

# Rethinking Revolution: Animal Liberation, Human Liberation, and the Future of the Left

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“Animal liberation may sound more like a parody of other liberation movements than a serious objective.” Peter Singer

“Animal liberation is the ultimate freedom movement, the ‘final frontier.’” Robin Webb, British ALF Press Officer

## Introduction: Framing the Unframed Issue

It seems lost on most of the global anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist Left that there is a new liberation movement on the planet –animal liberation– that is of immense ethical and political significance. But because animal liberation challenges the anthropocentric, speciesist, and humanist dogmas that are so deeply entrenched in socialist and anarchist thinking and traditions, Leftists are more likely to mock than engage it.

For the last three decades, the animal liberation movement (ALM) has been one of the most dynamic and important political forces on the planet. Where “new social movements” such as Black Liberation, Native American, feminism, chicano/a, and various forms of Green and identity politics have laid dormant or become co-opted, the animal liberation movement has kept radical resistance alive and has steadily grown in numbers and strength.

Unlike animal welfare approaches that lobby for the amelioration of animal suffering, the ALM demands the total abolition of all forms of animal exploitation. *Seeking empty cages not bigger cages, the ALM is the major anti-slavery and abolitionist movement of the present day, one with strong parallels to its 19<sup>th</sup> century predecessor struggling to end the slavery of African-Americans in the US.* As a major expression of the worldwide ALM, the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) has cost exploitation industries hundreds of millions of dollars in property damage and has decommissioned numerous animal exploiters through raids and sabotage. The FBI has demonized the ALF (along with the Earth Liberation Front [ELF]) as the top “domestic terrorist” group in the US, and the ALM in general is a principle target of draconian “anti-terrorist” legislation in US and the UK.

Operating on a global level –from the UK, US, and Germany to France, Norway, and Russia– *the ALM attacks not only the ideologies of capitalism that promote growth, profit, and commodification, but the property system itself with hammers and Molotov cocktails.* Fully aware of the realities of the corporate-state complex, the ALM breaks with

the fictions of representative democracy to undertake illegal direct action for animals held captive in fur farms, factory farms, experimental laboratories, and other gruesome hell holes where billions of animals die each year.

Since the fates of all species on this planet are intricately interrelated, the exploitation of animals cannot but have a major impact on the human world itself.<sup>[1]</sup> When human beings exterminate animals, they devastate habitats and ecosystems necessary for their own lives. When they butcher farmed animals by the billions, they ravage rainforests, turn grasslands into deserts, exacerbate global warming, and spew toxic wastes into the environment. When they construct a global system of factory farming that requires prodigious amounts of land, water, energy, and crops, they squander vital resources and aggravate the problem of world hunger. When humans are violent toward animals, they often are violent toward one another, a tragic truism validated time and time again by serial killers who grow up abusing animals and violent men who beat the women, children, and animals of their home. The connections go far deeper, as evident if one examines the scholarship on *the conceptual and technological relations between the domestication of animals at the dawn of agricultural society and the emergence of patriarchy, state power, slavery, and hierarchy and domination of all kinds*.

In countless ways, the exploitation of animals rebounds to create crises within the human world itself. The vicious circle of violence and destruction can end only if and when the human species learns to form harmonious relations –non-hierarchical and non-exploitative– with other animal species and the natural world. Human, animal, and earth liberation are interrelated projects that must be fought for as one.

This essay asserts the need for more expansive visions and politics on both sides of the human/animal liberation equation, as it calls for new forms of dialogue, learning, and strategic alliances. Each movement has much to learn from the other. In addition to gaining new insights into the dynamics of hierarchy, domination, and environmental destruction from animal rights perspectives, *Leftists should grasp the gross inconsistency of advocating values such as peace, non-violence, compassion, justice, and equality while exploiting animals in their everyday lives, promoting speciesist ideologies, and ignoring the ongoing holocaust against other species that gravely threatens the entire planet. Conversely, the animal rights community generally (apart from the ALM) is politically naive, single-issue oriented, and devoid of a systemic anti-capitalist theory and politics necessary for the true illumination and elimination of animal exploitation, areas where it can profit great from discussions with the Left*.

Thus, I attempt to demonstrate the importance of rethinking human and animal liberation movements in light of each other, suggesting ways this might proceed. *The domination of humans, animals, and the earth stem from the same power pathology of hierarchy and instrumentalism, such as can only be fully revealed and transformed by a multiperspectival theory and alliance politics broader and deeper than anything yet created*. I begin with some basic historical and sociological background of the AAM, and show how the Left traditionally has responded to animal advocacy issues. I then engage the views of Takis Fotopoulos, the founder of Inclusive Democracy, and conclude with a call for mutual dialogue and learning among animal and human liberationists.

## **The Diversity of the Animal Advocacy Movement**

*The ALM is only part, by far still the smallest part, of a growing social movement for the protection of animals I call the animal advocacy movement (AAM).* The AAM has three major different (and sharply conflicting) tendencies: animal welfare, animal rights, and animal liberation. The AAM movement had humble welfarist beginnings in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century with the founding of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) in Britain and the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) in the US.<sup>[2]</sup> Welfare organizations thereafter spread widely throughout these and other Western countries, addressing virtually every form of animal abuse. The goal of welfare organizations, however, has never been eliminating the institutions that exploit animals – be they research laboratories, factory farms, slaughterhouses, fur farms, or circuses and rodeos – but rather reducing or ameliorating animal suffering within such violent and repressive structures. Welfarists acknowledge that animals have interests, but they believe these can be legitimately sacrificed or traded away if there is some overridingly compelling human interest at stake (which invariably is never too trivial to defend against substantive animal interests). Welfarists simply believe that animals should not be caused “unnecessary” pain, and hold that any harm or death inflicted on them must be done “humanely.”<sup>[3]</sup>

In bold contrast, animal rights advocates reject the utilitarian premises of welfarism that allows the happiness, freedom, and lives of animals to be sacrificed to some alleged greater human need or purpose. The philosophy of animal rights did not emerge in significant form until the publication of Tom Regan’s seminal work, *The Case for Animal Rights* (1983). According to Regan and other animal rights theorists, a basic moral equality exists among human and nonhuman animals in that they are *sentient*, and therefore have significant interests and preferences (such as not to feel pain) that should be protected and respected. Moreover, Regan argues, many animal species (chimpanzees, dolphins, cats, dogs, etc.) are akin to humans by having the type of cognitive characteristics that make them “subjects of a life,” whereby they have complex mental abilities that include memory, self-consciousness, and the ability to conceive of a future. Arguments that only humans have rights because they are the only animals that have reason and language, besides being factually wrong, are completely irrelevant as sentience is a *necessary and sufficient condition* for having rights.

Sharply opposed to the welfarist philosophies of the mainstream AAM and utilitarian philosophers like Peter Singer, proponents of animal rights argue that the intrinsic value and basic rights of animals cannot be trumped by any appeal to an alleged greater (human) good. Animals’ interests cannot be sacrificed *no matter what good consequence may result* (such as an alleged advance in medical knowledge). Just as most people believe that it is immoral to sacrifice a human individual to a “greater good” if it improves the overall social welfare, so animal rights proponents persuasively apply the same reasoning to animals. If animals have rights, it is no more valid to use them in medical experimentation than it is to use human beings; for the scientific cause can just as well – in truth, far better – be advanced through human experimentation, but ethics and human rights forbids it.

The position of animal rights is an *abolitionist* position that demands the end to all instances and institutions of animal exploitation, not merely reducing suffering; like its 19<sup>th</sup> century predecessor, it demands the eradication of slavery, not better treatment of the slaves. Yet, although opposed to welfarism in its embrace of egalitarianism, rights, and

abolitionism, most animal rights advocates are one with welfarists in advocating *strictly legal forms of change* through education and legislation. Like welfarists, animal rights advocates typically accept the legitimacy of capitalist economic, political, and legal institutions, and rarely possess the larger social/political/economic context required to understand the inherently exploitative logic of capital and the structural relationship between market and state.

