouses strong emotion. This raises an essential question: how can we distinguish morally legitimate uses of images from manipulative propaganda? Many, after all, approach animal liberation films with heightened suspicion, suspecting films produced

by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and other activist organizations of presenting falsified, atypical, or dated images to arouse moral indignation that is not warranted. We know that images can be *abused* to arouse misinformed and dangerous passions, as well as morally admirable and constructive ones.[27] Furthermore, often the most powerful and transformative images are precisely those that have been deliberately framed in artistically and psychologically powerful ways: Tribe of Heart's films arguably arouse more people to changes of heart and practice than do the more straightforward documentary products of the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) or overtly hortatory films such as *Life Behind Bars*. Thus they are more vulnerable to charges of illegitimate manipulation.

A photographer or film-maker does not simply record reality; she selects what to show, how much of it to record, context, distance, time-frame, and a hundred other dimensions of what will be seen. By its nature, film is not simply a mirror of reality, but a constructed image. Given notoriously problematic films that have aroused passions in unfortunate and destructive ways (*Triumph of the Will*), we need to be able to distinguish helpful and legitimate uses of images from morally pernicious ones.[28]

I will make four points toward an answer to this problem. One is that legitimate uses of film must record something factual, not merely imagined or staged. Images that seem to reveal suffering may not, in fact, do so. The pro-life video *The Silent Scream*, for instance, seems to show a fetus screaming in pain as it is dismembered by an abortion. But since the fetus in the sonogram is only twelve weeks old, and fetuses become sentient later than that (probably in mid-second trimester), the image is misleading. The images in the films mentioned in this essay, in contrast, do record real suffering of sentient animals.

Secondly, the uses of images that I address aim us toward actions of rescue and reform, and not pernicious harm. Even this must be qualified, of course: ALF footage of the treatment of laboratory animals can incite compassionate people to destruction of property toward the end of liberating animals from atrocious treatment. Still, these acts aim at destruction of the apparatus of harm and death and the liberation of sentient beings from torment—-not the injury or death of living beings. In this way they are sharply to be distinguished from Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*, which arguably helped to incite people in the Nazi era to torture and genocide (or, at least, tolerance of them). With few exceptions, those moved by depictions of animal suffering feel stirred to make personal changes in life to withdraw from evils in which they have unknowingly or inattentively participated (vegetarianism or veganism) or to broader activism (efforts to educate others and to end the

harmful practices that they have witnessed)—-not to acts of murder or mayhem. Indeed, a robust aversion to violence of all kinds seems to be a common reaction to the films that I've discussed. Sometimes this is because the films openly connect violence to animals with broader societal violence (*Peaceable Kingdom* and *The Witness*); other times it seems a visceral response to the extreme brutality of the animal treatment that is witnessed.

Third, I would note that the final scene of *The Witness*, in particular, is moving in part because the viewer knows exactly what the shocked New Yorkers are responding to: we have earlier seen the scenes of extreme mistreatment of animals that arouses their sympathy, horror, and dismay. We are not responding blindly to facial expressions of strong emotion and the weeping of one pedestrian; we are responding to the expression of utterly appropriate emotions aroused by the pedestrians' exposure to facts about fur-production.[29]

Finally, much of the distrust of animal liberation films seems to arise simply from the fact that they arouse strong emotion. In many cases, this reflects not a sophisticated savviness about the power of visual media, but a misplaced distrust of emotion itself. As many have noted, Westerners are prone to an unreflective and unsupportable dualism that treats reason as divorced from and opposed to emotion. Even though neurobiology itself vitiates this false division,[30] and though it has been rejected in much work in moral psychology, it persists as a pervasive confusion among the general public, as well as among many intellectuals. A viewer caught in the grip of this dualism is likely to be disturbed and apprehensive about his own strong emotions aroused by a film like *The Witness*, and to hasten to reject it as a disturbing intrusion into his everyday calm.

What this reaction overlooks, of course, is the fact that emotion is central to moral life, both as a manifestation of important virtues such as compassion, and as an indicator that something we are party to or witnessing is wrong. Our emotions upon seeing something horrible may not alone provide enough basis for a considered moral judgment,[31] but they are an essential starting-point for moral thought. The danger in everyday moral life is not emotion itself: one who does not feel distress on seeing the torment of living beings is a sociopath, not a pillar of reason; and one who feels little or transient distress reveals vices of callousness or indifference. Danger lies rather in unreflective, biased, and destructive emotion.[32]

Forgetting

Royce notes that even when we achieve awareness of others' consciousness, we lose it as we "go back to daily action." Soon "we … forget what we have seen." This is certainly what often occurs

when images stir our concern. Memories of images fade, and with them the sense of moral urgency that they aroused. Resolutions get lost among daily distractions and habits. We return to equanimity and (largely) unresponsive conduct.

If we were to articulate a policy mirroring our conduct as we forget and return to routine, it would be this: "I will respond to problems set before me, but not to those which I don't see." Few would regard this as a respectable moral policy or an adequate reflection of compassion. It's among the most natural patterns of conduct, but also, clearly, morally deficient.

Restricting moral responses to problems we can see is unsatisfactory from the point of view of rational agency and integrity. The suffering we witness moves us to moral resolutions; the suffering passes out of view but still exists; we continue to embrace the same values but allow the resolutions to fade. But if resolutions made when we achieve our most acute awareness of a problem are abandoned in the swirl of everyday concerns, we leave behind our best-informed intentions and revert to simple unreflective habit. If we allow ourselves to lose awareness that we once saw as crucial to our moral understanding, and allow decisions that emerged from that awareness to be lost among mundane distractions, we forfeit integrity and the rational expression of our values.[33]

Yet some have argued that inattention and avoidance are essential to effective functioning and mental health. John L. Longeway summarizes these arguments in his discussion of escapism.[34] For Longeway, "escapism" refers to strategies by which one "attempts to keep beliefs one does not like out of consciousness … and, should they enter consciousness, to distract one from them or put them out of mind." (p. 2) Although his discussion addresses more or less conscious efforts to avoid beliefs, it bears, too, on the less intentional phenomenon of *allowing* ourselves to forget unpleasant facts. Is forgetting in either way defensible?

Longeway defends some escapism as rational and helpful, as when we "put an unpleasant … belief out of mind temporarily, because keeping it in mind is of no help, and interferes with thought or action." (p. 6) Sometimes, for example, we put out of mind upsetting facts about our personal lives so that we can concentrate on work. This kind of escapism is unproblematic in part because it is conditional: "[the unpleasant belief] is brought back to mind if it becomes important" (p. 6).

What Longeway calls "entrenched escapism" is harder to justify, for here an agent "avoids a belief even when it becomes necessary to consider it, and aims … to avoid that reality entirely." This kind of escapist engages in "habitual and unconditional avoidance of a belief, so that reflection on it need never occur" (p. 6). But since we cannot

know in advance that a belief will *never* be pertinent to our concerns, entrenched escapism is pragmatically irrational.[35]

Yet as Longeway notes, permanent avoidance of *some* beliefs might be defended on two grounds. First,

> [p]erhaps it is rational to defend one's self-concept in whatever way comes to hand because of the depression and inadequacy that follow on a poor self-concept … [T]his … makes us more efficient in action, for it removes hesitation and second thoughts …, and prevents useless and hindering regrets. (p. 14)

Since self-esteem is essential to effective agency, it seems rational to avoid beliefs that threaten it. So one might sensibly avoid awareness of personal failings that are harmless to others and irremediable. Secondly,

> Perhaps anxiety and despair [are] ever with us and, as a result, most people try most of the time … not to attend too closely to their moment-to-moment feelings and thoughts. We, perhaps, could not live if we paid close attention to our lives, so nature guarantees that we live constantly in inattention and illusion…. (p. 15)

It seems rational--and also naturally determined--for us to avoid doubts and despair about the human condition. For even if that condition warrants despair, attending to this would undermine our ability to function.

Longeway argues that neither rationale for entrenched escapism holds for everyone, for some persons could address threats to healthy functioning in other ways. First, "[i]f we learn to hold our self-concepts lightly … and … with a sense of humor and acceptance of our own fallibility, then we will not need entrenched escapism to avoid succumbing to … depression…." (p. 14) And when reflection on our lives reveals futility and unfulfilled desire, we might abandon "the conviction of the overwhelming importance of one's self" in which despair is often grounded:

> If we don't take ourselves as particularly important … then life is much less grim…. [E]ven death loses much of its sting once we begin to find meaning for our lives outside ourselves. (p. 16)

Still, Longeway admits that when things are bad enough, entrenched escapism may be rational:

> … the world may be too hostile altogether, even for the fellow who takes himself lightly…. [W]e may have to recognize that not only … excessive self-importance can make life intolerable--circumstances may do so as well, and in that case circumstances can make entrenched escapism reasonable. (p. 16)

Longeway is thinking of an impossibly hostile environment *for the escapist:* life may be unbearable with full awareness of "our inevitable death, our inability to live up to our own ideals, and the often terrible suffering that almost seems to constitute many of our lives." (p. 16) But life may also be unbearable with full awareness of *others'* suffering. If we live in "an impossibly hostile environment," either for ourselves or others, it may seem that escapism is the only way to fend off despair, paralysis, and suicide. In one case, it obscures the terrible quality of one's own life; in the other it blunts awareness of others' suffering that threatens a compassionate person's emotional well-being and that, too long sustained, can lead to burn-out or emotional collapse.

Some would add that we are best advised *not* to attend to the full array of suffering in the world, for doing so will stir in us convictions of obligations that are unreasonably demanding and destructive of any chance for happiness. Thus our tendency to forget disturbing images is a needed corrective to the exaggerated sense of obligation that the images arouse.

Appropriate Awareness

These arguments fail to justify forgetfulness, for they beg the question regarding obligations, overlook various forms that awareness can take, and assume an impoverished conception of happiness. I'll address each of these errors in turn.

Does attention to suffering lead us to overestimate our duties to address it? Some argue, to the contrary, that our habitual *in*attention to suffering leads us to underestimate its significance and the claims it makes on us. Jamie Mayerfeld argues that

> [o]ur tendency to deny and minimize suffering is a formidable obstacle to accurate moral understanding. It leads us to underrate the evilness

> of suffering, and consequently the urgency of eliminating it. We go about oblivious … to the true moral state of the world and the response that its state requires of us.[36]

Rather than seeing the sense of moral urgency that images elicit as an error to avoid, this perspective regards it as attuned to actual responsibilities.

Since the sense of urgency arises when we are *more fully and richly informed* than we are in the course of ordinary life, the latter perspective seems to me the right one. As Seyla Benhabib puts it,

> [p]ractical rationality entails epistemic rationality as well, and more knowledge rather than less contributes to a more rational and informed judgment. To judge rationally is … to judge in light of all available and relevant information.[37]

Vivid knowledge of the misery of others is relevant to judgments of our responsibilities; so convictions arising from that knowledge are more to be credited than unreflective, everyday assumptions.

In response to the concern that attention to suffering might be psychologically crippling, we can distinguish different kinds of awareness. The robust awareness that images arouse would be unbearably painful to maintain continuously, if it were possible to do so; moreover, that is probably *not* possible, given natural self-protective mechanisms. But there are other ways to maintain appropriate attention, as Jamie Mayerfeld suggests: "we can … now and then make an effort to behold the true nature of [severe] suffering" (p. 106), and thereafter retain a powerful awareness of suffering that is mediated and indirect:

> We can … refer by our memory to some past moment in which we were vividly and uncomfortably aware of what suffering is…. Memory need not reproduce that awareness in its original form. It can represent it in the shorthand form of the consciousness of certain … facts …: suffering was immediately felt, and was irrefutably *known*, to be horrible; … there was a powerful need and anxiety to banish that suffering somehow…. One can recall these facts without

summoning the experience of awareness itself….
(p. 106)

Images are catalysts for those moments in which we are "vividly and uncomfortably aware" of suffering. And even when they are gone, the understanding, emotions, and convictions they elicit can be retained in forms powerful enough to motivate and maintain moral action.

This kind of awareness is not the abstract, "pale" knowledge of suffering that we acquire through the usual channels. While it is like it in that it need not arouse strong emotion and intense anxiety, it is unlike it in that *it is grounded in the moral emotions of one's (relatively) fully informed, fully aware, fully responsive self*. The sense of obligation and resolve attending it were formed when one was most richly informed and empathetic with the suffering in question. In this sense they are grounded in one's *best* self.

Even mediated awareness of suffering may fade with time and memory's erosion. If so, when we sense this attenuation of its power we should renew our visual encounters with suffering to reinvigorate ourselves. Thus we should occasionally confront images of the kind that originally moved us. If the images that once moved us lose their power (as we are numbed by repetition), we should seek new ones that will again stir us to an appropriate sense of urgency. We ought to do this precisely because we know that the visual moves us to moral resolve and action when abstract knowledge does not, and our knowledge of human psychology should play a part in our "handling" of ourselves for moral ends.

The need for visual reminders to re-energize moral commitments will vary with individual psychologies and strengths. The important thing is that one can obtain an awareness of suffering, and be mindful of it in deliberation and conduct, without falling into madness or despair.

Happiness

Will appropriate awareness of suffering and the sense of obligation that comes with it destroy our happiness? Much evidence suggests that it will not.

