

Animal Autonomy E-Reader edition farangis



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Thoughts about the languages of animals	4
We speak with each other, somehow. Fragment about an ongoing social process	8
Animal Knowledge	9
Animal Theology: Man-Machine? Animal Reason!	10
Five neovegan perspectives	14

Every individual animal has a narrative (in context with her experience of her habitat and environment).

Denying nonhuman animals their own languages, as autonomous communicative systems that linguistically have evolved independent of human linguistics, means denying animals moral agency, let alone the experience of an individual narrative.

Biologism and epistemological humancentrism reduce nonhuman animals to mere 'explicable organisms'.

Tierautonomie / Gruppe Messel



Thoughts about the languages of animals

I can't see how a term such as 'animal language' could pose a problem to anybody when it directly refers to an animal's way of communication. I am however critical of people who 'translate' animals in stereotype ways.

Nevertheless I could apologize for using a word that describes the phenomenon that humans see as exactly the very one criterion which most sharply shows the difference between humans and all other animals. The word 'language' has evolved in the human mind and possesses as such its linguistic legitimacy.

The word 'language' belongs to one of the core conceptions of the most drastic forms of negative speciesism. Regarding this presumed ground I have to stand upon, I apologize for the insufficiency of my attempt to communicate something for which I can insofar only borrow this word, and I dare to ask you to perhaps think of a second word 'language' – free of value in a sense – which would only describe what we may not be able to describe yet within the borders of our set of regulations as we have them currently in regards to language; I am well aware that people usually don't want to accept that this one human term 'language' can be used tightly paralleled to animal language, and that so far the word 'animal language' has only be tolerated on a scientific level to refer to human parameters that have been applied to animal communication.

Animals speak their languages, but what their languages consist of, could only be understood if we communicated with them on a level that allows them to use their language.

Animal languages work like human languages, where you can translate what you understand and try to put how-you-can-understand-the-message or that what you understand into your terms of your language. The same happens when I talk to any other individual: I comprehend what she/he/it conveys in the restrictedness or unrestrictedness of my own terms. My terms don't merely underly semantics – though they might be translated back and forth into semantics, morphemes and syntax. My own terms and concepts have, in spite of their belonging to my system of language, a restricted meaning. In a very basic sense I have to rely on that what I understand or confer to that what I perceive.

The languages of animals (there are more animal languages than human languages of course) are seen by us as having a super restricted meaning. If we take the position of the nonhuman side in general, we can say though that human languages are restricted in that they only apply to humans. And seen from a standpoint which takes into account the question of perspective, I can say that if I don't understand a dog, it's because she belongs to a different animal 'group' when compared to my human group.

'Communication' infers meaning to the act of communicating on any level of any sound/wave produced by a communicative agent.

Does language necessarily have to be connected to the history, the past, the present and the future of human progress? Why should animals have ever evolutionary or in any wise chosen to contextualize their existence positively with the human existence? A being of an animal

group or I'd like to say an animal culture, clearly differentiates that what is important to their own existence; and I would call this rather their philosophy instead of just an evolutionary occurrence.

I find it permissible to use a word of the human language to describe something I witness, on an experiential basis, about the side of someone (animals) who uses another language. Also, I prefer to call the expressed existence of nonhuman animals a philosophy, since it is too simple and anthropocentrically self-serving to underlie animal existence pure evolutionary ends. I do draw from my personal observations which seem sufficient for me to make my own judgements in this case and to make a decision about what to think here.

Basically I think that everybody knows that animals have their languages, but that we usually deny that these languages, that we don't understand, have any meaning beyond marking an inferred biological determinism at all.

But how would we not deny any meaning of animal communication that would go beyond the notions that our societies generally have about even the being itself of animals; we deny the fact of a self-authorative being of animals in itself in its whole meaning. So, no surprise that we draw major qualitative lines. In terms of language, we create a complicated building of restrictions to exclude the nonhuman animals from the comparatively tolerant perspectives that we have in regards to the pluralism of human languages. (It's ok for a human language to be completely different, just because it's human.)

We deny another animal that it's not instinctual, because he/she/it not a human. You can indeed call everything an instinct. Still you can't really prove that it is "instinct". You can just put the 'supposed carrier of an instinct' in a setting where they are treated as such instinctual beings (a paradox in itself) and seen as such, and interpreted as such.