The adherence to bourgeois ideology that justice can be achieved by working through the pre-approved channels of the state, which is utterly corrupt and dominated by corporate interests, separates animal liberationists from rights and welfare proponents.<sup>[4]</sup> Sometimes grounding their positions in rights philosophy, and sometimes rejecting or avoiding philosophical foundations for emphases on practical action, the ALM nonetheless seeks total liberation of animals through direct attacks on animal exploiters. Unique in its broad, critical vision, the ALM rejects capitalism, imperialism, and oppression and hierarchy of all kinds. Unlike the single-issue focus of the welfare and rights camps, the ALM supports all human struggles for liberation and sees the oppression of humans, animals, and earth as stemming from the same core causes and dynamics. The ALM is predominantly anarchist in ideology, temperament, and organization. Believing that the state is a tool of corporate interests and that the law is the opiate of the people, the ALM seeks empowerment and results through *illegal direct action*, such as rescue raids, break-ins, and sabotage. One major form of the ALM is the Animal Liberation Front (ALF), which emerged in England in 1976, spread to the US by 1980, and therefore became a global movement active in over 20 countries. Whereas some elements of the ALM advocate violence against animal exploiters, the ALF adopts a non-violent credo that attacks the property but never causes injury to human life.<sup>[5]</sup>

Thus, the main division within the AAM is not between welfare and rights, as commonly argued, but rather *between statist and non-statist approaches*. Only the radical elements in the ALM challenge the myths of representative democracy, as they explore direct action and live in anarchist cultures. Clearly, the ALM is closest to the concerns of ID and other radical Left approaches, although it too has significant political limitations (see below).

But the pluralism of the AAM movement is not only a matter of competing welfare, rights, and liberation perspectives. *Its social composition cuts across lines of class, gender, religion, age, and politics. Republicans, democrats, Leftists, anarchists, feminists, anti-humanists, anarcho-primitivists, Greens, Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, and others comprise the complexity and diversity of the AAM.* Unlike the issue of class struggle and labor justice, one can advocate compassion for animals from any political position, such as is clear from the influential books and articles of Matthew Scully, former speechwriter for George W. Bush.<sup>[6]</sup> However repugnant one might find Scully's past or current political stands, his work has had a significant influence on wide range of people, such as republican elites, who otherwise would never had been sensitized to the wide spectrum of appalling cruelties to animals.

Such political diversity is both a virtue and vice. While it maximizes the influence of the AAM within the public realm, and thereby creates new legislative opportunities for animal welfare policies, there is nevertheless a lack of philosophical and political coherence, splintering the "movement" into competing and conflicting fragments. *Overwhelmingly reformist and single-issue oriented (in addition to being largely white and middle/upper*

class), the AAM lacks a systemic social critique that grasps capital logic as a key determining force of animal exploitation and recognizes the state as a corporate-dominated structure resistant to significant social change. While there is no “animal advocacy movement” in the singular that one can build bridges with in the struggle against capitalism, there are nonetheless progressive elements within the ALM camp that understand the nature of capitalism and the state and are open to, and often experienced in, radical alliance politics. *The ALM, thereby, is a potentially important force of social change, not only in relation to its struggle against animal exploitation and capitalist industries but also as an element of and catalyst to human and earth liberation struggles.*

## **Toward A Sociology of the ALM**

“We’re very dangerous philosophically. Part of the danger is that we don’t buy into the illusion that property is worth more than life ... we bring that insane priority into the light, which is something the system cannot survive.” David Barbarash, former spokesman for the ALF

“We’re a new breed of activism. We’re not your parents’ Humane Society. We’re not Friends of Animals. We’re not Earthsave. We’re not Greenpeace. We come with a new philosophy. We hold the radical line. We will not compromise. We will not apologize, and we will not relent.” Kevin Jonas, founder of SHAC USA

Despite a large volume of literature on animal rights and animal liberation, and its growing political prominence, humanist and Left scholars have ignored the sociological meaning and import of animal rights/liberation struggles.<sup>[7]</sup> In this section, I seek to rectify this speciesist oversight and gross omission with a broad sociological contextualization of the animal rights/liberation struggles of the last three decades.

In the context of recent social history, one might see the ALM, first, as a “*new social movement*” with roots in the struggles of the 1960s and 1970s. Often described as “post-class” and “post-materialist,” new social movements seek not higher wages but rather the end of hierarchies and new relations with the natural world. Once the labor movement was co-opted and contained after World War II, the dynamics of social struggle shifted from the capital-labor relation to broader issues of justice, freedom, and identity politics. People of color, students, feminists, gays and lesbians, peace and anti-nuclear activists, and environmentalists fought for new kinds of issues. The contemporary animal rights/liberation movements were born in the social milieu generated by the movements of the 1960s and 1970s, and form an important part of movements for progressive change. This is a consequence of their critique of hierarchy, instrumentalism, and the domination of nature in the form of nonhuman species, their contribution to environmentalism, and their role in advancing the ethic of nonviolence.

New social movements play out in a *postindustrial capitalist society* where the primary economic dynamics no longer involve processing of physical materials but rather consumerism, entertainment, mass media, and information. Transnational corporations such as Microsoft, Monsanto, and Novartis demonstrate the importance of science and research for the postindustrial economy. Although not recognized as such, a second way of viewing the ALM is to recognize that it is part of the contemporary *anti-capitalist and*

*anti/alter-globalization movement* that attacks the corporate-dominated “globalization form above” from democratic visions manifest in the struggle for “globalization from below.”<sup>[8]</sup>

To the extent that postindustrial capital is anchored in a global science/knowledge complex, and this is driven by animal experimentation, animal liberation challenges global capitalism, in the form of what I will call the *Global Vivisection Complex* (GVC). More specifically, I will identify this new oppositional force the *direct action anti-vivisection movement* (DAAVM). This movement has emerged as a serious threat to biomedical research industries. In the UK, for example, pharmaceutical, biotechnology, and medical research industries are the third largest contributor to the economy; an attack on this science complex is an attack on the UK state and global capital in general. To date, the ALM in the UK and US has shut down numerous animal breeders, stopped construction of a number of major research centers, and forced HLS off the New York Stock Exchange. Clearly, the ALM is a major social force and political force. If the Left does not yet recognize this, transnational research capital and the UK and US governments certainly do, for they have demonized the ALM as a top domestic terrorist threat and are constructing police states to wage war against it.

The GVC is a matrix of power-knowledge reflecting the centrality of science in postindustrial society. It is comprised of pharmaceutical industries, biotechnology industries, medical research industries, universities, and testing laboratories. All these institutions use animals to test and market their drugs; animals are the gas and oil without which corporate science machines cannot function. As corporations like Huntingdon Life Sciences and Chiron are global in scope and have clients throughout the world, animal liberation groups such as the ALF and Stop Huntington Animal Cruelty (SHAC) are also global in their resistance. A seemingly local group like Stop Newchurch Guinea Pigs (NSGP), which waged aggressive war in an English village against a family who breed guinea pigs for research in England, is also part of the anti-globalization movement because the family they attacked –and ultimately shut down– supplied animals to the GVC. Whatever the political views of anti-vivisectionist –whether libertarian, free market, socialist, or anarchist– they are monkeywrenching globalization from above. The DAAVM disrupts corporate supply chains, thwarts their laboratory procedures, and liberates their captive slaves.

Besides the *economic threat* of the DAAVM, it also poses a *strong philosophical and ideological threat* by attacking the ideological legitimacy of animal-based “science.” The powerful, fact-based assault on the legitimacy of vivisection mounted by the DAAVM and animal rights movements is an assault on the authority of Science itself, an attack on the modern Church of Reason. The anti-vivisection movement exposes the fallacies of vivisection and reveals how science serves the interests of corporations such that objectivity is something to be bought and sold (e.g., junk science and falsified data to dispute global warming was funded by energy corporations such as Exxon-Mobil).

Like the Christian church in its hey day, the popes and priests of Science are compelled to defend their authority and power by attacking and discrediting their opponents (in academia and elsewhere). Science exerts a strong influence over government and has the power to create new laws and enforce its interests. Thus, due to intense pressure from Science, the DAAVM in the UK and US has come under fierce attack by the corporate-state complex. Both UK and US governments have placed severe limitations on free speech

rights and, ultimately, have criminalized dissent, such as evident in UK laws against “glorification of terrorism” and the repressive measures of the USA PATRIOT Act. Both states have applied draconian “anti-terrorist” laws against animal liberationists and imposed harsh jail sentences for “harassment” or sabotage actions.