Those who work to relieve suffering often find "serious joy"[38] in their devotion that lightens the burden of awareness and focuses attention on the future. Film-maker Jenny Stein explains the situation well. Profoundly moved by a film about animal abuse, she and her partner realized they "had to do something with [their] work and direction in life … because the problem was … so huge."[39] Stein recalls that they were

> … deeply saddened as we realized the scope of the problem. Bigger than we had ever been able to comprehend. That heaviness was a part of our lives, and continues to be a part of our lives, but by doing the work that we're doing, there's also a joyfulness and a lightness that allows us to *stay in the heaviness and not be absorbed by it.*[40]

Stein captures an ideal of awareness that seems fitting in our world. Out of concern for the suffering and a desire to know our obligations, we ought to "stay in the heaviness" that consciousness of global suffering brings. But in order to live with a measure of happiness and make ourselves authentically useful, we must not be "absorbed"--overcome and immobilized--by our awareness. *Addressing* the suffering one cares about is not only the appropriate response to our awareness, but also an effective way to fight despair.

One who has attained a mediated, but robust sense of global suffering will bear a solemn sense of tragedy. Her ordinary pleasures and personal accomplishments will be felt and appreciated differently, colored by a background sensibility dramatically different from that of more oblivious companions. But in the sense of "happiness" as a meaningful and satisfying life, she will be as capable of happiness as they are.

Longeway suggests that "[i]f we don't take ourselves as particularly important … then life is much less grim," and meaning easier to find outside ourselves (p. 16). This discussion suggests a more complex situation: if we don't take our own fulfillment to be especially important, in light of suffering that we have witnessed, life becomes far *more* grim than when we focused on our personal desires. Our sense of the world will darken considerably, or at least include far darker shades. Yet meaning is easier to find when we see that we can, through actions readily available to us, prevent some of the horrifying suffering of innocents. Appropriate awareness of our context reveals the world to be both far more terrible *and* far more full of potent opportunities for meaning than we thought when we were more oblivious. By stirring us to lifelong service, it makes possible one kind of deeply serious, but happy life.[41]

Conclusion

This discussion suggests that compassionate persons will bravely seek to know the darkness in the world. Because self-knowledge and empirical psychology reveal pervasive tendencies

to deny suffering, the virtuous will seek ways to combat those tendencies. One of the most powerful strategies is to look at suffering.

Martha Nussbaum writes, "[w]e live amid bewildering complexities. Obtuseness and refusal of vision are our besetting vices. Responsible lucidity can be wrested from that darkness only by painful vigilant effort, the intense scrutiny of particulars."[42] But it is not only "bewildering complexities" that we refuse to see; we turn our eyes from the simplest and plainest of facts. We do so, often, because the facts are *not* bewildering: they clearly call for urgent moral action.

"Painful vigilant effort" is needed for us to combat our refusal to see, but its burden is lightened when we direct our energy not just to keeping our vision, but to the moral demands that make vision so hard to retain--to rescue and help. We should hold on to awareness of suffering out of simple respect for its victims, but service can (at least in part) replace agonizing vision as the most apposite mark of that respect.

That we have responsibilities to do these things may seem a somber, unwelcome conclusion. But our responses to the visual are also cause for joy; for they show us how much we can care, and how caring can give meaning to our lives.[43]

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[1] This is only a general truth, of course, since not all persons can see. It would be interesting to explore ways in which alternate primary modes of perceiving--hearing and touch, for example--affect moral perception and response. Stanley Milgram's obedience experiments have revealed the importance of physical proximity, sound, and touch to people's willingness to harm innocent strangers in a laboratory setting. Another line of inquiry would explore how a *permanently* alternate mode of perception affects moral responsiveness. See John Sabini and Maury Silver, "On Destroying the Innocent with a Clear Conscience: a Sociopsychology of the Holocaust," in John Sabini and Maury Silver, *Moralities of Everyday Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 55-87.

[2] The fact that empathy often remains dormant without visual prompts is particularly disturbing given the hegemony of conventional attitudes about animals in mass media, as reflected in advertisements for fast food, leather, and other animal products. Messages conveying traditional attitudes are ubiquitous in mainstream media, while pro-animal organizations can rarely manage to air a message even when they are capable of bearing the prohibitive costs. Thanks to Steve Best for this observation.

The power of the visual is frightening, too, because images can be *abused* to arouse misinformed and dangerous passions, as well as morally admirable and constructive ones. I discuss this problem later in the text (see "Worries").

[3] My discussion presupposes agents (and an audience) who are non-

sociopathic, conscientious, and compassionate to an ordinary degree. It does not concern patently vicious agents or radical egoists, who seem quite capable of remaining unmoved by text and images alike.

[4] Margaret G. Holland, "Touching the Weights: Moral Perception and Attention," *International Philosophical Quarterly* XXXVIII (1998), 299-312. The passage quoted is on page 301. Subsequent references to this work are cited by page number in the text.

[5] Shelly Kagan, *The Limits of Morality.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

[6] Jamie Mayerfeld, *Suffering and Moral Responsibility* (NY: Oxford Univ. Press, 1999), p. 190.

[7] See "Pig Farm Investigation," *Meet Your Meat Collection*, Action for Animals (Taking Sides), not copyrighted.

[8] See Martha Nussbaum, "'Finely Aware and Richly Responsible': Moral Attention and the Moral Task of Literature," *The Journal of Philosophy (*1985*),* 516-29: "Moral knowledge … is not simply intellectual grasp of propositions; it is not even simply intellectual grasp of *particular* facts; it is perception. It is seeing a complex concrete reality in a highly lucid and richly responsive way; it is taking in what is there, with imagination and feeling." (p. 521)

[9] Some would deny that we come to a fuller understanding of suffering when we witness it. In a conversation about "the animal question," Jacques Derrida asks Elisabeth Roudinesco, "[f]f you were actually placed every day before the spectacle of … industrial slaughter, what would you do?" Roudinesco replies, "I wouldn't eat meat anymore [sic], or I would live somewhere else. But I prefer not to see it, even though I know that this intolerable thing exists. I don't think that the visibility of a situation allows one to know it better. Knowing is not the same as looking." When Derrida presses her on the question, Roudinesco repeats that she "would move away," and adds that "… in order to understand a situation and to have the necessary distance, it is best not to be an eyewitness to it." Jacques Derrida and Elisabeth Roudinesco, *For What Tomorrow … A Dialogue*, trans. Jeff Fort (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 2004), pp. 71-2. I find Roudinesco's replies puzzling. It seems disingenuous to deny that we know suffering better by seeing it, although it is true that knowing is not *the same as* looking. I would ask, too, what Roudinesco means by "the necessary distance." If she means "necessary to knowing," her claim seems simply false. If she means "necessary to continuing to live as before with equanimity," as her earlier comments ("I wouldn't eat meat anymore") suggest, it is morally bankrupt.

[10] It is true that we can become inured to images when we are subjected to them repeatedly by mass media such as television. There is such a thing as visual overload; and images of starving African children, in particular, have become so familiar and routine on certain television channels that, in the terrible equalization of images that television effects, they can lose their power to grip and move us. Yet this seems to be true in part because documentarians of hunger usually do not linger on particular persons long enough to reveal their context or experience in any meaningful way. When images of the hungry do this, they are far more powerful. See Robert Richter (producer), *Hungry for Profit*, New Day Films, 1985, in which a poor family is shown gathering around their table for a clearly inadequate meal.

Images of animal suffering inflicted by humans are still difficult to

encounter for ordinary persons; and perhaps their rarity, as well as the intrinsically dramatic nature of the brutality shown, is what has prevented them from being diluted by visual overload. This problem is worth pursuing in depth, but I shall not do so here. For a profound discussion of some of its complexities, see Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003). In response to the observation that "Shock can become familiar" and wear off, Sontag points out that "… there are cases where repeated exposure to what shocks, saddens, appalls does not use up a full-hearted response. Habituation is not automatic…." (p. 82) Sontag makes two powerful observations in this connection. First, in some cases (she is thinking of war photography) "[a] narrative seems likely to be more effective than an image. Partly it is a question of the length of time one is obliged to look, to feel." (p. 122)

Also, unlike photographs alone, "[n]arratives can make us understand." (p. 89) Witness the special power of the Tribe of Heart films (cited in note 24), which include extended personal narratives in addition to documentary footage of animal abuse. Secondly, Sontag makes the crucial observation that "[c]ompassion is an unstable emotion. It needs to be translated into action, or it withers…. People don't become inured to what they are shown--if that's the right way to describe what happens--because of the *quantity* of images dumped on them. It is passivity that dulls feeling." (pp. 101-02; emphasis in original) This insight deserves extensive discussion in relation to animal abuse, which I hope to pursue in future work.

[11] At least, this is what happens according to repeated testimonials. I've shown a documentary on factory farming to roughly twelve hundred students in recent years, and their responses to the film are remarkably consistent in reflecting the change I've described. Perhaps five out of a hundred report that they already knew about the practices shown and that seeing the film didn't change their feelings or thoughts in any way. Perhaps one in a hundred (invariably a male, in my experience) reports that he sees the suffering, but simply doesn't care. The film that I have used most often is Victor Schonfeld (producer), *The Animals Film*, Slick Pics International, 1981.

[12] Josiah Royce, *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy: a Critique of the Bases of Conduct and of Faith* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1885). Subsequent references to this work are provided by page number in the text.

[13] So far as I know, Royce did not intend this discussion to include awareness and reverence for nonhuman animal lives. When he speaks of our "neighbors," he seems to mean human companions who are, like ourselves, centers of purpose and striving for causes in which we believe; and when he speaks of "conscious beings," he seems to refer to *self*-conscious humans with freedom of the will. Yet since Royce regarded all earthly objects (including humans) as manifestations of a self-conscious Absolute or God, and since he recognized that our lives and well-being are essentially related to the natural world, perhaps a friendly extension of Royce's themes to include nonhuman animals is possible. I would welcome correction or elucidation on this point. See *The Philosophy of Rosiah Royce*, Edited and with an Introduction by John K. Roth (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1982).

[14] Although the terms "empathy" and "compassion" are often used interchangeably in ordinary parlance, I use the terms roughly as Lawrence Blum and Nancy Sherman do. See Lawrence Blum, "Compassion," n Lawrence Blum, *Moral Perception and Particularity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 173—82 and Nancy Sherman,

"Empathy and Imagination," in Peter A. French and Howard K. Wettstein, eds., *Midwest Studies in Philosophy Volume XXII: Philosophy of Emotions* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame Press, 1998), pp. 82-119.

For Sherman, empathy is the projective capacity to imagine others' mental states--"to imaginatively engage in another's thoughts and feelings"--coupled with emotional sensitivity. (p. 96) Thus empathy involves an ability to understand "what it is like to be someone else" and emotional resonance with others' experiences. Altruistic virtues such as compassion, Sherman notes, presuppose empathy: "To … take a pro-attitude toward another and be disposed toward practical concern, presupposes, in part, an ability to penetrate another's inner world…." (p. 110) Empirical studies and common experience suggest, too, that "empathy predisposes us to sympathy": those who are encouraged to imagine others' feelings in difficult situations offer more help than those who are not (pp. 111-12).

Lawrence Blum also treats compassion as an action-oriented virtue that includes empathy as a constituent capacity. He characterizes compassion as "a complex emotional attitude … involving imaginative dwelling on the condition of the other person, an active regard for his good, … and emotional responses of a certain degree of intensity." (p. 175) Compassion, for Blum, also involves a "disposition to beneficent action." (p. 178)

[15] See David Putman, "Integrity and Moral Development*," The Journal of Value Inquiry* 30 (1996), 237-46.

[16] J. M. Coetzee, *The Lives of Animals* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 35.

[17] Coetzee, *The Lives of Animals*, p. 35.

[18] Putman suggests that when people have "wantonly harmed those who were 'outside' their perimeter" while remaining empathic and ethical within their moral boundaries, this may have resulted from "a combination of belief and truncated empathy." Perhaps being raised with racist and other boundary-drawing beliefs makes some people grow *incapable* of (fully) empathizing with the relevant "outsiders." Or perhaps people so trained learn to *block* empathy that could (and threatens to) emerge--to cut it off or avoid it--as did some in the Nazi era who participated in mass killings. Probably, as Putman suggests, both phenomena are to some degree present in those who learn to draw sharp moral boundaries. For such persons, perhaps even vivid images can never be enough to extend the scope of (full) empathy.

[19] See Ferdinand Schoeman, "Statistical Norms and Moral Attributions," in Ferdinand Schoeman, ed., *Responsibility, Character, and the Emotions: New Essays in Moral Psychology* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 308-15.

[20] See Kathie Jenni, "Vices of Inattention," *The Journal of Applied Philosophy* Volume 20, No. 3 (2003), 279-95.

[21] Marla Rose, "A conversation with James LaVeck & Jenny Stein, Tribe of Heart" (2000). Retrieved April 24, 2002 from the World Wide Web: http://www/veganstreet.com/community/tribeofheart.html

[22] Marla Rose, "A Conversation with James LaVeck & Jenny Stein, Tribe of Heart," p. 35. Putman (cited in note 15) notes that "[a]s many historical figures have shown, the [morally] well-rounded human being will question the beliefs of a society because of a greater sense of empathy." (p. 245) Thus while some moral orientations assume specific rules and boundaries, "empathy and caring push the boundaries themselves." (p. 245) By using images to elicit empathy in those who were not initially "well-rounded" in

this way--empathy that goes beyond traditional boundaries--activists set in motion social change.

[23] Victor Shonfeld (producer), *The Animals Film*, Slick Pics International, 1981; *45 Days: the life and Death of a Broiler Chicken*, Compassion Over Killing; *Pig Farm Investigation*, Action for Animals: Taking Sides; and *Hidden Crimes,* SUPRESS (Students United Protesting Research on Sentient Subjects), 1986.

[24] Jenny Stein, Director, *The Witness*, Tribe of Heart, Ltd., 2000; and Jenny Stein, Director, *Peaceable Kingdom*, Tribe of Heart, Ltd., 2004.

