

“Doctrine of Demons”: Attacks on Animal Advocacy

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Warnings from the Right

Western civilization faces a terrible new menace, one even more dangerous than Islamist terror or gay marriage. The nature of this threat? People who want to protect animals.

Apparently alarmed by the idea of better treatment for animals, various rightwing journals and websites depict animal advocates as the ultimate danger, a movement so powerful and violent that it is poised to destroy the very foundations of Western culture and depose “Man” from the center of the universe. The discourse they construct is part of a countermovement to animal protection, designed to protect the financial interests of those who profit from exploitation of animals. As Munro (1999) notes, this countermovement is a well-organized, multi-million-dollar propaganda campaign by agribusiness, bio-medical industries and recreational killers (“sportsmen”) to control moral capital and present their vested interests as representative of “normal people” threatened by “animal rights extremists.” However, the anthropocentric prejudice underlying this discourse is not exclusively limited to corporate interests and rightwing groups: these prejudices are mirrored on the left.

One particularly striking example of how this prejudice is mobilized against animal advocates is found in the rightwing Christian journal *U Turn* (whose editor, Ken Ewert, feels himself so directly tuned-in to the supernatural that he is able to claim that a “free market economy” is ... God’s economic design”). Contributor Dave Matheson depicts the animal rights movement as “Man’s rebellion against God” and warns:

The animal "rights" movement is part of what Michael Novak believes is "a turning away from the biblical emphasis on the distinction between man and nature," which causes man to be "attracted by Eastern mysticism, which views man as a part of nature." Herbert Schlossberg elaborates on this theme, saying "this error plunges man into complete irrationality ... everything that distinguishes man from nature disappears in this outlook, and that can only mean that man himself disappears. That is why C. S. Lewis was right to call the triumph of such a conception 'the abolition of man'." I think Paul summed it up best; the animal rights movement is the "the doctrine of demons"!

Matherson's assertion that human beings ("Man") are distinctly separated from the rest of nature conforms to the anthropocentric prejudices of the journal's religious ideology but it is in complete contradiction to any scientific understanding of the world. His argument is anachronistic (it is unlikely that early Christian activists had "the animal rights movement" in mind when discussing any "doctrine of demons"), chauvinistic (other beliefs are dismissed as mere mysticism) and selective (while embracing conservative elements of C.S. Lewis's thought, Matherson overlooks his affection for animals and efforts to consider their interests within the context of his religious beliefs; LeBar [1983] and Connolly [2003] see Lewis as an animal welfarist while Ingrid Newkirk suggests that, if he were alive today, Lewis's opposition to vivisection would lead him to join PETA [People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals n.d.]).

One finds the same attempt to control the social construction of moral meaning by mobilizing religious ideology to discredit animal advocacy in Australia's *Sydney*

Morning Herald (December 2, 2004) where rightwing Catholic journalist Miranda Devine warns that the “obsession with animal rights is not a sign of a more compassionate society but of one which has lost respect for humanity. It has lost its belief in the soul and free will, which used to distinguish people from animals and gave existence meaning.” Understanding that animal advocates have gained public support for their campaigns by appealing to the compassion that many people naturally do feel for animals, Devine works to deny those compassionate feelings and transform them into something sinister, an “obsession” which somehow has decreased “respect for humanity.” She then links this in a vague way with a decline in religious beliefs, arguing that, without these superstitions, existence must be meaningless. There is no logic in this but the intended effect is the same: to create a sense that concern for animals will have immense and disastrous effects for human beings.

Similar warnings come from another neoconservative-Christian journal, *First Things*, which promotes the views of rightwing Catholic priest Richard J. Neuhaus. For example, Thomas Derr (1992), Professor of Religion at Smith College, detects “a persistent strain of anti-humanism in their movement” while David R. Carlin, Professor of Philosophy and Sociology at the Community College of Rhode Island and chairman of the Democratic Party in Newport, Rhode Island, writes that “the animal rights movement seems to be aiming at the elevation of animals. In fact, however, it is but the latest episode in a long history of attempts to degrade humans.” Carlin’s argument is even weaker than those cited above but is equally alarmist:

At present I cannot *prove* that the idea of animal rights is extraordinarily dangerous and inhumane; to get proof of this, we’ll have to wait until the

disastrous consequences of the idea reveal themselves over the next century or so. But I strongly suspect that it's a dangerous idea, and accordingly I suspect that the promoters of this idea, whatever their intentions, are enemies of the human race.

