Human and Animal: Thinking and Feeling a Way Toward Liberation

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Abstract

This thesis engages with philosophical approaches to the ethics of Western animal use, and is an attempt at a synthesis of perspectives with a broadly psychological slant. The pivotal importance of experience is emphasised throughout, since it is argued that experience necessarily mediates the human understanding of morality (whether in a cultural or a more strictly philosophical sense). The thesis is intended to work toward greater integration between animal liberation and environmentalist theoretical discourses (including particularly those from the perspective of ecopsychology), and to do so by strengthening the foundations of an ethics that does not rely solely on rationalism. It engages with discourses about modernism and postmodernism and relates these to animal liberation both as a social movement and as a philosophical enterprise. In particular, it is suggested that postmodern understandings of knowledge and representation may prove favourable to the development of 'animal friendly' attitudes and behaviours, and also that rigid and prescriptive rationalist theories are increasingly less likely to be adopted or found to be experientially sustainable in contemporary Western culture. The work of several ecofeminist animal liberationist thinkers is supported in this regard. A central theme is the importance of relations with animality in child development, and the way that the subversion of such relations by Western culture adversely affects the maturation of a strong and autonomous moral sense. The thesis also considers the flawed role that Western preconceptions about hunter-gatherer cultures have played in philosophical thinking about relations between humans and the natural and animal worlds. The work deliberately attempts to transcend some of the dualistic conceptualisations (and academic conventions) that typically set humans apart from animals, as well as to contribute to the difficult philosophical project of re-engaging bodily awarenesses in the theorisation of ethics. These aims are implicitly considered to be central to the inscription of an ethics that affirms the importance of our own status as simultaneously natural and social/moral beings.

Contents

Introduction

The following pages contain my examination of two vitally important aspects of the animal liberation movement: the motivations behind it, and the suitability of the ethical philosophy that accompanies it. The occasional tension between these two aspects has been recognised previously, but I hope that my analysis here is able to synthesize a useful perspective on how they might each support the other. Moreover, because the possibility of animal liberation does not exist in a social and cultural vacuum, this synthesis will also aim to engage with other elements of cultural critique to situate animal liberation as a development that has emerged primarily within a specific society – that of the industrialised West – but that draws on underlying aspects of our human social and moral natures. The aim is to negotiate a progressive theoretical understanding of animal liberation – both of what it is and, perhaps, of what it could and should be.

This analysis takes place within the context of disagreements about the most appropriate way to theorise the ethical foundations of the movement. The influential philosophers Peter Singer and Tom Regan have produced remarkably resilient theories that are grounded in traditional logical philosophy and are based on utilitarianism and rights ethics respectively[1]. These theories have been criticised extensively by more ecologically minded philosophers because they clash with ecological ethical thought, and by ecofeminist philosophers because they attempt to impose an abstract logical structure onto our emotional responses to ethical situations. Ecofeminists have tended to stress 'care' as the emotional foundation for an embodied ethical response to problems such as opposing institutionalised animal abuse. This approach, however, has itself been criticised because, while it takes account of the motivations of many of those who support animal liberation, it appears not to carry the weight of moral compulsion that is thought necessary to provoke significant change at the societal level. The philosophy of animal liberation can therefore perhaps be thought to be trapped in something of a double bind: it can express the psychological undercurrents of the movement, and fail to communicate

[1] See Peter Singer, Animal Liberation: A New Ethics For Our Treatment of Animals, (1975), New York: Avon Books, Peter Singer, Practical Ethics, (1993), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Tom Regan, The Case for Animal Rights, (1984), London: Routledge and Kegan Paul

compellingly enough with a resistant social structure, or it can use the language spoken by the dominant culture – a language of rights and moral rules and be seen as accepting these concepts uncritically, with an increased risk that it might be seen as a symptom of the parallel problem of Western alienation from the natural world.

This latter criticism – that the range of attitudes and behaviours that go with animal liberation are 'unnatural' – is a long-established one. It is the crux of numerous critiques, particularly within the field of environmental ethics, and some of the rhetoric used by those liberationists that invest heavily in logical frameworks seems almost calculated to provoke it. Singer, for example, argues that reason points the way to "objective" ethical judgements,[2] and that "we do not find our ethical premises in our biological nature, or under cabbages either. We choose them."[3] While he assumes that his idea of an expanding circle of moral inclusiveness, driven by rational thought, is completely benign, some environmentalists have objected that subsuming natural beings within it might actually constitute a further step in the domestication of what wildness still remains in the world. John Rodman, who mounted what is perhaps the earliest and most powerful critique of Singer, argues that

> the progressive extension model of ethics, while holding out the promise of transcending the homocentric perspective of modern culture, subtly fulfils and legitimizes the basic project of modernity – the total conquest of nature by man. Instead of discovering a larger normative order within which we and our species-specific moral and legal systems have a niche, limits, and responsibilities, we construct a transhuman moral/legal order by extending selected principles of modern human morality… to encompass all or part of nonhuman nature.[4]

Clearly there is a clash of priorities here: Singer is focussing his efforts on the terrible plights of those animals that are already hopelessly "encompassed" by the rationalising tendencies of modernity – although by those promoting industrialised objectification and exploitation rather than moral inclusiveness. Rodman, although he notes his own objection to the idea of "animal machines", reads Singer more from the perspective of wishing to preserve a shrinking wild

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[2] Peter Singer, The Expanding Circle: Ethics and Sociobiology, (1981), Oxford: Clarendon Press, p.149
[3] Singer, Expanding Circle, p. 77
[4] John Rodman, "The Liberation of Nature?", *Inquiry* 20 (1977), p. 97

world from *either* of these aspects of modernity. But he also objects to the attempt to extend the reach of what he calls the "moral/legal stage of consciousness," because he sees it as furthering the domestication of the human being by imposing yet more artificial boundaries on our behaviour. As he puts it "Man's domination of external nature is replicated in the internal domination of man's 'higher nature' over his 'natural self.'"[5] For Rodman, as for many deep ecologists and others who followed him, the potentially "wild" self should not need excessive injunctions on behaviour – these may only appear to be necessary because we lead such unnatural lives, in which our natural selves cannot flourish. From this perspective animal liberation theory, particularly of the logical and moral extensionist variety, risks suppressing the potential resonance between humanity and the natural world.

My reason for mentioning this critique briefly here is not because I explicitly engage with Rodman at length in the following thesis, but rather because he gave a very important early indicator of how the philosophy of animal liberation might develop, particularly as it was taken up by several ecofeminist theorists. Moreover, many of the issues that he raises – particularly those sketched above – are issues that are implicitly addressed both by the ecofeminists and, hopefully, by the analysis that I develop here. So while I will not go on to explore Rodman extensively, it does seem appropriate to frame the following work by acknowledging his influence on the formation of my own understanding (at the least) of what an adequate theory of the liberation of animals should achieve, and specifically of why internal coherence is not the only important criterion for such a theory.

Animal liberation then, to be successful, must change the ways that people in the West both conduct and think about many of the most important aspects of their lives. These include such matters as how they conceptualise their sense of self and their relationships with others, how they sustain their bodily health and how the countryside around them is made use of. Although it is primarily about what is or should be done to animals, it clearly cannot ever be *only* about this, which means that any theory of animal liberation must bear a weight of responsibility beyond its primary focus on opposing the appalling modes of species exploitation that are currently common in the West. While I would not wish to suggest an ultimate need for a single unified theory of how to live, or of how to achieve an ideal future, it does

[5] Rodman, "The Liberation of Nature?" p.103

seem pretty clear that the success or otherwise of animal liberation, at least as a theory, is inextricably entwined with its ability to frame its vision in a way that can accommodate other important perspectives on where Western culture might be going wrong. My own attempt to clarify these matters is based on the conviction that the contemporary Western modes of animal exploitation and institutionalised abuse have consequences that are not only devastating and unjustifiable for the animals concerned, but also are incompatible with a genuine flourishing of the human spirit, and that theorizing this with a sufficient degree of accuracy might be the best way to find a genuinely liberatory direction.

The methodological approach that I take is based upon the analysis and critique of arguments that have been advanced by writers from a range of disciplines that are broadly related to the field of environmental philosophy. The arguments that I present have roots in some rather naïve ideas that I had formed prior to embarking upon this specific study, but these ideas were considerably developed and refined (and many jettisoned) during the process of research. Much of the material that made it into the thesis did so because it seemed to connect up ideas from relatively diverse areas of thought – suggesting perhaps that an underlying logic might be uniting the insights of writers who were ostensibly separated by disciplinary conventions. Although not adopted uncritically, such ideas often proved to be useful in the development of my own position and the analysis of material in subsequent chapters. The precise methodological approach therefore differs very subtly from chapter to chapter, according to the concerns that have arisen as the argument develops. I believe, however, that the connections made throughout the thesis are sufficiently coherent and important to outweigh any drawbacks of this approach.

