

Should the Animal Rights Movement Make Use of Deliberative Activism?

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This paper addresses the question of whether the animal rights movement should make use of what I call “deliberative activism”, i.e., activism based on deliberative processes. To date, animal rights activists rely primarily on non-deliberative activism, such as strikes, protests, boycotts, demonstrations, leafleting, rescue actions, etc. In contrast to such non-deliberative forms of protest, recent work by Robert Garner and Lucy Parry emphasizes the potential benefits of deliberative democratic structures for the animal rights movement. This paper aims to contribute to this endeavor by putting deliberative activism under scrutiny. More specifically, this paper evaluates three proposed benefits of deliberation for the animal rights movement: 1) deliberation can change (moral) minds; 2) deliberation can counter the “ideological hegemony” of the animal industry; 3) deliberation can avoid both alienation of stakeholders and reputational damage to the movement. I argue that whether the animal rights movement can reap these benefits depends to a large degree on whether the deliberative processes in question are designed to support recognition respect, that is, respect for each other as persons.

Keywords:
animal rights;
deliberative activism;
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moral judgment;
recognition respect;

INTRODUCTION

This paper is concerned with the question of whether the animal rights movement should use deliberative activism to achieve its goals.² I conceive of deliberative activism as a form of activism that is based on deliberative processes, as understood within the framework of deliberative democracy. While recent work by Garner and Parry emphasizes potential benefits of deliberation for animal rights advocacy, an in-depth evaluation of the effectiveness of deliberative activism is yet missing.³ Given the urgency that animal rights activists often perceive, the use of deliberative processes may not seem appealing. However, as I will show in this paper, deliberative activism can be effective for the animal rights movement—but only if deliberation supports recognition respect.

This paper is structured in the following way: First, I provide a brief overview of the role of activism in the literature on deliberative democracy. Next, I address the first presumed benefit of deliberative activism: The po-

tential of deliberative processes to change the (moral) minds of the participants. To assess whether this benefit can also work to the advantage of the animal rights movement, it is necessary to take a closer look at the nature of moral judgments, given that animal rights are a moral issue and deliberation on animal rights aims to change the respective moral judgments on the topic.

In the third section, I therefore touch upon research in cognitive science on the formation of moral judgments and reflect on the implications that these findings may have for changing minds on the issue of animal rights. Concretely, I propose that the emotional basis of moral judgments causes an *affective* (i.e., emotion-based) *aversion* to change one’s mind or to compromise on the issue of animal rights. The question therefore arises whether animal rights activists are well-advised to make use of deliberative activism, given that the disagreeing parties are unlikely to change their minds on the issue. In section four, I suggest that affective aversion may be counterbalanced by an affective attitude of recognition respect. Based on these considerations, I argue that animal rights

activists can benefit from the mind-changing potential of deliberative processes, but only if these processes support recognition respect.

In section five, I use the previous considerations on recognition respect to evaluate the second presumed benefit of deliberative activism for the animal rights movement: That, by using deliberative processes, animal rights activists can counterbalance the ideological hegemony of their opponents (Garner, 2016, 2019; Parry, 2016). I argue that the experience of recognition respect makes it more likely that animal rights activists can truly counter the ideological hegemony of the animal industry. Section six assesses the third presumed benefit proposed by Parry (2017) that deliberative forms of activism can avoid both alienation of important stakeholders and reputational damage to the animal rights movement. On the face of it, both benefits seem to speak in favor of deliberative activism. However, as I will argue, we should proceed with caution since these benefits can be easily undermined by the negative effects of adverse emotions. I argue that once again, the experience of recognition respect is indispensable to avoid alienation and reputational damage.

Section seven reflects on potential concerns for animal rights activists, especially regarding the question of why they should want to deliberate with their opponents in the first place. The last section addresses some limitations regarding the conception of moral judgment employed in this paper.

ACTIVISM IN DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY

Deliberative democracy, in its broadest sense, can be understood as “any practice of democracy that gives deliberation a central place” (Bächtiger et al., 2018, p. 2). As such, deliberative democracy is increasingly understood as a system, in the sense that the realization of deliberative ideals can take place in multiple ways (Bächtiger et al., 2018). More precisely, according to a systemic understanding of deliberative democracy, deliberation does not necessarily or exclusively have to take place in formal settings such as mini-publics or governmental settings but can also be practiced in private conversations or the public sphere. In this paper, I understand deliberative democracy in the systemic sense, according to which deliberative democracy can take place in multiple forms, including both public and private political conversations.