Possibilities

Human rights in favor of animal rights may hopefully be another way to convey that an opinion of a human majority can't represent a truth about any individual animal and the whole animal groups: The animal individual itself is a truth-bearer since it exists, and simply by that it represents, through how it lives (in its own rights and in its own terms) a truth. Just like I judge humans I meet by the impact of truth (their actions are possible just by sheer existence), I would want to be as just as I can towards the ways in which individual nonhuman animals live.

- Art doesn't function through semantics, since there are shapes and colors
- Micky Mouse doesn't function through semantics, since there are figures and action!
- Snowball doesn't function through semantics, since there is Lisa taking her seriously enough!
- Music doesn't function through semantics, since there is play and composition!
- Oppression doesn't function through semantics, since there are suppressors
- Love doesn't function through semantics, since there is understanding and misunderstanding

- Peace doesn't function through semantics, since there are underlying actions ... and this array could go on and on. Anyway, and still this is all part of our language?

What we do when we speak about 'animals' and 'language' is: We reduce the complexity of animal communication to linguistic terms into which they may not fit. Instead of admitting the existence and relevance of other communicative systems as being really independent from our systems and which are thus not explainable through purely and solely biological criteria (instinct).

I have compounded two things:

1. the function of the term 'instinct' as
 - a. serving to restrict the notion of a *socio-ethical plane* as if that had only developed in and being attributable to humans and 'human groups/cultures' and
 - b. its intended reduction of the scope and meaning of communication in nonhuman animals to a biologically explainable and manipulatively determinable code,

and

2. I have defined linguistics as an inadequate means of setting general rules for a communicative validity.

Instincts and linguistics are terms/phenomenons that are working in our systems of categorization.

In regards to the self-categorization going along with this, I also want to point out that our own language does not base

- a. on merely a functional basis neither in connection to the agent that uses language nor in connection with the subjects that language seeks to deal with, and
- b. that our language might also not just be a compound of what linguistics (and maybe physiological aspects of speaking) alone can make out of it.

Generally: Cultural (in a non-humancentric sense, i.e. implying "the natural" on an equal scale) and individual aspects play a role too, as well with humans as with animals when communicating!

I do state again that the word culture can to my opinion also be applied to nonhuman animals – if one allows a culture to be really and profoundly different [from "our" cultures] too.

A kind reply I got to this essay

Animal Language Essay

I have been saving your essay on Animal Language for some time. I signed up for two courses this semester: Intro to Philosophy and Anthropological Linguistics. The Philosophy instructor's wife (another professor) claims that the "only difference between human animals

and nonhuman animals is “language!” Since, I know this to be inherently illogical I heartily protested. He appeared to be intimidated by my remark and became withdrawn, so communication ended.

In addition, my Anthropological linguistic textbook makes this claim as well, although worded differently. For example,...”As far as we know only ‘humans’ have language.” I am on the verge of pulling hairs out of my head but resist this impulse, since there is enough violence to go around. Instead, after locating your article, I am going to ask them to read your essay. Frankly, I agree with most of what you stated with the exception of what could appear to be speciesist in term usage, such as “it” in reference to nonhuman animals, which, if I am correct, supports the ongoing oppression of nonhuman animals. Perhaps, I am mistaken and misread your term, since, some of your comments were more complicated than I could readily understand, so I will reread your wonderful [text] again. More important, I am so so grateful for people like yourself.

As an Anthropology major with an interest in speciesism. every day ever more speciesist attitudes are revealed to me, sometimes, my own included and, if it were not for people like Gary Francione, Carol Adams, Joan Dunayer, Colleen Patrick Geoudreau and other amazing truth seekers, I do not think I would be able to pursue my goal which is to write on human animals and their very wrong relationship with nonhumans [...]



We speak with each other, somehow. Fragment about an ongoing social process.

First I ought to say I hope that nobody who might be picking up on this will be trying to take the issue in a simplistic way. It is in no regards. I would like to start Human + Nonhuman mutual translation project. But this is going to be difficult, because I don't want to impose neither any potentially restrictive definitions on my nonhuman fellows that I am communicating with, nor do I want to cater to the chorus of voices who seek to belittle nonhumans on the basis of their cultures and languages being different and for us not translatable. But right here I must pause, because: why can't we translate Nonhuman Animals? As I previously suggested, as anti-speciesist I don't see a difference when it comes to trying to understand "my opposite" – I think we can try to understand each other possibly, if we come to see our own language (and parameters) as relative. I come from a non- or anti-biologicistic and anti-humancentric approach, and I only want to turn my views into public input, because it is horrifically ridiculous and more than that tragic, how narrowly we view the idea of language to a contemporary and only highly restricted definition of the term.