The structure of the thesis is roughly as follows:

I begin by exploring some of the uses to which a theory of animal liberation might be put if it is to be incorporated into the lives and outlook's of individuals outside of the context of academic debate. This enables me to determine some of the factors that might be considered relevant to assessing the success or otherwise of such a theory. Subsequently I explore the possible influence that the understanding of knowledge and representation offered by postmodernism might have on both the popularity of animal-friendly behaviours and attitudes, and what it might suggest about the formation of theories to nurture and to reflect these behaviours and attitudes. I then suggest some important links between a postmodern worldview and

one that is respectful of the otherness of the natural world, although I resist any easy or simple equations here. I then briefly review some important features of several ecofeminist animal liberationist accounts, which are basically compatible with my analysis so far of what types of theory seem most appropriate. I attempt to support and to develop the ecofeminist analysis to argue for a version of animal liberation that can be viewed as a completely natural response of our social and moral feelings to knowledge about what happens to animals in our culture. This approach does not draw on a conception of an absolute or universal morality, although it does suggest that those aspects of human psychology that relate to our moral treatment of others do naturally tend to include animals, at least prior to the influence of culture. I engage particularly with Gene Myers' ethnographic and theoretical account of the dynamics of moral development in children and attempt to elaborate upon the explanation that he gives of the possible impact upon this process of moral development of knowledge about animals being killed for food. I see this, however, as a process that is dialectically connected to other aspects of the culture in which it takes place.

My understanding of animal liberation therefore remains firmly situated within Western culture, although it does identify potentially universal psychological tendencies as underlying it. In developing this account, I draw upon the discipline of ecopsychology, and having done so I then attempt to blur some of the boundaries that have been erected between ecopsychology and animal liberation, suggesting that the areas of common purpose should outweigh the tensions between an ecological and a liberationist worldview. In doing so, I criticise the avoidance of the issue of animal liberation that is often to be found in the work of important environmental theorists of all types, including ecopsychologists and ecofeminists. My final chapter explores in greater depth a thread that has recurred throughout the thesis: the role that our Western understandings of hunter-gatherer cultures have played in discussions of animal liberation, and the problematic treatment of this matter in recent ecofeminist approaches that seem determined to develop an abstract and universal theory of ethical relations, while simultaneously and slightly confusingly preaching the cardinal importance of context. Although I attempt to illuminate my critique of these other directions that theory has taken in recent years by considering the flawed role within them of accounts of hunter-gatherer cultures, I make no attempt to suggest how other cultures should deal with their relations with animals.

The primary questions that I ultimately aim to address are not so much about whether it is morally permissible to take an animal's life, or to cause an animal to suffer for one's own interests, as they are about what happens psychologically when we do these things, when we contemplate them being done for us, and also when we construct, adopt or adapt various types of symbolic framework to legitimate or to condemn them. This psychological focus suggests a question that I should perhaps address here: whether the thesis employs any clear idea of right and wrong, or whether it tacitly, if somewhat accidentally, supports a moral relativism? This is a difficult question, although one that I hope will be answered adequately as my argument unfolds. Although many of the ways in which animals are treated in the contemporary West strike me personally as morally abhorrent in the extreme, for reasons that will become clear in the course of the analysis, I find it difficult to make unequivocal normative moral pronouncements. Morality, I assume, is not universal or ontologically absolute, but rather is contingent and immanent in our personal engagement with the world, with our motivations and needs, and with the consequences of our actions. This might be thought to provide too weak a foundation to provoke liberatory social change, or even to condemn outright the practices of factory farming, industrialised slaughter, vivisection, xenotransplantation, etc, that animal liberation opposes. This is the criticism most often levelled against the ecofeminist theory that this analysis draws upon and broadly attempts to support. But perhaps it is only so if the archeology of needs and consequences that is drawn upon in forming an understanding of what we do to animals is insufficient.

It would be impossible to address all such consequences of our culture's use of animals. Those for the animals themselves are undoubtedly the most serious, and I have given little attention to those here. But perhaps expanding our understanding of the harm that culturally institutionalised animal abuse might be doing to our own society, and even children, is one effective way of criticising social values that has been insufficiently explored by animal liberationists. The steps in this direction that I take here are perhaps the most significant part of the thesis, but are nevertheless able to do no more than hint at what I feel might be going on.

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Stepping Off The Escalator: Logical Approaches in Critical Context.

(a) Philosophical Contributions

The term "animal rights" is often used in a loose or informal sense as a label for the movement that opposes such forms of animal abuse as hunting, vivisection and the meat industry. This usage is popularly accepted and understood, but within philosophy the term risks being taken to refer to one of the range of theories claiming that animals do or should possess certain specific types of rights. Because I do not make such claims here, I tend to use the slightly less popular term animal liberation. This term also carries a slight risk of being linked to a specific moral theory – in this case that of Peter Singer who has used the term to purposefully distance himself from the idea of moral rights. The term "liberation" in itself does not relate to so specific a theoretical approach as "rights" does, so although it could be argued that there is a loose association with Singer's work (this being largely to do with his own adoption of the term), there appears to be no sense in which Singer has claimed the term "liberation" as specifically his own, and indeed the term has been used by many other theorists – including Regan.[1] Since it expresses most accurately and powerfully what I understand the movement described above to desire, I also use the term "animal liberation," despite not wishing to associate my own thinking too closely with Singer's (much as I admire it).

By far the most influential individual moral philosophers to have written about our relations with animals are Singer and Tom Regan. I will briefly outline their approaches here. Regan's approach claims that animals should be recognised as having rights analogous to human rights, and that these rights should be considered to be inviolable except in certain very specific instances. In his book The Case for Animal Rights[2] Regan offers a very thorough exploration of his claim that a being is entitled to be considered as having rights if that being is the "experiencing subject-

[1] Tom Regan, All that Dwell Therein: Essays on Animal Rights and Environmental Ethics, (1982), California: University of California Press, p.27 & 41
[2] Tom Regan, The Case For Animal Rights, (1983), London: Routledge & Kegan Paul

of-a-life." Regan considers that the fact of being experiencing subjects-of-a-life is something that animals and humans have in common and that this is the morally relevant factor in understanding why it is wrong to use either without due regard for their interests. Considering what it means to be a subject-of-a-life, Regan identifies it with certain cognitive abilities and draws the line of moral considerability at "mentally normal mammals of a year or more."[3] By using what is called the argument from marginal cases, he shows that differences between such animals and humans that have been claimed to explain why humans may be thought to have rights but animals may not are either not relevant or are incoherent when examined in detail. For example, it might be claimed that humans are rational beings or that they are "moral agents" (able to understand and obey moral rules), that animals are not, and that these qualities entitle humans to rights that animals do not possess. Regan objects that, by this reasoning, very young children and severely mentally handicapped humans must logically be considered not to have rights, since they do not possess the relevant qualities. This is considered contrary to what most people intuitively feel to be true: most people are assumed to wish for young and mentally disabled humans to have rights similar or identical to those possessed by adults. Regan finds no relevant or coherent differences that separate all humans from all animals, other than the difference of species, and therefore points out that the denial of rights to animals while granting them to all humans is speciesist – a form of prejudice analogous to racism or sexism. Regan considers several ethical approaches to correcting this discrimination, and concludes that the extension of rights to animals is the only option that adequately addresses the many moral dilemmas that may be thrown up.

Regan does however carefully distinguish moral rights from legal rights. He claims that moral rights are universal, whereas legal rights vary from country to country and from time to time. His argument is that animals possess moral rights and because of this, vegetarianism is morally obligatory and hunting, trapping and vivisection are wrong. We should perhaps note that the enactment of laws giving *legal* rights to animals is not specifically called for by Regan, although this is an inference of his approach. Steven M. Wise, in his book, Rattling the Cage: Towards

[3] Ibid., p.78

Legal Rights for Animals[4], examines this issue and argues for a progressive extension of legal rights to animals, beginning with chimpanzees and bonobos. Regan's approach concerns itself primarily with setting out a compelling argument for individuals to modify their behaviour and bases this argument firmly in the established traditions of logical philosophy.

Other legally oriented rights theories have been advanced. A very significant body of work has been advanced by Gary Francione, whose background is in the American legal system. Francione's arguments for rights perhaps present the most pressing case of this type, since he focuses tightly in on the functioning of legal systems and the practical efficacy of rights arguments as correctives to the paradigm that reduces animals to property. In this practical context, objections to the abstractions and reifications inherent to a rights framework might seem less compelling, since adherence to the pre-existing rights frameworks is the approach most likely to carry the weight necessary to achieve legal change. Nevertheless it should be appreciated that the American legal system does not embody an accurate picture of the wider realities of the world – realities that many other areas of academic enquiry (such as philosophy) seek to engage with. As strategically powerful and important as Francione's work might be within this circumscribed arena, it does take the "tool-like" aspect of rational deliberation to an extreme and seems to have little feeling for the complexities of individual moral deliberation or experience.