Carlin acknowledges that he is unable to offer any evidence for the strange linkages he creates (i.e. that concern for animals degrades humans) and the suspicions he draws from them. Nevertheless, he is quite content to assert strong conclusions and warn that concern for animals is being promoted by "enemies of the human race."

If these hysterical fears surfaced only in obscure publications of religious fringe groups they might be dismissed as insignificant. However, these same arguments are repeated across a much wider range of rightwing publications. For example, although Alex Epstein, from the pro-capitalist Ayn Rand Institute, does not appear to believe animal advocates are actually agents of Satan, he does perceive a threat of similar magnitude. Writing about an animal advocacy conference, he detects "the true goal of their doctrine: human extermination" and states: "Animal rights advocates place the lives of animals over the lives of human beings. This is a formula for human suffering and death." The claim that animal advocates "place the lives of animals over the lives of human beings" refers to vivisection and medical experiments, all of which, in Epstein's world, apparently are conducted for the highest ethical objectives of saving humans from fatal diseases. The fact that not all animal advocates share a single point of view on such questions does not even enter the discussion, nor does the fact that not all these experiments are undertaken for such noble purposes.

On his personal website, devoted to “defense of business and America,” Epstein expands on these themes, condemning actions taken against Huntingdon Life Sciences, Europe’s largest contract research agency notorious for its vivisection activities. In 1989 HLS was infiltrated by the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection, which reported on terrified dogs being force-fed chemicals, cleaning products, insecticides and fungicides and harnessed for painful subcutaneous and skin toxicity tests; another expose in 1996 revealed inadequate care and deliberate abuse in addition to that which was commercially-motivated. In 2000 the *Daily Express* exposed cruelty in xenotransplantation procedures at HLS for Novartis, which obtained a court injunction against further publicity on the experiments. In 2003, after fighting the injunction, *The Observer* published secret documents exposing horrendous cruelty in pig-to-primate heart transplant experiments done for Novartis. In 2004 the group Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty exposed tests done on beagles at HLS for Daikin industries of Osaka and the Japan Refrigeration of Air Conditioning Association of Tokyo, using banned gases. While animal advocacy groups have supplied extensive evidence of hideous abuse of animals at HLS, Epstein simply ignores this in order to make unsubstantiated claims intended to vilify and arouse hatred for those group: “The goal of the animal-rights movement is not to stop sadistic animal torturers; it is *to sacrifice and subjugate man to animals*. This goal is inherent in the very notion of "animal rights."

Andrew Bernstein, “senior writer” for the Ayn Rand Institute, identifies the same “man-hating psychology” among animal advocates. He suggests that they argue “Since rattlesnakes and rats are held to possess an inviolate inherent worth, it is deemed not only morally wrong to harm them, but also obligatory to sacrifice man for their sake.” That such an “obligatory...sacrifice” is mandated nowhere in the writings of animal advocates

is irrelevant to Bernstein's main aim of presenting them as fanatics. Another luminary of the Ayn Rand Institute, Edwin Locke, writing for the Institute's on-line *Capitalism* magazine, engages in similar distortions and warns of similar dangers:

The animal "rights" terrorists are like the Unabomber and Oklahoma City bombers. They are not idealists seeking justice, but nihilists seeking destruction for the sake of destruction. They do not want to uplift mankind, to help him progress from the swamp to the stars. They want mankind's destruction; they want him not just to stay in the swamp but to disappear into its muck.

Not surprisingly, these defenders of capitalism are eager to link this army of demonic anti-humanists with the political left wing. For example, Matherson thinks animal advocacy has become the last refuge of the Evil Empire:

Did you ever wonder what became of the left wing "intelligentsia" following the humiliating collapse of the Soviet Union and its Communist puppet states? Well, they are alive and well, and they are continuing to promote the Communist ideals of state control over resources. The only things that have changed are the terminology they use, and the names of the organizations they belong to. Roll over Marx and Lenin! Today's trendy and leftist causes are animal rights and radical environmentalism.