[25] Patty Shenker (Producer), *Life Behind Bars: the Sad Truth about Factory Farming*, A Farm Sanctuary Production.

[26] I will not here discuss in detail the particular power of music, which can be transformative by itself; nor the special power of music together with images; nor the very special power of slow motion images; nor the exceptional power of slow motion images overlain with music. Every one of these phenomena deserves study in itself.

[27] Think of Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will.*

[28] An essential work that indirectly addresses this question is Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Suffering of Others* (cited in note 10).

[29] Jenny Stein has responded to the objection under consideration in two ways, with reference to particularly powerful scenes in *Peaceable Kingdom* that use music by Moby. She notes that the rest of the film provides ample documentary footage of animal abuse that alone arouses moral objections, so that the scenes employing music do not stand alone; and she adds that she sees music as enabling already present emotions to emerge fully, in contrast to manufacturing or stimulating emotions that weren't already stirred by the earlier part of the film. Conversation with Jenny Stein following a screening of *Peaceable Kingdom*, Newport Beach Film Festival, Newport Beach, CA, April 22, 2005.

[30] Antonio R. Damasio, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* (NY: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1994).

[31] Since we don't know the reason why the abortion was performed in *The Silent Scream*, for example, we can't judge the abortion to be wrong simply because it entailed the grisly destruction of a fetus. If the abortion was necessary to save the biological mother from a horrible death, it might have been an unfortunate, but justified killing. My essay addresses only one aspect of the power of the visual, and one kind of response to images. I examine cases in which seeing something enhances attentiveness to suffering that is (a) real, and not merely apparent, and (b) not justified by important moral concerns. Thanks to Rod Jenks for spurring me to clarify this point.

[32] For a holistic moral epistemology, there is no reason without emotion, and no emotion without reason. See also Nussbaum (cited in note 8). For a very helpful discussion (aimed at students) of the role of feelings in moral reflection, see Anthony Weston, *A Practical Companion to Ethics*, 2nd ed. (NY: Oxford Univ. Press, 2002).

[33] I discuss ways of avoiding this, and our responsibility not to allow it to occur, below (see "Appropriate Awareness") and in "Vices of Inattention" (cited in note 20).

[34] John L. Longeway, "The Rationality of Escapism and Self-Deception," *Behavior and Philosophy* 18 (1990), 1-20. Subsequent references to this work are provided by page number in the text.

[35] Longeway argues that entrenched escapism is contrary to both theoretical

and practical reason; I ignore his discussion of theoretical reason here. Also, Longeway focuses on the *rationality* of escapism, not its moral justifiability. I am concerned with both questions, since I would argue that a policy that contravenes one's moral values is, *ceteris paribus*, pragmatically irrational.

[36] Jamie Mayerfeld, *Suffering and Moral Responsibility* (cited in note 6), p. 105.

[37] Seyla Benhabib, "The Generalized and the Concrete Other: the Kohlberg-Gilligan Controversy and Moral Theory," in Eva Feder Kittay and Diana T. Meyers, eds., *Women and Moral Theory* (Rowman & Littlefield, 1987), pp. 154-77.

[38] The phrase is from Herman Hesse's *Magister Ludi.*

[39] Marla Rose, "A Conversation with James LaVeck and Jenny Stein" (cited in note 21), p. 5.

[40] Marla Rose, "A Conversation with James LaVeck and Jenny Stein," pp. 5-6. Emphasis added.

[41] See also Peter Singer, *How are we to Live: Ethics in an Age of Self-Interest* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1993).

[42] Martha Nussbaum, "'Finely Aware and Richly Responsible': Moral Attention and the Moral Task of Literature" (cited in note 8), p. 516.

[43] Earlier versions of this essay were read at the Northern Illinois Ethics Consortium (NIEC) Inaugural Conference, "Ethics in Contemporary Life," Northern Illinois University, September 2002; and at the Society for the Study of Ethics and Animals (SSEA) meetings, American Philosophical Association (Pacific Division) meetings, San Francisco, March 2003. I thank the audiences at these presentations for thoughtful comments and questions. Special thanks to Mylan Engel, Jamie Mayerfeld, Steve Best, and two reviewers for this journal for especially valuable comments on earlier versions of the paper. Finally, thanks to the University of Redlands Faculty Review Committee of 2000-01 for awarding me a Faculty Research Grant to assist in the completion of this essay.

Beyond Orthodoxy: A Pluralist Approach to Animal Liberation

Susanna Flavia Boxall†

"Every animal, by instinct, lives according to his nature. Thereby he lives wisely, and betters the tradition of mankind. No animal is ever tempted to belie his nature. No animal, in other words, knows how to tell a lie. Every animal is honest. Every animal is straight-forward. Every animal is true – and is, therefore, according to his nature, both beautiful and good." – Kenneth Grahame, author of The Wind in the Willows

Introduction

Animal liberation[1] theorists (ALTs[2]) face two challenges: an external challenge and an internal one. The first challenge involves offering robust arguments that relevantly address the experience of non-human animals in our times. Given that our society is constantly finding new ways to use and abuse non-humans,[3] ALTs must respond to cruel social practices by honing existing arguments and by proposing new ones. The second challenge concerns the need to achieve greater unity within the body of animal rights literature. That is, if the ultimate goal is to advance the cause of animal liberation, then energies should not be mostly spent on squabbling over specific philosophical and ideological points (e.g., whether deontology is superior to utilitarianism), but on developing robust arguments that advance the emancipation of non-human animals.

I will argue that some important ideas in Aquinas' and Marx's writings articulated through Nussbaum's capabilities approach[4] can help surmount these two challenges in a twofold manner. First, Aquinas' concept of *telos* and Marx's critique of alienation address the key problem, alienation, which is faced by non-human animals used in the food and pharmaceutical industries. That is, the crux of animals' experience in modern industries is that they are systematically deprived of any opportunity to live, eat and breed in accordance with their instinct. Second, the harmonizing of a Marxist and Thomistic Christian perspective with a theory of justice like Nussbaum's, shows the possibility of a pluralistic approach to animal liberation that moves beyond basic metaphysical disagreements.

It could be argued that the reading of Aquinas and Marx I will provide is highly selective and not representative of their overall philosophy. To respond, my reading will be purposively selective. There is no use in quoting Aquinas' dictum that we owe nothing to animals and that there is no possibility of friendship with them, when our experience and our intuitions indicate the contrary. As Andrew Light argued, it is silly to pretend that merely citing a "chapter and

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verse" of Aquinas by itself will "carry some weight." Great thinkers are a valuable resource as long as we are able to discern the good, useful insights from the bad, worthless ones. Aquinas' Christian teleological worldview is highly valuable, for it offers those who come from this tradition a base on which to support the cause of animal liberation, while also offering an alternative position within the animal rights literature that transcends the classical approaches to animal liberation. The same argument, *mutatis mutandi*, applies to my reading of Marx.

The Choice

Prima facie, the choice of Aquinas and Marx might seem counterintuitive. After all, Marx is well known for his critique of religion as a symptom of an alienated society. Furthermore, Aquinas believed that "since charity is a kind of friendship and we cannot be friends with other animals, we cannot [even] feel charity for them" (Barad 143), Marx affirmed in the Holy Family that hunting and fishing are "innate rights of men" (118), suggesting that the human need (or desire) for animal flesh has ascendancy over non-human animal life.

In spite of this, my choice of these two thinkers is deliberate and purposeful. First, Marx's critique of capitalism in terms of exploitation and alienation is still a relevant depiction of the human and non-human experiences of abuse, and recognition of this relevance does not depend on agreement with animal liberation goals. Marx's and Engel's words in The Communist Manifesto apply very well to our times:

> The cheap prices of its commodities [i.e., the bourgeoisie's] are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls…It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production…It has agglomerated population, centralized means of production, and has concentrated property in a few hands. (22-23)

Not only are citizens of Third World nations forced into exploitative productive relations, as in the case of workers in Pacific Rim countries who earn less than two dollars a day to produce brand-name shoes (Sample 8), but animals[5] in agribusiness have gone from dwelling on small farms to being housed in massive complexes with millions of their kind, waiting for their body parts to be harvested (Marcus 9).

Second, Aquinas' ideas can bring diversity to the body of animal liberation literature. Aquinas' teleological views not only add a religious perspective[6] but they are descriptively

accurate of the role different creatures play within nature. That is, Aquinas' philosophy moves beyond the commonly-held (and often-criticized) detached, scientific, Darwinist[7] view of nature. Such a complaint has been voiced by Barbara Noske, who has criticized biology for its "…reliance on the Darwinist model and consequent imprisonment" (10). Her concerns are seconded by Holmes Rolston III, who has admitted that "[t]he classical theology of design perhaps needs reforming, but the biology of randomness and bloody struggle may need reforming just as much…Theology…may give us, so to speak, sufficient cause to wonder about reverence for creation" (286) That is, conceiving nature as a divine gift might be conducive to greater respect for both human and non-human life, and to the realization that our ever-limited human understanding might preclude us from fully grasping the nature of our fellow non-human beings.[8]

Third, the combination of a Marxist and a Christian perspective has the potential for yielding a revolutionary result. As demonstrated by liberation theology[9], when religion is infused with revolutionary ideas, a stronger drive for emancipation may ensue. Given that thousands of non-human animals are being killed and tortured every second, the possibility of encouraging activism cannot be ignored.

In the next sections, I will discuss the internal and external challenges faced by ALTs.

The External Challenge

It is widely recognized that the western tradition has been (and is) resolutely anthropocentric. The world is arranged in terms of a natural hierarchy that has placed humans (especially white males) at the apex of the natural order. Take the early example of Aristotle, who in both De Anima and Nicomachean Ethics discussed the superiority of the rational soul over the appetitive and nutritive soul. This hierarchy resulted in the justified subjugation of the lower kinds to the higher ones: "the male is by nature superior, and the female inferior; and the one rules, and the other is ruled; this principle, of necessity extends, to all mankind. When there is such a difference as…between man and animals…the lower sort are by nature slaves" (Aristotle 259).

This view of nature was adopted and sustained by mainstream Christianity, which considers humans to be above, and dissociated from, the rest of God's creation. As Lynn White[10] puts it, "no item in the physical creation had any purpose save to serve man's purpose" (347). The merely instrumental value of non-human creation becomes evident in the episode of the Flood, which, according to Singer, sets a precedent for the human mistreatment of

animals (Practical Ethics 266). Similarly, in the biblical episode of the binding of Isaac, God allows Abraham to sacrifice a lamb instead of Isaac, after Abraham proves his loyalty to God. The conclusion that some thinkers such as Singer draw from these two examples is that God had placed little value on much of his own creation, or that the value of the natural world was merely contingent. If God "drowned almost every animal on earth in order to punish human beings for their wickedness," what else but blatant disregard for nature can be expected from humans (Singer, Practical Ethics 266)?[11]

This attitude of disdain towards nature continued throughout the Middle Ages. Although clearly ambiguous at times, the medieval treatment of non-human animals was often characterized by cruelty, an ethos of animals as marginal to anything important, and a blatant misunderstanding of animals' nature. As documented by Joyce Salisbury, dogs were hung from their owners' doorposts, donkeys were mutilated and bulls were executed. The treatment of animals as mere inanimate objects went hand-in-hand with the contradictory belief that animals had some type of agency, as is illustrated in the practice of animal trials. The execution of both humans and non-humans for the practice of bestiality shows the ambivalent human conception of animal nature (Salisbury 100).

However, human barbarism reached new levels in modern times with "[t]he growing use of live animals in experiments…without anesthetics, which were not yet available" (Garner 11). Despite the obvious signs that animals felt pain in the same way that humans do, philosophers like René Descartes justified vivisection on the grounds that non-human animals were mere *automata*: "It is more reasonable to make earthworms, flies, caterpillars, and the rest of the animals, move as machines do, than to endow them with immortal souls" (264). Similarly, Immanuel Kant added that, although cruel, vivisection was justified, "since animals must be regarded as man's instrument" (270).

While animals in the western tradition up to modern times were treated less than sympathetically, the industrialization of agriculture and the development of new medical technologies have created the worst possible conditions of existence for non-human animals. To illustrate, consider the chilling figures: according to Marcus, "the fastest American slaughterhouses kill 400 cattle per hour on each line they operate" (47). This means that several animals per hour, having been inadequately stunned, are killed while fully conscious, while many more are dismembered, skinned and cooked while still alive.[12] In the U.S. alone, many of the more than 10 billion animals killed annually have ended their lives in this way in 2003 (Marcus 65). In the U.K. alone, 2.79 million animals were used in 2003 in vivisection and laboratory experiments, most of which involve brutal practices such as the Draize or LD-50 tests.[13] Examples could be multiplied: primates are used in collision tests,

pigs, cats and frogs are dissected in biology classes, mice are engineered to grow cancerous tumors, ducks and geese are force-fed in the production of *foie gras*, and agonized animals with no market value are left to die in their own excrement outside slaughterhouses.

This litany of examples simply shows that in contemporary times animal suffering has been greatly increased. And even though social attitudes towards animals, as explained by Marcus, have improved in some areas – e.g., veganism is slowly becoming more mainstream, and the majority of Americans support legislation to protect farm animals from some cruel practices – the industries that enslave and sacrifice millions of animals every year continue to grow (63-65).

Given that every second, thousands of animals are made to suffer and die with complete impunity, the possibility of finding novel ways in which to support animal liberation cannot be overlooked. Hence, we must continue to challenge the status quo by constructing new arguments that are compelling in the face of recent experience. As Andrew Light argued, "it is…important at the moment to articulate as many possible reasons for the same ends…[i.e., animal liberation] which we think are…morally motivating to the public" (129).