Thus, the DAAVM is facing the wrath of the secular church; just as Galileo said that the earth moves around the sun, so anti-vivisectionists say that research performed on one species does not apply to research performed on another, and the ALM as a whole assert that humans belong to the earth, and the earth does not belong to them. As the peace movements exposed the madness of the military-industrial complex, the anti-nuclear movement emphasized the destructive potential of nuclear power; and the environmental movement showed the ecological consequences of a growth economy, so the ARM brings to light the barbarism of enlightenment and fallacies of biomedical research.

If the ALM can be seen as a new social movement, and as an anti-capitalist and alter-globalization movement, it can also be viewed in a third way I have emphasized, namely that it is a *contemporary anti-slavery and abolitionist movement*.<sup>[9]</sup> Just as nineteenth century abolitionists sought to awaken people to the greatest moral issue of the day involving the slavery of millions of people in a society created around the notion of universal rights, so the new abolitionists of the 21<sup>st</sup> century endeavor to enlighten people about the enormity and importance of animal suffering and oppression. As black slavery earlier raised fundamental questions about the meaning of American “democracy” and modern values, so current discussion regarding animal slavery provokes critical examination into a human psyche damaged by violence, arrogance, and alienation, and the urgent need for a new ethics and sensibility rooted in respect for all life.

Animals in experimental laboratories, factory farms, fur farms, leather factories, zoos, circuses, rodeos, and other exploitative institutions are the major slave and proletariat force of contemporary capitalist society. Each year, throughout the globe, they are confined, exploited, and killed – “murdered” is not an inappropriate term – by the *billions*. The *raw materials* of the *human economy* (a far greater and more general domination system than capitalism), animals are exploited for their fur, flesh, and bodily fluids. Stolen from the wild, bred and raised in captivity, held in cages and chains against their will and without their consent, animals literally are *slaves*, and thereby integral elements of the contemporary capitalist *slave economy* (which in its starkest form also includes human sweatshops and sex trades).

Abolitionists often view welfarism as a dangerous ruse and roadblock to moral progress, and often ground their position in the philosophy of rights. 19<sup>th</sup> century abolitionists were not addressing the slave master’s “obligation” to be kind to the slaves, to feed and clothe them well, or to work them with adequate rest. Rather, they demanded the total and unqualified eradication of the master-slave relation, the freeing of the slave from all forms of bondage. Similarly, the new abolitionists reject reforms of the institutions and practices of animal slavery as grossly inadequate and they pursue the complete emancipation of animals from all forms of human exploitation, subjugation, and domination.

## **Animal Liberation and the Left**

"Auschwitz begins whenever someone looks at a slaughterhouse and thinks: they're only

animals." Theodor Adorno

"In relation to [animals], all people are Nazis; for the animals it is an eternal Treblinka."  
Isaac Bashevis Singer

Animal liberation is the next necessary and logical development in moral evolution and political struggle. Animal liberation builds on the most progressive ethical and political advances human beings have made in the last 200 years and carries them to their logical conclusions. It takes the struggle for rights, equality, and nonviolence to the next level, beyond the artificial moral and legal boundaries of humanism, in order to challenge all prejudices and hierarchies including speciesism. Martin Luther King's paradigmatic humanist vision of a "worldhouse" devoid of violence and divisions, however laudable, remains a blood-soaked slaughterhouse until the values of peace and equality are extended to all animal species.

Animal liberation requires that the Left transcend the comfortable boundaries of humanism in order to make a qualitative leap in ethical consideration, thereby moving the moral bar from reason and language to sentience and subjectivity. Just as the Left once had to confront ecology, and emerged a far superior theory and politics, so it now has to engage animal rights. As the confrontation with ecology infinitely deepened and enriched Leftist theory and politics, so should the encounter with animal rights and liberation.

*Speciesism* is the belief that nonhuman species exist to serve the needs of the human species, that animals are in various senses inferior to human beings, and therefore that one can favor human over nonhuman interests according to species status alone.<sup>7</sup> Like racism or sexism, speciesism creates a false dualistic division between one group and another in order to arrange the differences hierarchically and justify the domination of the "superior" over the "inferior." Just as society has discerned that it is prejudiced, illogical, and unacceptable for whites to devalue people of color and for men to diminish women, so it is beginning to learn how utterly arbitrary and irrational it is for human animals to position themselves over nonhuman animals because of species differences. Among animals who are all sentient subjects of a life, these differences —humanity's false and arrogant claim to be the sole bearer of reason and language— are no more ethically relevant than differences of gender or skin color, yet in the unevolved psychology of the human primate they have decisive bearing. The theory —speciesism— informs the practice —unspeakably cruel forms of domination, violence, and killing.

The prejudice and discriminatory attitude of speciesism is as much a part of the Left as the general population and its most regressive elements, calling into question the "radical," "oppositional," or "progressive" nature of Left positions and politics. While condemning violence and professing rights for all, the Left fails to take into account the weighty needs and interests of billions of oppressed animals. Although priding themselves on holistic and systemic critiques of global capitalism, Leftists fail to grasp the profound interconnections among human, animal, and earth liberation struggles and the need to conceive and fight for all as one struggle against domination, exploitation, and hierarchy.

From the perspective of ecology and animal rights, Marxists and other social "radicals" have been extremely reactionary forces. In the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels lumped animal welfarists into the same petite-bourgeoisie or reactionary category with

charity organizers, temperance fanatics, and naïve reformists, failing to see that the animal welfare movement in the US, for instance, was a key politicizing cause for women whose struggle to reduce cruelty to animals was inseparable from their struggle against male violence and the exploitation of children.<sup>[10]</sup> In works such as his *1844 Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, Karl Marx advanced a naturalistic theory of human life, but like the dominant Western tradition he posited a sharp dualism between human and nonhuman animals, arguing that only human beings have consciousness and a complex social world. Denying to animals the emotional, social, and psychological complexity of their actual lives, Marx argued that whereas animals have an immediate and merely instinctual relation to productive activity the earth, human labor is mediated by free will and intelligence. If Marxism and other Left traditions have proudly grounded their theories in science, social radicals need to realize that science – specifically, the discipline of “cognitive ethology” which studies the complexity of animal emotions, thought, and communications – *has completely eclipsed their fallacious, regressive, speciesist concepts of nonhuman animals as devoid of complex forms of consciousness and social life.*<sup>[11]</sup>

While there is lively debate over whether or not Marx had an environmental consciousness, there is no question he was a speciesist and the product of an obsolete anthropocentric/dominionist paradigm that continues to mar progressive social theory and politics. The spectacle of Left speciesism is evident in the lack of articles – often due to a blatant refusal to consider animal rights issues – on animal exploitation in progressive journals, magazines, and online sites. In one case, for example, *The Nation* wrote a scathing essay that condemned the treatment of workers at a factory farm, but amazingly said nothing about the exploitation of thousands of chickens imprisoned in the hell of battery cages. In bold contrast, Gale Eisnitz’s powerful work, *Slaughterhouse*, documents the exploitation of animals and humans alike on the killing floors of slaughterhouses, as she shows the dehumanization of humans in and through routinized violence to animals.<sup>[12]</sup>

As symptomatic of the prejudice, ignorance, provincialism, and non-holistic theorizing that is rife through the Left, consider the case of Michael Albert, a noted Marxist theorist and co-founder of *Z Magazine* and *Z Net*. In a recent interview with the animal rights and environmental magazine *Satya*, Albert confessed: “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 in anything like the way I see women’s movements, Latino movements, youth movements, and so on ... a large-scale discussion of animal rights and ensuing action is probably more than needed ... but it just honestly doesn’t strike me as being remotely as urgent as preventing war in Iraq or winning a 30-hour work week.”

While I do not expect a human supremacist like Albert to see animal and human suffering as even roughly comparable, I cannot fathom privileging a work reduction for humans who live relatively comfortable lives to ameliorating the obscene suffering of tens of billion of animals who are confined, tortured, and killed each year in the most unspeakable ways. But human and animal rights and liberation causes are not a zero-sum game, such that gains for animals require losses for humans. Like most within the Left, Albert lacks the holistic vision to grasp the profound connections between animal abuse and human suffering.

