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Someone not Something: Dismantling the Prejudicial Barrier in Knowing Animals (and the Grief which Follows)

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Humans' ideologically informed species segregation in their choice of corporeal comestibles leaves certain animals particularly vulnerable to depersonalisation and devaluation of their individual and social features and competencies. This reflects in the lack of attentional focus on these species in scientific inquiries as well as in the attitude of the general public towards these species, both of which determine political (in)action. With an emphasis on land animals bred and raised to satisfy the feeding and clothing demands of a large part of the human population, this essay explores the motivations and capacities of human rescuers and caregivers to know and relate to animals in sanctuary and rescue settings, and the emerging science which supports them.

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For the animal shall not be measured by man. In a world older and more complete than ours, they move finished and complete, gifted with the extension of the senses we have lost or never attained, living by voices we shall never hear. They are not brethren, they are not underlings: they are other nations, caught with ourselves in the net of life and time, fellow prisoners of the splendour and travail of the earth.

Henry Beston, The Outermost House

Introduction

The 'cross-race' or 'own-race' effect denotes the increased ease with which humans recognise faces from their own race compared to those from other races (Bothwell et al.). This phenomenon, whose selective aspect is plastic and may disappear following sufficient exposure to other races (Sangrigoli et al.), is equally applicable to interspecies contexts. In fact, nuances in appearance, facial definition and expression, body language, and even, or particularly, intra-community interactions of other animal species can easily be missed if humans are deprived (or deprive themselves) of participation in the animals' worlds, be it direct participation involving interaction, or participation by observation alone with the attempt at attunement, albeit at a distance, with the animals and their lives.

Humans' ideologically-informed species segregation in their choice of corporeal comestibles leaves certain animals particularly vulnerable to depersonalisation and devaluation of their individual and social features and competencies. This reflects in the lack of attentional focus on these species in scientific inquiries as well as in the attitude of the general public towards these species, both of which determine political (in)action. For example, an alarmingly high number of humans ask whether the rescued sheep in the present author's care exhibit distinct personalities. Caregivers of individuals belonging to other profoundly instrumentalised and depersonalised species, such as chickens, pigs or cows, address similar inquiries.

With an emphasis on land animals bred and raised to satisfy the feeding and clothing demands of a large part of the human population, this essay contextualises two distinct, albeit correlated, experiential modalities of animal advocates, rescuers and caregivers. The first part briefly examines selected relevant psycho-socio-political factors that enable people's current distancing from the reality of animal agriculture and their – largely unwitting – participation in the suffering of both the nonhuman animals trapped in the exploitative systems and the humans who wish to help them. The second part explores the motivations and capacities of human rescuers and caregivers to know and relate to animals in sanctuary and rescue settings, and the emerging science which supports them.

Edible Bodies: Caring and Connection / Uncaring and Disconnection

It is not unusual – quite the opposite, in fact – for human societies to assign culturally edible bodies among the physically edible bodies in their socio-natural environments. For example, for the Amazonian Wari' people, the physically edible bodies of deceased in-laws represented culturally edible bodies. The entire socio-emotional spectrum of action and reaction at the occurrence of death, including coping with grief, informed by this ritual was discontinued following Western intervention and the introduction of burial practices, which some Wari' people still find discomforting (Harvey 157-160). Animals in some cultures, such as the indigenous Australian totemic cultures, may be excluded from groups of animals considered as culturally acceptable corporeal comestibles. In most Western cultures pigs, cows, chickens and some other species qualify as food, but others, such as dogs and cats, are spared because of their assigned privilege as companion animals. Stemming from this culturally-shaped normativity, Westerners are quick to condemn as savage those Asian communities that consume dogs and cats (and of course those humans practicing cannibalism), ignorant of (or perhaps simply ignoring) the fact that the Western species segregation is equally arbitrary and a mere result of the ideology of 'carnism', as Melanie Joy terms it.

Following a visit to a pig slaughterhouse, activist Belinda Morris describes her encounter with one of the pigs awaiting slaughter. She speaks to those who do not or will not see the

suffering of ‘food animals’ and to those who cannot *un*see and *un*hear it. Referring to the pig she met but couldn’t rescue, Morris writes:

> The people you pass on the street, your friends, colleagues, family, are they the ones who are going to eat her corpse and never give her a thought? Do they care how frightened she was? Why do they not care? Why did she not matter to them? [1]

The disconnect between those who see and those who do not sets up an intra-specific discordance, a ragged flaw in the fabric of human society. Morris, who, as a seasoned rescuer and caregiver, is well aware of the individuality and bio-psycho-social complexity of each animal going through the killing line, concludes: ‘Walking through a slaughterhouse tears pieces out of your heart. Living amongst those who keep the slaughterhouses in business does the same.’

