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Introduction: New Directions in Animal Advocacy

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Abstract

The 'political turn' in animal studies (see Milligan, Boyer et al.; Garner and O'Sullivan; Cavalieri 'Animal Liberation: A Political Perspective') has offered some unique trajectories for realising improvements for animals. Where traditional animal ethics was dominated by a focus on normative concerns for how humans should act with respect to animals, the recent movement towards politics has effected a shift in favour of thinking about how human-animal relations are shaped by institutions, political structures and actors, the role of the state and private governance, power relations and problems of strategy. At least one benefit of this analysis is that it moves away from philosophical questions about how we would like animals to be treated, instead changing focus towards problems of translating the normative into practical action and praxis; in particular, how those involved in animal protection, welfare, liberation and rights can effectively engage with a social and political terrain to achieve change.

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The ‘political turn’ in animal studies (see Milligan, Boyer et al.; Garner and O’Sullivan; Cavalieri ‘Animal Liberation: A Political Perspective’) has offered some unique trajectories for realising improvements for animals. Where traditional animal ethics was dominated by a focus on normative concerns for how humans should act with respect to animals, the recent movement towards politics has effected a shift in favour of thinking about how human-animal relations are shaped by institutions, political structures and actors, the role of the state and private governance, power relations and problems of strategy. At least one benefit of this analysis is that it moves away from philosophical questions about how we would *like* animals to be treated, instead changing focus towards problems of translating the normative into practical action and praxis; in particular, how those involved in animal protection, welfare, liberation and rights can effectively engage with a social and political terrain to achieve change.

Drawing lessons and members from the new social movements, pro-animal movements have relied on an ‘advocacy’ model of representation: that is, they involve human actors who speak and act on behalf of animals. Reaching back to some of the oldest liberation politics, often these movements commonly seek to represent and ‘speak’ on behalf of beings who are denied recognition within human political institutions (Donaldson and Kymlicka, *Zoopolis*). This presents challenges: animal advocates must discharge this responsibility in ways which resist both the hierarchical anthropocentrism found within many human societies and political discourses; and simultaneously advance the interests of animals in ways that are not anthropomorphic or do not simply render human interests in the name of animals. The expanded recognition of the agency of animals challenges established advocacy practices, while at the same time our circle of compassion continues to be widened by new empirical evidence about physiology, and greater respect for diverse forms of animal subjectivity.

While reaching towards a radical repositioning of human and non-human relations, animal advocates must engage with a material world structured by intersecting power relations. All animal advocacy, in seeking to make progressive improvements in the treatment of animals, must reckon with a concrete social and political terrain; navigating institutions and structure, stakeholders and political actors, legal obstacles, ideologies and firmly held social practices. Similarly, 'new' human concerns are prioritised by some well-meaning advocates as yet another justification to deprioritise progressive reform around human-animal relations, rather than seeing the human chauvinism as a root cause of multiple social and environmental concerns. Within this terrain advocates must be able to employ strategy and tactics, in the sense of seeking to achieve goals over a long period of time using a variety of pathways (strategy), deploying techniques as appropriate to win short term goals (tactics). None of this can happen realistically without careful understanding of prevailing (and contestable) theories of change, the nature of institutions and political subjectivities, and contemporary attitudes, values and ideologies. In this issue C. Lou Hamilton provides a 'Provocation from the Field' which exemplifies this sort of analysis ('Animals and the War on Drugs'). Here Hamilton pays attention to the impact for animals of international policies which aim to eliminate illicit drug use through criminalisation. Hamilton shows in this provocation the ways in which these policies negatively impact both human communities and animals.

The origins of this special issue were in a conference held in December 2018 sponsored by the Human Animal Research Network and the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Sydney. The conference brought together animal studies scholars with animal advocates. It served to facilitate a grounded dialogue on emerging issues, the philosophy and tactics of animal protection, and the question of how we can move forward to make change, grappling with an evolving environment and new ideas.

Justifying recent attention to the political turn, the diversity of interests and perspectives demonstrated that this field is verdant with possibility, and not easily containable. Yet within this diversity, lines of dialogue were established between and across the boundaries of activism and scholarship. A number of themes emerged in conversations during those two days,

some of which are replicated here in this special issue. We have thus ordered this special issue in line with the following trajectories.