Animals ...

We speak. We all have different approaches of how we try to understand each other, but to draw a line based on biology is problematic, as long as we fail to question that parameter of explanation critically. I suggest to get away from any speciesist paradigm and use plain and naked reason to find solutions to accepting communication as a fact in itself (without further reproach to explicability within a humancentric dominant context) and I believe a broadened classification of 'language' in terms of our own human language even is needed, and which can't as well be narrowed down to a set of neurological and technical terms. Life's intricacy needs to be taken account of in human as well as in nonhuman and other than human animal terms.



Animal Knowledge

It's astonishing, why are we willing to accept that the burden of proof lies with the nonhuman animals and their allies, to make clear who they are, when a human-centred society doesn't even have the will and ability to see the full spectrum. Why do we, their allies, bow in to human methods of research on things that can't be proven and that don't have to be proven?

Their individual life's dignity does not need to be proven; it needs to be acknowledged, without restrictive conditions.

What the AR community should learn is to claim the rights, the foundation of dignity, the freedom that really lies outside of paradigms that were (and are) installed to quite contrarily draw lines as aggressive borders.

We tie our human standards and insights on a.) language and b.) on our specific capacity to utilize nature, and we see both these things as qualifiers that are intertwined: Language plus the capacity to utilize nature as a resource!

It never occurs to us that other beings could have a more sustainable and clearly wise concept of how to live on planet earth, that their ancestral relation over millions of years has given them insight on how to interact in other ways with nature and their natural environment.

We would deny that, because we don't accept that nonhumans have concepts. We think concepts can only occur with certain qualifiers ... , and we think that nature couldn't have possibly taught nonhuman animal ancestors things they decidedly built their cultures on.

We think nonhuman animals don't decide these things.

I could go on, but my point is that we as AR people err so bad, because we don't want to take the stance that would make us jump in the cold water of radical new perspectives in terms of: de-humanfocusing and thus deconstructing sources we refer to as a basis of knowledge about life.

We keep putting new wine into old bottles when we don't come up with a new architecture of basic knowledge.

Animal Theology: Man-Machine? Animal Reason!

The basic question about the categorical division into (nonhuman) "animals" and "humans" (Homo sapiens), brings up probably before the question of its moral implications, the question about what exactly hides beneath both these big generalized identities.

- Why has the view about that what-animals-are and that what-humans-are finally lead to us only viewing animals under biological terms today?
- Is it enough to attribute only an instinctual behaviour to nonhuman animals?
- Is it thus the 'fault' of animals that humans won't relate to them in any further way than how they are relating to them today?

What other options are there?

Animal = instinctual? Human = reasoning? Attributed identities in a human-centered narrative

If we don't accept the view that nonhuman animals are those who have to stand below humans, within a frame given by e.g. a biological, philosophical or even a divine hierarchy-of-being, then such a claim doesn't have to be solely morally motivated. It can also mean that we question the way in which both identities („animal“ and „human“) are understood, that we question the separation and qualifications of these identities, even before the questions of our wrongdoings enter the floor of debate.

We can ask if the interpretation of the characteristics that are considered to make up the marking dividers within a "human-animal hierarchy", are in reality a negation of the autonomous value of otherness or diverseness of nonhuman animals.

We know that the single criterion that serves as our standard, is the human parameter, i.e. the human model counts as the ideal, as the standard, for creating norms.

- So what happens if we put this standard of measurement into doubt?
- It's a question of perspective!

Conclusions deduced in the fields of biology and psychology/specifically ethology, with those being the main academic sectors that deal with the explicability of *animal identity*, nail the perspectives:

- On the supposed relevant characteristics
- on how animal characteristics (in either, the case of humans or nonhuman animals) have to a.) express themselves and b.) in which exact correlation they have to become „measurable“, in order to reach a certain relevance or meaningfulness from a human point of perspective.

So the problem lies in the question why humans won't accept nonhuman animal autonomy when it can't be made fathomable through the perception of a value-defined comparison.

Why are own nonhuman animal criterions and why is their independent meaningfulness (for the sake of themselves and for their situation within their natural and social inter- and co-specific contexts) rendered irrelevant, when they cross our perspectival glance, and when these animal criteria could also be understood and accepted to fully lay outside of our hierarchical-framework?