By and large, caring for and about animals other than humans is still seen as softness, implying weakness (Oliver), if not as outright pathological (Gazzola), depending in part on the degree of care and the species in question. At the same time, most people actively seek to avoid witnessing the cruelty that they themselves support with their everyday choices, when evidence is presented to them. The phenomenon is not new. For example, Tolstoy’s attempts to convince his acquaintance to visit the slaughter yards with him were unsuccessful, despite the fact that the acquaintance himself was a hunter and not unused to killing (40).[2] A letter published in *The Farmer’s Magazine* in 1848 by a neighbour of the Smithfield market in London, calling for the closure of the market because the sights and sounds of animal suffering at the hand of humans ‘produce an impression on the beholders that no person can adequately describe’(142), is also telling.

Progressively, slaughter and so-called animal agriculture more generally have become a concentrated operation, removed from public view (Fitzgerald). The distancing and concealment in relation to current farming practices and slaughter enable humans, in the words of Timothy Pachirat, ‘to eat meat without the killers or the killing, without even … the animals themselves’ (3). The live, pulsing, feeling animal is rendered into the abstraction of a happy cow on a milk carton, or a defiant bull on a restaurant sign, which in no way depicts the brutal suffering that the effigy’s real counterpart endures. The steak and the chicken breast exist disconnected to the once living animal; body parts are elective courses to entertain the palate. Yet animals are still here, bleeding and bleating louder and more numerous than ever.[3] At the

same time the pressure on activists is growing, with industry-lobbied governments in the U.S., Australia and elsewhere attempting to criminalise investigative operations and comparing them to terrorism.[4] People dedicated to exposing the hidden violence perpetrated on animals in agriculture and other exploitative and/or extermination environments, including in the wild, are consequently caught between an aggressive government, supported by a powerful and profit-driven industry, and a mostly apathetic public, which is capable of ending the violence but, if it continues to be kept in the dark, will not.

The general denial of and active resistance to witnessing the gravity of the situation nonhuman animals have been driven into for human interest find some theoretical grounds in the system justification theory (Jost and Banaji 1994; for review see Jost, Banaji and Nosek 2004), which predicts humans' tendency to perceive the larger system that one is embedded into and dependent upon in a positive light, regardless of how bad the system may be. The research in this area focuses primarily on the human intraspecies context and the puzzling desire to keep the status quo even by groups and individuals who would obviously directly benefit from a change. Nevertheless, system justification can easily be observed in relation to the treatment of animals, with the wider public believing (or wanting to believe) that the system has provisions in place to ensure that animals do not suffer while they are being deprived of agency, mutilated, crammed into cages or pens and abused in numerous other ways before eventually being slaughtered, regardless of the amount of available evidence demonstrating the opposite. This tendency, combined with the general urge to justify cognitive inconsistencies in order to reduce ideological dissonance reported by researchers in cognitive dissonance (Wicklund and Brehm, cited in Jost et al. 2004), may result in a communication conundrum whereby the suffering animals and the humans who suffer with them and advocate for their freedom may be perceived as the ones victimising the perpetrators (both farmers and consumers) and credited with extremism, intolerance and aggression, or simply dismissed as over-emotional or even mad, as noted above.

However, when paths are uncovered which help reach members of the general public with undeniable evidence of systemic torture, people's responses reveal the system's betrayal of both nonhuman animals and the humans who unwittingly support it and who are ultimately responsible for it. A street action known as 'video challenge' is a case in point. The video challenge project consists in recruiting people in the street to watch a short graphic, narrated video of animals exploited for human consumption.[5] In exchange, the viewers receive a small

financial or food reward. It appears that despite the potentially distracting public venues, the setup with a laptop and headphones offers sufficient intimacy for the viewers to respond to the material presented with unguarded candour, leading to reactions of shock, horror, and often tears. It is perhaps surprising that, at least in the experience of the present author, there is no anger towards the activists for exposing the viewers to this violence, there is no attempt by the viewers to justify the violence as often happens in discussions with consumers of animal products who refuse to confront the reality of animal farming, nor is there any attempt to dismiss the violence as 'single occurrences' – the latter most likely due to the fact that the film shows various invasive procedures which are routinely performed in animal agriculture (for example, beak trimming, the grounding of live male chickens, tail docking, et cetera.), as well as of course slaughter itself.