Thus understood, the systemic approach “stretches” earlier accounts of deliberative democracy (Goodin, 2018), which advanced more narrowly defined delibera-

tive procedures and goals, e.g., aiming for a consensus through authentic and rational arguing, with a focus on the common good. Importantly for this paper, systemic stretches also pertain to the presumed relevance of mutual respect. As Robert Goodin (2018, p. 888) points out, previous ideals of an “an overriding rule of ‘mutual respect’ among those participating in the deliberations” have been stretched to allow for prejudice and incivility, including “intemperate, disrespectful interventions that are high on emotion but low on information” (p. 889) and “hecklers ... shouting down the speakers so that they cannot be heard” (p. 890). According to Goodin, prominent deliberative democratic scholars, such as Jane Mansbridge, consider such practices to be justified within the deliberative system if they can give a voice to minority positions that would otherwise not be heard. While stretches of this kind may have advantages in terms of making deliberative democracy more inclusive and perhaps more realistic, I shall argue that deliberative activism – at least if used by the animal rights movement – should adopt deliberative strategies that not merely allow for mutual respect but require it.

Political activism more generally is increasingly acknowledged as an important part of deliberative systems, and the public sphere in particular is considered to be an important site for resistance to dogmatic beliefs and entrenched norms (Bächtiger et al., 2018). Some scholars endorse the inclusion of activism in the deliberative democratic framework specifically with reference to animal rights activism. Mathew Humphrey and Marc Stears (2006), for example, claim that deliberative democracy needs to make room for disruptive actions to ensure equal access to political influence. They argue that disadvantaged groups rely on disruptive tactics to have a voice because these groups tend to challenge those entrenched ways of thought and behavior that also manifest themselves in political inequality. As Humphrey and Stears put it, “if political equality is really our concern (...) then empowering activists to challenge the advantages of entrenched patterns of behaviour would appear to be a desirable rather than an undesirable form of democratic political action” (Humphrey & Stears, 2006, p. 408).

Furthermore, Stephen D’Arcy (2007) argues that deliberative democracy justifies the direct action activism often employed by animal rights activists, because deliberative democratic theory is not only a theory of legitimacy but also a theory of illegitimacy. That is, according to D’Arcy, as a theory of illegitimacy, deliberative democracy defines the conditions under which direct ac-

tions may be used to resist illegitimate decisions. Moreover, Garner holds that even though extreme (e.g., violent) forms of animal rights activism may not be compatible with the ideals of deliberative democracy, the *tone* of animal rights activism “is entirely justified (even within the parameters of deliberative theory) whilst the animal rights movement is so disadvantaged in the current system of interest group politics” (Garner, 2016, p. 111).

As the above review shows, the relationship between animal rights activism and deliberative democracy has been addressed primarily concerning the question of whether deliberative democracy should (or does) include non-deliberative activism, such as direct actions. While the acknowledgment of non-deliberative activism as a legitimate part of the deliberative system is certainly desirable for the animal rights movement, I propose that we also need to evaluate the potential of *deliberative* activism. Except for Garner (2016, 2017, 2018, 2019) and Parry (2016, 2017), this question has not been gaining much attention as of yet.

By evaluating the potential of deliberative activism for the animal rights movement, this paper aims not only to contribute to existing scholarship on the subject, but also to increase the effectiveness of the animal rights movement in practice.

CAN DELIBERATION CHANGE MINDS?

According to Elisa Aaltola (2011), animal rights activists have been largely ignoring the importance of effective persuasion, which is, however, central for successful animal rights advocacy. As Aaltola puts it, persuasion “is the element that should be a constant reference point when deciding on tactics” (Aaltola, 2011, p. 401). She therefore emphasizes the necessity of developing new persuasion strategies that can increase the effectiveness of animal rights activism. On the face of it, deliberative processes seem to support effective persuasion, given that these processes are supposed to achieve agreements — in the form of a consensus or a compromise — by changing the minds of the discourse participants. More concretely, in the case of a consensus, (some of) the participants have to change their minds on the issue at hand to form a consensus with their interlocutors. In the case of a compromise, the participants do not change their initial positions on the issue of disagreement but change their minds in the sense that they agree to sacrifice something of value that they were not ready to sacrifice before the deliberative process.⁴

Deliberative activism therefore seems to hold considerable promise for animal rights advocacy, assuming

that deliberation can cause a change of mind in the participants (Garner, 2019). Parry (2016) also suggests that animal rights advocates should make use of deliberative structures, emphasizing the potential of deliberative processes to change minds. She argues that reflexivity — a feature inherent to deliberative processes — is particularly important for promoting animal rights because reflexivity requires that discourse participants reevaluate their positions in light of new arguments. The opportunity to change someone’s (moral) position is crucial for promoting animal rights because the goals of animal rights advocates tend to be diametrically opposed to the normative status quo. As Parry points out, “it is because animal rights theory is radically different to the status quo that the reflexive feature of deliberation has significant potential” (Parry, 2016, p. 142).

At a first glance, this seems to be an obvious argument in favor of deliberative activism. If deliberative processes have the reflective potential to change minds on issues of disagreement, animal rights activists should certainly make use of such processes.⁵ However, some scholars have raised concerns about this idea by pointing to the difficulty of changing someone’s mind when it comes to values or habits that matter fundamentally (henceforth referred to as the “changing-moral-minds problem”). For example, in an analysis of deliberative fora on animal rights, Garner (2018) found that attitude-change is more likely to take place for those without significant stakes in the issue. In a similar spirit, Humphrey and Stears argue that people are “particularly unlikely to change their minds in ways that require a significant reshaping of their fundamental worldviews or their ways of life” (Humphrey & Stears, 2006, p. 406–407).