Animal individuality

To be willing to accept an autonomous meaningfulness of nonhuman animals, means to question the deindividualization that our views and explanations about nonhuman animals purport. Those are the views that allow us to set nonhuman animals in comparison to us, as 'the human group' of identity, instead of seeing otherness and/or diverseness in itself as a full value. And those are also the views that seek to sort out how the existential 'meaning' of nonhuman animals might relate to anything that matters to us "humans" as a closed group of identity.

The deindividualized view of nonhuman animals almost automatically goes along with the subtraction of value in terms of attributed meaningfulness, and so we land at the moral question now – since the question of identities, individual existence and deindividualization indeed pose ethical conflicts.

Nonhuman animals, and the attributed identities in the fields of "animal" and "human" social contexts

If we can view nonhuman animals, apart from their localization in the realm of biology, for example also in a sociological context, then we could ask the question: „How do people act towards nonhumans animals?“

- Can we explain the behaviour of humans towards nonhuman animals solely by referring to the common notion that one can't really behave in any particular way towards nonhuman animals because they are supposedly 'instinctively set' and

‘communicatively restricted’ compared to us, and that thus our behaviour towards them can’t contain an own quality of a social dynamic?

- Can we legitimate our typically human social misbehavior towards nonhuman animals by referring to the „stupidity“ that we interpret into nonhuman animal behaviour?

Such questions would of course only feed themselves on stereotypes of animal identity, no matter from where they’d stem!

However we probably can’t ask any of such questions a sociologist, though it could fall into their scope to analyze these relationships. Sociologists likely would prefer to deal with the animal rights movement and not deal with the interaction between humans and nonhuman animals, since everyone seems to be in accordance with the fact that a natural science, biology, has already determined what the identity of nonhuman animals “factually” is. And it must be said that even the animal rights movement seems to place the moral question somewhere almost out of reach by accepting the explanation of the identity of animals as something more or less strictly biological.

A geometrical image

Imagine two abstract groups. Group A consists of triangles and everything that surrounds them becomes mathematically relevant to their own triangular form. This happens as all that either resembles or does not resemble a triangle appears in a certain colour.

Group B are circles.

Now group A says that group B aren’t triangles (because A are triangles) and that B also weren’t squares or rectangles.

Does any reason follow from this which would mathematically legitimate for the circles to be excluded as equally valid geometrical figures?

The triangles are different compared to the circles, but both are geometrical figures and insofar of an equal value.

They can be correlated due to each of their geometrical qualities, even when the circles do not match the characteristics of the triangles!

Let’s take this as our metaphor

Sociology does not question the social interaction between humans and nonhuman animals. They don’t scrutinize that relation from their viewpoint, because the view held on the human relation towards animals is already set in its core by the natural sciences.

The hierarchical empire built by the natural sciences though [and along with it the humanistic kind of knowledge on which the modern natural sciences base upon] rules out every need for any further examination and consideration of this relationship. We do not see the direct relation between humans and nonhuman animals.

A most typical exemplification of that inability to relate on a basic and fundamental level of ‘common sense’ can be pinpointed in the difference between relating to

nonhuman animals in terms of “joy” versus “love”: as in “animals equally feel joy” or “we can both love”, and “pain” versus “violence”: as in: “animals can equally feel pain” or “we can both experience violence”. Love is an intermittent sentiment, violence also bases on social interactivity (though in that negative sense), whereas “joy” is located only in the subject we attribute the feeling to, and the same goes for “pain”.

We – nonhuman animals and humans – understand the questions of LOVE and VIOLENCE. Whereby “joy” and “pain” are reductionary names for the “same” thing.

Regarding the question whether animals can be perceived in any way as moral agents, one has to ask, does moral exist outside the human concept of morality?

When we discuss morality we presume that the substance matter which the term comprises came into life through our perceptions, and because we define what „moral“ means, we can claim a described phenomenon as solely ours.

What does morality consist of?

- Does morality solely exist because of a theoretical framework? One can doubt that. Morality on the one side has something to do with basic social interaction, through that morality gains value.
- On the other side are the superordinate agreements about morality, which are declared and decided upon by an elite or defining group/process, but through that the agreements about morality only contain a forced validity, which is disconnected from its own basis, that is: the meaning of social interaction between beings (i.e. the construct about morality excludes that what lays outside of its hierarchy, other forms of interaction that contain „social values“).