Naturally, there is no guarantee that the viewers will act upon their new knowledge with a firm and lasting commitment to implement changes on a personal level and withdraw from participation in the abuse of the kind they just witnessed. Nevertheless, in addition to receiving crucial insight into the practice of contemporary meat, egg and milk industries, this experience may help the viewers understand the shallowness of the calls for tolerance and acceptance of people's (mostly uninformed) choice to consume animals, whereby consumption of animals is viewed as a personal matter with no repercussions for the freedom and wellbeing of other feeling beings. It may also help the viewers appreciate the strength (as opposed to the often cited weakness) of people who expose themselves to this violence on a regular basis as rescuers, carers and/or advocates, and the psychological burden they carry due to such exposure.

The right often invoked by the general public to use nonhuman animals for their own convenience not only hurts the animals in question, it also constitutes violence against other humans as it may instigate vicarious trauma and grief. Vicarious trauma and grief describe the traumatisation and grief induced by exposure to a primary victim's experience, affecting professionals and volunteers who work with human and nonhuman animal victims of violence (Kastenbaum; McCann and Pearlman). The symptoms are comparable to those experienced by first-hand victims and can be equally debilitating, with potentially negative consequences for the individual's personal and professional life. Recent studies which have looked at the effects of working with victims of violence in sanctuary and shelter workers and the emerging evidence of

psychological distress in veterinarians and animal control workers further testify to the reality of the impact the suffering of nonhuman animals can have on those human animals who are left to deal with the mostly human-induced damage, and the need for diversified strategies to be adopted by workers and activists to protect themselves from such and promote the strength needed to continue the work (see, respectively, Bradshaw, Borchers and Muller-Paisner; Nett et al. and Tiesman et al.).

You see me, but do you hear me?[6]

Spreading awareness of the physical pain and discomfort suffered by animals in exploitative industries is, understandably, central to all animal protection advocacy, be it abolitionist or regulatory in nature. However, the focus on physical pain can dim other equally important aspects of an animal's being and encourage further objectification of animals and the notion that enslavement and exploitation might be better justified should that pain be absent or reduced.[7] The widely practiced instrumentalisation of animals, with its constant and systemic attempts to silence them, represses the expression of their being – a being that the human has appropriated and expects to function principally for human interest – and largely ignores aspects of positive sentience,[8] such as rewards and pleasures (Balcombe) and the need for self-determination, which appear to be equally important for wellbeing. Ironically, it also robs humans of the knowledge of other animals that they seem – for various purposes ranging from mere curiosity or fascination to facilitated exploitation – determined to increase.

On Sheep and Other Primates

Groundless human projections are quickly evoked to dismiss the proposal of nonhuman animals possessing characteristics capable of disturbing the biblical foundations promoting human supremacy, upon which the Western mind was built and within the framework of which it continues to operate even in secular circles. But increasingly, students of animals' intra- and interpersonal competencies agree that accusations of such projections ('anthropomorphising') are often premature and uninformed; they emphasise instead the importance of participating in

the animals' world, understanding how it works. Otherwise, 'chances are, you either ignore them entirely, or you misunderstand them' (Brown). Further, the greater the human economic and ideological investment in the instrumentalisation of particular species, the less appears to be the motivation to explore and understand the life and being of these species, their social fabric and individuality within it. In relation to social intelligence, primatologist turned sheepologist, Thelma Rowell, draws parallels between the methodological faults (and consequent misleading results[9]) of early primatology – before primatology shifted from ethological to more anthropological research methods (Despret 2006) – and the continuing ethological approach in research of sheep communities. In the words of Vinciane Despret:

> [A]s far as their social expertise is concerned, these animals are certainly on a par with apes. To put it simply, they are organized – so much so, in fact, that they warrant the title recently awarded to dolphins, hyenas and elephants, of 'honorary primate' (...) Of all animals, sheep are precisely those that until now have been given the fewest chances. They have been the victims of what Thelma Rowell calls 'a hierarchical scandal' in ethology: 'we have given primates multiple chances; we know just about nothing about the others.' Of course we know things about them, but clearly those things are incomparable to what we know about apes. The more research advances, the more interesting the questions about apes become, and the more these animals turn out to be endowed with elaborate social and cognitive competencies. By contrast, questions about the others still primarily concern what they eat. (2006)

A similar criticism of 'primate chauvinism' (deWaal, quoted in Abbott, 414) was recently advanced in relation to the social and cognitive intelligence of fishes, largely citing Redouan Bshary's work (Abbott). In essence, humans have blatantly taken everything away from nonhuman animals – to resort to a hyperbole – and turned them into unfeeling, unthinking objects for humans' own convenience. Now the animals have to depend on human research ingenuity and attentional focus to prove humans wrong, and possibly change their attitudes towards other animals.