A fundamental reshaping of worldviews and ways of life is, however, exactly what is required from an animal rights perspective. This is so because a proper extension of rights to non-human animals would deeply affect most peoples’ lifestyles — in particular their eating habits, but also clothing, social and cultural habits, many of which require the usage of non-human animals in one way or another. Therefore, in a sense, everyone is a stakeholder when it comes to the issue of animal rights. Furthermore, a change of mind regarding the moral and legal status of non-human animals is particularly difficult, because it requires us to confront a deeply ingrained set of justifications: The justification that using non-human animals as food, clothing, test objects, etc. is normal, natural, and necessary (Joy, 2008, 2019). And, as D’Arcy points out, in a world where we take it for granted that non-human animals are ours to use, “the posi-

tion that killing animals and eating them is morally impermissible cannot be expected to find a large, receptive audience, open to the force of the better argument” (D’Arcy, 2007, p. 10).

The question therefore arises: What are we to make of these difficulties in changing the minds of “carnist” stakeholders — i.e., of those who consider meat-eating (and the usage of non-human animals for other purposes) to be normal, natural, and necessary (Joy, 2008)?⁶ Should we still recommend deliberative activism to animal rights advocates, even though the chances that deliberation will affect a change of mind in their opponents appear to be slim? Humphrey and Stears (2006) indeed suggest that precisely because it is so difficult to change “sticky” mindsets through deliberation, animal rights activists may be well advised to resort to non-deliberative means.

Garner also expresses some skepticism regarding the potential of deliberative processes to change moral minds. While acknowledging deliberative democracy as a potentially promising framework for animal rights activists — at least one that is more beneficial for the movement than aggregative versions of democracy (Garner, 2019) — he is concerned that deliberation seems to work best on topics that do not matter too much to the participants (Garner, 2018). If this is the case, deliberative processes may not work for animal rights activists, given that both the activists and their opponents tend to have high stakes in the issue.

Given these concerns regarding the changing-moral-minds problem, the question arises of whether the difficulty in changing moral minds speaks against deliberative activism. To properly address this question, I will take a closer look at the process of moral judgment formation, given that moral judgments are the constitutive elements of moral disagreements and are, as such, the ultimate targets of persuasion. By looking at moral judgments as the source of the changing-moral-minds problem, we can devise strategies for adjusting the deliberative process in a way that will increase its potential for moral persuasion.

THE EMOTIONAL BASIS OF MORAL JUDGMENTS

As mentioned above, deliberation on animal rights aims to achieve either a consensus or a compromise. In both cases, consensus and compromise, a change of mind is required from the participants and both kinds of mind-change are difficult to achieve in the moral domain. The emotional basis of moral judgment formation

constitutes an important reason why it is difficult to change moral minds. Ample research in cognitive science shows that the emotions play a fundamental role in the formation of moral judgments (Damasio, 1994, 2003; Frijda et al., 2000; Greene, 2008, 2013, 2014; Greene et al., 2001; Haidt, 2001, 2012; Haidt et al., 1993; Helion & Pizarro, 2015; Johnson, 2014; LeDoux, 1996; Lerner et al., 2015; Nichols, 2004; Prinz, 2006, 2007; Schnall et al., 2008; Wheatley & Haidt, 2005). While each of these works takes a different view on the precise relationship between emotions and moral judgment formation, they all agree on the core assumption that emotions play a significant role in the process.

In line with research on moral judgment formation, I proceed from the assumption that moral judgments tend to be strongly influenced by emotions, even though I do not take this to mean that we cannot also reflect on moral issues while keeping emotional inclinations at bay. However, doing so requires some practice and skill (e.g., emotion-regulation techniques) that not everyone has cultivated. To advance the rights of non-human animals, different stakeholders need to be included in the deliberative process and setting aside the emotions will not be easy for everyone — all the more so since animal rights are not an issue that many people have been trying to reflect on with a neutral mindset (or at all).

On the contrary, the (ab)use of non-human animals obtains a status of normalcy that is deeply ingrained in our thoughts and emotions. As a result, we tend to defend the status quo rather than challenge it. As I will explain in the following, the emotional basis of moral judgments makes us (to some degree subconsciously) protective of our values, so that we rather defend our views than listen to the other side. But if, as parties to a moral disagreement, we do not (truly) listen to each other, it will be exceedingly difficult to achieve a change of mind.

To exemplify some concrete implications that the emotional basis of moral judgments has for deliberation on animal rights, let us consider two influential models of moral judgment formation in more detail, Jonathan Haidt’s Social Intuitionist Model (Haidt, 2001, 2012) and Jesse Prinz’s Constitution Model (Prinz, 2006, 2007).