The problem with such myopic Leftism stems not only from Karl Marx himself, but the traditions that spawned him – modern humanism, mechanistic science, industrialism, and

the Enlightenment. To be sure, the move from a God-centered to a human-centered world, from the crusades of a bloodthirsty Christianity to the critical thinking and autonomy ethos of the Enlightenment, were massive historical gains, and animal rights builds on them. But modern social theory and science perpetuated one of worst aspects of Christianity (in the standard interpretation that understands dominion as domination), namely the view that animals are mere resources for human use. Indeed, the situation for animals worsened considerably under the impact of modern sciences and technologies that spawned vivisection, genetic engineering, cloning, factory farms, and slaughterhouses. Darwinism was an important influence on Marx and subsequent radical thought, but no one retained Darwin's emphasis on the intelligence of animal life, the evolutionary continuity from nonhuman to human life, and the basic equality among all species.

Social ecologists and "eco-humanists" such as Murray Bookchin condemn the industrialization of animal abuse and killing but never challenge the alleged right to use animals for human purposes. Oblivious to scientific studies that document reason, language, culture, and technology among various animal species, Bookchin rehearses the Cartesian-Marxist mechanistic view of animals as dumb creatures devoid of reason and language. Animals therefore belong to "first nature," rather than the effervescently creative "second nature" world of human culture. Like the Left in general, social ecologists fail to theorize the impact of animal exploitation on the environment and human society and psychology. They ultimately espouse the same welfarist views that permit and sanctify some of the most unspeakable forms of violence against animals within current capitalist social relations, speaking in the same language of "humane treatment" of animal slaves used by vivisectionists, managers of factory farms and slaughterhouses operators, fur farmers, and bosses of rodeos and circuses.

The Left traditionally has been behind the curve in its ability to understand and address forms of oppression not directly related to economics. It took decades for the Left to recognize racism, sexism, nationalism, religion, culture and everyday life, ideology and media, ecology, and other issues into its anti-capitalist framework, and did so only under the pressure of various liberation movements. The tendency of the Marxist Left, in particular, has been to relegate issues such as gender, race, and culture to "questions" to be addressed, if at all, only after the goals of the class struggle are achieved. Such exclusionist and reductionist politics prompted Rosa Luxemburg, for one, to defend the importance of culture and everyday life by exclaiming, "If I can't dance, I don't want to be a part of your revolution!"

Neo-Marxists, such as Frankfurt School theorists, grasped the importance of politics, culture, and ideology as important issues related but not reducible to economics and class, and after the 1960s Leftists finally understood ecology as more than a "bourgeois issue" or "diversion" from social struggles. In *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno developed important insights into the relationship between the domination of humans over nature and over one another, and sometimes sympathetically evoked images of animals in captivity as important symbols of human arrogance and alienation from nature. Most notably, Herbert Marcuse emphasized the importance of a "new sensibility" grounded in non-exploitative attitudes and relations toward the natural world.

Although since the 1970s the Left has begun to seriously address the "nature question," *they have universally failed to grasp that the "animal question" that lies at the core of*

*social and ecological issues.*<sup>[13]</sup> To make the point about the interrelationships here in a simple but crucial way, consider that no society can achieve ecological sustainability if its dominant mode of food production is factory farming. The industrialized system of confining and fattening animals for human food consumption, pioneered in the US after World War II and exported globally, is a main cause of water pollution (due to fertilizers, chemicals, and massive amounts of animal waste) and a key contributor to rainforest destruction, desertification, global warming, in addition to being a highly inefficient use of water, land, and crops.<sup>[14]</sup>

Critiques of human arrogance over and alienation from nature, calls for a “re-harmonization” of society with ecology, and emphasizes on a “new ethics” that focus solely on the physical world apart from the millions of animal species it contains are speciesist, myopic, and inadequate. It’s as if everyone can get on board with respecting rivers and mountains but still want to eat, experiment on, wear, and be entertained by animals. Left ecological concerns stem not from any kind of deep respect for the natural world, but rather from a position of “enlightened anthropocentrism” (a clear oxymoron) that understands how important a sustainable environment is for human existence. It is a more difficult matter to understand the crucial role animals play in sustaining ecosystems and how animal exploitation often has dramatic environmental consequences, let alone more complex issues such as relationships between violence toward animals and violence to other human beings. Moreover, it is far easier to “respect nature” through recycling, planting trees, or driving hybrid cars than it is to respect animals by becoming a vegan who stops eating and wearing animal bodies and products. Much more so than a shift in how one views the inorganic world, it is far more difficult, complex, and profound –for both philosophical and practical reason– to revolutionize one’s views toward animals and adopt ethical veganism.

In short, the modern “radical” tradition –whether, Marxist, socialist, anarchist, or other “Left” positions that include anti-racism and feminism– stands in continuity with the entire Western heritage of anthropocentrism, and *in no way can be seen as a liberating philosophy from the standpoint of the environment and other species on this planet. Current Left thought is merely Stalinism toward animals.*

A truly revolutionary social theory and movement will not just emancipate members of one species, but rather all species and the earth itself. A future revolutionary movement worthy of its name will grasp the ancient conceptual roots of hierarchy and domination, such as emerge in the animal husbandry practices of the first agricultural societies, and incorporate a new ethics of nature – environmental ethics *and* animal rights – that overcomes instrumentalism and hierarchical thinking in every pernicious form.<sup>[15]</sup>

## **ID and Animal Liberation**

“As Long as Men Massacre Animals, They will Kill Each Other.” Pythagoras

“Many activists do not understand the revolutionary nature of this movement. We are fighting a major war, defending animals and our very planet from human greed and destruction.” David Barbarash, former ALF Press Officer

As the AAM is not a monolithic entity, but rather has statist and non-statist branches, conservative and radical dimensions, Left critiques must not be overly general but rather specific to different tendencies. The issue of animal rights/liberation is important for ID and other radical orientations in that it: (1) advances a provocative critique of humanism and speciesism which are core components of Left ideology; (2) demands a broader thinking of “ecology” and “the nature question”; and (3) allows a richer and more holistic analysis of the origins and dynamics of hierarchy and domination.

As I have pointed out, the animal welfare and rights camps seek change in and through the pre-approved channels of the political and legal system, and do so from an unshakeable conviction that representative democracy works and ultimately responds to the voices of reason, compassion, and justice over the roar of vested interests, large corporations, and (even they recognize it) the structural demands of economic growth and profit. These legalist orientations, which comprise the vast bulk of animal advocacy organizations (many of them huge bureaucracies and money making machines), often win gains and “victories” for animals, yet they also legitimate and strengthen statist myths of “democracy.”<sup>[16]</sup>

Welfare and rights legalists have reduced animal suffering in a myriad of ways, ranging from adopting cats and dogs to good homes and running animal sanctuaries to ameliorating the misery of factory farmed animals. The plight of animals in factory farms and slaughterhouses, in truth, is so severe, that any reduction in the hell they endure is laudable and worthy of support. While irrelevant to an abolitionist purist or a social revolutionary movement, the increase of a battery cage size by a few inches means a lot to the half dozen chickens confined within a torturously small wire prison. At the same time, however, welfare tactics do not challenge the property and commodity status of animals, and enable factory farms and slaughterhouses to put a “humane farming” stamp of approval on their murdered victims. They thereby legitimate animal slaughter and alleviate consumer guilt, perhaps even enabling more confinement and killing in the long run.

Welfare and rights approaches in the AAM are largely apolitical beyond their own causes, although ideological orientations can fall anywhere on the scale from far right to far left. In most cases, legalists (1) do not have a grasp of social movement history (with which one can contextualize the significance of animal advocacy); (2) lack critiques of the logic and dynamics of global capitalism and neoliberalism; and (3) fail to see the relation between capitalism and animal exploitation. They thereby proceed without a systemic vision and political critique of the society and global system that exploits animals through industrialized systems of mass production and death.

Holistic and structural critiques of capitalism as an irrational growth system driven to exploitation and environmental destruction are a hallmark of approaches such as social ecology and Inclusive Democracy, and are crucial for the theoretical growth of the AAM. Lacking a sophisticated social and historical analysis, much of the AAM is guilty of all charges leveled above. It is well-deserving of the ID critique that it is a reformist, single issue movement whose demands – which potentially are radical to the extent that animal rights demands and affects an economy rooted to a significant degree in animal slavery – are easily contained within a totalizing global system that exploits all life and the earth for imperatives of profit, accumulation, growth, and domination.