The Internal Challenge

As discussed above, western culture traditionally has been a locus of anthropocentrism. Thinkers such as Peter Singer, Robert Garner and Lynn White have correctly emphasized this point. This observation has led them to the belief that little – if anything – can be rescued from traditional western scholarship that could support the goals of animal liberation with the exception of Bentham's famous dictum,[14] thinkers have been blindly callous toward non-human nature. Hence, the argument goes, ALTs must jettison the whole of western scholarship and rely on newly-constructed arguments grounded on secular ethics. In short, a "blank slate" is needed to rid ourselves of the deep-seated western views such as that "the natural world exists for the benefit of human beings, [that] [h]uman beings are the only morally important members of this world, [that] [n]ature itself is of no intrinsic value, and [that] the destruction of…animals cannot be sinful, unless by this destruction we harm human beings" (Singer, Practical Ethics 267-268).

To respond to the intellectual aridity of traditional moral theory, Singer proposed (following Bentham) the principle of equal consideration of interest based on sentience. Insofar as a being has the capacity for suffering and enjoyment, he/she has "an interest in not being tormented" (Singer, "All Animals" 171). Given that humans and many non-human animals share the capacity for sentience, Singer's philosophy commits us to *equally* respecting these

beings' interest. Behaving otherwise would make us guilty of sexism, racism, ageism, ableism and/or speciecism.

While contemporary utilitarian arguments, such as Singer's, have proven to be very successful, they have found opposition among some sympathizers of animal liberation. Objections have been raised by those who come from a religious background, or who disagree with the analysis of the western tradition, or who prefer a deontological ethics.

Authors like Mathew Scully and Andrew Linzey fall into the first category involving a religious perspective. Their main charge against Singer is, to quote Scully, that "[h]e requires his readers…[to] accept an entirely new set of standards, and indeed a new and improved set of commandments produced *ex nihilo* from the mind of a modern intellectual" (327). And later Scully adds, "for professor Singer there is no good, no purpose, no *telos*…for any of us, on four legs or two…He simply takes it as a given that intelligent people do not believe in God or, if they do, know better than to bring it up in serious philosophical discussion" (328). Not only does Singer drive religious devotees away from animal liberation struggles, but, as Linzey has contended, he fails to give Christianity its due. Take, for example, the story of creation in Genesis I, which describes God commanding humans to practice vegetarianism. As Karl Barth noted, "Whether or not we find it practicable or desirable, the diet assigned to men and beasts by God the Creator is vegetarian" (cited in Linzey 36).[15] Linzey also argues that further support for the liberation of non-human animals can be found among canonized saints, of whom two-thirds "have championed the cause of animals" (23). The problem, Linzey concludes, is not Christian anthropocentrism, but current attitudes that ignore the animal-friendly elements within the history of that religion.

While Christian thinkers have tried to show the contributions[16] their tradition can make to animal liberation, a second category of authors has tried to rescue the writings of their intellectual predecessors with the hope of making them relevant to issues germane to animal emancipation. Consider the intellectual endeavors of Andrew Light, Jonathan Hughes, Ted Benton and Judith Barad. Light has applied American philosophical pragmatism to the elucidation of human-non-human relationships, while Hughes and Benton have explored Marx's naturalism and demonstrated its bearing on current animal welfare/ecological issues. Similarly, Barad has recently written on the subject of Aquinas and the Animal Liberation Front (ALF). In short, all of these authors have challenged the idea that western thought is an intellectual wasteland, at least in so far as what it has to offer ALTs.

The final category of authors is best represented by Tom Reagan, who put forward the claim that both human and non-human animals possess a right to life. His deontological position is based on

the following argument: all individuals with inherent value are to be treated with full respect (i.e., these individuals have rights); all beings that are subjects-of-a-life possess inherent value; all mammalian yearlings and above are subjects-of-a-life; hence, all mammalian yearlings and older have rights. According to Reagan, the minimum threshold for holding rights is met by creatures that have (among other features) beliefs, desires, perceptions, memories, emotions, sentience, and preferences.

Reagan and Singer repudiate the current treatment of non-human animals by the meat and pharmaceutical industries, but differ on the reasons why such practices are morally objectionable. Singer focuses on sentience, while Reagan values the human-like capabilities of some non-human animals (Garner 26). In short, Reagan and Singer engage, like Kant and Hume, in the perennial debate of reason vs. pleasure. As Robert Wennberg explains, "they differ in the theoretical basis for their conviction and in their understanding of the adequacy of various moral frameworks" (158).

While this cornucopia of arguments is beneficial, for it fosters discussion and advances intellectual refinement, it is important to note that the disagreements among many ALTs are over issues that are tangential to the present and future wellbeing of nonhuman animals. Settling the question of whether deontology is a superior theory to consequentialism will not assuage the pain of veal calves, just as bickering over whether Christianity is inherently anthropocentric will not help secure a ban on LD-50 tests. The first question we must ask ourselves is what is the animal experience in the world of modern agriculture and research? And once we have settled this question, we must find theories that respond to that experience. Otherwise, we run the risk of confining our inquiry within the boundaries imposed by an *a priori* theoretical framework. Furthermore, by focusing on theory before analyzing (to the best of our ability) the animal experience, we easily fall prey to the anthropocentric argument, in which animals are welcomed into a theory only if we prove that they are *just like* humans.

In the following section, I will explore the physical and psychological treatment of animals in our contemporary world.

Being Animal

A recent article in the New York Times explained that our commonly-prejudiced assessment of the intelligence of avian species is mistaken. Neuroscientists have discovered that the bird brain is "as complex, flexible and inventive as any mammalian brain" (Blakeslee F1). While this conclusion should come as no surprise to anyone who has carefully observed birds' behavior, it startled most in the scientific community. Scientists had assumed that since bird brains are physiologically different from mammalian brains, they could not

possibly be as intelligent as mammals. After studying the complex behavior of crows, parrots and magpies, scientists reached an enlightening conclusion: "[t]here is a bird way and a mammal way to create intelligence" (cited in Blakeslee F1).

This example is illustrative of how little we know about what it means to think, live and feel like an animal, and how our self-perception as the smartest species on earth can hinder our scientific pursuits. There are two key lessons to be learned from this report. First, it is not that we can know nothing about the inner life of non-human animals, but that we must always be cautious when drawing radical conclusions about their experiences. As Noske concludes, "we must remind ourselves that other meanings exist, even if we may be severely limited in our understanding of them" (160).

Second, a study like this gives us a hint of how it must be for avian species to be warehoused in windowless buildings from birth to death. The life of a laying-hen in a battery cage deprives the bird of all her natural activities: physical, emotional and intellectual. When farmed chickens are rescued, they immediately adopt their natural behavior: they roost, take dust baths and sun baths, go for runs, and they form personal bonds with other animals (Masson 88).

The same experience of deprivation holds for other farm and research animals, which are housed in filthy, restricted, uncomfortable and boring environments. Cows and pigs are prevented from experiencing motherhood, pigs are forced to live in their own excrement, and naturally playful goats cannot frolic. Consider the following description of young factory pigs: "The tedium of their existence soon became apparent: they were lethargic, exhibited ragged ears, had droopy tails, and rapidly acquired that dull-eyed glaze that swineherds associate with six- or seven-year-old breeding hogs" (Masson 20).

If to that miserable life we add the fact that these animals are made to grow painfully fast to satisfy the consumer palate (and the industry's thirst for profit), and that painful procedures might be performed on them, the fact that their lifespan in confinement is a fraction of their life expectancy in the wild comes as a relief to those who care for animals' wellbeing.

In short, production and research animals are deprived of everything that would allow them to be *who* they are. Naturally, as Masson simply puts it, "[t]o the extent that you prevent an animal from living the way he or she evolved to live, you are creating unhappiness for the animal" (2). In the next section, I will discuss how some of Aquinas' ideas can shed light on the animal experiences just described.

Aquinas: Let Them Be

Saint Thomas Aquinas' name is found in most indices of books on animal rights/animal liberation. His philosophy is used as

an example of the official anthropocentric position: nonhuman animals are inferior to humans; hence, we have no duties towards them. Aquinas' attitude is very similar to Aristotle's, and an antecedent for Kant's idea that duties are only owed to persons (i.e., rational, moral beings). Authors arguing against animal cruelty and oppression generally devote a few lines to showing that Aquinas' ethical position regarding nonhuman animals is highly problematic, since it leads to bothersome conclusions with respect to marginal humans. Of course, no one is comfortable accepting the possibility of "more perfect" (i.e., more intelligent humans) harvesting the organs of "less perfect" (i.e., mentally retarded) humans. Since this picture makes us queasy, the conclusion is that Aquinas must be wrong and should be forgotten, and that nonhuman animals should be included in our moral universe (Wennberg 128).

Although under this line of argument we have given moral status to animals, the contorted process by which we reached this conclusion does not seem to give animals their due. Some pigeons can recognize more than 700 visual patterns, while some marginal humans cannot independently perform simple bodily functions (Blakeslee F1). Yet, our granting the pigeon moral status is only a (perhaps unwanted) byproduct of protecting the moral status of some humans. The problem with this procedure is that is clings to the hierarchical paradigm it attempts to dethrone. How effective (or satisfying) would it have been to recognize the rights of women, based on the fact that some women are smarter that retarded males? If we want to extend respect to the natural world, we must consider it in its own right first, and resist the temptation to value it when it mimics what we find familiar, rational, and human.

Despite its bad reputation, Aquinas' theology helps us consider a non-anthropocentric perspective, because it puts God[17] in a privileged place. God is not only eternal, perfect and infinite, but also a mystery. Since God's attributes are so far beyond human cognition, and his essence is so immensurable, we must accept that our limited "intellect is unable to grasp His essence as it is in itself, [and that] we rise to a knowledge of that essence from the things that surround us" (Aquinas 26; ch. 24). Thus, the whole of nature is a collection of clues that can aid us in the understanding of divine greatness.

Being the product of the divine creative power, creatures partake in divine perfection: "every created thing has, in keeping with its form, some participated likeness to the divine goodness…Therefore, too, all actions and movements of every creature are directed to the divine goodness as their end" (Aquinas 113; ch. 103). In short, a being's *telos* is divine goodness, or the imitation of The Supreme Good.

Given that God has manifested himself diversely throughout creation, each creature's *telos* will focus on some particular aspect(s)

of God's being. As Aquinas notes, "[c]reated things attain to the divine likeness by their operations in different ways, as they also represent it in different ways conformably to their being" (114; ch. 103). Despite the uniqueness of each individual's *telos*, creatures follow two basic principles in their attempt to mimic God: they protect their bodily integrity and they reproduce. In Aquinas' words,

> For every creature endeavors, by its activity, first of all to keep itself in perfect being, so far as this is possible. In such endeavor it tends, in its own way, to an imitation of the divine permanence. Second, every creature strives, by its activity, to communicate its own perfect being, in its own fashion, to another; and in this it tends to an imitation of the divine causality (114; ch. 103).

As every creature in the world lives, breathes, reproduces and dies, he/she partakes in God's being in his/her own unique way. Rabbits mimic God in their *rabbithood*, pigs in their *pighood* and beetles in their *beetlehood*. Humans are no exception, for we strive to reach God through, among other ways, the exercise of *human* reason. Yet, the fact that we possess our own form of reason, does not give us the acumen to completely comprehend the *telos* of other beings. Recall that Aquinas affirmed that the whole of creation is merely a collection of pointers that can help us partially understand the nature of God's infinite goodness. So, just as God is an enigma, each creature is also one, insofar as he/she partakes of the divine mystery. Not only is each creature unique, but he/she is also valuable as a representation of an aspect of God's perfection.[18]

As discussed in the earlier section, the most common human attitude towards nonhuman animals has been characterized by ignorance and cruel deprivation; and too often, the former has led to the latter. We have hastily decided that birds, insects, nonhuman mammals, and so on are "just animals;" hence, we can (ab)use them. The problem with this attitude, based on Aquinas' theology, is threefold. First, branding nonhumans as mere animals ignores the fact that nonhuman creation, just like us, is a modest participant in divine perfection and infinite goodness, and thus is intrinsically valuable.

Second, our self-aggrandizing attitude that supports the denigration of nonhuman creation runs counter to the idea that, although powerful, our intellects will never plumb the mysteries of the universe. In fact, most of what there is to know will remain in a penumbra, for, again, God's perfect essence cannot be grasped by an ephemeral human being. Therefore, a better approach to creation is one that cultivates observation, humility, and respect.

Third, the abuse of nonhuman animals prevents a large part of God's creation from fulfilling its *telos*. As Masson pointed out, the

raising and harvesting of animals prevents them from doing what they were born to do: live, interact with their kind, enjoy their surroundings, and breed. By discarding male chicks, which our society has deemed economically worthless, we are diminishing the quantity of good in the world; we are depriving those birds of their life and their opportunity to transmit their perfect being to others; we are breaching our duty to promote good and avoid evil; we are disfiguring God's creation on earth.

In short, the analysis of Aquinas shows that insofar as all humans and non-humans are ontologically similar in their natural desire to keep themselves alive, staying in being is a good. Then, preventing animals from following their *telos* is problematic: it not only hurts the animal, but it makes the world less perfect and it constitutes an act of irreverence. This assessment of a portion of Aquinas' theology echoes the plight of non-human animals: deprivation from fulfilling their natural inclinations.

Having discussed the potential contributions of Thomistic philosophy to the animal liberation literature, in the next section I will address Marx's intellectual input to animal liberation theories.

Marx: Return them to Their Species-being

Marx's critique of labor under capitalism hinges on the problem of alienation. As described in the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844, modern workers find themselves cut off from the product of their labor, from the production process, from their species-being, and from other workers.