Knowing in Sanctuary

The primary purpose of sanctuaries for rescued animals is not research *per se,* but an attempt to provide a safe environment free of physical and other suffering, as well as encouraging positive sentience and self-determination (as much as an ultimately still captive setting allows it). In order to achieve these goals, however, informal but nonetheless meticulous research and observations are *de facto* being carried out on a daily basis for the entire duration of the animals' residency at the sanctuary, a residency which normally lasts until death. The relational dynamics characteristic of these settings offers alternative modalities of knowing and understanding animals, which inform methods of care as well as advocacy. Considering the difference between true wellbeing and 'welfare' – a term that has largely grown to denote attempts to reduce animal suffering under exploitative conditions[10] – long-time activist and rescuer Patty Mark suggests that it may be easier to understand the extent of the violence and deprivation animals endure in an exploitative context by considering these same animals in a sanctuary environment after they have been rescued. 'The damage becomes much more evident when the animals are at last allowed autonomy,' she says, when they are given the freedom, for example, to *not* be touched, picked up, restricted, immobilised by a foreign hand, 'when you watch them protecting and nurturing their bodies and selves like we do our own, when you watch them slowly heal physically and psychologically – sometimes it takes years – beginning to enjoy life and friendships with other animals, including humans' (107).

The intersubjective space of being together, created by the partners (the rescued animals and their carers), enables a relatively fluid transfer of information (albeit of nonverbal nature) and relationship-building. Dismantling the prejudicial barrier based on culturally primed species segregation uncovers new foundations which enable a more comprehensive understanding of other animals, promoting empathic recognition and informing humans' attitude towards them. 'All animals,' as Tom Regan puts it, 'are somebody – someone with a life of their own. Behind those eyes is a story, the story of their life in their world as they experience it.' The ability to hear these stories is no empty projection of a delusional and overemotional self, as it is often derided as being. The ability to hear them is critical to ensure the best possible care and physical as well as emotional and mental rehabilitation. Aside from strictly medical aspects, such care has to take into consideration a myriad of species-specific

properties, both cultural and natural, along with, of course, the personal specificities of the individual in question.

As a consequence of this subjective encounter, of living and being together with other animal species, and in certain circumstances being able to experience their group dynamics, sanctuary caregivers (including humans who provide sanctuary/home to singular companion animals, like cats and dogs) may develop capacities of seeing, hearing and understanding animals in ways that many other humans cannot. Unlike humans who participate in the exploitation of other animals and whose vision is by definition blurred as a consequence of this utilitarian 'relationship,' sanctuary caregivers are freer of the mental and practical limitations that such instrumentalisation entails and their interest is focused on true wellbeing of the animals in care. Most of them are also much less constrained by the doctrinal requirements that govern Western science, which is itself embedded in a tradition replete with interpretational and methodological errors, some of which are noted in this essay. Mindless anthropomorphising would not just be a futile process, but it can also adversely impact the animal in care. Thus it is essential to create a space which, while recognising species-specific characteristics, allows the development of an adequate level of intercommunication, in which the human *listens,* as a non-passive recipient, to the individual nonhuman animals (and/or a community of animals) who are *telling* their story. Each animal is a product of nature and nurture, i.e. genes and the socio-natural environment he/she grew up in and is embedded into; as such each animal is unique, as are his/her story and individual needs. The failure to recognise this stems not from the animals' lacki of individuality and complexity but from humans' not spending enough time with them, as marine mammal expert Toni Frohoff (cited in Siebert) indicates, or approaching them with a predetermined, culturally-biased, oftentimes voyeuristic attitude which does not allow them to truly *hear* them. What emerges from this process is an extremely complex picture of animals' psycho-social existence, congruent with various theoretical frameworks, some of which are discussed below, indicating the need for a paradigm shift, a shift unlikely to happen if the attention remains on how to justify the use of animals instead of on the animals themselves.