According to Haidt’s Social Intuitionist Model, moral judgments are based on intuition by default. A moral intuition, according to Haidt, emerges from automatic and non-conscious processes. This means that we are not always aware of the processes that lead to an intuition, but only of the intuition as such, which we experience as an “affective valence”, such as a feeling of

liking or disliking (Haidt, 2001, p. 818). Unlike moral intuitions, moral reasoning is considered to be slow, effortful, and conscious. But rather than contributing to genuine judgment formation, moral reasoning serves primarily to justify the judgments that we have already made intuitively. Haidt (2001) labels this phenomenon “post hoc reasoning”. Importantly, according to Haidt, merely appealing to rational arguments is therefore not likely to change someone’s moral mind. Rather, we need to affect the other person’s emotions in order to affect their reasoning.⁷

What are the implications of Haidt’s model of moral judgment formation for the issue at hand, i.e., how might it affect deliberation on animal rights? Let me answer this question with an example. Consider a deliberative democratic setting with animal rights activists on the one hand and carnist stakeholders (e.g., a group of people from the general public) on the other hand. Let us assume that the carnist stakeholders (henceforth {S}) believe that using non-human animals as food is morally permissible (henceforth {M}). We may think that {S} believe {M} because they have concluded that using non-human animals as food is natural, normal, and necessary; that non-human animals are not susceptible to pain, are not conscious or sentient beings; etc.

However, according to Haidt’s Social Intuitionist Model, judgment {M} is more adequately understood in the following way: Based on a variety of external (e.g., cultural) and innate (e.g. evolutionary) influences, {S} have developed the intuition that {M} is right. Rather than being the reason for judgment {M}, the diverse justifications for {M} ({M} is natural, normal, and necessary; non-human animals are not susceptible to pain, are not conscious, etc.) are post-hoc reasons that {S} have contrived to justify the intuition that {M} is right.⁸ If, however, these justifications for {M} are merely post-hoc reasons, deliberating on these reasons will — according to Haidt — not have much effect on judgment {M} which precedes these reasons. Instead, the Social Intuitionist Model suggests that we need to affect the other person’s emotions before we can hope to change their minds. I will elaborate on this point below.

But first, let us consider Prinz’s Constitution Model of moral judgment formation, which holds that moral judgments are constituted by emotions. This means that what we believe to be right or wrong is determined by feelings of approbation or disapprobation respectively (Prinz, 2007). According to the Constitution Model, because they are constituted by feelings of approbation or disapprobation, moral judgments are self-justifying.

More precisely, the feeling of approbation towards the values that we endorse in our judgments inherently conveys to us the impression that our judgments are justified (Prinz, 2006). Therefore, when we form a moral judgment, we experience a sense of rightness that is directed towards our own moral views and that negates the necessity for further justification.

Continuing with the above example, let us briefly consider the implications of the Constitution Model for deliberation on animal rights. According to the Constitution Model, {S}’s belief {M} (i.e., using non-human animals as food is morally permissible) is constituted by approbative feelings towards {M}, which convey to {S} the impression that {M} is justified. Since {S} therefore *feel* that {M} is justified, they are likely reluctant to change their views on the moral and legal status of non-human animals.

Given the emotional basis of moral judgments and the resulting difficulty to change moral minds, it is conceivable that a rational back and forth of reasons may not lead to the desired results for animal rights activists. The question therefore arises how they may hope to persuade carnist stakeholders to change their minds if the latter perceive their positions to be right not merely at the level of (post-hoc) reasoning, but also at the visceral level. Elsewhere, I have argued that because moral judgments are largely based on emotions, moral opponents tend to experience an *affective aversion* to change their minds on moral issues (Spang, forthcoming). In a nutshell, this means that we feel an aversion to change our moral minds because doing so contradicts our gut feeling that we are right — which, according to Prinz, is the very feeling that constitutes our moral judgment in the first place.

Assuming that we tend to experience affective aversion in contexts of moral disagreement, does it make sense for animal rights activists to use deliberative activism to advance their goals? In the following, I argue that deliberative activism can be an effective tool for the animal rights movement, but only if deliberation is designed to support recognition respect. More concretely, having identified the emotional basis of moral judgments as being at the core of the changing-moral-minds problem, we can devise a solution strategy that is tailored specifically to counterbalancing affective aversion. In line with the idea that an unwanted emotion is best counterbalanced with an “opposite” emotion (Haidt, 2012; James, 1890; Lerner et al., 2015; Spinoza, 2000), I suggest that affective aversion can be counterbalanced

by an affective attitude of respect. I elaborate on this idea in the following.