Other observers also detect leftwing conspiracies behind animal advocacy. For example, reporting to the South African Gunowners' Association on an Animal Rights Conference in Washington D.C., Jim Beers (federal programs coordinator for the National Trappers Association and contributor to "free-market" websites such as Alliance for America and the Heartland Institute) identifies the same "communist" menace, likening the event to

a communist training program back in the 50's or 60's for a cadre of insurgents to be sent into a country to be subverted. Some are trained to control the media, others to influence politicians and control bureaucracies, still others to control religion and schools, demonstrators were to disrupt things, and others to do the "other things" that ultimately underpin all the rest. Frightening is too weak a word to describe what it is like to watch this take place in a luxury hotel in a free country.

J.P. Zmirak (2002) also spot a nefarious leftwing plot to impose an animal rights agenda. Joining the strident chorus that shouts from David Horowitz's on-line *FrontPage* magazine about the dangers of liberalism, Zmirak adds his claim that "every known philosophy of the far-Left contains the seeds of murder including the animal rights movement." Terror, murder, demonic doctrines and the end of "Man" – all these are depicted as the tactics and goals of a surging tide of self-loathing animal rights fanatics engaged in a cosmic scheme of ontological mutiny. No evidence is presented for any of these claims and their authors readily overlook the long historical association between movements for better treatment of animals and other movements for social justice and improvements in what we now generally regard as basic human rights, such as anti-slavery campaigns, emancipation of women and abolition of child labour. In attempting to portray a concern for animals as a perverted hatred for human beings, the authors also ignore various studies which demonstrate that those people who show

compassion and empathy for animals are more likely to have similar attitudes for other human beings. Furthermore, they also overlook the large body of research that demonstrates that violence towards animals frequently is linked with violence towards human beings.

Dismissals from the Left

While rightwing commentators fret that Satan and his socialist hordes are using subversion and murder to promote their animal rights agenda, in reality, many of those considered to be on the left seem to have very little interest in animal protection and to share many of the same instrumentalist attitudes towards animals. The World Socialist Movement, for example, dismisses the issue of animal rights as a reformist one and claims to have no position on this. However, other leftist groups do adopt positions that are virtually identical to those of rightwing supporters of animal exploitation industries. For example, the World Socialist Web Site of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), a miniscule Trotskyist faction, denounces animal rights as an “extremist” movement which rejects the benefits of modern science and places the interests of other animals above those of human beings. In a statement that could have originated from the desk of a pharmaceutical corporation or its hired public relations consultants, Julie Hyland expresses firm confidence in the state’s regulation of vivisection and the benign intent and good corporate citizenship of the pharmaceutical industry:

Research involving animals is closely regulated in Britain, with the Home Office reporting that 2.73 million animal experiments were conducted in the UK in 2002, of which 84 percent were on rodents. Of such

procedures—most of which were for research and drug development purposes—non-toxic testing accounted for 82 percent of all experiments. Animal testing for cosmetics is banned, and despite often highly emotive campaigns by animal rights activists, dogs, cats, horses and primates account for less than 1 percent of animal experiments.

The faith of these Trotskyist revolutionaries in the humanitarian intentions of the pharmaceutical corporations and the diligence of the British state in overseeing these industries for the good of the masses is rather surprising. In contrast to the kindly motives of these benevolent institutions, Hyland identifies a “misanthropic outlook at the heart of animal rights extremism, with its denunciations of humans as no better, and in many instances much worse, than animals.” As do her rightwing counterparts, Hyland neglects to provide any actual evidence of this “misanthropic outlook” but merely asserts its existence as the only possible motivating force for animal advocates. Many Marxists share with their capitalist foes an anthropocentric, instrumentalist view of nature in which the interests of animals always must be subordinated to those of human beings.

Responding to a reader’s criticisms of Hyland’s claims, ICFI representative Chris Talbot defends her statements, denounces animal advocates as “extremists” and expresses the organization’s support for vivisection:

Our view, and we believe it is one that most of our readers share, is that experiments on animals are of importance to medical researchers. We have no reason to believe that cruelty or neglect of laboratory animals is widespread, and we do not accept the argument of animal rights protesters

that the cases of malpractice they focus on justify stopping all animal experiments.