We need not dig into dusty employment records of the early industrial era to imagine this type of life. As mentioned earlier, Marx's critique of exploitation is sadly current. Take, for example, the case of abused workers in China, who work 96-hour weeks for the meager salary of $13, producing high-priced items for American consumers ("New International"). Individual workers are clearly alienated from their labor, which has been transformed into expensive pieces of clothing they themselves will never be able to afford. The process of production is also *alien*: deplorable working conditions weaken their bodies, "[t]he greater… [their] activity, the less…[they] possess" (Marx, "Manuscripts" 306). What should be a creative and fulfilling process is now repugnant to them. Thus, the "worker feels himself freely active only in his animal functions–eating, drinking and procreating" (Marx, "Manuscripts" 308). As workers continue to live in this sordid existence, their interaction with other workers is alienated and hostile. Instead of seeking each other's company, workers avoid each other, seeking refuge in private places and self-destructive activities.

This forlorn way of life is meticulously described in Capital. Noting the impact of industrial machinery and the division of labor

in modern manufacturing, Marx recounts the human consequences that derive from increased production:

> They [men, women and children] are to be found in a range of unhealthy jobs: in brass-foundries, button factories, and enameling, galvanizing and lacquering work. Owing to the excessive labor performed by their workers, both adult and non-adult, certain London firms where newspapers and books are printed have gained for themselves the honorable name of 'slaughter-houses..' (Capital 592)

The comparison between the status of human labor and the production of meat was not pushed beyond the observation that, in modern times, workers are treated like animals. There was no room in Marx's writing for the treatment and slaughtering of non-human creatures. The situation of human workers was repugnant enough to warrant his full attention:

> One of the most shameful, dirty, and worst paid jobs…is the sorting of rags…The rag-sorters are carriers for the spread of small-pox and other infectious diseases, and they themselves are the first victims…A frightful source of demoralization is the mode of living…men, boys and girls all sleep in the cottage, which contains two, exceptionally three rooms, all on the ground floor and badly ventilated…These cottages are the models of untidiness, dirt and dust…The life of myriads of workmen and workwomen is now uselessly tortured and shortened by never-ending physical suffering that their mere occupation begets. (Marx, Capital 593-94)

Since Marx focused on the human side of alienation, he dedicated a portion of his writing to explaining what it is that makes us human. And to achieve this goal, he emphasized the differences between human and non-human beings – especially concerning the process of creation:

> Of course, animals also produce. They construct nests and dwellings, as in the case of bees, beavers, ants, and so on. But they only produce what is strictly necessary for themselves or their young…They produce only under the compulsion of direct physical need, while man produces when he is free from physical need and only truly produces in freedom from such need. (Marx, "Manuscripts" 309)

While Marx's assessment of the motivations for creation and production are questionable, he is *prima facie* right about the fact that humans and non-humans differ in the ways of production. Despite

this difference, alienation is also a possibility for non-human creatures, which experience alienation in their *own*, albeit not human, ways. That is, alienation does necessarily depend on rationality, but on the possession of needs that must necessarily be satisfied in order to reach self-realization. For example, Marx's and Engels' discussion of alienation in The Holy Family uses the language of needs:

> The class of the proletariat feels annihilated in its self-alienation; it sees in its own powerlessness and the reality of an inhuman existence...[T]he proletariat [experiences]…an *indignation* to which it is necessarily driven by the contradiction between its human *nature* and its condition of life, which is the outright, decisive and comprehensive negation of that nature. (51)

Then, Marx's account of exploited labor not only accurately describes modern sweatshop working conditions, but closely resembles the experience of animals in modern agriculture. Cattle, pigs and fish are subject to bacterial infections, in the same way that workers during the 19th century were exposed to insalubrious working conditions. Not even the massive quantities of antibiotics fed to mass-produced animals can stave off the consequences of filthy, overcrowded living conditions.

The subjection of non-human beings to such a life also leads, naturally, to an alienated existence: a life that does not satisfy the basic needs of self-realization, for it is essentially at odds with animals' nature. Take the case of dairy cows, whose bodily fluids are no longer produced for the growth of their calves, but for the sake of human consumers. For the cows, milk is now an alien product and the reason for their torturous existence. Or, consider the situation of hens, who are routinely debeaked to stop them from hurting each other: the cramped conditions of battery cages are so extreme that hens have become alienated from their own kind. Finally, just like humans, farmed animals are alienated from their species-being: they cannot raise their young, roost on trees, take dust baths, or make straw-beds for themselves. The only difference between exploited humans and non-humans is that the latter seldom find any relief, for, as Noske has noted, "[t]he modern animal industry does not allow them to 'go home'– they are exploited 24 hours a day" (17). While human workers find relief in their animalistic side, non-human animals are reduced to a nearly inanimate existence, because their animalistic element has also been taken away from them.

Marx's observation about the uniqueness of humans should not deter us from turning to his writings with regard to the issues faced by non-human animals. The fact that he referred to non-humans in a simplistic manner is not an indication that non-human animals have no room in a Marxist-inspired critique of animal welfare

in capitalism, but a sign that he was more concerned about the suffering in human society than with the moral standing of non-human animals. Rather than describing the abilities of non-human animals, Marx focused on the deficiencies in the realization of human capacities in capitalist production systems. Thus, Marx's overlooked discussion of non-human alienation should be adopted by ALTs, for it provides an accurate framework for understanding the experience of animals in modern agriculture and research.

An added benefit of espousing Marx's critique of alienation is that Marx himself discussed how an unalienated society might be organized. In the simple socialist formula, "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs," [19] Marx summarized the requirements for human flourishing. Note that Marx's principle does not seek simply to guarantee human existence, but rather the actual development of human capacities – in the same way that Aquinas commits us to the advancement of (and not mere non-interference with) a being's good by helping that being obtain the necessary goods to fulfill its *telos*. To quote Hughes, "[h]uman needs for Marx are...the conditions for their existence *as* human beings; the conditions for a recognizable human way of life" (181). Then, in the case of non-human animals, eliminating their human-induced alienation would involve, as Ted Benton suggests, "...refrain[ing] from destroying those conditions under which...animals are able to autonomously meet their needs" (213). However, most farm and research animals lack the ability to autonomously meet their needs, because they are domesticated, and/or are disabled due to abuse, neglect or disease. Then, a more robust understanding of respect for non-human life would involve fostering the conditions under which animals can fulfill (with human aid) their *animal* needs.

Having discussed Marx's concept of alienation in relation to non-human animals, I will consider Aquinas' concept of *telos* in relation to Marx's ideas of species-being.

Common Ground and Beyond

In the classic article "The Roots of our Ecological Crisis," Lynn White contended (perhaps too strongly[20]) that Christianity's teachings about the human relationship with nature in terms of domination have been so influential in the western world that they infused most intellectual works with the spirits of progress and dominion over nature. A good example of such influence is the case of Marx's philosophy. With its resolute belief in humanity's progress towards the perfection of communism, White concluded, Marxism is nothing more than a "Judeo-Christian heresy." (346).

Although White showed a point of convergence between Marxism and Christian doctrine, this commonality is far from useful to ALTs, for it merely perpetuates the myth that both Christian and Marxist ideas are inherently hostile to non-human emancipation.

There is, however, a more fruitful interpretation of Christian ideas and Marxist doctrine that can offer theoretical support for animal liberation goals. The key to such agreement is the idea of *telos* (as discussed by Aquinas) and unalienated existence (as expressed by Marx).

Aquinas' argued that every living being partook of the divine essence through its *telos*. All creatures seek to fulfill their own version of divine goodness in their daily lives by acting in accordance with their being. Then, the divine goodness that permeates our world depends on all beings' ability to fulfill their *telos* in the ways that come naturally to them. For humans and non-humans, the satisfaction of their *telos* requires the exercise of a wide range of capabilities from emotional and physical abilities to intellectual capacities. In short, the world is a better place when creatures are able to satisfy (in their own particular way) their needs for food, water, love, play, and aesthetic and intellectual appreciation.

Now, consider Marx's critique of alienated existence under capitalism. Workers live a life that is undesirable, for they are unable to perform the activities that define their humanity (i.e., labor) in a natural, human form. As Marx mentions in Grundrisse, labor under oppressive economic and social relations is taken as "repulsive," a sacrifice. On the other hand, free-labor, albeit demanding, is an act of self-fulfillment, such as the composition of a piece of music (Grundrisse 145-146). In short, capitalism fails to acknowledge the workers' needs and thus reduces the individual to something he/she is not: "[P]olitical economy knows the worker only as a working animal – as a beast reduced to the strictest bodily needs" (Marx cited in Hughes 25). A similar analysis could be applied to non-human animals in industrial societies. Take the case of dairy cows, which undergo systematic insemination and give birth to numerous calves in their lifetime. To them, becoming mothers is no longer an act of self-realization: their calves will be removed from their side quickly, creating (for both mothers and offspring) immense emotional distress:[21] they will be milked continuously (even after their udders develop mastitis), and impregnated once again. For the dairy cow, motherhood is not a blessing, but a curse. She, like the worker, is reduced to something she is not: a contraption.

Clearly, both Marx and Aquinas perceive that there is something wrong occurring when beings are not allowed to do what they were born to do. Aquinas recognized that the balance and well-being of the universe depended on the fulfillment of all beings' *telos*. Marx criticized the perversity of an economic system that systematically deprived workers of a decent existence by forcing them to relinquish everything that made them human. And, although not directly observed by him, the same system reduces non-human animals to a machine-like existence. In short, Aquinas' and Marx's thought converge on one point that holds true for both humans and

non-humans: it is better to let beings fulfill their *telos*, or to allow them to live unalienated existences.

Not only is there an agreement among some of Aquinas' and Marx's philosophies, but their ideas combine synergistically, complementing and extending each other. Marx contributes to this ideological partnership by implying that the liberation of non-humans depends on radical, foundational change. Although non-human animals cannot create a social revolution – in the same way that child workers cannot exert political pressure against their oppressors – humans can and should act on their behalf.

On the other hand, Aquinas' religious perspective on life and nature can foster a non-materialistic perspective within animal liberation theories. Remember Rolston's complaint about the overly scientific, cold approach to life many individuals have. Unless we remind ourselves that non-human nature is, at its essence, a mysterious, magnificent creation, we run the risk of claiming that we *know exactly* what animals desire and need. Furthermore, as a consequence of this alleged knowledge, we might begin to see ourselves as distant and detached from those we are trying to defend. This is not to say that we cannot sometimes hazard a guess at what might be best for non-human animals. However, our knowledge of their *telos* is so limited, that we should always remind ourselves to be observant and to respect their uniqueness.

The problem with the idea that beings should be left to fulfill their natures is that we do not want to have to accept the oppression of animals, if that were to come naturally to some humans. Furthermore, neither Marx not Aquinas addresses the question of how to go about guaranteeing animals' basic entitlements in society. A possible solution to this issue is to frame Aquinas' and Marx's call for a fulfilled existence in terms of Nussbaum's capabilities approach. This theory of basic justice acknowledges that "there is a waste and tragedy when a living creature has the innate, or "basic" capability for some functions that are evaluated as important and good, but never gets the opportunity to perform those functions" (Nussbaum 305).

Thus, the capabilities approach can overcome the pitfalls of the Marxist-Thomistic perspective in two ways. First, it takes seriously only those capabilities that are *necessary* for an individual's flourishing and not any human whim or inclination (such as the enjoyment of blood sports). Second, by being framed in terms of justice (and not mere duties and/or rights to an unalienated existence), it makes Marx's and Aquinas' position more robust and effective. To wit, subjecting veal calves to confinement and malnourishment is not merely wrong of us, but it is an unfairness done to them, for animals are morally entitled "…not to be treated that way" (Nussbaum 302). Then, recognizing these animals' minimum entitlements makes animals agents whose well-being must be the subject of law and public policy (Nussbaum 313). Simply put,

the capabilities approach allows us to frame the plight of non-human animals as an issue of global justice.

Drawing from Aristotle and Marx, Nussbaum proposes a model of political justice that embraces a different conception of the good life, and guarantees all the necessary capabilities for the pursuit of The Good (whatever this may be). As Michel Skereker explains, Nussbaum bases her capabilities theory on two intuitions. First, she argues that "there are certain functions that are particularly central in human life, in the sense that their presence or absence is typically understood to be a mark of the presence or absence of human life." Second, she claims that "there is a quality to the performance of these actions when performed by humans that sets them apart from functionally similar actions of nonhuman animals" (383). In short, most creatures have a need for love, nourishment and play; however, the ways to go about acquiring them will vary from species to species, and from being to being.

Being a pluralistic theory of justice, Nussbaum's capabilities approach can be logically extended to non-human animals. Nussbaum suggests that insofar as we feel wonder (and perhaps reverence) when "looking at complex organisms, that wonder at least suggests the idea that it is good for that being to flourish as the kind of thing it is" (306). Concomitantly, when such flourishing is thwarted, a wrong is committed. While the standard capabilities theory had at its heart mutual human cooperation to promote human flourishing, the expanded capabilities view focuses on promoting harmony and flourishing among human and non-human animals. This entails that non-human animals should not "be cut off from the chance of a flourishing life and that all animals should enjoy certain positive opportunities to flourish" (Nussbaum 307).

While it is open to question what minimum requirements an organism must meet to be entitled to basic justice, this issue should not stop us from embracing the capabilities view. Given the fact that sentience is the most common minimum threshold for moral considerability, and that pain, suffering and frustration are the essence of the animal predicament under human exploitation, it seems unproblematic to adopt Nussbaum's requirement of sentience.