Peter Singer's book Animal Liberation[5] is occasionally credited with rejuvenating the animal rights movement in the mid-seventies. It is a hugely influential book by a leading moral philosopher whose interests also span many other issues. In Animal Liberation Singer makes a powerful case against the modern meat industry and against vivisection. In other publications he has expanded upon the detail of the ethical principles underlying his condemnation of these practices. Singer advocates utilitarianism as a guide to ethically good behaviour. Utilitarianism favours actions that bring about the greatest overall sum of pleasure in the world, and the least overall sum of pain. Using the argument from marginal cases, Singer demonstrates that there are no reasonable grounds for not extending the same moral

[4] Steven M. Wise, Rattling the Cage: Towards Legal Rights for Animals (2000), London: Profile Books
[5] Peter Singer, Animal Liberation (1995), London: Pimlico (Originally published 1975)

principle beyond the boundary of the human species to include the welfare of other sentient animals.

Utilitarianism provides an approach to morality with significant differences from the rights approach. For example, whereas any use of animals for harmful experiments might constitute an unacceptable infringement of their rights, the utilitarian emphasis on the *overall sum* of happiness/pain means that Singer endorses in theory the idea that conducting certain medical experiments on animals may be justifiable if (and only if) it would be likely to lead to the relief of a greater amount of pain than would be inflicted. It is important to point out, though, that Singer insists on the equal consideration of the interests of animals and humans and the fact that these interests may be different due to their differing natures is the only valid basis on which different treatment may be appropriate. This means that forcibly conducting experiments on animals is only preferable to conducting them on humans insofar as the greater comprehension of their predicament is likely to significantly increase the subjective level of suffering experienced by humans. It also means that conducting experiments on animals in cases where a wider benefit is not immediately apparent is unsupportable, and therefore that the great majority of experiments currently carried out on animals are morally intolerable, motivated as they are by economic rather than humanitarian factors.

The application of utilitarian thinking to the western meat industry unequivocally condemns that industry. The consumption of meat in the western world is shown to be a luxury, producing no overall benefit other than the fairly insignificant amount of pleasure produced by the fact that some people enjoy its taste. When that pleasure is contrasted against the amount of suffering inflicted on meat-animals (particularly as the horrific conditions inflicted by the factory farming system proliferate) it becomes apparent that there is no justification for the consumption of meat in the West. The negative effects of meat-eating on human health, and the enormous consumption of grain by meat-animals that could otherwise relieve the hunger of disadvantaged societies can, of course, be factored in to the equation to make it more complete.

Singer's work not only elaborates the implications of extending utilitarian thought to animals however - it also contains a fascinating analysis of ideas about how morality may have originated in evolution and why these ideas support the extension of moral concern beyond the boundary of the human species. The

discipline of sociobiology[6] purports to have discovered the foundations of human ethical thought in co-operation between individuals for the biological end of increasing the reproduction of one's genes into the next generation. Ethical behaviour is argued to be inextricably linked with the impulse towards altruism (acting in the interests of others rather than oneself). The evolutionary roots of altruism are considered to lie in social behaviour such as kin altruism (helping those who carry similar genes to oneself, and therefore helping those genes to survive) and reciprocal altruism (in which it is understood that by doing a good deed for another individual one reaps the reward of that individual returning the favour at some time in the future). In addition, because co-operation in such enterprises as hunting or gathering food will increase the chances of success, individuals who co-operate with each other are likely to have better survival (and hence reproductive) chances than those who act selfishly. Natural selection can therefore be seen to favour altruistic behaviour to some degree, and a genetic tendency to act in this way (though clearly not always to act in this way) has become established in our species, amongst others.

In The Expanding Circle: Ethics and Sociobiology[7], Singer outlines these ideas and discusses the development of altruism from behaviour that is motivated by a kind of genetic "selfishness" into behaviour that carries more objective and impartial connotations of right and wrong. Singer shows that human moral obligations have been gradually rippling outward through the development of our history, so that while originally individuals gave moral consideration only to family/social group members, this later came to encompass larger groups, then nations, races, all humans, and at the stage we are coming to now, animals. Some thinkers influenced by sociobiology believe that this discipline authorises a limited, fundamentally selfish, view of ethics in which only those who will directly reciprocate moral concern in exactly the same terms should be included within the ethical circle. Singer, however, emphasises that the process of moral concern has an internal dynamic of its own, driven by the capacity for rational, objective thought and that the only appropriate stopping point for the expansion of the ethical circle is the point at which all those affected by our actions are included.

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[6] The major founding work in this field is Edward O. Wilson's Sociobiology: The New Synthesis (1975), Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, Harvard University Press. Another major contribution is Richard Dawkins' The Selfish Gene (1976), Oxford: Oxford University Press

[7] Peter Singer, The Expanding Circle: Ethics and Sociobiology (1981), Oxford: Oxford University Press

A book that perhaps lends intriguing, but qualified, support to Singer's expanding circle idea is the primatologist Franz de Waal's Good Natured: The Origins of Right and Wrong in Humans and Other Animals[8]. De Waal concerns himself with observations of primate behaviour, particularly moral and helping behaviour. De Waal suggests that in primate society, moral and helping behaviour will indeed expand outwards, based on the availability of resources. Therefore, if a group is prospering, then moral and helping behaviour becomes much more common toward strangers and if a group is suffering hardship, then the 'circle' will constrict and only one's closest will be helped. This seems not to be based on the rational derivation of moral principles however, as Singer wishes it to be for humans, so much as on a balancing of the individual's own needs with those of others. De Waal also offers an interesting comment on the extension of ethical behaviour beyond the social in-group who are able to reciprocate it, claiming that "in the same way that birds and airplanes appear to defy the law of gravity yet are fully subjected to it, moral decency may appear to fly in the face of natural selection yet still be one of its many products."[9]

In what follows I refer primarily to Regan and Singer since they are by far the most influential of the logical animal liberationists. Nevertheless, there are many other philosophical accounts in a similar vein, including works by David DeGrazia,[10] Evelyn Pluhar,[11] Mark Rowlands[12] and Bernard Rollin.[13]

(b) Regan and Singer's Response to Criticisms

Regan and Singer have both made responses to the criticism of their rationalistic approaches that have been mounted by ecofeminists and others and discussed at various points in my thesis. These responses are based to some extent on

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[8] Franz de Waal, Good Natured: The Origins of Right and Wrong in Humans and Other Animals (1996), Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press

[9] Ibid., p. 12

[10] David DeGrazia, Taking Animals Seriously: Mental Life and Moral Status, (1996), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press

[11] Evelyn B. Pluhar, Beyond Prejudice: The Moral Significance of Human and Nonhuman Animals, (1995), Durham: Duke University Press

[12] Mark Rowlands, Animals Like Us, (2002), London: Verso Books; Animal Rights: A Philosophical Defence, (1998), Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan

[13] Bernard Rollin, Farm Animal Welfare, (2003), Blackwell; Animal Rights and Human Morality, (1981), New York: Prometheus Books; The Unheeded Cry: Animal Consciousness, Animal Pain and Science, (1990), Oxford: Oxford Paperbacks

a misunderstanding of the criticisms. The essence of the criticism by ecofeminists is that in the human subject (and especially in the realm of ethics) reason and emotion are inextricably linked, and that theories should reflect this rather than adhering to outdated conceptions of reason as 'pure,' epistemologically privileged, universal or objective. Singer and Regan, however, are keen to reassure us that, despite the absence of an explicit role for emotional responses *within their theories*, they do in fact (as people) have emotions. Singer, for example, asserts in a fictionalised reply to J.M. Coetzee's fictionalised critique of the logical approach, "Lay off with the 'You reason, so you don't feel' stuff, please. I feel, but I also think about what I feel."[14] Regan also wishes to make clear how important emotions and experience are to him, reflecting that "Philosophy can lead the mind to water, but only emotion can make it drink."[15] He has also similarly reflected that "Philosophical argument can take the heart to the river, but perhaps it is only experience that can make it drink. The intellectual challenge before me was to try to make this sense of the world less vague and the grounds for accepting it rationally more compelling."[16] An obvious question arises, however, from these two uses of the drinking metaphor. If only emotions and experience can make our hearts drink, then (as the ecofeminists argue) surely emotions and experience need to be incorporated into the theories themselves, rather than remaining as adjuncts designed to reassure us that the theorists are real people after all? It is a strange assumption that emotions and experiences such as compassion and moral outrage are "vague" and need to be massaged into an exclusively rational framework in order to have meaning or to be compelling.