In bold contrast to the limitations of the AAM and all other reformist causes, Takis

Fotopoulos advances a broad view of human dynamics and social institutions, their impact on the earth, and the resulting consequences for society itself. Combining anti-capitalist, radical democracy, and ecological concerns in the concept of “ecological democracy,” Fotopoulos defines this notion as “the institutional framework which aims at the elimination of any human attempt to dominate the natural world, in other words, as the system which aims to reintegrate humans and nature. This implies transcending the present ‘instrumentalist’ view of Nature, in which Nature is seen as an instrument for growth, within a process of endless concentration of power.”<sup>[17]</sup>

Fotopoulos and other ID theorists offer an important analysis and critique of global capitalism and the triumph over social democracy and other political systems other than neoliberalism. As true of social ecology and Left theory in general, however, the dynamics and consequences of human exploitation of animals throughout history is entirely missing from the ID theory of nature and ecology and critique of instrumentalism.

Where the ID critique can take easy aim at the statist orientation of the AAM, the framework has to shift in its approach to the ALM, for here there are some important commonalities. First, the rhetoric and direct action tactics of the ALM show that, like ID, it understands that the state is a political extension of the capitalist economy and therefore “representative democracy” is a myth and smokescreen whereby capitalism mollifies and co-opts its opposition. Bypassing appeals to politicians in the pocket of animal exploitation industries, and disregarding both the pragmatic efficacy and ethical legitimacy of existing laws, the ALM applies direct pressure against animal exploiters to undermine or end their operations and free as many animals as possible. Thus, second, from writings and communiqués, it is clear that the ALM, like ID, is anti-capitalist and has a systematic (or at least holistic) analysis of hierarchy and oppression. Third, the ALM rejects single-issue politics in favor of supporting and often forming alliances with human and environmental movements. Fourth, the anti-capitalist ideology of the ALM is, specifically, anarchist in nature. Not only are animal liberationists anarchist in their social and political outlook, they are also anarchist in their organization and tactics. The small cells that ALF activists, for example, build with one another – such that one cell is unknown to all others and thereby resistant to police penetration – are akin to anarchist affinity groups in their mutual aid, solidarity, and consciousness building.

The project to emancipate animals is integrally related to the struggle to emancipate humans and the battle for a viable natural world. To the extent that animal liberationists grasp the big picture that links animal and human rights struggles as one, and seeks to uncover the roots of oppression and tyranny of the Earth, they can be viewed as a profound new liberation movement that has a crucial place in the planetary struggles against injustice, oppression, exploitation, war, violence, capitalist neo-liberalism, and the destruction of the natural world and biodiversity.<sup>[18]</sup>

Radical animal rights/liberation activists are also active in online learning communities and information sites, such as Infoshop and Indymedia, whereby radical cultures are forming on a global level. The communities envisioned by Fotopoulos and other past and present anarchists is today largely unfolding online, as well as in events such as the protests communicated to and attended by global communities and “Liberation Fests” that feature militant speakers such as Black panthers, Native Americans, and animal and earth liberation proponents, as well as hard core music that acts as a energizing, unifying, and

politicizing force. Many animal liberationists are knowledgeable of social issues, involved in human liberation struggles, politically radical and astute, and supportive of alliance politics. Crucial and novel forms of thinking, struggle, and alliances are unfolding, all without notice of much of the Left. <sup>[19]</sup>

In conditions where other social movements are institutionalized, disempowered, reformist, or co-opted, animal liberationists are key contemporary forces of resistance. They defy corporate power, state domination, and ideological hegemony. They resist the normalization and roboticization of citizens through disinformation systems (from FOX News to MSNBC), media-induced passivity, and cultural narcotics in weapons of mass distraction and endless forms of spectacle and entertainment. They literally *attack* institutions of domination and exploitation –not just their ideologies or concepts– with bricks, sledge hammers, and Molotov cocktails. Their militancy and courage deserves recognition, respect, and support. It is worth pointing out that where today’s radicals are mostly engaged in theory and philosophizing, the ALM is *taking action* against capitalism and in defense of life, often at great risk of their own personal freedom should they be caught for illegal raids or sabotage strikes.

Yet, for whatever parallels we can identify between the ALM and ID, Fotopoulos is critical of the ALM to the degree that it lacks a *detailed and concrete* systemic critique of global capitalism and its various hierarchical systems of power, and *positive and workable* strategies for radical social transformation that dismantles the state and market system in favor of direct democracy. As Fotopoulos remarks on the limitations of the ALM from his standpoint, “The development of an alternative consciousness towards animals could only be part of an antisystemic consciousness which has to become hegemonic (at the local/ regional/ national/ transnational level) before new institutions implementing an ecological democracy, as part of an ID, begins to be built. In other words, the strategy for an ecological democracy should be part of the transitional ID strategy in which direct action, although it does play a more significant role than the traditional tactics of the Left (demonstrations, etc.), still it is also in effect a defensive tactics. What we need most, in contrast, is an aggressive tactics of building alternative institutions within the present system (which would include institutions of ecological democracy) that would make the antisystemic consciousness hegemonic.”

Fotopoulos’ statement possibly devalues the importance of single issue causes such as saving species such as whales and chimpanzees from extinction, of defending the earth and struggling to preserve various land and sea animals from total extinction. Whether connected or not, it is important that radical struggles for social justice, animal rights, and ecology all unfold in as many forms as possible in this ominous era of global warming, species extinction, rainforest destruction, and rapid ecological disintegration, all results of increasingly authoritarian and exploitative social systems. Fotopoulos is entirely correct, however, in his main point. Sabotage actions –while important and rare forms of bold resistance today, saving countless thousands of animal lives and shutting down numerous exploitative operations– are rearguard, defensive, and incapable of stopping the larger juggernaut of capitalist domination and omnicide. Many of the ALM would admit as much. Positive visions for radical change, along with the concrete struggles and transitional social forms to put them in place, are urgently needed, although some theorists and activists within the ALM are contributing to this project in notable ways.

Moreover, the general thrust of Fotopoulos' critique of the reformist tendencies dominating the AAM, such that animal friendly neocons like Matthew Scully are hailed as heroes, is correct: "Unless an antisystemic animal liberation current develops out of the present broad movement soon, the entire movement could easily end up as a kind of "painless" (for the elites) lobby that could even condemn direct action in the future, so that it could gain some "respectability" among the middle classes." Unfortunately, these words already ring true in the pathetic spectacle of mainstream groups like the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) applauding the FBI witchhunt on the ALM and expressing its hope to see "the end of the ALF and ELF forever," so that the flames of radicalism are extinguished within the vacuum of reformist, compromising, single-issue, touchy-feely, puppy-hugging politics.<sup>[20]</sup>

But, as I have been arguing, the insights, learning, and changes need to come from both sides, and the animal standpoint can be highly productive for radical social politics. The animal perspective can deepen the ecological component of ID, as well as its understanding of the profound interconnections between domination of animals and domination of humans. The goal of ecological democracy cannot be achieved without working to eliminate the worst forms of animal exploitation such as occur in the global operations of factory farming. It cannot be realized without a profound critique and transformation of instrumentalism, such as which emerged as form of power over animals than over humans.

The best approach to theorizing hierarchy in its origins, development, and multifaceted, overlapping forms is through a multiperspectival, non-reductionist approach that sees what is unique to and common among various modes of domination. There are a *plurality* of modes and mechanisms of power that have evolved throughout history, and different accounts provide different insights into the workings of power and domination. According to feminist standpoint theory, each oppressed group has an important perspective or insight into the nature of society.<sup>[21]</sup> People of color, for instance, can illuminate colonialism and the pathology of racism, while women can reveal the logic of patriarchy that has buttressed so many different modes of social power throughout history. While animals cannot speak about their sufferings, it is only from the *animal standpoint* – the standpoint of animal exploitation – that one can grasp the nature of speciesism, glean key facets of the pathology of human violence, and illuminate important aspects of misothery (hatred of nature) and the social and environmental crisis society now faces.