THE ROLE OF RECOGNITION RESPECT FOR CHANGING MINDS

The idea that respect is important for democratic deliberation is certainly not new. Indeed, many scholars of deliberative democracy consider mutual respect to be a crucial ingredient for the deliberative democratic process (e.g., Bächtiger et al., 2010; Bächtiger et al., 2018; Gutmann & Thompson, 1996, 2004; Mansbridge et al., 2010; Thompson, 2008). Furthermore, both Garner and Parry mention respect in their work on deliberation and animal rights. Garner refers to respect in passing, pointing out that “mutual respect of, and empathy for, *the arguments* of others is encouraged” during deliberative processes (Garner, 2018, p. 2, 2019, p. 311, emphasis added). Parry (2016) puts a higher emphasis on respect, stating, for example, that “*all the interests* under consideration should be respected, and deliberators should present their arguments in a respectful manner, giving equal consideration *to different positions*” (p. 140, emphasis added).”

However, the role of respect for deliberative activism remains underspecified in these works: It is not clear how exactly respect can support deliberative activism. In particular, both Garner and Parry focus on respect for opposing *positions* or *arguments* rather than respect for *persons*, which, as I will argue below, is a more promising form of respect in contexts of moral disagreement. In the following, I therefore propose a specific function of respect that has not yet been recognized in existing accounts: I propose that respect for persons is important for deliberative activism because it can counterbalance affective aversion in two different ways and thus increase the likelihood that animal rights activists can achieve a change of the mind in their interlocutors.

Stephen Darwall has labeled respect for persons as *recognition respect*. According to Darwall, recognition respect “is just this sort of respect which is said to be owed to all persons. To say that persons as such are entitled to respect is to say that they are entitled to have other persons take seriously and weigh appropriately the fact that they are persons in deliberating about what to do” (Darwall, 1977, p. 38). Darwall contrasts recognition respect with *appraisal respect*, which he characterizes as a kind of respect that is focused on particular characteristics or achievements of the other person. We can, for example, have appraisal respect for someone’s integrity

or good qualities (Darwall, 1977) — such as, we may add, someone’s moral judgments.

While both appraisal and recognition respect can be experienced affectively and can therefore constitute an emotional counterbalance to affective aversion, recognition respect has two distinct benefits that make it more promising in the context of moral disagreement. First, in situations of moral disagreement, we are rather unlikely to experience appraisal respect, which requires us to respect precisely those judgments that we morally reject. We may, however, still experience recognition respect for the other person, even if we disagree with their points of view. Therefore, recognition respect constitutes a more realistic form of respect in the context of moral disagreement. Secondly, recognition respect generates a shift of focus away from contentious moral judgments and towards each other as persons. I propose that a focus shift of this kind can increase the willingness to seriously listen to each other during a deliberative process and, ultimately, to agree on a compromise or a consensus.

These theoretical considerations also find empirical support, for example, in the work of Bernd Simon and Christoph Daniel Schaefer. The authors conceptualize respect as “recognition as fellow citizens of equal worth” (Simon & Schaefer, 2016, p. 381), thus falling in line with Darwall’s conception of recognition respect that is used in this paper. Their studies show that recognition respect can indeed counterbalance disapproving attitudes (Simon & Schaefer, 2018). Moreover, their research shows that recognition respect can be experienced even in the midst of strong disagreement: Simon and Schaefer found that “the doubly extreme combination of utmost disapproval and full respect turned out to be more than only a theoretical possibility. It was an empirical reality” (Simon & Schaefer, 2016, p. 381). Furthermore, the empirical work of Scott Atran and Jeremy Ginges (2015) also corroborates the importance of respect for agreement-seeking processes, by indicating that mutual displays of respect can increase the likelihood that the parties to a conflict will agree on a compromise.

Together with the previous theoretical reflections on the role of recognition respect, these empirical findings provide an encouraging framework for assessing the potential of deliberative activism for the animal rights movement. I have suggested that the emotional basis of moral judgments causes us to experience an affective aversion to change our moral minds. But it seems that an affective experience of recognition respect can counter affective aversion and may support a compromise or

a consensus on the issue of disagreement. Regarding the changing-moral-minds problem, we may therefore conclude that it does not necessarily speak against deliberative activism — but the deliberative process must be designed to support a mutual experience of recognition respect.

In the following, I discuss two further assumed benefits of deliberative activism for the animal rights movement and I argue that the realization of both benefits also crucially depends on recognition respect.

CAN DELIBERATION COUNTER IDEOLOGICAL HEGEMONY?

A significant problem for animal rights activism is what Garner (2016) calls the “ideological hegemony” of industries that benefit from animal exploitation (e.g., agricultural industries or pharmaceutical companies). These industries possess ideological hegemony in the sense that their interests align with the widely accepted view that non-human animals are property (Francione, 2004; Francione & Charlton, 2017; Hadley, 2015) and that using them for our purposes is normal, natural, and necessary (Joy, 2008, 2019). As John Hadley puts it, “animals, like slaves in a bygone era, have the status in law of property objects and can be bought and sold, deprived of the necessities of life, inflicted with pain, interfered with and killed... People get together with friends to celebrate their achievements in life by consuming animals. The exploitation of animals is omnipresent to the point of being mundane” (Hadley, 2015, p. 707).