More Than Meets the Eye

Donald Broom and Ken Johnson famously wrote that millions of years of evolution and adaptation cannot be overridden by a few thousand years of domestication and a few decades of close confinement (33). They cite, specifically, the unlikelihood of a hen adapting to live in a cage any time soon, regardless of the level of genetic manipulation involved. More recently, G.A. Bradshaw (2005; 2009) took a step further and established the field of trans-species psychology (TSP). TSP is based on current available evidence which indicates that while morphological differences among the brains of various animal species result in the information being distributed and processed differently as a consequence of adaptation to specific physical environments, the differences are not qualitative in nature. TSP works on the premise that animals (including humans) are born with specific neurobiological dispositions that require specific socio-natural environmental input for physically and emotionally balanced development. The disruption of the biological and/or historical normative (e.g. by anthropogenic interference) affects the delicate balance that has slowly emerged through the species' evolution and the manner in which this predicates optimal developmental and living conditions. This leads to compromised wellbeing and, when the stressors intensify to unmanageable levels, to the emergence of severe psychological scars and trauma, which not only affect the wellbeing of the individual in question but, via trans-generational transfer, also impacts on posterity (see for example Bagot and Meaney; DeGregorio).[11] The trauma imprinted in the animal's subconscious can only be adequately accessed and reorganised (aiming at healing) by providing a secure environment where the affected animals are given the opportunity to re-create themselves as new, mentally balanced individuals. This is a space that allows and encourages self-determination and mutual respect as opposed to imposing control. The healing approach is a relational model, reflecting the importance of non-linguistic, right-brain-to-right-brain affective communication (Schore 2011) and attachment relations (in the formative period but also later in life) for normative development and functioning, and the necessity of recreating a positive developmental context for successful repair when disruption occurs.

Neuropsychologist Allan Schore accuses the behavioural model and its successor, the cognitive-behavioural model, of having 'plagued psychiatry and psychology' to the detriment of human wellbeing (2012, 4). Similarly, proponents and practitioners of TSP agree that focusing on behaviour – behaviour being a symptom not the cause – and attempting to correct behaviour

alone does nothing to address or eliminate the root of the problem. As a consequence, the wellbeing of the animal(s) continues to be compromised even though the behaviour may appear more in tune with humans' expectations: 'broken' on the outside (behaviourally), but likely broken inside, too. This widespread approach to animals under study and in attempted rehabilitation also appears to propagate the objectification of animals more generally, further dimming options of learning to appreciate the complexity nature has endowed them with.

Behaviourism, as the practice of conveying exclusively what one could see, Carl Safina notes, developed as a necessity to establish the study of animal behaviour as a science at a time when brain science was in its infancy and little systemic observation had been made of free-living animals conducting their normative lives (26). This 'objective' approach was also intended to dispel many myths surrounding nonhuman animals, stemming from centuries of folklore and superstition, portraying animals as caricatures of human vices and virtues. 'In establishing the study of behaviour as a science,' Safina writes, 'it had originally been helpful to make "anthropomorphism" a word that raised the red flag. But as lesser intellects followed the Nobel Prize-winning pioneers [Konrad Lorenz, Nikolaas Tinbergen and Karl von Frisch], "anthropomorphism" became a pirate flag. If the word was hoisted, an attack was imminent' (27).

Behaviourism managed to instigate and consolidate the fear of anthropomorphism, which remains widespread today. The objectivity that behaviourism strived for, however, fell short of expectations. There is always more than meets the eye, and the nature of the attention the observer applies also plays its part. This can lead, for example, to ignoring species culturally/ideologically deemed uninteresting, such as sheep, or paying excessive attention to certain behaviours while ignoring others of equal or higher relevance for the overall understanding of an observed individual or community. In her book *Animal Friendships,* zoologist Anne Dagg laments that for a long time research focused on aggressive and reproductive behaviours among nonhuman animals and ignored the less 'exciting' though more regular congenial relations, undoubtedly contributing to the heavily distorted picture humans still nurture of other animals' lives and relations. In *The Evolution of Morality and Religion*, Donald Broom concurs that cooperation and convivial behaviours are more common, and reminds the reader that when considering sociality within animal communities, it is critical to take into account not only what individuals do but also what they do not do. In fact, '[m]ost

altruistic behaviour involves refraining from doing things which would be easy to do but which would harm others, even if the perpetrator might benefit in some way from doing this' (2003, 40).

Ultimately, the observed phenomena cannot escape subjective evaluation and interpretation as humans are faced with choices of actions which impact on nonhuman animals. For example, deciding that nonhuman animals' interpersonal relationships don't matter is no more objective than deciding they do matter. The bond between mother and infant is a well-recognised phenomenon, both in scholarly literature and in popular knowledge. The disruption of this bond can lead to production loss in animals exploited for their bodies and secretions; therefore, effort has been put into research attempting to minimise the inconvenience, resulting, for example, in various available techniques of forced weaning (e.g. Schichowski, Moors and Gauly). Even when it comes to 'commodities' such as farm animals, the bond is obviously there, but, production loss aside, by and large the bond does not matter.