The animal perspective offers crucial insights into the nature of power and domination. Any theory such as social ecology or ID that claims to understand the origin, development, and dynamics of hierarchy profits considerably from taking into account the wide body of literature revealing deep connections between the domination of humans over animals and the domination of humans over one another. Any critique of "instrumentalism" as a profound psychological root of hierarchy, domination, and violence must analyze the roots of this in the domination of animals that begins in the transition from hunting and gathering cultures to agricultural society. Instrumentalism emerges as speciesism and forms a key part of anthropocentrism more generally.

In many cases, technological, ideological, and social forms of hierarchy and oppression of human over human began with the domestication, domination, and enslavement of humans over animals. In her compelling book, *The Dreaded Comparison: Human and Animal Slavery*, Marjorie Spiegel shows that the exploitation of animals provided a model,

metaphors, and technologies and practices for the dehumanization and enslavement of blacks.<sup>[22]</sup> From castration and chaining to branding and ear cropping, whites drew on a long history of subjugating animals to oppress blacks. Once perceived as beasts, blacks were treated accordingly. In addition, by denigrating people of color as “beasts of burden,” an animal metaphor and exploitative tradition facilitated and legitimated the institution of slavery. The denigration of any people as a type of animal is a prelude to violence and genocide. Many anthropologists believe that the cruel forms of domesticating animals at the dawn of agricultural society ten thousand years ago created the conceptual model for hierarchy, statism, and the exploitation treatment of other human beings, as they implanted violence into the heart of human culture. From this perspective, slavery and the sexual subjugation of women is but the extension of animal domestication to humans. James Patterson, author of *Eternal Treblinka Our Treatment of Animals and the Holocaust*, reveals the common roots of Nazi genocide and the industrialized enslavement and slaughter on non-human animals.” Patterson, Jim Mason, and numerous other writers concur that the exploitation of animals is central to understanding the cause and solution to the crisis haunting the human community and its troubled relationship to the natural world.

## **The Need for Animal Rights Against Left Welfarist Politics**

“The assumption that animals are without rights, and the illusion that our treatment of them has no moral significance, is a positively outrageous example of Western crudity and barbarity. Universal compassion is the only guarantee of morality.” Arthur Schopenhauer

One clear difference between animal rights and ID is that that ID theorists view rights discourse as reformist, statist, and incompatible with ecological democracy. As argued in his article, “Towards a Democratic Liberatory Ethics,” Fotopoulos holds that all rights (human or animal) are derived from institutions of power antithetical to decentralized democracy. Rights are mostly rights against the state, and have meaning only in social forms where political and economic power is concentrated in the hands of elites. In direct contrast, a non-statist society or inclusive democracy abolishes hierarchies in favor of the equal sharing of power; in such social settings, rights – capitalist, individualist, protective, and largely negative in nature– become meaningless.

To put it another way, the issue of rights should not arise at all in the case of a non-statist society like that of ID; it is a superfluous vestige of bourgeois institutions and ideologies. To overcome the present ethics of heteronomy, Fotopoulos argues, we need an ethics of autonomy, which can only become articulated along with a politics of autonomy. “There still remains the problem of what are the appropriate institutions and the corresponding values which would lead to the reintegration of society to nature—part of which is the problem of animal liberation. So, for ID, the problem is one of ecological democracy, which is a crucial component of an inclusive democracy ... many of the deplorable forms of animal exploitation described by animal advocates are simply the necessary symptoms of a growth economy, seen as the inevitable outcome of the dynamics of the system of the market economy.”

I have no quarrels whatsoever with the position that “rights” are a bourgeois construction

appropriate to capitalist market relations and state institutions where rights first and foremost are rights to acquire and accumulate property, where property is more sacred than life and is protected with the full force of the state – such as demonstrated once again in the recent conviction of the “SHAC7.” Rights, in short, are created by the capitalist elite for the capitalist elite. Nonetheless, in the current context, where property relations and state power grow stronger and more repressive every day, and where liberation, emancipation, revolution, democracy, ecology, and autonomy are remote hopes (yet still worth struggling for), at a time when global warming and biological meltdown are rapidly unfolding before our eyes, it would be a strategic error of the highest order to abandon the discourse of rights as a critical tool for animal liberation, as it has ably served the cause of all past human liberation struggles.

Whatever philosophical reservations one can voice against rights –and there are many expressed from the quarters of Marxism, feminism, communitarianism, feminism, ID, and elsewhere– the concept of rights continues to inflame rebellion and the political imagination, continues to provide a critical leverage and internal critique against capitalist exploitation. Rights discourse is embedded in the popular imagination in a way that allows people to identify with and understand the concept of animal rights, whatever straw man arguments and fallacious objections they might mount against it and are cleared up fairly easily.

The concept of rights, moreover, by insisting on the intrinsic value of animal life and providing a firm bulwark against welfarism and utilitarianism, is unambiguously *abolitionist* in its meaning and implications, thereby providing a conceptual, political, and legal foundation for animal liberation, as currently fought for in the context of advanced global capitalist domination and ecological decline. In a non-statist society, rights can “wither away,” but they are necessary for the animal liberation struggle in the current moment.

To put it simply, in an exploitative society such as ours, rights serve the important function of throwing up a “no trespassing” sign around an individual, prohibiting the use of someone as an unwilling means for another’s ends. Cutting through the deceptive webs spun by speciesist philosophers over centuries of time, rights apply to any being that is *sentient*, that has preferences and interests, regardless of any rational or linguistic properties speciesists use to circumscribe the meaning of rights with arbitrary conditions. While animals do not require human values such as the right to vote, they do need the same basic protective conditions rights assign for humans, namely the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

The concept of animal rights prohibits any and all forms of exploitation, including confining and killing animals as sources of food, clothing, and entertainment. It equally prohibits using animals in experiments, however “humane” and useful to human, such that experimenting on animals against their will is no more ethically legitimate than experimenting on humans. Fotopoulos falls back on welfarist arguments that have failed miserably to reduce animal suffering, let alone bring about animal liberation. Fotopoulos writes, for example, “I would agree with a society respecting animal liberation provided that it means a new ethics will be upheld where any kind of exploitation of animals per se is ruled out. This applies in particular with respect to the use of animals for entertainment purposes, hunting, or even medical research purposes—*unless* it is ‘proven’ that no alternative means of research on a particular serious medical problem is available” (my

emphasis).

From the perspective of animal liberation, and in relation to the dogmatic humanism of the Left, this is a promising start for common ground on the wrongs of speciesism and animal exploitation. Fotopoulos recognizes the lack of justification for major forms of animal exploitation (although meat and dairy consumption go unmentioned) and includes animal liberation as part of the “new ethics” required for ecological democracy. Yet, the glaring problem here is that within the impenetrable walls of scientific dogma, researchers always insist that there are no alternatives, which becomes a self-fulfilling prophesy if they never seek or use them. Fotopoulos therefore fails to break with speciesist ideology that justifies extreme injury and death to animals for “medical research” purposes if it potentially serves the dominant and most important species, human beings. Fotopoulos will have to dig deeper to tell us why the same violent procedures used on animals are not equally legitimate if used on human beings. If he appeals to the standard criterion of advanced intelligence, he will have to say why we should not experiment on 4-5 year old children rather than chimpanzees, as such primates as more intelligent than young children. It is precisely this kind of utilitarian exploitation of one being for the interests of another than the concept of rights is intended to block, hence its importance is demonstrated in this very passage by someone who sees it as untenable.

From a promising but problematic start, Fotopoulos then back peddles to support the trivial palette preferences of humans over the substantial interests to life and freedom from confinement and suffering of animals. As he writes, “However, all these issues in a democratic society are decided by the general assemblies and although I could envisage that simple majorities will be sufficient to decide many of the issues similar to the ones I mentioned, this would clearly not be the case with regards to the use of animals for food purposes. Clearly, this could only be left to the individual to decide whether s/he would like to be a vegetarian or not, if we do not wish to end up with a new kind of totalitarian society. Still, even in that case, the rules of rearing animals in accordance with the new ethics should be decided by simple majority rule and it is hoped that *paedeia* will play a crucial role in turning a new ecological ethics, which would be consistent with an inclusive democracy hegemonic.”