Astonishingly, Hyland and Talbot simply accept the vivisection industry's claims that animal testing is vital to develop new drugs to save human lives. Overlooking a veritable mountain of evidence, including industry documents, undercover video footage and eyewitness accounts, that shows terrible abuse of animals, often conducted for purposes that are trivial or redundant, these Trotskyite revolutionaries readily accept that vivisection is "of importance to medical researchers" and show no interest in or awareness of studies that suggest that much of this research is actually misleading and harmful. They share their position with industry lobbyists such as Richard Berman. For example, in advertisements in the *New Yorker* magazine (February 14 and 25, 2005) Berman's Center for Consumer Freedom, a public relations firm funded by tobacco, meat, alcohol and junk-food industries, campaigned against what it called PETA's "violent opposition to medical research" claiming that it funded criminal organizations to block research into an AIDS cure because PETA values animals more than human beings.

Despite vivisectionists' claims to be focused on vital medical research, much testing is still done on frivolous products such as household cleaners or cosmetics (in 1998 the British government announced it would not issue licenses for animal testing of cosmetic products or ingredients but this took the form of a voluntary agreement with corporations, which can still test their products outside the country). Most testing is done in secret, defended on grounds of intellectual property or academic freedom, but

according to statistics released by the industry-friendly Canadian Council on Animal Care that supposedly monitors testing in this country, government-mandated toxicity tests accounted for eighty-two per cent of the procedures. The group Animal Alliance (2003) noted that the Canadian government spent none of its budget on developing alternatives and stated that most testing was curiosity-driven and less than twenty-seven per cent of testing was done for medical purposes. Also, the military tortures vast numbers of animals in order to develop new methods of harming human beings with biological, chemical, microwave or radiation weapons. Even in cases where animals are used for medical research, leading medical journals note that few important new drugs have been found in recent years; most are variations of existing drugs, sold under different names. Much animal testing is cruel, redundant and wasteful, devoted to reproducing existing studies or introducing slight variations. Vivisectors often conduct pointless experiments in order to compete for grants and to further their careers. Findings are often irrelevant to human needs and the validity of using one species as a model for another is itself questionable.

Even when research is directed to serious human problems, the utility of animal testing is questioned within the scientific community itself. For example, in an article entitled "Laboratory Routines Cause Animal Stress," published in the Autumn 2004 issue of *Contemporary Topics in Laboratory Animal Science*, ethologist Jonathan Balcombe of the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, reviewed eighty published studies and found that even relatively innocuous handling caused physiological reactions such as spiked blood pressure, hormone elevations and impairment to immune responses significant enough to invalidate data obtained from experiments

(<http://www.pcrm.org/newsletter/nov04/stress.html>). Balcombe noted: "Research on tumor development, immune function, endocrine and cardiovascular disorders, neoplasms, developmental defects, and psychological phenomena are particularly vulnerable to data being contaminated by animals' stress effects"

(http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2004-12/pcfr-aem122804.php). Balcombe's findings followed a paper in the *British Medical Journal*, titled "Where Is the Evidence that Animal Research Benefits Humans?" in which the authors concluded that much animal experimentation was wasteful, methodologically unsound, and poorly conducted while noting that, frequently, human trials were conducted concurrently with animal research and that clinical trials sometimes continued despite evidence of harm from animal experiments.

Arguments from the left and the right converge in the dismissal of animals from moral consideration. Defending animal exploitation, the ICFI's Chris Talbot rejects arguments of philosopher Peter Singer who emphasizes ability to feel pain as an important moral consideration. Talbot's arguments mirror those of Edwin Locke in the Ayn Rand Institute's *Capitalism* magazine: only humans have rights because humans have special abilities and are moral agents. Talbot writes:

Our position, on the contrary, is that human society is a unique phenomenon amongst all the animal species. Humans can labour with their hands and brains, can plan and develop productive techniques, and have amassed centuries of culture and knowledge that have enabled them to control and hold dominion over the rest of nature. Moreover, we hold that humans have the ability to change and develop not only the natural

world in a conscious and planned way, but also human society itself—that, after all, is the central tenet of socialism. In our view, therefore, humans have infinitely more to them than the ability to experience pleasure and pain on a biological level. We disagree with the underlying conception of Singer, Tom Regan and others that the essential nature of humans can be found in their individual and biological characteristics. In other words, we oppose the view of human society that sees it as nothing more than a collection of individuals with their own “human nature” and interests.