Born To Be Free

Ironically, it was to the work of ethologist Konrad Lorenz and other ethological enquiries at the time that John Bowlby, the father of (human) attachment theory, owed his breakthrough as he was trying to get away from contemporary human-orientated behavioural theories and approaches in the field of interpersonal attachment (Bretherton). The latter were centred around food acquisition and unable to explain the empirical data demonstrating adverse effects on the development of infants subjected to separation from caregivers. Harlow's invasive experiments on rhesus monkeys provided further confirmation that 'man' (and other animals) cannot live by milk alone, as he put it (1958, 677).[12] Further research has revealed that the caregiver as the infant's primary source of external stimuli (for humans and other animals), acts, in conjunction with the infant's own system, as a regulatory power for essential developmental processes, which affect both the individual's psychobiological adaptiveness as well as gene expression (summarised in Bradshaw and Schore 2006). The primary caregiver's capacity to mediate the infant's affective arousal states contributes to the development of an experiential matrix, which creates a sense of safety for the infant and encourages further explorative behaviour of the social and physical environment. This secure attachment ultimately leads to

adaptive physical and mental health. Poor and dysregulated transmissions within the attachment relations are 'affectively burnt' (Schore 2012, 35) into the infant's maturing brain, with the brain consequentially developing unconscious internal working models based on insecurity with potentially vulnerable psycho-physiological outcomes and trans-generational transfer, as noted above.

However, and fortunately, the capacity for interpersonal psycho-bio-regulation continues into adulthood (Hofer), which opens doors to opportunities for healing. Most of the animals in sanctuaries come from dysfunctional developmental conditions and/or have suffered physical and/or mental trauma later in life. They do not come equipped with biographies; sometimes little or nothing is known about their past. It is the role of the sanctuary caregiver to attempt to compile such a biography, to work their way through the complex internal landscape of the rescued individuals to ensure optimal psycho-physical care and to promote wellbeing. A sufficient level of 'working knowledge' is usually attainable by means of the intersubjective space and nonverbal communication proposed above. While sanctuaries, like any other captive environment, in most cases do not enable full self-determination (partly for the animals' own safety), [13] allowing the animals co-participation in the healing process and their own lives instead of exercising control, enhancing positive aspects of sentience, and showing them respect instead of trying to infantilise them, can ensure a higher level of wellbeing and restore some of the animals' dignity.

In her book *Interspecies Ethics,* Cynthia Willett reminds the reader of African-American abolitionist Frederick Douglass' doubts that an appeal to the moral sentiments of white people would suffice to abolish black slavery:

> White people could not generate sympathy for a slave unless that slave asserted some significant degree of agency and demanded, through that assertion of agency, recognition from others… A display of vulnerability and an appeal for sympathy do not suffice to generate the solidarity that an egalitarian political ethics requires. (38)

If Douglass was correct, and the odds are he was, how can nonhuman animals, particularly captive so-called farm animals, these 'quasi-artefacts' of ours, to use Freya Mathews' unflattering description, ever exhibit a level of agency sufficient to demonstrate equality without risk of being shot for it? Mathews does not seem to think such endeavour is necessary. While

domestication was wrong when it occurred, she opines, and it would be equally wrong to try to domesticate wild animals in the future, this does not mean that the farming of species that are already domesticated is wrong today. The 'pact' between our and their species permits us to use them for our own purposes. 'They are no longer sovereign beings,' Mathews writes, 'they owe their existence to us… We are obliged to care for them but we also have certain rights over their destiny' (264). This is a curious but not uncommon position, and as such it deserves further consideration. It is beyond the scope of this article to attempt elaboration of the often cited 'pact' that humans want to believe they have with oppressed species. However, adhering to the nature of argumentation in the present article, at least three of the numerous points that question the ethics and logic of defending animal agriculture and its inherent instrumentalisation should be given some brief attention here.

Firstly, the position that domestication occurred in the distant past, and that at present we are simply left with ancestral 'artefacts' which we have an obligation to look after, is both inaccurate and highly misleading. Animals trapped in the exploitative systems sprung with and promoted by domestication are subjected to ongoing manipulation to increase production and profit. Over the past sixty years the size of a broiler chicken has quadrupled (Zuidhof et al.), bodies of other animals, enslaved for human dietary choices, such as turkeys and pigs, have also substantially increased in size, leaving their underdeveloped bones and internal organs struggling to keep up with the unnatural body mass they are supposed to support but often cannot. 'They are bred to be slaughtered at six months of age,' explained a sanctuary owner whose hallway has been taken up by a disabled rescued pig suffering from apophysiolysis:[14] 'this and similar conditions are not uncommon, particularly in breeding sows, who are obviously kept alive past the six months' (Vesenjak-Kutlačić; Vizcaíno et al.). Sheep are another species under constant attack. In Australia, about one in four lambs (fifteen million annually) dies from exposure. To address production loss, the industry is engaging in genetic manipulation aiming at increasing the number of lambs per birth, pushing the mothers well beyond their physical (and undoubtedly emotional) limits, likely increasing death rates of lambs, although the overall number of lambs to be turned into meat may nevertheless increase (Animals Australia).