In this ideological environment, the views and goals of animal rights activists are considered to be abnormal, unnatural, and unnecessary (Joy, 2019) and as such are rejected by most people (Garner, 2016). Because animal rights activists represent a marginalized perspective, animal industries — benefiting from their ideological hegemony — can easily dominate the content and shape of public discourse (Parry, 2016).

Both Garner (2019) and Parry (2016) suggest that deliberative democracy may constitute a solution to this problem because deliberative processes are supposed to be inclusive — not only in the sense that these processes include all relevant perspectives but also in the sense that all perspectives are equally under scrutiny. Therefore, if animal rights activists participate in a deliberative process, they are supposed to have a better chance of getting heard (Garner, 2018). Or, as Parry puts it, deliberative democracy not only empowers relevant stakeholders to “get into the room”, but also enables “the full

range of perspectives, positions or interests to be taken into consideration” (Parry, 2016, p. 139).

I agree that inclusivity in the sense envisioned by Garner and Parry can theoretically counter the ideological hegemony of animal industries. However, there is a risk that hegemonic dynamics prevail in the deliberative process and this risk is particularly salient in deliberation on moral issues. More concretely, the problem is that “getting into the room” does not automatically mean that everyone is being heard and taken seriously. This has, among other things, again to do with the emotional basis of moral judgments, which makes us — intuitively — defensive of our positions and reluctant to listen to arguments that challenge our views. If, however, everyone is getting into the room without truly listening to each other, we merely achieve token-inclusivity.

To avoid mere token-inclusivity, it is important to design the deliberative process in a way that supports recognition respect. As I have argued above, recognition respect can counterbalance affective aversion not only as an emotional counterweight but also by shifting the focus to the other person and away from the issue of disagreement, thereby increasing the likelihood that actual listening can take place. I therefore submit that deliberation can help animal rights activists counter the ideological hegemony of the animal industry, but only if the deliberative process supports recognition respect.

CAN DELIBERATIVE ACTIVISM AVOID ALIENATION AND REPUTATIONAL DAMAGE?

Another argument in favor of deliberative activism pertains to the alienation and reputational damage that can result from non-deliberative activism. In this context, Parry (2017) points out that by demonizing actors in the animal industry, for example in shock videos, animal rights activists not only exclude relevant stakeholders from dialogue but also risk alienating an important group of people that they need to address. Parry further argues that non-deliberative, violent actions can negatively affect the public perception of animal rights activism and that the animal rights movement is therefore likely to suffer reputational damage from such actions. Instead, she suggests that “a more deliberative approach encompassing reasoned argument and non-coercive persuasion may be more conducive to achieving animal activists’ aims” (Parry, 2017, p. 452–453). But can deliberative activism indeed avoid alienation of stakeholders as well as reputational damage to the movement? I submit that the answer to this question is, once again, a qualified

“yes”: Deliberative activism can help avoid alienation and reputational damage, but only if the deliberative process supports recognition respect.

As with the previous presumed benefits of deliberative activism, a potential problem in this case pertains again to our intuitive defense of moral views: We rather create post-hoc reasons to justify our positions than hear about potential pitfalls in our reasoning. For example, if, as a stakeholder in the agribusiness, I engage in deliberation with animal rights activists, it is unlikely that I want to hear their reasons for advocating animal rights. Rather, I feel justified in using non-human animals for food — which is in my opinion natural, normal, and necessary — and I am therefore going to defend my position rather than wanting to hear arguments to the contrary. I may even feel annoyed or angry that I have to engage with animal rights activists at all, considering that I am providing food for many people. I may, indeed, wonder why I should have to defend my actions in the first place.

Vice versa, as an animal rights activist deliberating with stakeholders in the animal industry, I do not want to hear justifications for using non-human animals for human purposes. Rather, I want to make them understand that our treatment of non-human animals constitutes a highly problematic practice that is not justified just because it is considered to be normal. Given this mindset, I may enter the deliberation with a certain level of anger and frustration.

A deliberative setting in which such adverse emotions take hold may, however, lead to precisely the kind of alienation and reputational damage that non-deliberative activism can cause and that deliberative activism seeks to avoid. With adverse emotions unchecked, participants in deliberation may engage in insulting behavior or use aggressive wording that can ultimately cause rather than avoid alienation and reputational damage. In contrast, if deliberative activism is to avoid these problems, the deliberative process needs to be designed so that it supports a mutual experience of recognition respect. Feeling respect for each other as persons, both animal rights activists and stakeholders in the animal industry are much more likely to refrain from aggressive behavior, to listen to each other’s arguments, and to leave the deliberative setting with an agreement in hand rather than a feeling of alienation and mistrust.

POTENTIAL CONCERNS FOR ANIMAL RIGHTS ACTIVISTS

So far, this paper has evaluated whether animal rights activists should make use of deliberative activism. Another important question is, however, whether animal rights activists *want* to use deliberative activism in the first place. In this section, I address some concerns that have been raised in this regard.