In fact, neither Regan nor Singer argue that human beings are “nothing more” than individuals; Talbot misrepresents their views while asserting a sharp dualism between humans and other animals. Although a belief in this dualism does constitute a dominant view of our relationship with other animals, it has been challenged consistently throughout much of human history and has been disproved by modern science, which has supported Darwin’s observations that differences between humans and other animals are ones of degree, not of kind. New ethological observations have led to the discovery that other animals do have complex cognition, with abilities and emotions that are comparable in many ways to those of human beings. Talbot’s idea that human beings “hold dominion over the rest of nature” is striking for its echo of Christian ideology and its suggestion that the relationship of human beings to the environment should be one of power rather than harmony. Even the British Liberal Party’s policy statement on animal welfare makes more progressive claims, even if these are not carried out in actual practice and legislation to protect animals and the environment: “Liberals recognize that the world’s creatures have rights too and that the human race should act as trustees of the natural

world rather than its master” (<http://www.liberal.org.uk/policy/animal.htm>) while the Green Party states: “Greens oppose factory farming and advocate banning cruel live exports. We want an end to animal experimentation and real investment in non-animal chemical testing” (<http://www.greenparty.org.uk/issues/1>). In Canada, the Green Party’s 2004 Platform states: “Every plant and animal has the right to exist, independent of human needs” (<http://www.greenparty.ca/platform2004/en/keyvalues.php?p=185>). The Green Party did not respond to an enquiry asking for a clarification of the actual meaning of this statement.

The ICFI’s position on environmental issues suggests that the only dilemma is capitalism and that once Marxists control production all problems will be solved. They promote technology and industrialization and see no problems with population growth (<http://www.wsws.org/articles/2001/jan2001/corr-j10.shtml>). The ICFI’s views are narrowly-focused on human interests but are not unusual on the left. For example, Peter Staudenmaier, of the Institute of Social Ecology, reproduces the same arguments in his article “Ambiguities of Animal Rights”, calling it a “moral mistake and a symptom of political confusion...anti-humanist and anti-ecological...at odds with the project of creating a free world”. Championing a human-centred view, Staudenmaier rejects analogies between animal advocacy and movements for human emancipation because animals cannot speak for themselves. (Again, this echoes statements from industry lobbyists and capitalist ideologues. For example, Alan Herscovici (n.d.), propagandist for the Fur Council of Canada, makes similar arguments; Edward J. Feulner, President of the Heritage Foundation, issues, but nowhere proves, the standard denunciation that analogies about exploitation of humans and other animals reflect “a twisted moral

universe [and] callousness toward human suffering.”) The proposal that individuals do not have rights (or the ability to experience pain or even consciousness) because they cannot speak is an argument that some philosophers use to deny consideration for animals but this also raises problems about the status of marginal cases among human beings. Furthermore, while other animals cannot speak in human languages, they can often articulate their wishes in ways that are immediately understandable to human beings and it is clear they do not want to be killed in slaughterhouses or tortured in laboratories. Reproducing the claims made by the intellectuals of the Ayn Rand Institute and the ICFI about the uniqueness of human beings as moral agents, Staudenmaier argues that animal advocacy “degrades, rather than develops, the humanist impulse embodied in liberatory social movements”. Oddly, he even denies the very existence of anthropocentric institutions, arguing that only elitist ones exist and that any concern about anthropocentrism only masks differences between human beings. This is obviously false, as exemplified by the presence of factory farms, slaughterhouses and vivisection laboratories. The fact that people have different relationships with these institutions – profiting from them or being exploited within them – does not alter the basic relationships of domination over and victimization of animals. The existence of class distinctions between human beings in no way invalidates the fact that anthropocentric beliefs operate within all classes and have negative consequences for other animals.

Recognizing a perception that animal advocacy is linked to progressive social and political thought, Staudenmaier attacks this view, arguing that animal advocacy is elitist, racist and linked with extreme rightwing groups, including fascists and Nazis. As proof, Staudenmaier even includes the claim that Hitler was a vegetarian, an irrelevant argument

but one which is rejected in Rynn Berry's book *Hitler: Neither Vegetarian Nor Animal Lover*. While the Nazis may have introduced some progressive legislation concerning animals, this hardly invalidates a concern for animals on the part of others, such as those who may be fundamentally opposed to Nazi ideology. Some leftwing writers such as Alexander Cockburn (2005) and Gary Francione (1996) have noted logical flaws in this analogy as a means of discrediting animal advocacy. Yet, clearly, a ferocious hostility towards animal advocacy inspires writers on both the left and the right to employ such distortions and dishonesties in order to defend the supremacy of "Man."