The reasons for Regan's assumption are almost certainly to do with the excessively high valuation placed on rationality within Western culture, and of

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[14] Peter Singer, "Reflections" In J.M. Coetzee, The Lives of Animals, (1999), Princeton: Princeton University Press. Quoted in Cathryn Bailey, "On the Backs of Animals: The Valorization of Reason in Contemporary Animal Ethics", *Ethics and the Environment*, 10(1), 2005, p.10

[15] Interview with Tom Regan by Patrice Grenville, *The Animals Agenda 6*, December 1986, p. 40. Quoted in James Jasper and Dorothy Nelkin, The Animal Rights Crusade: The Growth of a Moral Protest, (1992), New York: The Free Press, p. 94. In the context of Regan's approach to philosophy, what this can be taken to mean is that attempts to use purely logical reasoning to establish absolute answers are unlikely to inspire people to change their behaviour – such approaches will only work where emotional responses are engaged by other information/experience. This may suggest that theory that is able to account for such responses has a greater chance not only of representing the movement faithfully, but also of convincing people to modify individual consumption patterns. This does not, however, suggest that it will be more effective in motivating legal or institutional change. Because of our culture's bias toward objective rationality, logical approaches seem likely to be more effective at these levels.

[16] Tom Regan, quoted in Robert Garner, The Political Theory of Animal Rights, (2005), Manchester, Manchester University Press, p.152.

course, academic culture. This high valuation is powerful in policing the apparent legitimacy of theories, and Regan is obviously correct in his assumption that adhering to the paradigm of "hard core philosophy – clear, rigorous, dispassionate"[17] provides a good defence against the traditional tendency to deny legitimacy to animal liberation on grounds of irrationality. I acknowledge and discuss this important reason for adopting the rational approach in Chapter 7, on pages 174-175. An exclusive emphasis on rationality is criticised very heavily however, by ecopsychologists, for its harmful psychological and environmental consequences. I also consider elements of this critique in Chapter 7, and the suggestion that it involves a "colonisation" of human experience and psychological development. In the context of this suggestion it is interesting to note that, despite his observations on the importance of experience and emotion, Regan himself seems unable to imagine a possible role for them in theory, asking "How could it be otherwise? How, that is, could one conceivably offer a theory of animal rights based on appeals to emotion?"[18]

Robert Garner argues that the emphasis on rationality is tactical, suggesting that

> [T]he emphasis placed by Singer and Regan on reason over emotion is a political strategy as much as it is an intellectual conviction. Here, they are right to suggest that, whatever the inherent merits of the case, arguments based on reason, logical consistency, rationality and so forth are more likely to curry favour with the public (in this particular issue area at least) than those based on care and compassion.[19]

As noted earlier, there may be legal and political advantages to logical arguments. But it seems not to be obvious that logical approaches are more likely to impress the public. Garner quotes Lori Gruen's argument that "As long as the theories that advocate the liberation of animals rely on abstraction, the full force of these consequences will remain too far removed to motivate a change in attitude."[20] Gruen's remark is, of course, compatible with Regan's own admission that "only

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[17] Tom Regan, All that Dwell Therein, p.2
[18] Tom Regan, Defending Animal Rights, (2001), Urbana: University of Indiana Press, Quoted in Bailey, "On the Backs of Animals", p.2
[19] Garner, Political Theory, p.151
[20] Lori Gruen, "Dismantling Oppression: An Analysis of the Connection between Women and Animals" in Greta Gaard (Ed.), Ecofeminsm: Women, Animals, Nature, p.79. Quoted in Garner, Political Theory, p.154.

experience [or emotion] can make [our hearts] drink." It is also worth noting an observation about "the idea of animal rights" that has been made elsewhere by Garner. "Its moral absolutism," he observes, "may... be unprofitable in the decision-making arena and in the task of altering public opinion."[21] I would suggest a balanced recognition that although the adoption of logical approaches is likely to be tactically useful within academia and Western legal systems, since it adheres to the dominant value structures, there is little evidence that it is likely to build a strong public following. In my second chapter I argue that sustainable public support requires a much more flexible approach – one that is more compatible with experience, with other important theoretical perspectives, and that is perhaps able to get closer to what Garner calls "the inherent merits of the case."

Garner goes on to note in Regan's defence a criticism that he makes of the ecofeminist approach:

> What are the resources within the ethic of care that can move people to consider the ethics of their dealings with individuals who stand outside the existing circle of their valued interpersonal relationships?... Unless we supplement the ethic of care with some other motivating force – some other grounding of our moral judgement – we run the grave risk that our ethic will be excessively conservative and will blind us to those obligations we have to people for whom we are indifferent.[22]

This point is essentially similar to one that I make about the ecofeminist approach on page 108. Garner notes Brian Luke's objection to this point and comments that Luke

> rightly suggests that Regan's arguments here are predicated on a pessimistic assessment of people's willingness to care for animals and desire to protect them. This, of course, is an empirical question, and, given the abuse suffered by animals, it is difficult to challenge, other than anecdotally as Luke does, Regan's pessimism."[23]

One of the primary goals of this thesis is to challenge such pessimism and to do so with evidence that is not merely anecdotal. I attempt to do this primarily by drawing on Gene Myers' ethnographic research and his accompanying theoretical framework, both of which strongly suggest that it is natural for children to extend care to

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[21] Robert Garner, Animals, Politics and Morality, (1993), Manchester: Manchester University Press, p.64
[22] Tom Regan, Quoted in Garner, Political Theory, p. 154
[23] Garner, Political Theory, p. 155

animals, but that this natural tendency is suppressed by development within Western culture. Indeed I later present evidence that Western culture's excessive emphasis on the discursive and the rational is specifically implicated in the suppression of these caring responses and their accompanying sense of connection with animals. As I observe in my conclusion, it can be difficult to see how to counteract this suppression effectively without using tactics that conspire with otherwise unhealthy aspects of Western culture. But the irony that a choice might be necessary between the tactical use of an exclusively logical approach and the greater preservation of experiential and empathic connections with the animal has been noted by several writers. Cathryn Bailey, for example, puts it like this:

> Early on, Modern reason screamed out its superiority through the "scientific" vivisection of live dogs. The dogs, nailed to boards by their paws, had their vocal cords cut so their screams would not disturb their "experimenters"... There are less literal ways of silencing animals through reason, though, even when what we mean to do is raise our voices on their behalf.[24]

Bailey's observation may at first seem tenuous, but the implications of the elevation of reason are clear and insidious. Singer quotes Socrates, for example, as an epigram to a chapter devoted to the value of reason; his words "the unexamined life is not worth living"[25] may be taken by the uncharitable to have a meaning that Singer did not intend.

The argument that the logical approach is tactical makes a certain limited sense then, although to noticeably different degrees for different writers. Regan is open about the fact that his intention to argue for animal liberation preceded the actual assembly of the arguments that he uses, acknowledging that "Since the leading theories were (and remain) one or another version of utilitarianism, on the one hand, and, on the other, theories that proclaim basic moral rights, it seemed to me that the moral basis of vegetarianism would have to be found somewhere among these options."[26] In this sense he is to some extent clear about what is referred to later in my thesis as the tool-like nature of rationality. Singer, however, puts forward a view of reason as leading to supposedly objective conclusions that contrasts with Regan's

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[24] Bailey, "On the Backs", p.15
[25] Singer, Expanding Circle, p.87
[26] Regan, All that Dwell, p.1.

reflexive awareness of the authority of his prior intentions. Consider the following passage from Singer's work:

> The capacity to reason is a special sort of capacity because it can lead us to places we did not expect to go. This distinguishes it from, say, the ability to type. As I work on the draft of this chapter, I am using both my capacity to reason and my ability to type. My ability to type produces the results I expect – that is, the words I choose to convey my thoughts appear on the paper in my typewriter, more or less as I wanted them to. My capacity to reason, on the other hand, has less predictable consequences. Sometimes an argument that appeared sound turns out to be fallacious. I may have to drop a position I formerly held, even abandon a project I find I cannot complete. Matters can also take a brighter turn: I may see a connection between two points that I had overlooked before. I may become persuaded of something that I did not previously believe. Beginning to reason is like stepping onto an escalator that leads upward and out of sight. Once we take the first step, the distance to be traveled is independent of our will and we cannot know in advance where we shall end.[27]

Here Singer seems to want almost to erase his own authorial agency, deferring instead to a higher power that supposedly compels him to conclusions over which he has no control. This is, perhaps, an ambitious claim to legitimation. But while the experience of creativity coming from somewhere other than the individual author is common among many writers and other artists, for Singer to ascribe his philosophical conclusions wholly to the supposed autonomy of reason seems fairly unconvincing. Such a conclusion does not acknowledge the extent to which reason is only able to take account, for example, of those aspects of the world that a thinker chooses (or is able) to consider. A philosopher may strive for standpointlessness, but she remains, nevertheless, a philosopher, and those with different knowledge and experiences of the world will reach different conclusions. Regan acknowledges this central feature of philosophical thought when he notes that "Philosophy is notorious for its disagreements. Give two philosophers the same premises and we are not surprised that they disagree over the conclusion they think follows from them. Give them the same conclusion and we expect them to disagree about the correct premises."[28] This observation is difficult to reconcile with Singer's assertion of reason's philosophical autonomy.

