

Politics and Animals

Editors' Introduction

EDITORIAL COLLECTIVE

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INTRODUCTION

The last four decades have seen a significant increase in public as well as academic interest in the human-animal relationship. A number of social, political, and academic developments have helped catalyze and disperse the presence of animal-related issues in a wide range of disciplines and institutions. For instance, the development of animal rights philosophy, the rise of a social movement for animal liberation, the emergence of cognitive ethology, the popularization of new ecological sensibilities, and the shifting modes of politicization of food production have all been instrumental in forming this trajectory. Alongside and within this conjuncture, a burgeoning field of human-animal studies has come to light. The evolution of human-animal studies began in moral philosophy in the early 1970s and quickly spread to other disciplines like history, sociology, anthropology, cultural and gender studies, literature, and law (Flynn, 2008; Taylor & Twine, 2014). Although human-animal studies remains a field on the margins in many circles, its research interests and agendas have begun to make inroads into mainstream academia. This is evidenced by the flood of books, journals, university courses, conferences, and interdisciplinary projects devoted to the relations, interactions, and interfaces between human and nonhuman animals.

ANIMALS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

With some recent and noteworthy exceptions, the fields of political science and political theory have demonstrated comparatively meager scholarly interest in

this “animal revolution” (Ryder, 2000) or “animal turn” (Weil, 2010). The dearth of literature emerging from these areas has not gone entirely unnoticed; in a recent anthology, editors David Schlosberg and Marcel Wissenburg (2014) remark that while there is an entire “academic industry on animal rights, welfare and ethics, there has been comparatively little offered in the political realm” (p. 1). Despite a growing awareness and interest in neighboring disciplines, as well as the fundamental role of the state in regulating the human-animal relationship and the essentially political character of that relationship, scholars of politics have devoted little attention to what many view as an ongoing paradigm shift in species relations.

There is no single reason for this neglect, but boundaries delineated within the deepest roots of political thought provide clues, and traditional definitions of politics continue to resonate within contemporary conceptions of animals and animality. For instance, when Aristotle laid the groundwork for the empirical study of politics and staked out its subject matter, he did so by explicitly excluding animals from the polis (*The Politics*, I: ii, 61). Taking Aristotle’s discursive cut as a pre-political fact, Western political philosophy and the various sub-fields of political science have committed themselves to a view of politics as an exclusively human affair. Consequently, when animals do become the subject of study in political science—as is increasingly common in environmental politics—their exclusion from the social world has relegated analytical approaches to human-animal relations to managerial frames that present a depoliticized account of human-animal relations. Commitment to this anthropocentric ontology, in turn, has contributed not only to

the marginalization of animal issues, but also, we argue, to a stunted and contorted understanding of what politics might be about.

THE RISE OF CRITICAL ANIMAL STUDIES

In the academic division of labor, the task of mapping the Realpolitik of the human-animal relationship has fallen largely on disciplines other than political science. For example, a number of critical sociologists, anthropologists, and philosophers have inquired into the connections between animal exploitation, human oppression, and moral exclusion (see Nibert, 2002, 2013; Noske, 1997; Patterson, 2002; Sanbonmatsu, 2011; Spiegel, 1989; Torres, 2007). Likewise, feminist animal rights philosophers have explored the intersections between sexism and speciesism extensively (see Adams, 1990; Adams and Donovan, 1995, 2007; Birke, 1994; Gålmark, 2005; Luke, 2007; Wyckoff, 2014b). Several historians and historically oriented scholars also have contributed to our understanding of the shifting politics of the human-animal relationship over time, particularly by shedding light on the emergence of the animal protection and animal rights movements (see, for example, Ritvo, 1987, 1997; Kean, 1998; Kete, 2002, 2007; Franklin, 1999; Thomas, 1983; Tester, 1991).

The research agendas of disciplines other than political science and political theory have touched upon many political themes, and have re-politicized many naturalized dimensions of the human-animal relationship. Yet little of this research has demonstrated a sustained interest in articulating interspecies relations as specifically political issues. There is a paucity of literature that construes issues raised by and within the human-animal relationship as concerning the basic organization of the political community and the authoritative distribution of burdens and benefits among its human and non-human members. Instead, the character of much animal ethics discourse has focused principally on defining and defending moral obligations to animals. While important, this focus has not only further complicated—if not stifled—the role that political scholarship has in critical animal studies, but likewise has made animal issues seem out of place in political science. Indeed, as Schlosberg and Wissenburg (2014) remind us, it is “one thing to convincingly argue that humans have ethical duties towards animals, quite another to see those duties enshrined in laws and consti-

tutions, and still another to see them embraced and implemented.” (p. 1)

POLITICIZING HUMAN-ANIMAL RELATIONS

The founding commitment of *Politics and Animals* is that the most pressing questions about the human-animal relationship are first and foremost political. As Jason Wyckoff (2014a) has pointed out, the usual framing of animal treatment in ethical terms “has tended to obscure the ways in which (and the degree to which) the wrongs suffered by animals at the hands of humans are structural” (p. 539, emphasis in original). The question, Wyckoff insists, is not just how we ought to relate to other sentient beings. More importantly, we should ask under what institutional conditions our interspecies encounters take place to begin with. After all, we do not just “happen upon” animals; we are structurally obliged to meet and interact with them in specific ways.