Others on the left repeat the idea that the interests of human beings are not only more important than but separate from those of other animals and the natural world. For example, Michael Albert (2002), a co-founder of *Z* magazine and ZNet, stated in *Satya* magazine:

...when I talk about social movements to make the world better, animal rights does not come into my mind. I honestly don't see animal rights movements in anything like the way in which I see women's movements, Latino movements, youth movements, the anti-corporate globalization movement, labor movements, and so on.... it just honestly doesn't strike me as being remotely as urgent as preventing war in Iraq or winning a 30-hour work week, or overthrowing capitalism...

Apart from the unwarranted assumption that one must be concerned about animal rights "or" war in Iraq "or" a reduced work week "or" overthrowing capitalism, Albert's anthropocentrism prevents him from seeing how capitalism thrives on the exploitation of

all animals, not only humans, and he fails to acknowledge important connections between various forms of oppression. Concern for ‘one’s own kind’ is just as limited, whether this is based on ideas of race or of species. As Peter Singer (2004:153) points out in his book on the ethics of globalization, *One World*, such sentiments of partiality formed an essential part of the Nazi world-view. Like Albert, many on the left dismiss animal advocacy as a trivial, single-issue movement and see veganism as a personal or even a ‘lifestyle’ choice. In fact, due to the pervasive use of animals, it is very difficult to truly live as a vegan in our society but the effort to do so is a powerful symbolic statement and involvement with animal protectionism is a means of opening doors to other issues and to understanding connections between various forms of oppression. Those on the left who dismiss veganism and concern for animals not only trivialize compassion but overlook the radical potential of these concerns for creating consciousness about other issues. The left has been criticized in the past for its dogmatic views on issues of racism and sexism, dismissing these as secondary issues and thus alienating many who might have been potential allies. Repeating these mistakes today, much of the left insists on the overwhelming importance of human issues, taking “Man” as the measure of all things and dismisses the plight of other living beings. However, any political theory is inadequate if it focuses on the human species alone, ignoring other living beings and the environment in which all of them exist or regarding these only as resources to be exploited.

Just as individual human activities must be seen within a historical, social and political context, so too they must be considered in a broader ecological context. A meat-based diet is not simply a personal choice but a political one, with far-reaching

consequences. The production of meat is linked to major forms of environmental destruction. Hundreds of thousands of square kilometers of rainforest have been destroyed to provide pasture for cattle. According to reports from the World Rainforest Movement, forty percent of the forests of Central America have been destroyed, largely for ranching. Because ranching is totally unsuited to the environment, new areas of forest are soon needed. As a result, thousands of plant and animal species are being driven into extinction, indigenous people are driven off their land, often violently and always with the loss of their unique cultural traditions, and a major source of oxygen-production for the planet is being eradicated. In Africa, commercial cattle ranching for export was directly linked to the Sahel famine of 1968-1974 in which 100,000 people died.

Commercial fishing, shrimp farming and pollution are destroying coral reefs and mangrove swamps, with a similar loss of irreplaceable biodiversity and damage to extensive and vital ecosystems. In North America, half the agricultural land is devoted to ranching or producing grain for animals and some estimate that half the world's grain goes to feeding animals who are then killed for human consumption. This is an extremely impractical system; for example, it is estimated that production of approximately half a kilogram of beef requires forty times as much fossil fuel as would be required to produce a similar quantity of soybeans and even greater amounts of water are diverted into this inefficient system. The huge numbers of animals crammed into factory farms produce vast amounts of waste that pollutes adjacent land and water systems. As the global consumption of meat has grown and corporate factory farming has spread throughout the world, poverty has increased as small farmers have been driven out of business and forced into urban slums, while the environment has suffered. Even if one is unmoved by