An obstacle is posed by the fact that we are limited by epistemological barriers from fully knowing and evaluating non-human capacities. As Nussbaum recognizes, we might be inclined to depict nature in terms of a Virgilian Golden Age. Nevertheless, the awareness of such a bias can help us sharpen our focus and achieve a more accurate representation of non-human nature. Careful and unbiased observation can lead us to a greater understanding of what it means to flourish as a crow, a pig, or a rabbit. Recall the "startling" announcement made by scientists regarding the discovery of bird intelligence: what came as a surprise to them was far from a revelation to your average amateur bird-watcher.

Based on what we know about most sentient beings, the capabilities theory calls on humans to respect and/or foster the following capacities necessary for non-human animal development: life, bodily health, bodily integrity, sense, imagination and thought, emotions, practical reason, affiliation, play, and control over one's environment (Nussbaum 314-317). This means that, given that the destruction of animal life is not a necessary capability for the flourishing of human beings, we should refrain from killing, trapping, and wounding animals, while working to better (and eventually abolish) the conditions under which animals continue to suffer. Furthermore, respect for animal life requires us to support the creation and maintenance of animal sanctuaries, where rescued animals have an opportunity to live to the fullest extent of their nature.

Concluding Remarks

To conclude, I have shown how Aquinas' teleological view of nature and Marx's critique of alienation can provide a unified response to the problem of alienation faced by non-human animals in our contemporary world. When understood through the theoretical framework of the capabilities approach, Thomistic theology and Marxist philosophy provide us with a pluralistic theoretical framework in which to couch claims about animals' basic entitlement to social justice. The greatest advantage of this ideological partnership is that by putting animal experience *first,* it transcends politics, ideology and religion, thus surmounting basic metaphysical disagreements that haunt classical animal liberation literature. [22]

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[1] I consider the animal liberation movement to include individuals and organizations that, through a variety means, strive for the emancipation of non-human animals. That is, animal liberationists can have a multi-pronged approach to animal emancipation that includes both the engagement in direct, violent, and/or unlawful actions, and the commitment to legislative and/or societal change. Note, however, that animal liberationists do not merely seek an improvement in non-human animals' living condition, but endeavor to radically change the *status quo*.

[2] By animal liberation theorists (ALTs) I refer to the authors of a body of literature that addresses the predicaments faced by non-human animals in our society and seek, ultimately, the emancipation of non-human animals from human bondage.

[3] E.g., in feed lots, slaughter houses, laboratories, and science classes, and so forth.

[4] Nussbaum's capabilities approach is a theory of justice that defends a set of basic capabilities, all of which are necessary for the pursuit of The Good Life (whatever this may be). The list of capabilities includes life, health, bodily integrity, senses, imagination and thought, emotions, practical reason, affiliations, relationship to the world of nature, and control over one's environment.

[5] I will, for the most part, make use of the term "non-human animal." However, for the sake of convenience (and to avoid repetition) will sometimes refer to non-human animals by the term "animals."

[6] A recent Gallup poll showed that "[a]lmost half of Americans believe God created humans 10,000 years ago" (Newport). This means that the incorporation of a religious authority into the body of animal liberation theories might also be strategically sound. Given that religion is an important concern for most Americans, taking a religious perspective seriously might help attract support from those who were formerly repelled by evolution-based arguments.

[7] By "Darwinist" I refer to a view of the natural world that reduces inter- and intra-species relations to strife for survival.

[8] Noske makes this point in greater detail in her book Beyond Boundaries.

[9] Some authors within the tradition of liberation theology are Gustavo Gutiérrez (A Theology of Liberation), Rubén Dri (La Utopía de Jesus, El Movimiento Antiimperialista de Jesus), Robert McAfee Brown (Unexpected News: Reading the Bible With Third World Eyes), and José Míguez Bonino (Christians and Marxists: The Mutual Challenge to Revolution).

[10] Although Lynn White mistakenly overemphasizes the role of Christianity in our ecological crisis, he is correct in the fact that most people see the world (and their place in it) through the prism of Genesis' "dominion."

[11] It might be argued that Singer misses the point that God's original creation was a fiasco, thus justifying his destruction of it. Yet, Singer's point still holds: by trashing his "imperfect" *oeuvre*, God set the example for the irresponsible management of natural resources.

[12] When proper stunning fails or when exsanguination is not allowed to progress far enough, animals are sent down the production lines to be butchered while fully conscious.

[13] According to RDS (Understanding Animal Research in Medicine), a UK group that supports the use of animals in medical research, "[i]t is estimated that world-wide up to 50 million animals are used in research every year" ("Frequently Asked").

[14] "[T]he question is not, Can they *reason*? nor, "Can they *talk*? but, Can they *suffer*?" (Bentham 311).

[15] Of course, this dietary guideline was given to humankind before the Fall. However, it could be argued that humans should strive to emulate, as closely as possible, the ideal, purest form of humanity of the Garden of Eden.

[16] Andrew Linzey has emphasized that a careful textual exegesis reveals that a position of respect for animal life has been present throughout Christian history, thus showing that the goals and views of ALTs are more common than previously thought (cited in Berry 282). Both Wennberg and Linzey have argued that a concern for animal wellbeing can be better understood in terms of "the problem of evil," thus indicating that animal oppression is just another obstacle in the goal of eternal peace (Linzey cited in Berry 282; Wennberg 337). Finally, Linzey has contended that, unlike secular moral theories that either require intellectual sophistication or the commitment to an anthropocentric ethics, Christianity can support animal rights (or "theos-rights" in Linzey's words) based on the following simple precept: "…animals have been created by God and are valued by God. Therefore, animals are appropriate objects of respect and concern" (cited in Wennberg 163).

[17] In keeping with Aquinas' theology, I will refer to the Christian God with the male pronoun.

[18] Although I will not pursue this line of argument in this paper, it must be noted that the conception of a unique and infinitely good creation naturally leads to a more holistic environmental ethics that extends to plants and ecosystems.

[19] Critique of the Gotha Program, 1874.

[20] See footnote 10, above.

[21] "If you think a cow never gives a second thought to her missing calf, ask any farmer how long a newborn calf and her mother call for each other. One farmer told me that as long as they can see each other, they will call until they are hoarse, indefinitely" (Masson 3).

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Luddites or Limits? The Attitudes of Animal Rights Activists Towards Science

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Abstract: Based on 31 interviews with practicing animal rights activists (ARAs), this paper argues that the prevailing view that ARA's are unqualifiedly opposed to science is a misconception and false generalization. A more careful examination of their attitudes towards science reveals that they are opposed to specific forms of biomedical research they believe to be both unethical and unscientific, and that they may support alternative (non-animal-based) science, while nonetheless remaining critical of other aspects of science. I examine the interconnected nature of activists beliefs and reach the conclusion that rather than being "anti-scientific," it may be the case that ARAs are concerned with the ethical limits and the empirical boundaries of modern science, as exemplified by its reliance on animal testing.

Animal rights activists often utilize the dialogue and rhetoric of science itself in order to argue "logically" and "rationally" about animal rights, whereas conversely researchers may use emotional language to justify their use of animals. Compassion and emotion are seen by some within the animal protection community as negative and as potentially damaging to the image of a movement which has worked long and hard to be taken seriously (Groves 2001). A key issue of the modern animal rights movement is the critique and rejection of the use of animals in science. This movement opposes the uncritical *institutionalization* of modern science by questioning the sharp boundary between humans and other animals that medical and scientific research relies on to justify its use of animals. Identifying relevant continuities between humans and animals in terms of sentience, emotional experience, social life, and intelligence, ARAs reject animal experimentation on ethical grounds and argue that it is no more ethically valid than experimenting on human beings. Furthermore, the animal rights movement challenges the "scientific" status of animal research, on the grounds that differences in genetics, physiology, and reaction to drugs in animals and humans render results from animal experimentation problematic at best .

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This two-fold critique, whether implied or overt, has led many to argue that the animal rights movement is anti-science and anti-progress (e.g. Sperling 1988), and ultimately anti-human and misanthropic (e.g. Franklin, 1999). This paper argues that those within the animal rights movement are not necessarily anti-science per se, but rather are concerned with the ethical limits and scientific boundaries of animal reliant biomedical research. The position that ARAs are opposed to science per se because they reject animal experimentation conflates key distinctions in the animal rights critique of science, and thus relies on a false generalization and overly simplistic position by characterizing the animal rights movement as unified or monolithic in its ideologies or politics.

While there are differences within the animal rights movement itself, there are even more significant differences between "animal welfare" and "animal rights" stances which need to be noted (see, for example, Francione 1996, Taylor 1999). Animal welfare is an anthropocentric philosophy based on the presumption that it is acceptable to utilize animals for human means so long as they are not caused any "unnecessary" suffering (e.g. Appleby & Hughes 1997). This position actually affirms the value of at least some animal experimentation and serves to move the debate away from whether it is ethically acceptable to use animals in the first place to a discussion of what constitutes unacceptable or unnecessary forms of animal suffering. Welfarists take heart in requirements in recent years to force researchers to give better consideration to animal welfare as a sign or moral progress.

This position, however, is still based on the notion that it is acceptable to use animals to improve human lives, an assumption rejected by rights advocates. Animal rights proponents argue that animals have basic rights, including the right to life and bodily integrity, and thus reject the human "prerogative" to use animals for the "betterment" of humanity. These ideological differences between rights and welfare advocates often lead to the adoption of different tactics, such as reflected in the difference between "bigger cages" and "empty cages." Whilst welfarists work for the reduction of animal suffering within existing conditions of exploitation and inequality, rights advocates seek the abolition of animal slavery altogether and argue that animals have the same basic moral rights as humans (for further discussion, see Garner 1993). Many ARAs, moreover, point out that the notion of "welfare" is little but a mask that science "hides behind" to legitimate cruelty and unethical experiments, and lull the public into thinking it is doing responsible research (see Birke & Michael, 1994; Regan 2005).

Thus, it is important to keep in mind that the activists interviewed here adopt an animal rights orientation, and were dismissive of the anthropocentric logic of welfarism and skeptical of welfare claims made on behalf of science. Moreover, as I will show,

many ARAs have a more general critique of science as a domineering, mechanistic paradigm and practice, and show how such a form of science relates to destructive capitalist institutions[1]. Nonetheless, they do not believe that science is bad in all aspects or that it cannot be constituted in some other form, and thus they are not "anti-science" in any facile or unqualified way.

I. Method

This paper is based on 31 interviews with people who identify themselves as animal rights activists. Contact was made through a university animal rights group in the UK. There were 23 females and 8 males who agreed to be interviewed. This gender imbalance is representative of a movement which consistently shows higher female participation than male (e.g. Garner, 1993). Participants ranged in age from 16 to 46 years and their average length of involvement in animal rights was 3 years. The majority were unemployed, often deliberately, or employed in part-time work, to allow time for their considerable animal rights activities. The remainders were professionals and included a university lecturer, a veterinarian, and a journalist.

The interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes and were in-depth and unstructured. As well as collecting demographic information such as age, gender and occupation the interviews sought to elicit information around very broad aspects regarding the lifestyles, philosophies, and beliefs of animal activists. For example, interviewees were asked to outline their philosophical beliefs, their participation in animal rights activism, and their views of modern science. In place of a quantitative method that attempts to build a wall of "objectivity" between the interviewer and subjects, the approach adopted here was a qualitative one that allowed the respondent to fully elaborate their beliefs and feelings regarding particular topics. The qualitative method is fruitful in that it allows the researcher to work closely with the subjects interviewed to present an in-depth look at their lives without deciding for them which are the issues of interest. It also allows for a more reflexive study as it permits the researcher to respond to new, previously unforeseen, issues which are raised by the respondents during the course of the research.

While baseline statistical data (i.e. underlying statistics which allow comparisons over time) concerning the attitudes of animal activists (e.g. Herzog et al, 1991) have been gathered previously, such information is unlikely to present a realistic picture of the day-to-day

[1] For a detailed discussion concerning the ways in which a mechanistic science, i.e. one which views animals and nature as machines thereby giving humans "permission" to exploit and manipulate them, see Carolyn Merchant (1980), The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution.

lives of activists. Such data also does not necessarily give the respondents a chance to clarify their beliefs and/or statements. Although a qualitative approach -- i.e. one based on in-depth interviews rather than one which elicits quantitative data -- will not necessarily "fix" all of these problems, the adoption of such a paradigm will allow for a reflexive process of discovery that is essential to this research project, and arguably, this topic as a whole. A qualitative approach also has the added advantage of lending itself to sensitive research attempting to access "hard-to-reach" populations.

For the purposes of this research, "animal rights activists" were taken to be anyone who identified themselves as believing in the moral and ethical need for animal rights, such that prohibit their use in experimental research, in contrast to "animal welfare" as discussed above, which shares the anthropocentric values of science and merely seeks to minimize animal suffering. Whilst defining a nebulous and contested term such as "science" is near impossible, I adopt a sociological definition which views science as a distinct type of "truth-seeking" knowledge about the natural world and organic life, such as is derived from formulating and testing hypotheses, predicting and verifying outcomes, and use of experimental procedures. As a social enterprise reliant on shared paradigms and research communities, science is a socially-produced form of knowledge that constructs different views and paradigms as its assumptions change. Moreover, as an entrenched societal institution, science represents an uncritically accepted way of knowing the world and one which is granted a superior status to other ways of knowing the world.