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[27] Singer, Expanding Circle, p. 88
[28] Regan, All that Dwell, p.42

It is interesting that Singer demonstrates the autonomy of reason in a very different sphere of thought by recounting a story about Hobbes and, in the process, seems almost to acknowledge the impossibility of a truly objective ethics. But, frustratingly, he fails to take account of the implications that the story suggests about his own project:

> The story is that Hobbes was browsing in a private library when he chanced upon a copy of Euclid's *Elements of Geometry* which lay open at the 47th theorem. On reading the conclusion, he swore that it was impossible. So he read the proof, which was based on a previously proved theorem, which he then also had to read, and this referred him back to another, and so on until he was at last convinced that the theorem he had doubted really did follow from axioms he could not reject. (Thereafter Hobbes tried to apply a similar standard of demonstrative reasoning in his own work; but what Euclid had done for geometry proved more difficult to apply to political philosophy.)[29]

Of course, the reason that the attempt proved "more difficult" is that political philosophy is not geometry – and neither are ethics or lived experience.

The problem throughout, then, is that the style of ethics advanced by Singer and Regan seek (for tactical reasons or not) to theorise in a way that attempts to unnaturally separate rationality from human emotions and to deny the complexity and ambiguity of lived experience. This criticism is, of course, not intended to disrespect Singer or Regan or to suggest that they are unfeeling automatons. Rather, as Bailey puts it, "It is because Singer is such a great ally to animals in so many ways that the limitations of his method warrant such close consideration."[30]

Further problems with the exclusivity of the emphasis on rationality (that are not adequately engaged by the responses considered here) are explored both implicitly and explicitly throughout the body of my thesis. It should be noted that many of these are not reducible to the ecofeminist account. For clarity and completeness I will restate some of the principle ones in abbreviated form here, however the intention of the thesis is not to present a list of discrete points so much as to foster a holistic understanding.

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[29] Singer, Expanding Circle, p. 88-89
[30] Bailey, "On the Backs", p.12

1 Complexity of experience being incompatible with rational reduction

As I explore in my second chapter, the sustainability of frameworks of understanding that are used to guide action is likely to be related to the ability of these frameworks to not clash too strongly with individual experience of the world or other frameworks. Rational theories derive from operations performed on an abstract reduction of the complexity of the world (See also point 6 below). Such theories are therefore unlikely to present a consistently good fit with either experience or symbolic frameworks focussing on different aspects of reality. The theories of Singer and Regan are not even compatible with each other, despite using many of the same arguments, and the clash with ecological thought is particularly important. To the extent that the theories fail to embody an openness to the psychological/experiential significance of such clashes, they run the risk that people might become disillusioned with them and reject them, meaning that they lose their efficacy in changing abusive patterns of behaviour and consumption.

This lack of openness, which Garner refers to as "the intractability of moral theory,"[31] is apparent in his attempt to find a location for animal liberation within another ideological tradition. Largely because of this intractability, the best match that can be found is an imperfect one with liberalism (which makes a certain sense since the arguments are themselves extensions of the scope of existing liberal thought[32]). But if the logical theories, as derived from traditional liberal thought, are not seen as the very essence of animal liberation as a movement, then perhaps framing alternatives to them might make it easier to build bridges with those social movements that Garner finds to be otherwise unlikely allies.

2 The 'modern' (or excessively rational) approach to morality suppresses the moral impulse.

Zygmunt Bauman argues that morality cannot be found in obedience to abstract principles. Morality is rather immanent in personal responses to moral dilemmas, and manifests itself in an attitude of being "for the Other," that exists prior

[31] Robert Garner, "Animal Rights, Moral Theory and Political Strategy" in Robert Garner (Ed.), Animal Rights: The Changing Debate, (1996), Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, p.3
[32] Garner, Political Theory, p.38

to the construction of moral rules or codes. Obedience to such rules or codes can tend to work *against* the moral impulse as they seem to reduce the extent of moral behaviour to a matter of simple compliance, offering us the illusion that if we obey the moral code then we can rest assured that we have done enough to qualify as morally good[33].

3 Ethics as social control

Brian Luke argues that the rational approach tends to structure its conclusions in ways that are "well suited to programs for social control."[34] Marti Kheel and other ecofeminists have also identified the patriarchal element as problematic, objecting to a concept of morality in which one set of social controls (those instructing us to eat meat) are replaced by another set (telling us not to). For many ecofeminists both sets of controls act to compromise freedom and self-determination.

4 Social Control may not be necessary or the best option.

This style of ethics may not be necessary (indeed may be counter-productive), since potential human empathic connections with animals may offer a stronger foundation. I identify the theoretical framework and the ethnographic documentation provided by Gene Myers as providing a very strong foundation for such claims, while also recognising the significant problems presented to preserving these connections in a culture structured as ours currently is. An innate bodily interactional order may provide the basis for judgements concerning the fairness of interaction with animals (it is of obvious significance that Western culture employs very extensive mechanisms in order to dissociate this interactional order from judgements about the consumption of animal products). The interactional order draws on the ability to take the perspective of the other, often through a process of mimesis in which the separateness of self and other is experientially broken down. Mimesis is a basic human ability that is manifested in childhood through games of

[33] See Zygmunt Bauman, Postmodern Ethics, (1993), Oxford, Blackwell, or the account that I present in chapter 3.
[34] Brian Luke "Taming Ourselves or Going Feral? Toward a Nonpatriarchal Metaethic of Animal Liberation" in Carol J. Adams and Josephine Donovan (Ed.s), Animals and Women: Feminist Theoretical Explorations, (1995), Duke University Press, p. 298

imitation (particularly of animals), but tends to be subsequently repressed in adulthood through an emphasis on rational and discursive modes of interaction.

5 The emphasis on objectivity devalues subjective experience and distorts moral development.

Because the rational approach presents its conclusions as objective, it is fair to link it to the critique of objectivity mounted by, among other writers, David Levin. Levin thinks that modernity's emphasis on rationality is responsible for the suppression and distortion of individual subjective experience as everyone aligns themselves with a supposedly 'objective' truth. In childhood this results in the suppression of moral experience (and hence moral development), as children are taught not to value and to develop their moral feelings and intuitions (based partly on the capacity described above), but rather to accept standards that are dictated to them. This results in the development of a rigid, dogmatic and even manipulative character structure.[35] It would be best for animal liberation theory not to be party to this kind of character development.

6 Logical or overly abstract thinking suppresses bodily feeling and awareness and distances us from the world.

Psychologically, a preference for logical or abstract thinking involves a progressive detachment from the world – the development of an ability to separate conceptual thought from the material world and to prefer the relative freedom and autonomy of the virtual environment that this creates. Singer's likening of rational thought to "an escalator that leads upward and out of sight"[36] – is therefore particularly pertinent and poetic when considered alongside the ecopsychological argument that it distances us from body and world. Some of the precise mechanisms behind this are explored in the thesis.

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[35] See David Levin, The Body's Recollection of Being: Phenomenological Psychology and the Deconstruction of Nihilism, (1985), London: Routledge, David Michael Levin, "Psychopathology in the Epoch of Nihilism", in David Michael Levin (Ed.), Pathologies of the Modern Self: Postmodern Studies on Narcissism, Schizophrenia, and Depression (1987), New York: New York University Press, or the account of this work that I present in chapter 7.

[36] Singer, Expanding Circle, p. 88

These criticisms, taken together, suggest that the logical approach to animal liberation runs the risk of unnecessarily devaluing and distorting human experience. As R.D. Laing has famously observed, "If our experience is destroyed then our behaviour will be destructive."[37] Although to some extent speculative, the criticisms described here are potentially important. The logical approach might in some ways be a risky strategy, and although many significant and important gains can be ascribed to it, these gains might not be without their costs. One such cost might conceivably be, as Garner puts it, the attitude of "self-righteous moral purity exhibited by some in the animal rights movement" – an attitude that "undoubtedly alienates those who might otherwise become supportive of animal rights goals."[38] My argument is that animal liberation theory should nurture experience rather than risk overriding it, if it wishes to achieve wider appeal and to do so sustainably.

(c) Differences between Environmental Ethics and Animal Liberation

There is an entrenched and very well documented philosophical clash between the logical approaches to animal liberation and more ecologically sensitive forms of environmental philosophy. This clash can be seen to originate to a great extent in the ways in which moral values are detected. In very broad terms, ecological philosophies usually find the preservation of the web of relationships that comprise the natural world to be a self-evident good, and sometimes even derive moral values from a selective observation of these relationships. Taking a holistic view of the world, it is seen that all life – including that of humans – depends on other life forms, and that the health of the system is of paramount importance, since without this system none can survive adequately. Environmental writers, particularly those tending toward the deep ecological perspective, often see little need for elegant logical proofs, since ethics tend to be approached more as an "organic ethos,"[39] in which an integrative and systemic view of the good emerges from an accumulation of observation and thought about how nature works and how the human can fit harmoniously into this interrelated whole. The assumptions on which Western thought is based, particularly since the Enlightenment and the industrial revolution,

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[37] R.D. Laing, The Politics of Experience, (1967), London: Penguin Books
[38] Address by Robert Garner to the Empty Cages Conference, Raleigh, NC, October 2, 2004.
[39] John Rodman, "The Liberation of Nature" *Inquiry* 20 (1977), p.96

are often criticised for the fragmenting character of their vision, and for their ecological alienation and insensitivity. The folly of these assumptions might be held to be increasingly evident the further we plunge toward an environmental crisis characterised by pollution, habitat destruction, massive species extinction, climate change, etc.