On the individual plane exists that what any “I” perceives and experiences in her lived interactions and experiences as „morally okay“. And that can be between nonhuman animals or humans in the whole environmental context – seen from a common sense point of view if we take the human view.

When we discard the human decorum that surrounds and sticks to the word morality, we can say that every action has a moral implication, non-anthropocentrically seen.

It’s always the same: otherness and diverseness. We have to accept it.

Animals have a very different philosophy-of-living in a neutral comparison to our philosophy of life, and I believe one can use the term philosophy here to describe the yet unnamed phenomenon in nonhumans animals of how they structure and perceive their own lives.

I ask myself whether the human problem with nonhuman animals isn’t rather to be found in the differences of their philosophies-of-life when compared to our typically human ones.

The problems lie much more in this radical otherness from us or rather the qualities of diverseness, than in the reasons of gradual biological differences or in the often assumed moral impotence on *this other one*’s (the nonhuman animal’s) behalf.

The problem thus seems to fluctuate around the scope of difference and coinciding and convergent similarity. In many aspects we equal nonhumans animals a lot, but in the aspect of our dominance claim finally, we see nonhuman animals as „the losers“, the bottom of the evolutionary or divinely ordained hierarchical order on which we can postulate our violent and hypocritical senses of power.

That nonhuman animals are the losers amongst the biological animals is even an attitude that some of their advocates purport. I often meet people who won't reckon a unique, self-sufficient quality seen to be in the closeness and distance amongst the different animals (including human animals). In the forefront of every argumentation there is always: how are they in comparison to us. As if humans and nonhuman animals had to compete on an „equal“ scale ... and another related argumentation goes: how much of their „instinct“ could possibly entitle them to be granted rights; rights that would protect them from humans (whereby it is highly questionable whether those who have prejudices against you, can really grant you or protect your own rights.)

Human society, it seems, will always consider the „us“ and the „we“ as objectively more important, insofar as the „we“, the how „we are“, is the criterion, and nonhumans animals are measured against it.

The crucial point is to accept others with their diverseness and to accept the validity of otherness and diversity; for the others and for us.

Five neovegan perspectives

1. Why Animal Rights can't be treated as secondary to Human Rights

Let's assume we can't overcome human conflicts, and let's assume we do not want to consider animal rights (as an equivalent to human rights) and environmental issues as ways in which we could find fundamentally better approaches to conflict solution, just because there doesn't really exist an openness in the viewpoints of the majority to allow new or different perspectives on what is to be considered as relevant and 'sense-possessing' as human rights solely perspectives are.

Animal rights, even if not considered as touching a sphere of meaningful phenomena, is objectively not a secondary concern. I'd argue so, since the fact that human persons relegate animal individuals into "irrelevance", as a sector created for the nature-animal complex, doesn't hold any factual account for the leakage we can call an obvious one if we look at:

- a) the grade of destruction aggravated by any forms of speciesism (and humancentrism respectively) and
- b) the essential bond of the human notion of an ideal justice in the moral practice lived by societies (idealism) with the natural and the nonhuman animal world;

and the unknown factors reciprocal of nature and nonhuman animals overall as they display themselves back to human society (the other intelligence – ‘designed by life’ basically).

2. Animal Rights and Human Rights, your rights, as interconnected

How can animal rights and human rights be interlocked politically in a constructive way, instead of using human rights against animal rights?

We often tend to think that animal- and human rights would exclude each other, and the stereotypical „AR vs. HR” question, about who you would save first if you had to: your dog or your child, is being asked as if one had to pass a witch-test which is going to decide your fate as a proper human- or animal rights advocate. A more reasonable view would let us come to the conclusion that narrowing things down to the extremes isn’t really a useful approach upon which a rights debate can be lead.

The focus in such a question that seeks to radically separate two instances (two situative phenomena occurring in a wider context) from each other, is almost suggestive if not ignorant in its view towards the facets of reality that make up the complexity of life as living beings experience it.

Put in a situation where we had to decide between rescuing one living being and another, it is likely that we would not want to decide for one and against the other. We should consider the perspectival option that we’d want to save every being that’s in despair. We could think for instance: in any situation where a being needs help, a being needs a helper!