The advancement of animal rights is a matter of life and death for billions of sentient beings. Given the sheer urgency of the matter, it is not surprising that direct action activism oftentimes feels right for animal rights activists: It feels right to do something, rather than to engage in an exchange of reasons with their opponents. Indeed, D’Arcy raises the concern that animal rights activists may not consider a deliberative exchange of reasons to be sufficient for achieving their goals. He states that “direct action animal advocates are, in general, far less confident than many deliberative democrats that reason-giving in the context of public discussion can be a sufficient vehicle for advancing social justice” (D’Arcy, 2007, p. 1). Or, as Peter Sankoff puts it, “when someone concerned about animals looks at the state in which so many of these beings suffer today, it is undoubtedly difficult to accept that the answer to the problem is simply more talk” (Sankoff, 2012, p. 319).

While such reactions may be understandable on the part of animal rights activists, it is important not to be misled by feelings of urgency. Rather, the urgency of the issue is precisely the reason why we need to carefully evaluate which strategies are the most effective. I have argued in this paper that deliberative activism can be effective for animal rights activists, but only if deliberation is designed to support recognition respect. Respect-based deliberative activism can not only cause a change of mind in the participants but also avoid potential disadvantages of non-deliberative activism, such as mutual alienation and reputational damage.

This does not mean, however, that animal rights activists should always favor deliberative over non-deliberative activism. Both kinds of activism have their benefits, and each may be suitable depending on the specific goal. If, for example, the goal is to raise large-scale awareness for the suffering of non-human animals, direct action activism, such as the streaming of undercover footage on social media channels, is likely to be more effective than a deliberative setting, which is inherently confined to smaller groups. In contrast, if the goal is to affect policy-making more directly, respectful deliberation between relevant stakeholders can go a long way

within the deliberative system (see also Parry, 2017). Moreover, Sankoff (2012) demonstrates that animal welfare is supported more effectively by the law when the legislative process is accompanied by public deliberation on the topic. Therefore, even though deliberative activism may not always seem appropriate given the urgency of the matter, in the end, “more talk” is precisely what can propel the animal rights movement towards its goals.

Another concern is that animal rights activists may be unwilling to engage in deliberation with their opponents because they are unwilling to accept any outcome other than a consensus on their own position (Garner, 2019). Put differently, for animal rights activists, the question arises: If the goal of deliberation is to compromise on the rights of non-human animals — or even to change their own mind on the issue — why should they participate in the first place?

To address this motivational problem, animal rights activists must understand the benefits of deliberating with their moral opponents. As Parry states, “if it could be shown that a deliberative approach to animal advocacy could secure a better outcome for animals than the current or non-deliberative approaches, animal rights activists might be more open to embodying something closer to deliberative ideals” (Parry, 2016, p. 143). Based on the arguments of this paper, it is important to inform animal rights activists that respect-based deliberative activism can a) reduce their interlocutors’ emotional aversion to engage with arguments in favor of animal rights, and, therefore, b) increase the likelihood that their interlocutors will truly listen to their arguments and potentially change their minds; c) counterbalance the ideological hegemony of the animal industry, and d) avoid both alienation of important stakeholders and reputational damage to the animal rights movement.

When giving animal rights activists an understanding of these distinct benefits of deliberative activism, it will be likewise important to raise awareness of potential pitfalls. Above all, it needs to be emphasized that recognition respect is fundamental to reaping the presumed benefits. It needs to be clear that without respect for each other as persons, deliberative activism may not work or even be counterproductive for the animal rights movement. On the positive side, recognition respect will likely come easily to animal rights activists, given that it already tends to be an important aspect of their daily life. After all, which animal rights advocate does not have a parent, friend, or co-worker whom they dearly respect as a person but whose views on non-human animals they

find reprehensible? Given this practice in simultaneously experiencing deep respect and strong disagreement, I suspect that many animal rights activists are already well-prepared to maintain a respectful attitude when deliberating with their opponents.

LIMITATIONS

Before concluding, a note on the limits of the arguments advanced in this paper is in order. While my focus has been on recognition respect as a remedy to affective aversion (and thus as a remedy to the related challenges of changing moral minds, countering opposing ideologies, and avoiding alienation), it should be noted that this is not meant to be an exhaustive analysis of the role that the emotions can play in the context of animal rights advocacy. Indeed, several authors emphasize how specific emotions can attune us to animal suffering. Cora Diamond (2005), for example, argues that “our conception of suffering and death” is also shaped by the experience of pity, which at the same time opens up “the possibility of relenting” (p. 106) and which should therefore not be ignored in the context of animal ethics. Diamond (2008) further suggests that phenomena such as the exploitation of non-human animals can exceed our imaginative capacities and thus constitute a reality that is “resistant to our thinking it” (p. 45-46). Such phenomena can, however, be grasped emotionally, as an experience that exposes reality. Furthermore, Vinciane Despret (2013) argues that the experience of empathy can create “possibilities of an embodied communication” (p. 71) by “making the body available for the response of another being” (p. 70), including responses from non-human animals. And more generally, Alice Cray (2009) emphasizes that moral thinking can also take other forms than moral judgment. Arguing that moral reflections are a function of a whole web of individual sensibilities that are internal to our language capacities, Cray claims that ethical considerations should go “beyond moral judgment”.