The philosophies advanced by the more logical animal liberationists attempt, however, to derive value using these traditional forms and assumptions of post-Enlightenment Western thought, expanding their usual scope of application to embrace certain types of animals. John Rodman therefore identifies the following weaknesses in Singer's Animal Liberation:

> ... the limitation of its horizon to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Utilitarian humane movement, its failure to live up to its own noble declaration that 'Philosophy ought to question the basic assumptions of the age', and its tendency to utilize the contemporary rhetoric of 'liberation' without fully comprehending what liberation might involve.[40]

Many other environmental philosophers have also criticised the lack of radicalism that they detect in the "moral extensionism" advanced by Singer and Regan. The expansion of the supposed boundaries of moral considerability to include certain classes of animals is seen as wholly inadequate to deal with the complexities raised by contemporary human relations with the natural world. Instead a need is detected for a holistic paradigm in which morality cannot be determined by weighing the interests or rights of individual entities. For many philosophers this remains true even should the boundary of apparent moral considerability be widened beyond animals to include plants and natural features such as rivers, etc. It would be reductive to condense the disagreement to a matter of discrete issues. Nevertheless, two issues will be taken as indicative of the clash in thinking: individualism and sentiency.

Individualism

Perhaps the most fundamental difference between the logical animal liberationists and the more ecologically orientated environmental ethicists concerns the matter of whether moral value should be located in individuals or in ecological

[40] Rodman, "Liberation", p.86

communities. For Singer and Regan, only individuals can count morally. This emphasis on individualism can be traced to the roots of their thinking in traditional liberal thought, as Garner argues.[41] Environmentalists, who focus more on "the relationships between and among things" than on the things themselves tend to have "a more holistic vision of the world."[42]

The emphasis on individuals can be traced back to the thought of Jeremy Bentham, who argued that "The community is a fictitious *body* composed of the individual persons who are considered as constituting as it were its *members*. The interest of the community then is what? – the sum of the interests of the several members who compose it."[43] Leaving aside any implications of the resonances that this passage has with Thatcherism, it is worth noting Callicott's rebuttal of Bentham's logic on the basis of its central metaphor of a body: "The interests of a person," Callicott points out, "are not those of his or her cells summed up and averaged out."[44]

This parallel between a community and a body is, perhaps, an illuminating one. Regan has suggested that an environmental ethic (as distinct from an animal ethic) could be founded on awarding rights to individual natural entities, and that environmental ethicists need to make "the case that individual inanimate natural objects (e.g. *this* redwood) have inherent value and a basic moral right to treatment respectful of that value... Were we to show proper respect for the rights of the individuals who make up the biotic community, would not the community be preserved?"[45] Callicott is blunt in his refutation of this suggestion:

> To take an illustration familiar to almost everyone, if the right of individual whitetail deer to live unmolested were respected, the biotic communities which they help to make up would not be preserved. On the contrary, without some provision for "thinning the herd" – a euphemism for killing deer – plant members of some communities would be seriously damaged, some beyond recovery.[46]

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[41] See Garner, Political Theory, p.38 or as discussed above.
[42] J. Baird Callicott, In Defense of the Land Ethic: Essays in Environmental Philosophy, (1989), Albany: State University of New York Press, p.22
[43] Jeremy Bentham, An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation, (1823), Oxford: Clarendon Press, Quoted in Callicott, In Defense, p.24
[44] Callicott, In Defense, p.24
[45] Regan, The Case, p. 362-363. Quoted in Callicott, In Defense, p.43
[46] Callicott, In Defense, p.43

This is a contentious argument, not least because what Callicott seems to be endorsing is the management of nature, rather than allowing it to find its own (wild) equilibrium. The prospect of killing individual animals is a painful one that many animal liberationists would want to oppose, but it is worth noting briefly that if severe damage to an ecosystem were to result in a greater quantity of suffering for sentient creatures (because of the loss of their food supply, for example) then Singer's utilitarianism would seem to provide grounds for the "cull." Although based in a consideration of the interests of individuals, Singer's theory definitely does allow the violation of individual interests for the aggregate good of the many (although we should note that this is not quite an ecological perspective). Regan's rights perspective, however, would not sanction such a move.

Callicott continues by pointing out the ignorance of ecological functioning to be found in Regan's suggestion for the founding of an environmental ethic, and the fact that taken to its logical conclusion the awarding of rights to "individual inanimate natural objects" would imply an attempt to "stop practically all trophic processes beyond photosynthesis."[47] It is difficult to dispute this logic and – since the basic mechanisms of ecological functioning are an unalterable fact of life (whether this is interpreted as having moral value or not!) – an environmental ethic based on individualism does seem doomed. But Callicott presses this important point further to engage Regan on his own ground – the logical basis for an animal rights ethic.

Regan wishes his argument for animal rights to be applied only to the treatment of animals by humans, and not to the treatment of animals by other animals. Humans are (usually) moral agents; animals are moral patients. Nevertheless, humans and rights-possessing animals are supposed to possess rights equally – Regan admits no hierarchy of greater or lesser rights. Callicott argues, then, that if we are obliged to protect the right of a human moral patient (a child, for instance) not to be harmed, by another moral patient (such as a "certifiably brain-damaged sadist"[48]), then we must logically be obliged to protect animal moral patients from being harmed by other animal moral patients. The argument is carefully constructed using close reference to Regan's own words and appears logically watertight. It is worth quoting at length:

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[47] Ibid., p.43
[48] Ibid., p.45

> Regan's permission of animal predation... stands in direct contradiction to his theory of animal rights. He says, "Since animals can pose innocent threats and because we are sometimes justified in overriding their rights when they do..., one cannot assume that all hunting and trapping are wrong" (p.353). "Pose innocent threats" to whom? To people, as he explains. But Regan's whole case for animal rights turns on the principle that basic moral rights are enjoyed equally by all who are entitled to them: "As a matter of strict justice, then, we are required to give equal respect to those individuals who have equal inherent value... whether they be humans or animals (p.264). And "all who possess [basic moral] rights possess them equally" (p.327). Since some animals can and do pose innocent threats to other (rights holding) animals, as a matter of strict justice, we ought to deal with such threats no differently than we would if they were threats to (rights holding) humans. If we ought to protect humans' rights not to be preyed on by both human and animal predators, then we ought to protect animals' rights not to be preyed upon by both human and animal predators. In short, then, Regan's theory of animal rights implies a policy of humane predator extermination, since predators, however innocently, violate the rights of their victims.[49]

This is not a conclusion that Regan wishes to endorse, but there appears to be no acceptable logical way that it can be avoided. It seems, then, that Regan's philosophy fails here on its own terms (to present us with "hard core philosophy – clear, rigorous, dispassionate"[50]) since it requires a sympathetic reader to accept that predator extermination is *not* logically required in order to protect individual animal rights. Of course, if the reader is already sympathetic then it might be asked why "hard core philosophy..." is needed anyway.

Singer's utilitarianism, as we have seen, might in some cases yield more ecologically benign solutions to specific moral dilemmas. Nevertheless, Singer's focus on individuals and on the importance of the pain and pleasure that they experience does lead to some disturbing suggestions. For example, in Practical Ethics, Singer argues that "we do seem to do something bad if we knowingly bring a miserable being into existence, and if this is so, it is difficult to explain why we do not do something good when we knowingly bring a happy being into existence."[51] So far, so logical. But Singer also suggests that "if it is good to create life, then presumably it is good for there to be as many people on the planet as it can possibly hold. With the possible exception of arid areas suitable only for pasture, the surface of our globe can support more people if we grow plant foods than if we raise

[49] Ibid., p.45-46
[50] Regan, All that Dwell Therein, p.2
[51] Peter Singer, Practical Ethics, (1979), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.101

animals."[52] What Singer appears to be advocating as an ideal in these sentences is the use of all possible land throughout the planet for agricultural cultivation, to sustain a maximum possible population of humans. Ecologically, of course, this would be disastrous. Any species of animal or plant not capable of adapting to the domination of the landscape by agriculture would perish. Of course, species and the health or diversity of the whole matter little within a framework in which only individuals are recognised as having value. Singer's vision is at least fairly consistent on this point. It is, however, frankly terrifying.