the ghastly suffering of billions of animals who are raised and then killed in factory farms and slaughterhouses, it is not hard to see that, like other capitalist enterprises, the meatpacking industry exploits workers, preying on the poorest and weakest and exposing them to dangerous conditions for low wages (Human Rights Watch 2005). Factory farming also has implications for human health. Animals are imprisoned in crowded, filthy, poorly-ventilated structures creating an ideal breeding-ground for disease. Numerous reports document the filthy conditions in slaughterhouses and the distribution, sale and consumption of animal flesh tainted with various chemicals, diseases and fecal matter. Heavy use of antibiotics in factory farming has polluted the environment as animal waste saturates waterways, promoted drug-resistant bacteria and further threatened human health. While millions of people in advanced capitalist societies suffer from obesity, diseases of overconsumption and illnesses such as cancer, heart disease and diabetes that are directly related to meat consumption, a billion poor people suffer malnutrition and starvation. The “cost-effective” strategy of feeding animal parts to other animals led to the outbreak of BSE and it is only a matter of time before other diseases spread from other animals to humans. Fear of an avian influenza pandemic led to the mass slaughter of birds in Canada in 2004 and throughout Asia in 2005. So the global meat system, a multi-billion-dollar industry, has serious consequences for the entire planet and the poor, increases real dangers to human health and is no trifling matter to be overlooked or dismissed even by those who are concerned only with the welfare of human beings and care nothing for other animals.

Despite the myopic anthropocentrism of many prominent leftists today, this hostility to expressing concerns for other animals was not always the case. While there is

a much longer intellectual history of concern for other animals and the ethical duties owed to them, as a political movement, animal advocacy is linked with the anti-slavery movement, feminism and various educational and social reforms, such as alleviating child poverty. In Late Victorian and Edwardian Britain, a circle of socialists, Fabians, social reformers, suffragettes, pacifists and artists, including figures such as Bertrand Russell, George Bernard Shaw, Anna Kingsford and Annie Besant, combined concern for humanitarian improvements with vegetarianism, and opposition to vivisection and hunting. The socialist Henry Salt, founder of the Humanitarian League, influenced Mahatma Gandhi and his philosophies of nonviolent resistance through his works such as *A Plea for Vegetarianism* (1886) and *Animal Rights* (1892). In the USA, socialist writers such as Jack London and Upton Sinclair also advocated for the better treatment of animals. Henry Spira, a prominent animal rights activist in the USA, developed his radical analysis as a member of the Socialist Workers Party in the 1950s and through his involvement with the civil right movement and support for Cuba against US imperialism. As Peter Singer (1999) remarked in a reflection on Spira's life: "He had read an article of mine about animal liberation, and realised that it was the logical extension of what he had been doing all his life: helping the downtrodden, the powerless, and the exploited."

Other prominent activists and intellectuals on the left have acknowledged how various forms of oppression are interwoven and have identified animal protection as a serious concern. For example, Noam Chomsky (2001) argues that most forms of hierarchy and domination serve only those at the top of the heap, are morally unjustified and must be questioned; Chomsky extends this to human relationships with other animals, citing the torture of animals in research laboratories as one example of such

illegitimate exploitation. Although he acknowledges vegetarianism and animal protection as serious issues and reasonable goals for those who seek to create a more progressive society, Chomsky admits that he is not a vegetarian himself and he has not addressed these issues in any depth in his own work. David Nibert's book *Animal Rights Human Rights* draws the connections between various forms of oppression and places animal rights within the context of a socialist approach. Anna E. Charlton, Sue Coe and Gary Francione (1993) have argued that the left should endorse animal rights. The Center for Animal Liberation Affairs (<http://www.cala-online.org/index.html>) explicitly places its concern for animals in the context of other social justice struggles. Materialist ecofeminists (as opposed to those focused mainly on spiritual aspects) see the exploitation of animals as one consequence of patriarchal capitalism. Groups such as Food Not Bombs, founded in the 1980s by anti-nuclear activists, now provide vegetarian food for the homeless and at various protests, while working with anarchists, environmentalists, anti-racist groups, animal rights activists and others opposed to capitalist globalization.