Firstly, there are broad philosophical questions about where animal advocacy is going and accordingly, what strategies advocates should deploy. It is perhaps no surprise that while many animal advocates and pro-animal scholars have broadly similar normative views in favour of reducing violence towards and suffering experienced by animals, long-term aspirations can differ dramatically. These aspirations are underpinned by diverse theoretical outlooks on exactly what personal, social and institutional change will be required to provide just outcomes for animals, and heterogeneous theories of change. Some of these different tendencies are highlighted in this special issue by Paola Cavalieri, whose lead essay provides a survey of different political accounts of animal liberation ('Animal Liberation: Pathways to Politics'), the philosophies which ground these perspectives, and a critical appraisal of their limitations. In some ways, as a philosopher who has actively shaped concrete animal advocacy movements globally, in particular in the growing success of The Great Ape Project (see Singer and Cavalieri), Cavalieri offers a unique perspective on questions of strategy.

Thinking about what it would require for our political project to be *universalised*, Cavalieri emphasises the importance of debate and exchange in thinking through how we move forward. In line with this spirit, we have used a novel approach to building conversation around Cavalieri's ideas. The *Animal Studies Journal* conventionally uses a 'double blind peer review process': this is the approach we have taken with most of the essays in this journal. However, for Cavalieri's essay we utilised an 'Open Peer Commentary' process. This involved sending an identified essay to two high-standing scholars in the field for their feedback on suitability for publication, and for their short commentaries which would be published alongside the 'lead essay'. This approach was undertaken, with the consent of the author and peer reviewers, partly because of the challenge associated with a truly anonymous peer review for a piece of writing by an internationally-renowned author who has a distinct style and is building on their own previous work in the field (as is often the nature of theoretical work). In addition, we were

deeply attracted to emerging open models of peer review, such as that used by journals like *Animal Sentience*, which put an emphasis on public debate.

We were really pleased to host two commentaries on Cavalieri's essay from leading figures within animal studies: Sue Donaldson and Matthew Calarco. Both have been involved in scholarly exchange with Cavalieri previously (see Donaldson and Kymlicka, 'Make it So' and Cavalieri 'Death') and both expand here on their distinctive approaches: Donaldson explores what alliance politics might look like if animal advocates worked more closely with other social movements; Calarco argues for the development of an appropriate framework to establish solidarity between humans and animals, allowing for 'full consideration to all beings – whether human or animal'.

However, political change cannot be profitably theorised without contact and engagement with the materiality of a terrain structured by the fissures and features of power, institutions and subjectivities. As Cavalieri stresses in this issue with respect to animal advocacy movements, 'it is on its choices, not on an academic clash of opinion, that the fate of the main theoretical currents will depend'. In this respect, the choice of tactics within the context of intuitions, laws, practices and political stakeholders and movements will determine how and if change is possible. Given this reality, there is a need for continual assessment of the possible actions we have before us, and their potential consequences, good or bad. This is thus the *second theme* that emerges in this special issue, namely, a critical appraisal of tactics that might be used by advocates for specific campaigns. Jessica Ison's contribution to this issue ('Animal Abuse and Advocating for the Carceral: Critiquing Animal Abuse Registries') provides an assessment of the politics of contemporary demands to establish Animal Abuse Registers, modelled upon Sex Offender Registries, the latter of which Ison suggests have been increasingly utilised and demanded in the United States and in Australia. As Ison discusses, while an Animal Abuse Registry might appear as an appealing strategy to hold individuals accountable for interpersonal violence towards animals, the lessons from the implementation of Sex Offender Registries are not positive, and carries a number of risks, including in contributing to negative law and order agendas and increasing incarceration. This shows the importance of indexing strategy against

currents in wider justice movements. Reem Lascelles and Alexandra McEwan provide a similarly grounded approach to thinking about available tactics to counter the rabbit meat industry in Australia ('A Spira Inspired Approach to Animal Protection Advocacy for Rabbits in the Australian Meat Industry'). In their analysis of the extent of rabbit farming, the welfare and legal issues surrounding this industry, and the barriers and opportunities available for an advocacy campaign in this area, the authors take Henry Spira's theories of change and approach as frame to develop their proposals. Their conclusions start with the specific lived experience of many rabbits – containment – and move up the analytical register to reconsider if Manichean characterisations of allies and opponents need overdetermine the landscape for productive advocacy.