Given these considerations, the focus on moral judgment as advanced in this paper may be considered to constitute a limitation. And to be sure, a broader conception of moral thinking, including a broader variety of emotions, would have had distinct advantages. However, I consider the limited focus on moral judgment to be justified in this case, because the main topic of this paper is not moral thinking as such. Rather, the reference to moral judgment formation sufficiently served the larger purpose of evaluating whether the animal rights movement can benefit from deliberative activism in the

different ways postulated by Garner and Parry. Therefore, within the boundaries of this paper, the focus on moral judgment permitted for more clarity than a more encompassing notion of moral thinking – as intriguing as that might have been – would have allowed for.

CONCLUSION

This paper has addressed the question of whether the animal rights movement should make use of deliberative activism. Proceeding from previous work on the subject by Garner and Parry, the paper has aimed to evaluate the potential of deliberative activism from an interdisciplinary angle, specifically with reference to research on moral judgment formation. Based on this research, I have argued that the animal rights movement should make use of deliberative activism only if recognition respect can be generated between the participants in the deliberative process. If disagreeing parties experience respect for each other as persons, they are more likely to overcome emotional aversion, listen to the other side, change their minds, counter ideological hegemonies, and avoid alienation and reputational damage. In contrast, without respect for each other as persons, deliberative activism is unlikely to work, or worse may be counter-productive by alienating important stakeholders and causing reputational damage to the movement.

Given the importance of recognition respect for deliberative activism, the question arises of how it can be generated within the context of deliberation. To some, the experience of recognition respect may come naturally, even in the midst of moral disagreement. But we can certainly not expect everyone to tune into a respectful mindset in contexts of moral conflict. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to identify concrete mechanisms for supporting the experience of recognition respect, the arguments put forth indicate that the animal rights movement (and deliberative activism as such) would benefit from further research in this direction. By way of analyzing the potential of deliberative activism for the animal rights movement, this paper has spelled out why recognition respect matters for deliberative activism, thereby not only adding to existing work on the subject but also providing insight for those who aim to use deliberative activism in practice.

NOTES

¹ I gratefully acknowledge funding from the Swiss National Science Foundation. I also wish to thank two anonymous reviewers for their detailed feedback on the manuscript.

² While recognizing that there is disagreement about the goals of animal rights advocacy, I here conceive of the term

“animal rights movement” to include both welfarist and abolitionist orientations.

³ “Effectiveness” will be evaluated regarding the three benefits of deliberative activism presumed by Garner and Parry, as detailed below (changing moral minds, countering ideological hegemony, and avoiding alienation and reputational damage).

⁴ According to the deliberative ideal, an envisaged change of mind can and should potentially go in different directions, depending on the force of the better argument. This means that in the case of deliberative activism, a change of mind can theoretically also occur for the animal rights activists. Since this paper is focused on evaluating the benefits of deliberative activism for animal rights activists, the following pages envisage a change of mind in their interlocutors rather than in the animal rights activists themselves. I also trust that animal rights activists have the force of the better argument on their side, so that – ideally – their interlocutors would change their views. Still, this aspect of deliberative activism may cause concern for animal rights activists, see section 7.

⁵ To be sure, a change of mind on the moral and legal status of non-human animals does not necessarily lead to different behavior. However, a change of mind in favor of animal rights should still be considered a significant success because it can a) lead to increased protection of non-human animals, e.g., if deliberation impacts law-making, and b) still cause behavior change in the long run.

⁶ Of course, not all carnist stakeholders are the same: in their contribution to animal suffering, a factory farm owner certainly plays a different role than a small farmer or a consumer. Note also that I do not use the label “carnist” in a derogatory sense. Rather, it is supposed to make the practice of using non-human animals visible as a choice rather than an unavoidable matter of fact. As Melanie Joy observes, “if we don’t name carnism (...) then eating animals appears to be simply a given, a morally neutral behavior with no basis in a belief system” (Joy, 2008, p. 58-59).

⁷ Haidt’s model has been classified as a dual-process model of moral judgment formation because it distinguishes between two processes: a non-conscious process that leads to intuition, and a conscious process of reasoning. While I do not subscribe to a separation between emotion and reasoning processes, I will maintain the distinction when referring to Haidt’s model for the sake of clarity. For a critical assessment of dual-process models including Haidt’s, see Helion and Pizarro (2015).

⁸ Even though perhaps not every carnist employs post-hoc rationalizations of this kind (there will also be those who are aware that non-human animals are susceptible to pain, etc., and yet choose to use non-human animals in one way or another), I proceed from the assumption that most carnists subscribe to at least some of the mentioned post-hoc reasons, especially to the natural-normal-necessary justification.

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