Garner suggests that "an ecocentric ethic lies on intellectually shaky foundations."[53] It is certainly not well established within traditional Western or liberal political thought. But the individualism of the liberal tradition and of the logical animal liberationists can seem at least equally shaky when examined in depth or when applied to the eco-social world existing outside of the circumscribed (and ecologically unaware) political context in which it developed. Many of the more radical environmental philosophers are consistent in that they are reluctant to recognise the sanctity of individual human life. Even Callicott, for example, is clear that "The biospheric perspective does not exempt *Homo sapiens* from moral evaluation in relation to the well-being of the community of nature taken as a whole."[54] The possible implications of this statement can seem chilling to those of us brought up within the individualism of the Western tradition, *but so can the implications of Singer's and Regan's thought when taken to their logical conclusions*. Perhaps, then, a balance between individualism and holism is necessary. There is no neat logical formula for such a balance, but perhaps – as I argue throughout this thesis and as this discussion amply shows – too great a dependence on logical formulae and on the universal application of principles derived from them can be just as dangerous as complete irrationality.

Sentience

As a utilitarian, Singer places great importance on Jeremy Bentham's insistence that the only important factor in determining the boundary of moral

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[52] Ibid., p.100
[53] Garner, Political Theory, p.126
[54] Callicott, In Defense, 27

considerability is sentience.[55] In fact, Singer sees the ability to suffer pain as the *only factor* relevant to determining whether moral considerability should be awarded, claiming that

> If a being suffers, there can be no moral justification for refusing to take that suffering into consideration. No matter what the nature of the being, the principle of equality requires that its suffering be counted equally with the like suffering - in so far as rough comparisons can be made - of any other being. If a being is not capable of suffering, or of experiencing enjoyment or happiness, there is nothing to be taken into account. [56]

Singer's conception of what constitutes suffering is limited to conscious experiences, which means that he specifically excludes from moral consideration forms of life that he does not consider to be conscious. This includes plants as well as many animals (his boundary is drawn at "oysters, perhaps, or even more rudimentary organisms"[57]). He asks himself whether the life of a weed has any intrinsic value and responds in the following way: "Suppose that we apply the test of imagining the life of the weed I am about to pull out of my garden. I then have to imagine living a life with no conscious experiences at all. Such a life is a complete blank; I would not in the least regret the shortening of this subjectively barren form of existence."[58] It is worth noting that Singer's "test" is in no sense objective and relies instead on his own preconceptions about the possibility of particular organisms having subjective experiences. While it would probably be a reasonable guess to assume that most animals experience the world in a way that is qualitatively and quantitatively different from plants, Singer's absolutist assertion that plant life "is a complete blank" is an intuition that is not universally shared. And, since environmental thinkers tend to wish to preserve ecosystemic wholes of which plants are a vital part, they are often troubled by the sentiency criterion and the naïve certainty with which it is applied. Rodman, for example, "confesses" that

> I need only to stand in the midst of a clear-cut forest, a strip-mined hillside, a defoliated jungle, or a dammed canyon to feel uneasy with assumptions that could yield the conclusion that no human action can make any

[55] I will refrain from quoting Bentham's rejection of rationality and the ability to talk in favour of the ability to suffer. See Singer, Animal Liberation, p.7
[56] Ibid., p.92
[57] Singer, Expanding Circle, p.120
[58] Singer Practical Ethics, p.92

> difference to the welfare of anything but sentient animals. I am agnostic as to whether or not plants, rocks, and rivers have subjective experience, and I am not sure that it really matters.[59]

Rodman's agnosticism is noticeably more compatible with the view of morality as infinite (as described later in this thesis) than is Singer's enthusiasm to draw a neat line. Of course, a distinct boundary for moral considerability appears to some extent to be a requirement of a logical approach, since logic appears intrinsically to be most appropriate when dealing with simple, abstract operations of the Boolean type. It struggles to cope well with grey areas or uncertainty. Nevertheless, on this point Singer might have been wise to have heeded a little more closely his own recommendation of Socratic method. Singer notes that Socrates "never claims to know the answer – his wisdom consists, he says, in the fact that he knows that he knows nothing. Therefore he knows more than those who know nothing but think they know something. That is the starting point of his criticism of conventional morality."[60]

Aside from these points, Singer's limiting of the scope of morality to the welfare of sentient individuals is troubling in practical terms, since it is likely to be counter-intuitive to many who experience moral feelings in relation to the sort of non-sentient entities that Rodman describes. This aspect of Singer's theory can therefore be seen to be the exact opposite of strategically useful, clearly alienating those who are troubled by environmental destruction for reasons that extend beyond its effect on sentient individuals.

Regan's stopping point for the expansion of moral considerability is not the (supposed) boundary of sentience, however, and the point at which he chooses to place his boundary is even likely to trouble many in the animal liberation movement. For Regan, only animals that have "inherent value" can be said to have rights. He believes that in order to have inherent value they must be "subjects-of-a-life," which is a fairly restrictive measure involving the ability to hold beliefs, to conceive of the future and to entertain goals, amongst other mental criteria. This line, he believes, should be drawn at "mentally normal mammals of a year or more."[61]

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[59] Rodman, "Liberation", p.89. Rodman notes Singers
[60] Singer, Expanding Circle, p.96-97
[61] Regan, The Case, p.78

This is an interesting point at which to mark the boundary of moral considerability, since it does omit many animals that might fairly unproblematically be considered sentient, favouring only those who have mental attributes closest to the human. Callicott admits to being "irritated" by this aspect of the theory – or perhaps more accurately by the fact that Regan claims to be arguing for animal rights when in fact his theory seems only to argue for the rights of mammals. As Callicott notes, "butterflies, beetles, mollusks, crustaceans, birds, fish, and amphibians... fall outside his very restrictive qualifications for rights bearers."[62] Putting to one side the implications of Regan's boundary for the majority of these animals, we are nevertheless left with some important problems in regard to his stated intention to argue for vegetarianism. Chickens and turkeys, which are intensively farmed by their billions in horrendous conditions, are essentially lacking moral considerability. Veal calves also seem to lack rights, as well as those other farmed animals who suffer immeasurably but are slaughtered before they achieve inherent value on or around their first birthday. The apparent exclusion of these animals from moral considerability seems curious since the misery of their lives is an absolutely central concern of the animal liberation movement.

Aside from the matter of where to draw the boundary of moral considerability, environmental thinkers have also objected to the reduction of morality to a matter of pleasure and pain that the focus on sentiency involves – and particularly to the characterisation of pleasure and pain that is put forward. For example, Regan refers to "the intrinsic evil of pain" and to his assumption that "pleasure is intrinsically good."[63] Singer also refers to "the evil of pain."[64] This kind of language is particularly uncomfortable for those environmentalists who have a more grounded appreciation of the physiological importance of pain to animal survival in the wild. Callicott, for example, notes that "Pain and pleasure seem to have nothing at all to do with good and evil if our appraisal is taken from the vantage point of ecological biology. Pain in particular is primarily information. In animals, it informs the central nervous system of stress, irritation, or trauma in outlying regions

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[62] Callicott, In Defense, p.41. Regan does suggest (referring as an example to frogs) that "When our ignorance is so great, and the possible moral price so large, it is not unreasonable to give these animals the benefit of the doubt, treating them as if they are subjects, due our respectful treatment, especially when doing so causes no harm to us." See Regan, The Case, p.367. Considering his arguments against the inadequate protection afforded by utilitarianism, however, this seems something of a fudge.
[63] Regan, All that Dwell, p.9
[64] Singer, Animal Liberation, p.20-21

of the organism."[65] While many experiences of pain may be deeply unpleasant, Callicott disputes both that it is always so, and that pain necessarily has any moral importance:

> A certain level of pain under optimal organic circumstances is indeed desirable as an indicator of exertion – of the degree of exertion needed to maintain fitness, to stay in shape, and of a level of exertion beyond which it would be dangerous to go. An arctic wolf in pursuit of a caribou may experience pain in her feet or chest because of the rigours of the chase. There is nothing bad or wrong in that.[66]

It barely needs saying that Singer and Regan are focussing on pain in different contexts to this. Nevertheless, the connotations of metaphysical fundamentalism apparent in references to pain as an intrinsic "evil" do seem to reinforce the legitimacy of Callicott's critique. Most people who have pursued a vigorous exercise programme will probably recognise the basic truth in what Callicott says: that physiological (or other) experience cannot always be neatly divided up into pleasure and pain, that pain can be rewarding even when it clearly is pain ("no pain, no gain" as the saying goes), and therefore that Regan's and Singer's fundamentalism on this point is essentially misguided.

Some degree of pain, then, is intrinsic to the experiences of embodiment, living and the achievement of goals or the avoidance of danger for almost any autonomous creature. Recognising that this is not a manifestation of evil suggests that the immorality of much animal abuse might be found to some extent in the curtailment of autonomy, rather than simply in the experience of pain *per se*. Both Rodman and Callicott (as well as other environmentalists who critique animal liberation[67]) consider animal domestication and all that it entails to be the bigger problem, and denounce modern farming accordingly. This is a matter that I take up toward the end of the thesis, introducing my own arguments from a progressive animal liberationist perspective in support of this position.