II. Results

Interviews undertaken for this project indicate that animal rights activists may well belong to a number of different pressure groups concerned with a variety of causes, e.g., anti-globalization, ecologism, feminism, and so on, and thus they adopt a holistic mode of activist informed by an understanding of relations among interconnected social and political issues. All of the activists interviewed, bar one, belonged to and were active in more than one political group and just under half of them belonged to and were active in three or more groups. This involvement often stemmed from a general recognition of the links between attitudes to animals and a wider social critique. As one activist explained:

> For me, it's about more than animal rights as well. It's about the whole sort of system, the capitalist system and how it exploits everyone and not just animals. It's more than animal rights, it's the whole big thing, it's like an anarchist thing I suppose, it's being opposed to a lot of things. You can't be

> into AR without being against a whole lot of things or for a lot of things as well.

This holistic activism was often based on recognition of the wider social and political implications of the critique of animal experimentation. The connection between the human use of the environment and of animals was self-evident and important to the activists interviewed here. In the words of one activist:

> I really feel deep down inside that what we do to animals, and to the earth on the whole, is wrong …. It's based on the idea that we have got it all wrong, we think we are above nature, are superior to it and can control it. I think, no I know, that we are all part of the same thing – we are a part of nature and part of the environment, and not a better part, just a part. If you believe that then how can we take it upon ourselves which bits of nature we can use and abuse? … We've become really arrogant in all the wrong ways and we think that everything is there for us and because of us and not despite us.

There was a pervasive belief among the activists that humans are arrogant and have "gone too far" in their "control" of the planet and in their belief that they can, and indeed should, control or manipulate nature for their own purposes and gain:

> If we are all a part of one big thing – nature – then there should be no hierarchy – we aren't at the top, we aren't better than them [non-human animals], we don't get to use them for our own purposes, that's not our decision to make. So I just don't think that we should be using animals, and the earth, in the ways in which we do.

The concepts of "control" and "domination" were prevalent throughout many of the interviews and were often contrasted with more holistic definitions of humanity's place within nature. The complaints about the ways in which humans treat animals "for their own purposes" often centered around the fact that humans are a part of nature and yet they act as though they own it. One activist put the point this way:

> It's like we've got it all wrong, all turned around somehow – we don't control nature and we shouldn't want to – we are simply a part of it.

Given this belief in the basic connectedness of all living things, the fact that humans use animals for their own purposes is

seen as morally wrong and inextricably linked to the way in which humans see the planet. That is, humans are perceived as treating nature as a commodity to be bought and sold. This is an outlook which the animal rights activists interviewed here object to:

> We think that we can buy anything but money is a human creation not natural and nature doesn't understand the laws of money so its pointless to say I'll use all these trees but I'll give you money for them … yet that's how we think, and it makes me mad and very sad at the same time – we have no conception of what we are doing and eventually we are going to kill everything off and usually in the name of progress.

The belief that many humans treat both non-human animals and nature as commodities to be utilized to maximize profit extended to the activists' beliefs about science. Thus their holistic outlook and activism was based on the general critique of an oppressive social system seen as underpinning the institution of modern science:

> I think it is linked to the fact that we see animals as our property to be exploited in the same way as any other resource regardless of dangers, ethics and so on.

III. Animal Rights Activists and the Boundaries of Science

Many of the activists who participated in this study mentioned the fact that they felt profit often dictated the way scientists and lab workers think about and use animals in research. There was a general consensus that science itself was not necessarily "wrong" but "misguided. In particular, activists tended to argue that modern science is linked to the pursuit of profit at the expense of everything else. This constant focus on the bottom line was then seen to preclude any moral or ethical behavior on the part of science, and often individual scientists themselves. Thus, the activists made a clear connection between capitalism, the search for profit, and the uncritical acceptance of institutionalized science by the majority of the public:

> Usually money and profit are the driving force, but it's about lots of things…. Our desire to control, our desire to make money and profit, the way we need to feel superior, the ways in which we define superiority, the fact that we feel that we have to use animals to make any progress in anything, the way in which science has argued away all animal feelings just so it can justify their use, the way in which this is presented as the only way of doing things rather than looking for alternatives. But here again you see it comes down to money – we wouldn't need to use as may animals as we do if we

> looked into alternatives but animals are cheap and alternatives are not so we use the animals and present it to people as a matter of life and death. Well it's not that simple, you don't choose animals over people, you don't have to, it's just presented that way so no one really has to analyze what they're doing.

If scientists were willing to use alternatives to animal testing exclusively, then their research would be acceptable to a number of activists, as one activist explained:

> There are alternatives, we just don't get told about them enough so people accept that we should use animals … I don't agree with it at all, it's putting us as more important than them which isn't fair, but even if you accept that we need to do medical testing then there are alternatives. I mean, it's not like I am against progress for the most part.

Given that it is the use of animals within science that causes the most consternation amongst animal rights activists, if animal testing were to be removed from science it is possible that an acceptance of science, or at least the room to negotiate one, could be gained from activists. Portraying all activists as anti-science and anti-progress is simplistic and impedes any meaningful dialogue between activists and researchers. Rather than being unqualifiedly "anti-science," animal activists are concerned with the (ethical) limits and (empirical) boundaries of modern science.

Yet, apart from its use of animals, many activists see modern science as mired in a false and dangerous mechanistic framework that is closely linked to capitalist attitudes and the pursuit of power and profit:

> I wouldn't say I am against science completely, it's not like I'm a Luddite or anything, I just don't like how far it's gone today. We need to put the brakes on and think about what we are doing to ourselves, animals and the planet a bit more. The cloning and genetic engineering we are into at the minute really scares me – it's pushing the boundaries too far. We don't know what we are going to end up with and trying to find out does not legitimate what we are actually doing. It's not natural. We have this natural life span that we should just accept and get on with enjoying what we have whether it's short or long.

Many activists cited examples from current debates in genetic engineering and these seemed to highlight their anxieties over the

human control of nature. Again, in the eyes of the activists this was linked to profit and the institutionalized nature of science:

> It's just stupid, you and me, we won't be able to afford these spare parts and we will die normally at the right time … it's about money and power and class, it's about everything – so much more than just using animals in the wrong way – so why don't people outside the movement see this?

One of the reasons why genetic engineering was often singled out for criticism was that it was here, at the forefront of modern technological advances, that they were most likely to see science spinning out of control. It also represents the underlying ideology of modern, post-Cartesian dualistic science which follows the biomedical model of seeing humanity and its wider environs as discrete, mechanistic parts to be manipulated:

> It's not like I am against progress for the most part although I don't agree with genetic engineering – I think we are playing with stuff we have no idea about the consequences of. I'm not even against science I just don't like the way it's going today. There has to be a time when you say 'stop, enough is enough' we don't need animals with kidneys growing out of their ears, what we do need is a science that makes sense, science that helps us all … and by that I mean all of us, animals, the planet, helps us all as an integrated system not one which knackers the system by prioritizing the needs of one part of it over another.

Whilst some activists indicate they may be willing to accept science if the use of animals in research were to cease, there are a number who explain that they cannot accept science in its current guise. They see science as intrinsically linked with exploitative and inegalitarian social, political, and economic systems:

> I can't say I'm against science, I could even accept a different kind of science. Trouble is I can't begin to see how that science would shape up. Under a capitalist system there's not one institution that can be fair and that goes double for science. It's linked to profit and big business so how on earth can it ever change while that system exists?

Interviews conducted here with animal activists indicate that they are not simplistically anti-science nor are they anti-progress. Rather, their worldview involves a holistic conception of the planet and nature and of humans' place within that system. This leads to their questioning many of the values that humans take for granted,

namely that it is morally, ethically, and schematically acceptable to view non-human nature as a commodity which can, and should, be used to further the needs, desires and interests of humanity. Given that much scientific research rests upon the use of animals and given that this research is often presented as being in the best interests of humans, science lends itself naturally as a target for the animal rights movement which questions human superiority over the planet and its non-human inhabitants:

> It's like a world gone mad innit? I mean, how far can we go, what more do they want to do, we have ears growing on mice, we have pigs being bred for human parts, we have mice and other animals bred with cancer deliberately so we can see what its effects are. I mean, we know its effect, it kills, and nastily. What are they gonna come up with next?

IV. An Anti-Science Movement?

Numerous theories abound concerning the modern animal rights movement. These include arguments that it is primarily a women's movement based on a perceived link between the oppression of women and their bodies and an oppression of animals and their bodies (e.g. Elston 1987; Groves 2001); that it is anti-progress (e.g. Horton 1989); that it is anti-science (e.g. Clark 1990; Guither 1998; Sperling 1988; Takooshian 1988); that it is anti-instrumentalist (e.g. Jasper & Nelkin 1992), that it uses public skepticism towards science to advance its cause (e.g. Jasper & Nelkin 1992), and that, due to its anti-science stance, it is also misanthropic (e.g. Franklin, 1999).

Science is problematical within the animal rights movement, but it is the use of animals that is of concern, not science per se, although, as shown above, many activists are critical of science in general to the extent it views the world as resources for manipulation and brings destructive results. The use of animals in scientific research was, and remains, an issue that many animal activists consider paramount. For example, Plous (1991) surveyed 402 animal rights activists and found that the majority (54%) identified "animals used in research" as the issue the animal rights movement should focus on most. In a follow up study of 372 activists in 1996 he concluded that if there were any significant changes in acticvists opposition to animals used in research it came not in degree of opposition but in type of research targeted and attitudes towards illegal laboratory break-ins (Plous 1996). Similarly, examinations of the philosophical animal rights literature indicate a high level of concern over the use of animals in science (e.g. Fox 2000, 2001; Singer 1975). A concerted study of animal rights groups' literature calculated that its "concern-to-use" ratio for animal research was 659 times higher than that concerned with animal agriculture. In other

words, for every page of animal agriculture discussion there were 659 pages of discussion concerning the use of animals in science (Nicoll & Russell 1990). It is therefore not surprising that some have represented the situation between animal activists and the scientific research community as a "state of war" (Gluck & Kubacki 1991). However this is a superficial and erroneous representation of a movement which is infinitely complex in its make-up, ideologies, and actions (Herzog 1993; Garner 1993, 1995).

It is possible that the advance of science and technology explains why so many found a resonance in the movement precisely when they did; that animal activists are not simply anti-science but are concerned with the limits and boundaries of science. This should not, however, be interpreted as an argument that animal protectionism is fundamentally anti-science for this is too simplistic. Nor should this be taken to be an argument that those within animal protection movements are simply "using" the movement as a vehicle to protest about science more generally, for this would be a disservice to those in the movement who clearly articulate their concerns for animals per se. Rather, this should be seen as one particular tool for explaining why animal protectionism became influential precisely when it did.

Sperling argues that anti-vivisection and animal rights have both developed at moments of broad cultural debate about the boundaries between human organism and machine (1988, p. 131). Both movements have also been concerned with the increasing hold of science over humanity, and specifically with the boundaries of science. French argues that in the nineteenth century anti-vivisection became a specific example of the general question "will science not recognize its moral limits?" (1975, p. 350). According to French, the nineteenth century anti-vivisection movement emerged at a time when science, and in particular medical science, was becoming the dominant paradigm for all other forms of knowledge. It has been argued that it was in direct opposition to this institutionalization of science that the anti-vivisection movement was born (e.g. French 1975; Sperling 1988). Encapsulated within this campaign against vivisection was a general critique of science and a questioning of the limits of science, and, in particular, whether it was legitimate to put to use knowledge gained from the pain and suffering of others (e.g. Elston 1987).

Sperling explicitly links fear over the extent of the power of science to the rise of the nineteenth century anti-vivisection movement. Further, she argues that a corollary of this can be found in the modern animal rights movement which represents, at least in part, a backlash against the increasing influence of science and technology on human lifestyles and attitudes:

> In the nineteenth century the human body was the perceived focus of medicine's assault, as the animal body was the focus of assault by experimental psychologists … in the modern period, the technological invasion is of the whole of nature – the vivisection of our planet. In a series of complex transformations the animal as victim has become a symbol of both humanity and nature besieged. The modern animal rights movement has expanded the Victorian focus, which was almost exclusively on the scientific domination of the body, to include the manipulation and domination of nature as a whole (1988 p. 139).

Sperling goes on to claim that animal rights activists are essentially anti-science in their outlook, which I am arguing is an over-generalization. It may well be that animal activists are more concerned with the limits and boundaries of modern science. Such a flawed science is essentially anthropocentric and mechanistic. It is, in other words, based on the belief that humans can, and should, seek to understand and manipulate natural processes (including other animals' bodies) by technological means for the perceived betterment of human beings. This modern, secular, "Enlightenment" view of science, ironically enough, encapsulates the Judeo-Christian belief concerning the place of humans within the world. This belief became firmly entrenched in modern thought, as exemplified by the idea of a Scala Natura with humans sitting perched firmly at the top of this hierarchy (Thomas, 1982) and the domineering views of Bacon, Descartes, Boyle, and other trailblazers of modern science. The Enlightenment, in its secular crusade against bigotry, intolerance and irrationality (which were regarded as the hallmarks of pre-enlightened thought) touted the notion that Truth was discoverable via the application of reason, and thereby embedded science, with its attendant "neutrality" and "objectivity," as the superior way of interpreting and seeing reality.

Furthermore, the notion of the scientific method became firmly entrenched within modern thinking, as the *key* way to elicit the Truth. One side effect of this was that it clearly allowed the institution of science, if not individual scientists, to avoid accountability for both the outcome of their work and the methods used to reach them. Hiding behind the mask of "objectivity," scientists thereby could neatly sidestep the profound ethical questions raised by use of animals in their research (see Michael & Birke 1994). Thus science became inextricably associated with both an empirical and experimental method and a hierarchical and domineering outlook and practice. It was this positioning of science which helped entrench its anthropocentric ideology which, in turn, cemented the belief prevalent under modern capitalism that nonhuman animals are little more than commodities to be used to benefit their human

"masters.". It would seem that those interviewed here, who demonstrated a high level of interconnected activism and critique of current political and social practices, recognized the role both science and technology have made, and continues to make, to the development of capitalism and the exploitation of all nature.