As animal rights advocates we clearly want both: a full consideration of (reasonable) human interests and rights and a full consideration of what we can understand to be the rights of other nonhuman animals as natural and so far animal-rights-political holders of such – by virtue of their self-autonomous existence in this world. And to take this a step further: we probably want to interlock animal- and human rights, so that both reaffirm and solidify each other. How can this be reached? And how can this, even more so, be reached in our current human societies, where the notion of animal rights is not regarded as positively relevant for the “own – collective human concern”.

One aspect that builds an (euphemistically said) “automatic” way to bind animal- and human rights together, is, as “simple” as it may sound the natural environment. Whereby ‘the (natural) environment’ can be a term for what the German poet-thinker Goethe more comprisingly called “das AllLeben”, the all-live – a term that hints at the interconnectedness of all life forms on earth and beyond.

The environment, nature, is the habitat of nonhuman animals and humans alike. It’s the sphere of living existence where both humans and nonhuman animals meet in their natural state of being, and it’s the very political ground (that is: a sphere of life and thus of interests) that needs to be re-captured for the ethical side that is to it, in regards to animal liberation and animal rights.

There are three core aspects that bind humans and animals together in their environmentalistic and nature-bound context:

- a.) existentially we got the shared ‘outer world’ on which life depends in its individual and collective existential value
- b.) the conflict between the (major) life forms is produced by ‘the culture’ in which life finds its contextualization, ranging from predominantly destructive in current humancentric human societies and, environmentally seen, constructive in nonhuman animal cultures and their form of relating to the natural
- c.) the solution, the bridge, lays in the will for re-establishing a natural balance, that encompasses its participants, the living beings, as co-creatant, co-existential “agents of an self-created contextualizing existence” that can be understood as something that we emotionally would induce with “dignity”.

Dignity is the felt and the realizable foundation of rights. Being co-existent in this world and acknowledging the agency of nonhuman animals in the environmental context, is a basis that should tie human- and animal rights constructively in a potentially fundamental way.

3. *Neoveganism as a way forward in our current day Western and other emerging democracies*

It seems the more you realize the political scope of human action and human thought, the less you think of the absurd idea that there would be one single power (the establishment, the fiscal world, a people, a god) that runs everything in a totalitarian style: the big complexes of “might” stifle the individuals power to impact things, *but individual action can’t be substituted in democracies.*

What can I, as a seemingly powerless individual, do when I see an unfathomable disaster such as the BP oil spill, a disaster caused by the ‘ruling’ part of our civilization? Our civilization bases (in its majority) upon humancentrist ideals today, it doesn’t need to take the natural environment and its “wild” inhabitants into “positive” account. To deal responsibly as an individual means I have to be willing to see the bigger contexts of phenomena, and widen my view over the limits of any anthropocentric limit.

On the opposite side of the big context of things, it’s the individual that has an impact on the situation she lives in: by action (political action, in a basic sense) and by thought (any form of it). It’s an ethical impact living beings ‘live’.

When I make the sensible claim that ethics should be the factor upon which to decide what’s wrong and what’s right, I should also acknowledge that ethics means to behave respectfully towards life. What is respectful? And what type of life matters and can be treated with which forms of respect?

Every living being on this earth has its own place in the universe – practically. The world should not be seen anthropocentrically simply because we can’t fathom the meaningfulness of other/diverse life in regards to those dimensions which we don’t know much or even anything about. Other “dimensions” of meaning aren’t restricted to physics and mathematical

abstraction: ethics, and its substance (life!) *too* has dimensions beyond a narrow anthropocentric reach.

If I take the ethical vastness and comprehensiveness into account, I am able to see that every action I can do, and every wrong I don't do, wherever I am, has an impact on the life around me. Taking the interest of all life into a wide ethical (in a sense of setting oneself in a creative relation) consideration makes the action of the individual meaningful.

When I see that human progress is built mostly on a destructive relationship towards life – that we use and degrade to “resources” – I should be able to realize that the step I have to do, is to take up a plant-based ethical (radical antispeciesist and vegan) lifestyle and go further from that point on.

4. Neoveganism, pluralism and antispeciesism

It should be normal for animal rights advocates (with that I mean people primarily or partially interested or active in the global animal rights and liberation, etc. movement) to accept different positions, without assuming that divergence would harm the cause. No need to say that exempt from such a form of mutual tolerance would be people who claim to be AR but practically advocate theories and practices harmful to nonhuman animals (euthanasia of “stray” feral animals, “humane” slaughter, hidden forms of speciesism, mild speciesism ...).