Certainly, not all animal advocates are on the left and not make connections between exploitation of animals and other forms of social injustice. Even within the field of animal protection itself, some have welfarist concerns only for particular animals and accept exploitation of other animals for food or other purposes. Even some who do recognize connections between various forms of oppression do not see this in leftist context. Some animal advocates such as Marjorie Spiegel (2001) recognize similarities between enslavement of Africans and enslavement of non-human animals but do not see a particular link between these forms of exploitation and capitalism, with Spiegel arguing

that animals have not fared any better under socialism. While Marxists have been too quick to dismiss animal advocacy, to overlook its progressive history, to ignore its capacity for radicalization of consciousness and to sneer at the compassionate sentiments that often motivate those who work on behalf of animals, it is true that some animal activists do not always see their own actions in a broader framework. For example, animal advocates argue that world hunger could be solved by adopting a vegan diet. In fact, this strategy would represent a far more efficient and sustainable use of resources. Certainly, it would be a healthier choice for those who do adopt such a diet but doing so alone will not directly benefit the poor who do not have enough to eat. The problem is not simply a shortage in the amount of food but a matter of how food is distributed and since the world is organized on the basis of capitalist relations, this means food goes to those who can afford to buy it.

However, when leftists dismiss concerns of animal advocates as mere sentimentalism and personal 'lifestyle' choices, they overlook a powerful potential for radicalizing consciousness. Those who are motivated to help animals will inevitably be forced to confront the absolute ruthlessness of corporate interests, the distortions of the corporate media and the power of the state that acts to protect these capitalist interests. Those who see their own positive efforts misrepresented by the media as extremism, who confront the venality and deception of corporations and experience the repression of the police are more likely to begin to see the world differently and to start to think about alternative forms of social organization (Redfearn and Benton 1996).

Nevertheless, sentiment itself should not be disparaged. Most people who support animal rights are motivated by feelings of compassion and justice. If the left wants to

mobilize people, there is a need to appeal to them on more than theoretical discussions of class. However, it is not merely a matter of leftist groups adopting a more sympathetic outlook in order to win new recruits. Rather, a re-examination of anthropocentrism presents opportunities for a richer politics of liberation and a willingness to address serious environmental and ecological issues.

Anthropocentrism has limited acceptance of the animal advocacy position. Many, on the right and on the left, believe they are proving the irrelevance of animal advocacy by asking seemingly-ridiculous questions such as “Do bacteria have rights?” or “Do bacteria have rights?” In fact, animal advocates may not have gone far enough in challenging anthropocentric views. The concept of extending rights to sentient animals who are subjects-of-a-life, as Tom Regan (2004) suggests, is a positive approach in helping some animals but it overlooks other organisms with less resemblance to human beings. In fact, Peter Staudenmaier raises this point but he only uses it to attack animal rights views rather than arguing for them to be extended further. Yet these questions do, in fact, raise serious concerns about plants and bacteria. For example, Lord Robert May, president of the UK’s Royal Society notes that while most conservation work focuses on birds and mammals “arguably it's the little things that run the world, things like soil microbes" and such little-known species perform essential functions for maintaining human life on the planet, purifying water, fixing nitrogen, absorbing green house gases and producing oxygen through photosynthesis (Kirby 2004). Human activities may be destroying many of these seemingly-insignificant species as a massive wave of extinctions now sweeps the planet. These extinctions are occurring in a context of unprecedented ecological disaster. In 2005, the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment,

based on work of approximately 1,400 experts from 95 countries, surveying ecological effects of human activities, found sixty per cent of the global ecosystem degraded by human activities, including animal exploitation industries. Along with atmospheric pollution from greenhouse gases, deforestation and loss of freshwater aquifers, overfishing, polluting the oceans and introducing alien species to new regions have destroyed twenty per cent of the world's coral reefs, damaged forty per cent of the river systems and seriously disrupted global climate. Effects have been especially harsh for the poor, many of whom rely directly on these ecosystems for survival. To avert disaster, resource consumption must be reduced to levels the planet can sustain.

A society that commodifies animals and permits massive abuse and cruelty to persist is unlikely to develop compassionate policies regarding human beings. Under capitalism, these abuses are justified in terms of profit and property relationships. The fact that animal protectionists have mounted compassionate appeals that threaten these relationships has created a rightwing countermovement discourse of vilification intended to arouse hatred for these advocates. Many on the left have overlooked the long connection between concern for better treatment of animals and better treatment of human beings and, unfortunately, seem willing to allow the same exploitation of animals to continue, justifying this on the basis of an anthropocentrism which is not only callous, limited and ugly but completely unrealistic in the face of urgent global problems and, ultimately, suicidal. Rather than accepting the anthropocentric and instrumentalist views of the animal exploitation industries, progressive thought on the left should embrace a more compassionate view towards animals and strive for a more inclusive version of social justice that includes nonhuman animals as well as humans.

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