This observation propels the focus of *Politics and Animals* beyond the typical concerns of animal ethics (“What is right or wrong for me to do in relation to non-human animals?”) to the core interests of political philosophy: What characterizes the good/just society? Are there any plausible organizational principles of such a society that would relegate a class of moral patients—indeed, an overwhelming majority—to institutionalized disadvantage and mistreatment? If not, what are the structural constraints militating against change? And how can these obstacles be overcome? This approach recasts the problematic of interspecies relations in the terms of social justice and asymmetrical power relations rather than in the idiom of personal conduct alone—a move that situates the study of human-animal relations within the ambit of critical political theory and analysis. Fortunately—and as Tony Milligan explores in this issue’s first article—there are signs of a “political turn” in the study of human-animal relations. The work of Robert Garner (1996, 1998, 2005, 2013), along with recent contributions by Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka (2011), Timothy Pachirat (2011), Siobhan O’Sullivan (2011), Alasdair Cochrane (2010, 2012), Kimberly K. Smith (2012), and Dinesh Joseph Wadivel (2015), to name just a few, has substantiated the idea that animals belong squarely on the agendas of political theory and political science.

INTRODUCING POLITICS AND ANIMALS

If the suppression of nonhuman animals as subjects of political inquiry has distorted political thought, then concerted attention to politics and animals promises a deep reevaluation of its essential concepts and categories. As the articles collected in our inaugural volume demonstrate vividly, the question of interspecies justice unsettles received interpretations of political thinkers both ancient and contemporary, challenging and advancing foundational political concepts including membership, representation, freedom, and equality. Providing a cross-section of leading scholarship on interspecies politics, our contributors showcase the full scope of *Politics and Animals* as a forum for research and debate spanning the vistas of political theory and political science.

Tony Milligan (2015) opens the issue by probing the recent scholarship comprising the “political turn” in theories of animal rights, analyzing the commitments that distinguish its key theorists from the traditional concerns of animal rights theories, and concluding by sketching the prospect of a liberal discourse of animal rights as a “workable orientation,” broadly conversant about the position of animals within liberal values and institutions—a discourse that might, Milligan suggests, develop outside of “any single master theory or new orthodoxy.” (2015, p. 14)

One of the critical sites of contestation in any such political project is the construction of personhood, and for over two decades Paola Cavalieri and Peter Singer’s *The Great Ape Project* (Cavalieri & Singer, 1993) has catalyzed this debate. In her article in this issue, Cavalieri (2015) offers an expansive account of the ongoing philosophical, legal, and cultural endeavor to secure rights of personhood for nonhuman great apes. Taking on the most substantial philosophical objections to the initiative, Cavalieri surveys the “meaning” of the Great Ape Project both within and beyond its founding text, ranging from its philosophical premises in an enlarged conception of egalitarianism to its judicial prospects in recent court battles and its future as a social movement.

As Cavalieri suggests in her conclusion, “some of the speculative tools of doctrines, once freed from their biases, can be turned against them.” (2015, p. 29) Elisa Aaltola (2015) makes just such a move in order to illuminate the the entanglement of paradoxical attitudes and actions in the social consumption of animal products.

Beginning with Plato, Aaltola retrieves insights from the rationalist tradition in philosophy to engage with questions at the heart not only of animal activism, but also of social psychology and sociology. For Aaltola, the storied concept of *akrasia* links the moral psychology of carnivorous habits to pernicious social structures and pervasive yet often covert conceptions of self-cultivation, introducing a welcome sophistication into discussions unfolding around the role of emotions in the movement for interspecies justice.

Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka (2015) analyze another of the central practical developments in contemporary animal advocacy. The proliferation of farm sanctuaries throughout North America and Western Europe opens vital spaces for organisation and experimentation in just coexistence with domesticated animals, and these endeavors raise important political questions. Donaldson and Kymlicka reflect on the political limitations of the sanctuary movement’s present focus on refuge, aid, and outreach, proposing an intentional community model that challenges some of the practices and principles developed by many sanctuaries. Anchored by a vision of non-humans and humans as “co-creators of ongoing, shared communities” (2015, p. 68), Donaldson and Kymlicka’s intentional community model aims to enrich the institutional structures, organisational priorities, and political self-conception of the consolidating sanctuary movement, while advancing their own account of political membership and agency for domesticated animals.

Concluding the first issue of *Politics and Animals*, Stefan Dolgert (2015) provides an iconoclastic perspective on both traditional and contemporary sources in political theory. Dolgert contends that re-reading Plato’s renditions of the doctrine of interspecies reincarnation scattered throughout his political writings provides an opportunity to disrupt Bruno Latour’s and Jacques Rancière’s renditions of Plato as an enemy of democratic theory. Simultaneously, taking the irruptions of animal voices seriously challenges the place of other species in all three theorists’ accounts of political participation.

One of the core challenges for interspecies political inquiry, Dolgert suggests, is to “imagine the worlds that other animals are already creating.” (2015, p. 84) Together, the articles collected in this inaugural issue expand the political imagination of human-animal relationships along multiple frontiers; they invigorate, deepen, and expand the conversations emerging around interspecies politics,

and the debates and exchanges to come in *Politics and Animals*.

MOVING FORWARD: OPEN ACCESS

Politics and Animals is a fully online, open access journal—a platform for scholarly research and debate on the politics intrinsic to human-animal relationships. We believe that, compared to print and electronic subscription models, open access affords more expansive and equitable participation in the circulation of knowledge. This is vital for fields with a stake not only in studying but also in influencing social and political trends. It is no great surprise, then, that inquiry into race, gender, ability/disability, indigeneity, and other topics at the forefront of social justice movements increasingly advances online through open access publishing platforms. Likewise, *Politics and Animals*' open access policy ensures that we can cultivate groundbreaking research in a forum that is free, accessible to the public, and maximally visible to other researchers. This journal is made possible through the support of Lund University, and the review infrastructure is provided by Open Journal Systems. Upholding our Editorial Team is a dedicated academic community, without whose support and hard work this journal would not be possible. We are delighted to present the inaugural issue of *Politics and Animals*, and invite those who are interested in contributing to the journal to refer to the journal's Aim and Scope, or for other matters, to correspond directly with us.

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