I often notice that there exists a self-prescribed narrowness in parts of the AR/AL movement which hinders the necessary plurality of expressed opinions for the cause. Naturally people hold different opinions about issues, especially when it comes to the details of something that could be described as a newly established consciousness as we have and develop it in the human-nonhuman animal relation today.

Why should animal rights be exempt from a highly diversified discussion such as we normally expect and have practically on every other big ethical, political and rights issue? Finding the truth (the acceptable truths of many insights) upon which to build a reasonable common grounds that reflects the needs of reality, finding a suitable and fruitful political and also legal language, and a language of liberation needs a full discourse made up of all our individual opinions. When we take our individuality away from our political agency (speech, thought and action) in our daily lives, we lose exactly that which enables us to make progress. Progress is plurality – the exchange of many powers and how they can synergize.

It's understandable when you take a look at the animal rights movement at its single place in history – possessing a newly understood form of an extended “beyond-social” interspecies context – that people are likely to assume that they would need to follow a school of thought or political opinion. In reality though animal rights is a phenomenon as fundamental as human rights, so basic and immediate to the individual existence that every person can become clear about her own understanding of basic rights terms in a valid way and that every person can figure out herself how she weighs out what's right and what's wrong in her own “common sense” rights-terms.

The relation towards nonhuman animals is ultimately an immediate one, it's a social connection in a new, antispeciesist way. And I think we should take it as such, if we truly are for human and animal liberation.

On a basis of accepting the presupposition that

- a. we can relate to nonhuman animals in a reasonable way obviously, and
- b. that the relation to nonhuman animals can thus be handled from the individual human in a similar way in which an individual human can assess human rights issues by applying her own common sense,

we can take our position of defense when we are addressing the “speciesist lobby”, which usually argues that there exist decisive barriers between the “values” of human and nonhuman animal life, a notion established on the premise that humans have the right to simply give the nonhuman animal world their definitions – in all detail (the result of which is mass murder on the biological argument).

We as animal rights/liberation/autonomy activists can constructively and positively relate to nonhuman animals, and we side with their interests from our position as fellow (human) animal beings. Practiced antispeciesism to its best level is an ongoing learning process which makes us mature and responsible as human beings or better as basic individuals. Our engagement and fight for the legal and earth-political rights to live, to possess habitat, to be a rights holder under nonhumancentric terms, will re-establish the integrity of an ongoing existential relationship we have with nonhuman animals. And this amounts to an entire paradigm-shift.

5. The face of an animal rights revolution ... it is about making these paradigm shifts

The uncountable deaths each day, every second, are the factual individual nonhuman animal victims who a human humancentrically driven full destructive force are directed against. We have to phrase clearly that speciesism is not just an accidental heritage of our human past which supposedly took place as “hunters and gatherers”, the question even remains open if in fact all human cultures have been hunters at some stage. Speciesism means, in the past inasmuch as in the present, a war by means of denial of rights, namely the right to live and exist freely, that is being waged against nonhuman animals and their world.

The majority of the ‘human group’ determines how this world is to be explained and understood. We, as humans (in a collective sense), don't accept that concepts or ideas which are not born out of a human logic (again, in a collective sense) and which are not shaped by our human perceptions and rationalizations can in fact exist. The revolution for animal rights, animal liberation or an acknowledgement of animal autonomy means to set forth that nonhuman animals have their very ways in which they shape this world. Their ways – their integrity in the natural sphere – need to be protected by rights that we as humans will have to enforce within the scope exclusively of human destructivity. That would at least take the burden of human oppression from the nonhuman animal ‘realm’.

On the ethical side we can state that: in whichever context nonhuman animals are forced to live and to die in right now, their integrity can't be stripped away from them – since in a fundamental and important sense nothing can negate their independent meaning.

What happens when our speciesist societies confine, torture and kill nonhuman animals is that humans collectively claim a total might over the physical life of nonhuman animals, in the final consequence.

Animal rights means to continuously work on the paths towards an anti-humancentrist human society in which the integrity of all animal life and the integrity of the entire natural world are being protected against so called “human interests”; which are in reality profane collective enmities towards “everything” and everyone who is not a human but a nonhuman animal and their natural living contexts.

And finally animal liberation should also mean the deconstruction of speciesist theories: Before the final consequence of physical harm and destruction we need to address the reasons and causes of the collective humancentric enmities and desires to subject animal-others and ‘nature’.



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