A *third theme* in this special issue relates to individual beliefs and their relationship to political change. Any campaign for social and political transformation has to grapple with values, epistemologies and ideologies, and the ways in which these shape the subjectivities of political actors. Elisabeth Valiente-Riedl explores the space of ethical consumption with a deep ethnographic study of contemporary practice, and the way in which concern for animals emerges amongst the participants in her study ('Towards Multispecies Solidarity: Individual Stories of Learning to Consume Ethically'). Her paper notes that an emerging theme was concern for animals, in such a way that for her research participants, ethical consumption could be 're-articulated as a process seeking multispecies solidarity'. Moving away from the politics of consumption and towards the sphere of production, Nik Taylor and Heather Fraser examine the attitudes and values of dairy farmers ('The Cow Project: Analytical and Representational Dilemmas of Dairy Farmers' Conceptions of Cruelty and Kindness'). Noting the at times explicit tensions engaged by farmers in contradictory roles – between care and the brute realities of animal utilisation, including killing – Taylor and Fraser observe that participants actively sought to 'neutralise' these contradictions in their speech and attitudes. But, as they point out, the fact that these neutralisations occur demonstrates that 'farmers are aware of the inconsistencies that underpin their work and relationships with their cows' and perhaps points to the possibilities for change. In a different register, Nekeisha Alayna Alexis offers a reinterpretation of core concepts in the Christian faith tradition to generate new foundations for

action ('Disturbing Animals in a Christian Perspective: Re/Considering Sacrifice, Incarnation and Divine Animality'). Alexis's aim here is not to rehearse familiar themes on how the Biblical texts might have affirmed anthropocentric concepts of domination and exploitation of animals and nature, but instead offer some glimpses at how these same texts might be read in radical new ways to 'highlight alternative and lesser known biblical and theological starting points for ethics toward other animals – starting points influenced by anti-oppression politics and commitments – with hopes that fresh conversations might arise'.

This special issue *has a fourth theme*: namely emerging areas of concern within animal advocacy. Here, the authors with this group of papers offer an examination of under-developed areas of animal protection, exploring fundamental problems of framing and their implications for the work of advocates. We are pleased that we have two papers on fishes, an area that has been traditionally been neglected by mainstream animal advocacy. Scientists Culum Brown and Cat Dorey offer an overview of current research on fish sentience and emotion and their implications for industrial fisheries ('Pain and Emotion in Fishes – Fish Welfare Implications for Fisheries and Aquaculture'). Humans utilise fishes on a scale that far exceeds land animals, and unfortunately provide few welfare protections as part of this utilisation. In this sobering analysis, Brown and Dorey point out that there are opportunities to improve welfare outcomes, particularly in the aquaculture sector, however other strategies, including reducing human consumption, particularly by consumers in the global north, is the most effective way to reduce the magnitude of suffering. In an exploration of a different aspect of the advocacy issues posed by fishing, Dinesh Wadiwel examines recreational fishing practices ('The Politics of Recreational Fishing'). Drawing attention to Australian studies, Wadiwel observes that unlike traditional land-based trophy hunting – which is often understood as a minority practice involving adult men – recreational fishing has strong involvement of both those who identify as men and women, and also has a large participation of children. His paper argues that given high population participation rates in recreational fishing in Australia, advocacy aimed at reducing or eliminating this practice requires a careful approach from advocates. The final paper in this theme brings together Danielle Celermajer and Arian Wallach to look at wild donkeys within the context of Australia's violent policies of extermination and commodification. In this careful

analysis, Celermajer and Wallach pull at, and expose, numerous threads which have led to the situation where donkeys appear to have no legitimate place (are ‘illegible’) within a contemporary Australian context. Highlighting the paradox of their legal position, environmental and economic (un)desirability, this paper talks to the complexity of Australian colonialism and the biological legacies of this history. As Celermajer and Wallach argue, inclusion requires a radical project across social, political and economic spheres: ‘if they are to show up as animals who belong, alongside the others who are making a life here, we will need to reimagine what belonging means and how we might belong together’.

We are really pleased to present this group of papers, which we hope will be useful for scholars engaged with political analyses within animal studies, as well as of value to animal advocates as a set of resources that can inform action. Each of these themes demonstrates the relevance of conversations between the conceptual and applied, and how the political turn continues to enliven our understandings of ethical and practical positions across the animal protection, welfare, liberation and rights communities.

Dinesh Wadiwel and Peter Chen

Guest Editors

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