Would it not be as totalitarian to ban racism, genocide, sweatshops, and sexual exploitation of children? Or does an ID society allow the majority vote to legitimate violence, confinement, slavery, and murder if it is so unenlightened? Would Fotopoulos leave it up to individuals to decide if they want to rape and murder, just as they decide what foods to put on their plate and the conditions necessary for animals to meet their death in order to be their object of consumption? If everyone decides they wish to be carnivores, this decision by millions of people in any nation almost requires the conditions of factory farming to meet such high levels of consumer demand, The “rules of rearing animals” will be predetermined by the logic of mass carnivore consumption, despite whatever “humane” impulses they might acquire by means of *paedeia* and their new enlightenment?

Fotopoulos invokes a standard argument against vegans and AR advocates – that it is somehow totalitarian to tell people how they ought to live, as if the personal is not ethical and political. First, the approach used by the vegetarian/vegan movement is one of persuasive education, not enforcing ethics or dogmas on others, however strongly scientifically and ethically grounded the arguments are. Second, is it any less “totalitarian” to enforce prohibitions against killing human beings? Why would it be any different for

proscribing all forms of animal exploitation, quaint (largely modernized and simulated) “subsistence cultures” aside? Why is the worry here focused on potential “totalitarian” control of consumers – which I interpret as simple conditions of ethics applied universally and without prejudice and arbitrary limitations – while nothing is said of the totalitarian domination of animals required by the carnivorous tastes of millions or billions of flesh-eaters? Despite current myths such as exemplified by in McDonald’s images of “hamburger patches,” animals do not *willingly* go the factory farm and slaughterhouse to satisfy socially-conditioned human palette preferences. There is no respect for autonomy where there is coercion of complex sentient forms of life, compelling their bodies to deliver fluids and flesh for no good or rational purposes – so that human can die prematurely of a host of diseases induced by consumption of animal protein, so that rainforests can fall, the ozone layer thin, and rivers become choked with waste.

This is a strangely relativistic argument from a theorist who argues for objectivity. Herbert Marcuse condemned this kind of “repressive tolerance” that entrenched itself in relativist positions and refused to condemn and prohibit exploitation and violence. Any future society worth fighting for will be based on principles of universal democracy that forbids any form of exploitation, regardless of the species. The democratic *paedeia* project needs to be articulated with humane education programs that teach connectedness with and respect for the earth and all forms of life. If children receive such instruction early in life, there is a good chance that the will of the majority will be enlightened enough to advocate ethical veganism and the philosophy of non-violence to all life.

Fotopoulos mounts another false barrier to animal liberation is his vision of a future non-statist society, ironically conflating the differences between human and nonhuman animals he otherwise is concerned to construct and protect: “I think it is incompatible with democracy itself to talk about an inclusive democracy that would be ‘representative’ of all sentient species. This is because democracy is inconceivable if it includes the “representative” element. Democracy is the direct expression of the political will of its participants and in this sense it is obviously impossible for non-human species to qualify as citizens, as they cannot directly express their political will. All that is possible in a genuine democracy is delegation –but not representation– of will, so that individual and social autonomy could be secured and I cannot see how this fundamental condition for democracy could be met with respect to non-human species.”

Whatever the political form of future societies, enlightened human beings will always, in some general and metaphorical sense, “represent” the interests of nonhuman species who lack a voice to communicate their needs – needs that in most cases require nothing beyond empathy and common sense to decipher. Animals cannot participate in direct democracy in any direct way of physical presence and communication, and so advocates of animal rights unavoidably will advocate on their behalf. Thus, whereas humans can construct direct democracy to advocate their needs and interests to one another, this scenario is not possible for animals. This does not imply human superiority, just different and unique natures whereby on a planet dominated by *Homo sapiens*, animals require humans to speak on their behalf.

Whatever language we use to describe it, enlightened humans must speak for the animals. This is not a totalitarian project as if one human group were to speak for another who can speak for themselves. In a way, in their expressed preferences and cries of pain, the animals do express their voice, wants, needs, and preferences. We only need to listen and pay

attention. But since animals are in a different ontological category of not having the capacities of human speech and reason (as we lack many of their fine qualities), we must in some sense “represent” them or serve as delegates, guardians, or ambassadors of their existence of this planet. It is irrelevant whether or not animals can meet our social contract conditions for democracy – be they those of Locke or of ID. We must acknowledge and respect their fundamental difference from us (along with our evolutionary continuities and similarities). To impose our will on them because they cannot meet our unique conditions of social life – in an incredibly arrogant, question-begging, and circular attempt to decide which beings have rights and full moral worth – is arbitrary and imperialist.

## **Beyond Humanism: Toward Post-Speciesist Identities and a Broader Liberation Movement**

“The fate of animals is of greater importance to me than the fear of appearing ridiculous; it is indissolubly connected with the fate of men.” Emile Zola

“Until he extends the circle of compassion to all living things, Man will not himself find peace.” Dr. Albert Schweitzer

“The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated.” Mohandas Gandhi

The basic goal of ID is ecological democracy and reintegration of society into nature. Although it is a key theoretical, ethical, and political deficit in ID, clearly a huge part of this problem demands engagement of animal rights/liberation. The challenge of animal rights to ID and other Left movements that decry exploitation, inequality, and injustice; promote ecological sustainability; and advocate holistic models of social analysis is to recognize the deep interrelations between human and animal liberation. The emancipation of one species on the backs of others not only flouts all ethical principles of a liberation movement, it contradicts it in practice. Frameworks that attempt to analyze relationships between society and nature, democracy and ecology, will unavoidably be severely limited to the extent that their concept of “nature” focuses on physical environments and ecosystems without mention of animals. Such views not only set up arbitrary ethical boundaries and moral limitations, they fail on their own grounds which seek to understand ecology. Their ecological lapses are twofold: (1) they fail to understand how factory farming and animal agriculture in general are implicated in the major environmental problems of our time, not the least of which are rainforest destruction and global warming; (2) they do not see that physical ecosystems are not self-maintained independent of organic life, but rather are dependent upon a wide range of animal species.

From the perspective of ID, one could support animal liberation as a dynamic social movement that challenges large sectors of the capitalist growth economy by attacking food and medical research sectors. The ALM is perhaps today the most vocal critic of capitalist logic and economies, drawing strong connections between the pursuit of profit and destruction of the social and natural worlds. It is a leading global, anti-capitalist force. If the ALM could gain wider public support, it could provoke a capitalist monetary crisis, as it works to bring about improved human health and medical care. Most generally, the ALM has the potential to affect a cultural paradigm shift, one that broadens ethical horizons to

include nonhuman animals and leads human species identity away from the dominator paradigm so directly implicated in the ecological crisis.

One could argue that animal liberation makes its strongest contributions to the extent that it rejects single-issue politics and becomes part of a broader anti-capitalist movement. This is certainly not the present case for the overall AAM, which might be viewed as a kind of “popular front” organization that seeks unity around basic values on which people from all political orientations – from apolitical, conservative, and liberal persuasions to radical anarchists– could agree. “But, to my mind,” argues Takis Fotopoulos, “this is exactly its fundamental weakness which might make the development of an antisystemic consciousness out of a philosophy of “rights,” etc. almost impossible.”

Animal liberation is by no means a sufficient condition for democracy and ecology, but it is for many reasons a *necessary condition* of economic, social, cultural, and psychological change. Animal welfare/rights people promote compassionate relations toward animals, but their general politics and worldview can otherwise be capitalist, exploitative, sexist, racist, or captive to any other psychological fallacy. Uncritical of the capitalist economy and state, they hardly promote the broader kinds of critical consciousness that needs to take root far and wide. Just as Leftists rarely acknowledge their own speciesism, so many animal advocates reproduce capitalist and statist ideologies.

It seems clear, however, that all aspects of the AAM – welfare, rights, and liberationist – are contributing to a profound sea-change in human thought and culture, in the countless ways that animal interests are now protected or respected. Just as the civil rights struggles sparked moral progress and moved vast numbers of people to overcome the prejudices and discrimination of racism, so for decades the AAM is persuading increasing numbers of people to transcend the fallacies of speciesism and discard prejudices toward animals. Given the profound relation between the human domination of animals and the crisis – social, ethical, and environmental – in the human world and its relation to the natural world, groups such as the ALF is in a unique position to articulate the importance of new relations between human and human, human and animal, and human and nature.