V. Boundary Work

Arluke and Sanders argue that humans are constantly involved in "boundary work – the drawing and blurring of lines of demarcation between humans and animals" (1996, p. 133). These boundaries are essential to lend order to the world in which we live, allowing us to make sense of our everyday existence. The boundary between human and animal is, however, an arbitrary one which is subject to constant flux and re-negotiation:

> "Natural" taken for granted dichotomies, such as human versus animal, can assume various meanings and uses even during the same time and in the same place (Arluke & Sanders 1996, p. 166).

The boundary between human and animal, whatever specific criteria it is based on at the time, rests on the notion that non-human animals are different, that they are "other" to our humanity. It also serves the practical purpose in everyday life whereby it allows us to make sense of our relationships with, and use of, animals. For example, the ways in which animals become scientific "tools" emphasize the "distancing" process that scientists use in order to make sense of their use of animals in research (e.g. Lynch 1988). Arluke & Sanders argue that "to become tools … their animal nature must be reconstructed as scientific data … to accomplish this transformation, animals must be deanthropomorphosized, becoming lesser beings or objects that think few thoughts, feel only the most primitive emotions, and experience little pain" (1996, p. 173).

The animal rights activists interviewed here directly confront and reject such boundaries. In seeing nature holistically and in seeing humans as simply one constituent part of that nature they are deliberately rejecting the notion of animals as "other" and the idea that humans are somehow superior and set apart from the rest of nature. This then fits into a philosophical schema which calls for a recognition of the inalienable rights of animals (and often the planet) in much the same way that humans are seen to have, and are accorded, basic inalienable rights. As one activist summed up:

> I fight for animals because animas are not our property or resources to exploit for our own ends. They should be accorded rights as should the planet in general. They are no

different to us. We are all part of this world and not one of us has the right to decide who is *more* part of it than the other.

Conclusion

Humans socially construct meanings of animals as they endeavor to make sense of them and their relationship to them in the general scheme of nature. These meanings are based on a wider acceptance of the species boundary and almost always result in the non-human animal being constructed as an inferior other to humanity. Despite the fact that social constructions of animals change over time, they change for the most part within the dominant paradigm which upholds the species boundary. It is at the forefront of science and technology that these boundaries are both maintained and blurred: maintained because science often justifies its use of animals by constructing them as different and inferior to humans, and blurred because animals need to have some similarities to humans if they are to be of use to science in the first place. It is therefore not surprising that the uncritical acceptance of modern portrayals of science has become a target for animal activists who sharply critique this division between humans and non-human animals.

However, as I have demonstrated, the argument that animal rights activists are anti-science is groundless. Listening carefully to activists demonstrates that the issue is far more complex than this. Indeed, many activists indicate support for a science that does not use animals, but are contemptuous of the way in which institutionalized science presents the use of animals in research as necessary. Much of the animal rights literature and rhetoric surrounding scientific research calls for a systematic and significant investigation into possible alternatives to the use of animals (e.g. Hill 2000). A large part of this are the various campaigns for humane research that many animal rights groups run (e.g. Animal Aid, UK) and campaigns to investigate alternatives to animal testing (e.g. BUAV,UK). By their very existence they indicate that animal rights activism, at least in its larger-scale institutionalized form is not simply anti-science but for a science that does not use animals. The data presented here drawn from animal activists in the UK corroborates this argument in that the activists explicitly claim not to be anti-science but to be anti-the-use-of-animals-in-science.

The attitudes of animal rights activists is an under-researched area and what little research there is tends to rest on prevalent stereotypes and generic conceptions of animal rights activists as an homogenous group (for some notable exceptions see Groves 2001; Herzog 1993; Munro 2001) which is clearly inaccurate. Animal activists come from all walks of life and hold a number of different viewpoints. Perhaps if we started listening to animal activists instead of relying on media stereotypes which are often drawn from the extreme minority of occasionally violent activists we will be able to

institute meaningful dialogue between activists and researchers and break the so-called "state of war" between them.

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Reconsidering *Zoë* and *Bios*: A Brief Comment on Nathan Snaza's "(Im)possible Witness" and Kathy Guillermo's "Response"

Richard Kahn†

In his essay, "(Im)possible Witness: Viewing PETA's 'Holocaust on Your Plate'," included in Volume 2, Issue 1 of this journal, Nathan Snaza draws upon Giorgio Agamben's biopolitical theory of life as genocidal concentration camp to better understand PETA's controversial campaign about the Holocaust's relevance to the speciescidal factory farm.[i] Snaza makes a number of salient and critical points and it is not my intention here to review the full range of his piece. Neither do I seek to suggest that the piece is deficient in its task or conception. Agamben is one of a handful of highly influential philosophers on the global scene, and his theory of post-Auschwitz applications of State power makes for a compelling link as Snaza asks us to think about the commercialized mass-murder of industrial farming and PETA's spectacular campaign against it.

As the essay explains, Agamben's work highlights how the rise of political concepts such as the sovereignty associated with the modern nation state and the corresponding notion of rights have a dark side which its logic cannot overcome. For Agamben, inclusion within the sphere of rights and the creation of democratic vistas has always come at the cost of the exclusion of others who are then included within a political terrain as non-citizens and whose very life and death is subject to the whims of totalitarian State power. As Snaza alludes, Agamben traces this process to the roots of democracy in Athens, where land-holding males could become cultural subjects of a life because of their difference from women, children, slaves, non-Athenians, animals, and plants who were excluded from this realm. Culture, designated by the Greek term *bios*, was opposed to nature, known as *zoë*, and there was (as Aristotle theorized) a continuum between them to which Athenian non-citizens were relegated as natural beings within the domain of culture.[ii] This is what Agamben (and Snaza) refer to when they speak of the ethical problem of *zoë* as the object of the biopolitical.

Of course, this amounts to a philosophical genealogy of what is more commonly described as "dehumanization," and so it is Agamben's thesis that Western democracies cannot ever "humanize"

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the planet in the way that Bush and Blair claim they seek to do, because their very humanity comes at the cost of the type of dehumanization that girds social domination and oppression generally, and occasionally manifests as the horror of an Auschwitz, Guantanamo Bay, or Abu Ghraib prison camp wherein people are politically reduced to "animals." Again, Agamben's major concern is that imperialist globalization and war is making the whole world a sort of camp such as these. However, Snaza is right to addend the concern that if it is wrong to de-humanize in this manner, it is correspondingly wrong to de-animalize non-human animals by making them over into mere objects for cultural exploitation. When Snaza argues that non-human animals can have a politics (a point which needs clarification), I take it that he means exactly this: that, as *zoë*, they have lifeworlds of their own that could and should be free to exist beyond the political categories society has extended over them.

Thus, via Agamben, Snaza questions PETA's ultimate aim and is cynical about the project of working for the legal rights of non-human (and one presumes—human) animals, a strategy which would only further enmesh them in misconceived Western political frameworks. Instead, he envisions a new politics that will seek to liberate *zoë* and uncompromisingly prevent its further encampment. In his mind, this means resisting capitalist market forces that have made the State "impotent" and so he calls for counter-cultural practices such as veganism, solidarity with liberators, and various forms of direct and indirect action against corporations.

Responding to Snaza in Volume 2, Issue 2, PETA's Kathy Guillermo makes the startling claim that the ultimate aim of PETA is "apolitical" and does not have to do with the extension of rights to animals, as Snaza suggests.[iii] Utilizing the language of "*bios*" and "*zoë*," she states that "we seek an evolution in the societal view of animals from *zoë* to *bios*, that is, the elevation of our concept of animals as beings who merely live to beings who share with humans 'the form or manner of living peculiar to a single individual or a group.'" In other words, PETA is attempting to transform the Western worldview that objectifies non-human animals towards the recognition of them as being subjects of a life in the like manner of human beings.

Guillermo's response requires correction, however. To suggest that PETA's ultimate aim is apolitical and does not have to do with working for animal rights is to my mind both false and misleading. PETA's own mission statement self-identifies it as "the largest animal rights organization in the world."[iv] While "animal rights" is increasingly used to describe all manner of pro-animal philosophies, from welfare-based reformism to revolutionary liberationism, and so one might attribute a more colloquial sense to PETA's use of the term, their mission statement clarifies that this is not the case. Asserting that, "PETA is dedicated to establishing and

protecting the rights of all animals," their statement makes it plain that Snaza is correct in describing their main objective as the extension of a liberal sense of rights to non-human animals. Further, that PETA describes its work as involving "legislation" only serves to underline that the protective rights which they seek are in fact the very rights that Agamben and Snaza have called into question.

Additionally, as I (and Snaza) have described, it is central to Agamben's theory that there cannot be a meaningful conception and actualization of *bios*—such as Guillermo says PETA seeks for non-human animals—without according them the legal status of rights, and this inclusion would then also require the further socially-included exclusion of some other order of being. Even if this classification of life were none other than plants, or fungi, the political effects would be disasterous, if Agamben is correct. For not only would that further legitimate the socio-historical exploitation of nature and the earth, but it would allow for the political logic of encampment to grow radically unchecked. Hypothetically, then, the politics of the camp could be legitimately extended into the colonization and domination of space even as non-human animals received unprecedented cultural and political recognition. Thus, there are problems in simply working to evolve a view of non-human animals as *bios* instead of *zoë*, as it potentially advances a progressive cultural and political viewpoint towards non-human animals while legitimating a political structure that progressives should oppose.

Though always controversial as an organization, PETA's defense and practice of the euthanasia of some animals is of special importance in this context.[v] It is not my intention here to question their policy on this matter, but rather to note that the decision to "put animals to sleep" is through and through the sort of biopolitics that makes of *zoë* its object that Agamben feels cannot be allowed to stand. It is this ability to work for the rights of animals, while also retaining the power to withdraw those rights in order to fashion their death that makes Snaza nervous.

If Agamben and Snaza are correct that there is something odious about the political history and logic of rights, however, I do not believe that a new political order is required that demands an idiom of concepts and practice that is wholly incommensurable with the present. I cannot agree with Snaza when he declares, "abandoning the concept of rights seems to be an utterly pragmatic move in the current moment." The modern history of rights, its many downfalls and shortcomings duly noted, has provided important openings for counter-hegemonic movements to oppose and transform the political system. It has served as a technology for developing greater equality and demanding forms of justice. Further, the fight for rights—be they human or non-human animal—has already made considerable headway across a wide variety of social and cultural institutions and has built up considerable force that

would be lost if a more radical move to an entirely new language and objective was substituted. In this sense, to speak of pragmatics would demand the continuation of the language and political goal of "rights," even when we know that it is in some key ways wrong.

Though Snaza's essay appears at times to figure the new politics that he imagines as an attempt to radically separate *bios* (and hence biopolitics) from *zoë* in the attempt to protect the latter, I would argue that, as with Agamben, he should ultimately not stand for a separation of the two life orders, but rather the true re-uniting of them through the political and cultural reclaimation of inclusively-excluded Others. This move to reconstruct the nature of both *bios* and *zoë* would likewise be pointedly different than PETA's teleological project of moving the identification of non-human animals from a place of *zoë* to one of *bios*. Instead, it will require the increased practice of our collective utopian imagination, in conjunction with an unflinching liberatory political will, to overcome the human/animal and culture/nature dichotomy that presently clouds our lives as a pervasive ideology. Standing together, then, *bios* and *zoë* are unsettling. They are challenges to us which provide us with the need to experiment and reach for untapped (or forgotten) social possibilities as we re-imagine what it is to be both human and animal in our relations.

Needless to say, if we are to better realize the form of a reconstructed animal liberation politics and culture as sketched briefly here, a greater push to jam and limit the global market economy that dulls the ethical imagination with spectacular nullities will also be required. Further, this certainly will lead to an interrogation of "rights" as the political tools and rhetoric born of market-based governments. But the emergent reconsideration of *bios* and *zoë* need not move completely away from the project of rights as it attempts to fashion another world, though neither should a call for rights be heralded uncritically, as is done when they are defended as naturally inalienable. Rather, the "interspecies alliance politics"[vi] of the future must explore, in all its complexity, how the demand for a strong sense of rights can be used strategically to bolster the liberation movement against capitalist speciesism and its resulting smelly underbellies of institutionalized genocide and zoöcide. A moment may come, whether through our diligence or luck, that the defense of rights can be superseded as politically practicable, but it is hard to envision how the present relationship between *bios* and *zoë* can allow for their complete disavowal now. We must yet earn the right to release life from being subjected to the rule of rights, and as thinkers/activsts such as Agamben, Snaza, and Guillermo all signify, it is this struggle perhaps that is at the very center of the contemporary moment's concern.

Notes

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[i] For Snaza's essay, see *http://www.cala-online.org/Journal/Issue2/Impossible%20Witness.htm*.
[ii] See Richard Kahn, *forthcoming,* Toward a Critique of Paideia and Humanitas: (Mis)Education and the Global Ecological Crisis. In I.G. Ze'ev and K. Roth (Eds.), *Challenges to Education in a Global World*, New York: Peter Lang.
[iii] For Guillermo's response, see *http://www.cala-online.org/Journal/Issue3/Response_Letter_Snaza.htm*.
[iv] For PETA's mission statement, see *http://www.peta.org/about/*.
[v] On PETA and euthanasia, see *http://www.peta.org/mc/factsheet_display.asp?ID=38*.
[vi] See *http://www.drstevebest.org/papers/vegenvani/commonnatures.htm*.