The second point, which is also often ignored by proponents of animal agriculture ('humane' or other) is the animals' interpersonal bonds and social structures. Animals who are allowed a measure of physical and psychological freedom exhibit social preferences (Bode,

Wood and Franks) and can form deep, lasting bonds (for example Holland), inclusive of but not limited to the parent-child dyad. When humans claim rights over animals' destinies and enact such rights, for example by choosing to kill someone from the community, they may be breaking up meaningful interpersonal relations as well as affecting the animals on a societal level. When the question of human grief and loss is considered within a multicultural framework, as it should be, and is subsequently stripped of the various culture-specific attributes used to propagate the myth of human uniqueness, it appears that there is nothing species-specific about human loss that couldn't be applied interspecifically, as the present author has suggested in the past (2013).

The third point returns to Broom and Johnson's assertion, cited above, of the perpetual victory of evolution and adaptation over domestication. As an example, they discuss the Australian wild boar – communities of domesticated pigs who had strayed from farms and successfully returned to a wild state (33). More recently, communities of rescued hens and roosters at the VINE sanctuary in the U.S. achieved something similar, [15] and now inhabit the nearby forest, living a wild life, free from human intervention (jones).

Could such re-wilding be the strongest demonstration of agency that nonhuman animals could offer, along the lines of Douglass' thinking, to convince humans of their equality and desire for freedom – a kind of peaceful revolution, Mandela-style rather than Orwellian? Are not the animals who have freed themselves from slavery demonstrating just that: the desire to be free and the capacity to live this freedom, which includes negotiations with a highly complex socio-natural environment that goes beyond food acquisition and reproduction success, requiring high levels of cognitive and emotional sophistication, which is increasingly being recognised for nonhuman animal societies? Admittedly, most domesticated animals would not be able to survive in the wild, mainly due to the genetic mutilations humans have subjected their bodies to. But have humans managed to destroy their soul?

Conclusion

In the 1970s and 1980s, Donald Griffin and Gordon Burghardt began advocating for the inclusion of the subjective mental experiences of nonhuman animals into the field of cognitive ethology (Griffin, 482). This proposition was met with some resistance at first, but over the following decades an increasing number of scientists have embraced the idea of nonhuman animals' subjective lives, enabling animals' subjectivity to grow from a taboo topic into the widely popularised subject that it is today. Similarly, ten years after Bradshaw (2005) first proposed trans-species psychology following her diagnosis of PTSD in elephants, recognition of human-comparable psychological effects of violence and depravation on nonhuman animals is on the rise (Dasgupta). The growing scholarly appreciation of human-nonhuman animal comparability reflects the general public's expanding awareness of other animals' lives and being. However, millennia-long conditioning, which has propagated speciesism, carnism and instrumentalisation, continues to impede the appreciation of the complexities of animals' individualities and their sociality both on scholarly and popular levels, precluding political change. Through participation in their lives, through encounters that do not *a priori* supress the other (regardless of whether the other is a human or a nonhuman animal), modalities of knowing and understanding emerge that are likely to be missed when such relatability is dismissed in advance. Had Derrida reached out to the cat instead of pondering over her otherness, how much of the philosophy of the Takers (Quinn)[16] would he have been able to bring down with a single act? Such acts occur regularly in sanctuaries, and increasingly even in science. They testify to the animals' sophisticated cognitive, psychological and social capacities that have emerged through parallel evolution – that is, not below but along with ours – suggesting that their ancient selves, regardless of human intervention, remain pretty much alive. The humans who have grown to embrace other animal nations as equals enjoy the delicate beauty trans-species communitarianism has to offer, but they also experience immense grief stemming from the anthropogenic violence their conspecifics perpetrate upon these nations. It is time, now, that people extended some consideration to that grief, and all that it signifies.

Notes

[1] Published on social media (Facebook) 24 March 2015. Used with author's permission.

[2] It is beyond the scope of this essay to delve into the question of differences between hunting versus slaughterhouse and farm work. Suffice to note that the physical distance between the hunter and the hunted, characteristic of most hunting practices, may allow an amplitude of psychological distancing that may not be affordable on the killing floor of a slaughterhouse, and people may also perceive hunting as being more of a 'fair game' compared to the slaughterhouse where animals are forced to in order to be slaughtered with no chance of escaping such fate.

[3] According to conservative figures from the U.N. Food and Agriculture organisation the number of land animals killed for food annually exceeds sixty-five billion. Cited in the FARM report, available at: http://farmusa.org/statistics11.html (Accessed 25 August 2015). Figures for aquatic animals are unavailable.