The fight for animal liberation demands radical transformations in the habits, practices, values, and mindset of all human beings as it also entails a fundamental restructuring of social institutions and economic systems predicated on exploitative practices. The goal of ecological democracy is inconceivable so long as billions of animals remain under the grip of despotic human beings. The philosophy of animal liberation assaults the identities and worldviews that portray humans as conquering Lords and Masters of nature, and it requires entirely new ways of relating to animals and the earth. Animal liberation is a direct attack on the power human beings—whether in pre-modern or modern, non-Western or Western societies— have claimed over animals since *Homo sapiens* began hunting them over two million years ago and which grew into a pathology of domination with the emergence of agricultural society. The new struggle seeking freedom for other species has the potential to advance rights, democratic consciousness, psychological growth, and awareness of biological interconnectedness to higher levels than previously achieved in history.

The next great step in moral evolution is to abolish the last acceptable form of slavery that subjugates the vast majority of species on this planet to the violent whim of one. Moral advance today involves sending human supremacy to the same refuse bin that society

earlier discarded much male supremacy and white supremacy. Animal liberation requires that people transcend the complacent boundaries of humanism in order to make a qualitative leap in ethical consideration, thereby *moving the moral bar from reason and language to sentience and subjectivity*.

Animal liberation is the culmination of a vast historical learning process whereby human beings gradually realize that arguments justifying hierarchy, inequality, and discrimination of any kind are arbitrary, baseless, and fallacious. Moral progress occurs in the process of demystifying and deconstructing all myths – from ancient patriarchy and the divine right of kings to Social Darwinism and speciesism – that attempt to legitimate the domination of one group over another. Moral progress advances through the dynamic of replacing hierarchical visions with egalitarian visions and developing a broader and more inclusive ethical community.

Having recognized the illogical and unjustifiable rationales used to oppress blacks, women, and other disadvantaged groups, society is beginning to grasp that speciesism is another unsubstantiated form of oppression and discrimination. The gross inconsistency of Leftists who champion democracy and rights while supporting a system that enslaves billions of other sentient and intelligent life forms is on par with the hypocrisy of American colonists protesting British tyranny while enslaving millions of blacks.

The commonalities of oppression help us to narrativize the history of human moral consciousness, and to map the emergence of moral progress in our culture. This trajectory can be traced through the gradual universalization of rights. By grasping the similarities of experience and oppression, we gain insight into the nature of power, we discern the expansive boundaries of the moral community, and we acquire a new vision of progress and civilization, one based upon ecological and non-speciesist principles and universal justice.

Articulating connections among human, animal, and earth liberation movements no doubt will be incredibly difficult, but it is a major task that needs to be undertaken from all sides. Just as Left humanists may never overcome speciesism, grasp the validity and significance of animal liberation, or become ethical vegans, so the animal rights movement at large may never situate the struggle for animal liberation in the larger context of global capitalism.

The human/animal liberation movements have much to learn from one another, although will be profound differences. Just as those in the Inclusive Democracy camp have much to teach many in the animal liberation movement about capital logic and global capitalism domination, so they have much to learn from animal liberation ethics and politics. Whereas Left radicals can help temper antihumanist elements in the ALM, so the ALM can help the Left overcome speciesist prejudices and move toward a more compassionate, cruelty-free, and environmentally sound mode of living. One common ground and point of department can be the critique of instrumentalism and relation between the domination of humans over animals – as an integral part of the domination of nature in general – and the domination of humans over one another. Such a conversation, dialogue, or new politics of alliance, of course, is dependent upon the Left overcoming the shackles of humanism, moving from an attitude of ridicule to a position of respect, and grasping the significance of animal rights/liberation.

- [1] For a trenchant analysis of how the exploitation of animals rebounds to trouble the human world in innumerable ways, see Jeremy Rifkin, *Beyond Beef: The Rise and Fall of the Cattle Culture* (New York: Dutton, 1993); John Robbins, *The Food Revolution: How Your Diet Can Help Save Your Life and Our World* (Newburyport MA: Conari Press, 2001); Charles Patterson, *Eternal Treblinka: Our Treatment of Animals and the Holocaust* (New York: Lantern Books 2003); and Jim Mason, *An Unnatural Order: Uncovering the Roots of Our Domination of Nature and Each Other* (New York: Lantern Books, 2005).+
- [2] For histories of the origins and development of the AAM in the UK and US, see James M. Jasper and Dorothy Nelkin, *The Animal Rights Crusade: The Growth of a Moral Protest* (New York: The Free Press, 1992), and Kelly Wand (ed.), *The Animal Rights Movement* (San Diego: Thomson-Gale, 2003).
- [3] Peter Singer's groundbreaking 1975 book, *Animal Liberation*, actually is titled deceptively as it espouses utilitarian-informed welfarist not abolitionist positions.
- [4] Not all self-professed "animal liberationists" reject capitalist structures and political ideologies, however, as is evident in the case of Joan Dunayer's book, *Speciesism* (Derwood: Maryland: Ryce Publishing, 2004). For my critique of the naïve and bourgeois dimensions of this form of "abolitionism," see "Beyond Welfarism, Speciesism, and Legalism: Review essay of Joan Dunyaer's *Speciesism*," in *Organization and Environment*, 19:2, June 2006.
- [5] For the ALF credo, see [http://www.animalliberationfront.com/ALFront/alf\\_credos.htm](http://www.animalliberationfront.com/ALFront/alf_credos.htm).
- [6] See Matthew Scully, *Dominion: The Power of Man, the Suffering of Animals, and the Call to Mercy* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002). Note also the difference between an ethics of justice and liberation, and ethic of "mercy."
- [7] The most important exception to this rule has been efforts by numerous feminists to engage the relationship between speciesism and patriarchy. See, for instance, Carol Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat* (New York: Continuum, 1990), Carol Adams and Josephine Donovan (eds.), *Beyond Animal Rights: A Feminist Caring Ethic for the Treatment of Animals* (New York: Continuum, 1996); and patrice jones, "Mothers with Monkeywrenches: Feminist Imperatives and the ALF" in Steven Best and Anthony J. Nocella II (eds.), *Terrorists or Freedom Fighters? Reflections on the Liberation of Animals* (New York: Lantern Books, 2004), pp. 137-156
- [8] On the theme of the direct action anti-vivisection movement as an anti-capitalist movement, see Steven Best and Richard Kahn, "[Trial By Fire: The SHAC7 and the Future of Democracy](#)".
- [9] For more details of my analysis of the ALM as an abolitionist movement, see "[The New Abolitionism: Capitalism, Slavery, and Animal Liberation](#)".
- [10] See Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "The Communist Manifesto," in Robert C. Tucker (ed.), *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1978), p. 496.
- [11] The body of literature comprising the field of cognitive ethology is incredibly rich and vast. Donald R. Griffin was a pioneer of the scientific study of animal life and intelligence, and wrote important works such as *Animal Minds* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992). For more contemporary approaches, see the excellent work of Marc Bekoff, including *Minding Animals: Awareness, Emotions, and Heart* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). :
- [12] Gail Eiznitz, *Slaughterhouse: The Shocking Story of Greed, Neglect, and Inhumane Treatment Inside the U.S. Meat Industry* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1997).
- [13] On the "animal question" as central to the "nature question" and social change in general, see Mason, *An Unnatural Order*.
- [14] On the environmental impact of factory farming, see Rifkin, *Beyond Beef*, and Robbins, *The Food Revolution*.
- [15] For an analysis of the affinities between animal and human liberation, see Ted Benton, *Natural*

*Relations: Ecology, Animal Rights, and Social Justice* (London: Verso, 1993).

[16] For more details of my critique of reformist policies in the AAM, see my article, "[The Iron Cage of Movement Bureaucracy](#)".

[17] All quotes from Takis Fotopoulos are cited with permission from personal correspondence with the author in December 2005.

[18] For an analysis of new alliance politics movements including animal liberation, see my article, "[Common Natures, Shared Fates: Toward an Interspecies Alliance Politics](#)".

[19] On new forms of alliance politics, see Steven Best and Anthony J. Nocella II (eds.) *Igniting a Revolution*" *Voices in Defense of Mother Earth* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2006).

[20] For a critique of HSUS' repugnant sycophancy to the FBI, see my article, "[HSUS Crosses the Line](#)".

[21] On the concept of "standpoint theory," see Sandra Harding, and my review of her book at--

[22] Marjorie Spiegel, *The Dreaded Comparison: Human and Animal Slavery* (New York: Mirror Books, 1996).