[4] The FBI considers the animal rights and environmental movements the number one domestic terrorist threat. So-called 'ag-gag' laws, criminalising documentation and the spreading of evidence of corporate animal abuse, have been introduced in various states in the U.S.: http://www.greenisthenewred.com/blog/about/ (Accessed 26 August 2015). Similar initiatives are currently being undertaken in Australia, see for example https://www.voiceless.org.au/the-issues/ag-gag (Accessed 26 August 2015). The first ag-gag legislation, disguised as a biosecurity bill, was passed in NSW in September 2015.

[5] The idea is not new. It features already in the award-winning documentary film *The Witness* (2000), but it was successfully revived in June 2015 by a group of activists in Sydney, Australia, and is currently spreading around the world.

[6] Cf. Bradshaw, G.A. 'You see me, but do you hear me? The science and sensibility of trans-species dialogue'. *Feminism & Psychology*, no. 20, 2010, pp. 407–419.

[7] This is something animal advocates should be well aware of to avoid dissemination of undesired messages among the broader public.

[8] Increased sensitivity to nonhuman animals as complex socio-biological entities has sprung a 'movement' within animal welfare circles advocating for greater consideration of positive sentience by factoring in environment- and sociality-focused needs and potentialities as markers of wellbeing along with the absence of negative stimuli (see, for example, Mellor; Yeates and Main). While this is certainly a refreshing perspective, its practical limitations are not insignificant. The observance of positive sentience could lead to the emergence of a boutique industry, which could serve its own purpose and possibly benefit a small number of animals, but it appears to be an unrealistic option to solve the current pressing issue of animal wellbeing. Such industry would be unable to meet the current demands for animal products by the ever growing human population (see note 3) for various reasons, including our planet's space limitations, and it could certainly not match the current financial affordability of animal products, which in an environment of growing economic pressure is not a negligible factor. Further, apart from animals forming the heart of the production line to whom regulations concerning positive welfare could apply to various extents, the current establishments also comprise animals that are deemed completely superfluous by the businesses in question (for example, male chickens in the egg industry); as such these animals need to be disposed of in timely fashion and in ways that are financially the least impactful. Higher 'humane' standards would have to address the issue of these superfluous animals as well as the question of slaughter of both animals raised for meat and so-called spent animals in other exploitative sectors of agribusiness; see also note 10. Ultimately, animal agriculture is a business and its existence depends on its profitability. If the latter is challenged by welfare standards, the business will either cease to exist or it will find ways of disguising or underplaying the abuse. This is already happening with issues concerning basic physical 'painism' and is also reflected in the widespread misleading advertising of so-called free-range and similar settings implying (but not necessarily implementing) higher welfare standards to please the public and its growing awareness of animal use and abuse.

[9] An interesting example that sparked and perpetrated the myth of aggression and competition as a societal norm in primates' communities comes from research on baboons, albeit the erroneous research conclusions were less a result of inadequate observation than they were of the highly unnatural and traumatogenic captive environment the research was conducted in. As Despret summarises, from the observations of baboons in the London zoo in the late 1920s by zoologist

Solly Zuckerman a thesis was developed which presupposed dominance-hierarchy as the main principle of social organisation in primate societies generally. This thesis remained dominant for several decades to the extent that when the dominance principle could not be observed in a particular primate community, the apparent absence of it would be conceptualised as 'latent dominance' (Despret 2009).

[10] See note 7. In her interview Mark recalls that 'the worst suffering and torment I've ever witnessed was in a New South Wales slaughterhouse when a group of free-range pigs were brought in for slaughter. Coming from their "good life" on the paddocks, to the noisy, crowded kill lines where they could hear other pigs screaming, smell the blood; they panicked, anguished and in fear, their mouths foamed, their eyes rolled. No words can describe it' (109).

[11] A recent study demonstrates trans-generational effects of neonatal experience (tail- docking and simulated mild infection) on pain responses in sheep (Clark et al.).

[12] Harlow's methods involved removing baby rhesus monkeys from their natural mothers and exposing them to mother surrogates. Two types of mother surrogates were developed: an unpleasantly hard surrogate made of wire-mesh, and a soft, cloth surrogate able to supply higher contact comfort than the wire version. The experiments show absence of attachment to the wire figure even when 'she' was the sole food provider.

[13] In some rare cases rescued animals have managed to return to a wild state (jones).

[14] Fracture of the ischial tuberosity of the tail bone.

[15] http://vine.bravebirds.org/

[16] The notion of Takers as contrasted with Leavers is rendered beautifully by Anthony Hopkins as protagonist of the film *Instinct,* 1999.

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