We might end this section by noting an intriguing irony in the emphasis on the philosophical importance of sentiency and pain by both Singer and Regan. This is that it does very effectively focus their theories on the importance of experience –

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[65] Callicott, In Defense, p.32
[66] Ibid., p.32
[67] For example, Paul Shepard. See his The Others, (1996), Washington DC: Island Press

indeed experience is considered to be the *only* thing that counts morally. But, of course, only the experience of the suffering animal (or mammal) is taken account of. Obviously an acute awareness of how this experience of suffering occurs, particularly in the industrialised Western context, is fairly central to the motivation of animal liberationists. But what my thesis will suggest is that there are many other important things that a good philosophy should take account of. One of these is experience in a much wider context – including that of those people that the philosophy attempts to communicate with, to convert and to sustain the commitment of in a world that is (and will inevitably be experienced as) more complex than any single logical theory can account for.

(d) Review of Political Sociology

The animal protection movement received significant sociological attention in the early 1990s. Perhaps the most notorious work to emerge around this time was Keith Tester's Animals and Society: The Humanity of Animal Rights. Tester was no friend to the movement, and his account took an extreme social constructionist line, asserting that "Statements about what is true are social artefacts rather than approximations to a real nature which culture hides."[68] From this theoretical base, he was able to suggest that "Animals are only made the site of moral worries to the extent that they are useful in establishing social definitions of the properly human."[69] Indeed, animal rights was a "fetish" and animals were "blank paper" that could be inscribed with anything that humans wish, moral status being only one example. A few strange and unsupported comments also made their way into Tester's account, for example: "Perhaps it is true; perhaps some individuals do only give animals rights because they are in some way unable to meet social expectations."[70] Critical rebuffs were fast. Ted Benton for example, taking a realist line, picked up on the argument that animals were "blank paper," and argued powerfully that the nature of animals and the socio-economic contexts in which they are engaged with do exert a powerful influence on how they are treated and thought about.[71] Tester's views have

[68] Keith Tester, Animals and Society: The Humanity of Animal Rights, (1991), New York: Routledge, p.33
[69] Ibid., p.195
[70] Ibid., p.17
[71] Ted Benton, "Animals and Us: Relations or Ciphers", *History of the Human Sciences*, 5(2), (1992)

since been so extensively and comprehensively disputed that (despite occasional attempts to rehabilitate them[72]) there seems little need now to offer further refutation.[73] Nevertheless, it is perhaps worth mentioning Tester here since his was the first of a trio of sociological accounts, emerging within 2-3 years of each other, which paid significant attention to the moral philosophy of Regan and Singer, and which painted very noticeably different pictures of the movement. The other two follow, after which I will consider Lyle Munro's more recent take on matters.

Robert Garner

Robert Garner's book Animals, Politics and Morality combines an examination of the moral theories advanced by Regan, Singer and several others with a sociological account of the politics surrounding animal protection, primarily in the UK. It is a valuable book, providing a wealth of meticulously researched detail about the history of the movement and about the politics surrounding crucial campaigns. It is also a source of several important observations made throughout this thesis.

Garner's first chapter deals specifically with moral theory, and provides an overview of the various philosophical positions that it is possible to adopt on crucial issues such as sentiency, mental complexity and the issue of utilitarianism versus rights, as well as what the consequences of adopting these positions are. In this approach it is similar to his more recent book Animal Ethics,[74] which applies much the same tactic in greater detail throughout its length. Garner is strongly sympathetic with the goals of the movement, but the breadth of his philosophical coverage can make it difficult to determine a clear philosophical position that he is willing to make his own. He notes that he is not adopting a pluralist position, that he is "not convinced by all of the claims made on behalf of animals by Tom Regan," but that he is "more convinced by the protection offered to both humans and animals by rights than I am by utilitarianism."[75] There is, then, a tension that can be detected in Garner's work: he has a strong wish to support formal philosophical claims on behalf of animals, but in appreciating with admirable clarity the strengths and weaknesses of competing positions he finds it difficult to clearly advocate a distinct one as his

[72] See Adrian Franklin, Nature and Social Theory, (2002), London: Sage
[73] Although I do report sympathetically on Gene Myers' objections to Tester later in the thesis.
[74] Robert Garner, Animal Ethics, (2005), Polity Press
[75] Garner, Animals, Politics and Morality, p.34

own. This is not, I believe, a weakness of Garner's so much as a weakness of moral philosophy: Garner's skilled dissection simply makes plain the ultimate lack of resolution that the many volumes on the formal moral status of animals have been able to achieve. Having said this however, one coherent and important insight is shown to emerge from the various theoretical approaches: they present challenges to the "moral orthodoxy" (the view that animal welfare deserves moral consideration, but not when significant human interests might be jeopardised). Garner suggests that the moral orthodoxy is "seriously flawed," but nevertheless that even if we accept it there is very significant scope for reform.[76]

These, then, are the various moral perspectives from which Garner launches his examination of the issues and tactics that occupy the animal protection movement. A chapter discusses the history of the movement since the 1970s, providing a fascinating account of the various groups that grew rapidly in importance, and particularly of the conflicts within the R.S.P.C.A. between moderates and radicals. Garner discusses possible contributing factors to the prospering of the movement, including the development of a post-affluent political culture, the coincidence of a growing awareness of animal capabilities with more severe methods of exploitation, and the influence of the radical philosophies discussed previously. The influence of the post-affluent culture seems distinctly plausible (and if it is accepted that humans are primates, it might even be observed to be compatible with DeWaal's observation – mentioned earlier – that if a group of primates is prospering then moral and helping behaviour becomes much more common toward strangers). Nevertheless, it might be worth noting more recent research by Adrian Franklin, Bruce Tranter, and Robert White into the effect of "postmaterialist values" on support for animal rights, and their conclusion that little influence can be detected.[77] Garner's account of the importance of the moral philosophy to activists is also interesting. Taking the perspective of the uninformed activist for a moment, he suggests that "The fact that most have probably not read the leading works and are not aware of the complex philosophising they contain is irrelevant. What is striking is the extent to which they are reducible to the level of

[76] Ibid., p.34 & 35

[77] Adrian Franklin, Bruce Tranter, and Robert White, "Explaining Support for Animal Rights: A Comparison of Two Recent Approaches to Humans, Nonhuman Animals, and Postmodernity", *Society and Animals*, 9(2), (2001)

slogans."[78] This might be an interesting point to consider in relation to Callicott's deliberately provocative observation that ""Right(s)" is actually an expressive locution masquerading as a substantive. (That is the secret of its talismanic power.)"[79]

There then follow highly informative chapters on how animals suffer as captives (principally pet, zoo and circus animals), as sources of food, and as tools of laboratory research. Legislative frameworks are explored in each of these areas and a sophisticated analysis of the politics around each issue is presented. These forays into the convoluted politics of animal protection make a valuable and original contribution to the literature. The consequences of holding moral positions such as rights and the "moral orthodoxy" are explored in each case, and the case for change in the practices considered is presented.

Next there is a chapter on the politics of nature conservation, which in the first (1993) edition of the book contains a significant weakness that was subsequently rectified in the second (2004) edition.[80] This weakness is worth briefly mentioning, since it is wrongly used to justify charges of hypocrisy and "eco-imperialism" against conservationists, and is perhaps helpful in understanding Garner's approach in later works to the clash between environmentalists and animal liberationists. Garner identifies (in the first edition) two possible reasons for the conservation of wild animals. The first is that "we might want to keep animals around because it serves our interests to do so."[81] This "anthropocentric conservationism" is "the dominant form at present."[82] The second reason is that "we might want to conserve animals for their own sakes because they have interests which must be promoted directly, irrespective of any benefits we may derive from so doing."[83] This second reason is "consistent with the various moral theories we considered"[84] – which is to say that it is concerned with recognising the interest that individual animals have in not being harmed. What the account lacks is any significant acknowledgement that the conservation of species diversity might be recognised as an end in itself for

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[78] Garner, Animals, Politics and Morality, p.64
[79] Callicott, In Defense, p.42
[80] Robert Garner, Animals, Politics and Morality (Second Edition), (2004), Manchester: Manchester University Press.
[81] Garner, Animals, Politics and Morality (First Edition), p.151
[82] Ibid., p.152
[83] Ibid., p.152
[84] Ibid., p.152

reasons other than anthropocentric interest. This serves the purpose of reducing the perceived moral dimensions of any dispute between animal liberationists and conservationists in the liberationists favour.[85]

Next there are chapters on the two principal courses that the animal protection movement has adopted to work toward change: the constitutional route and direct action. Again, the political analysis is very valuable, and too complex to relate fully here. It is worth mentioning, though, that Garner's political stance is essentially one of adapting to the requirements of each situation, rather than being hampered by a need to remain committed to a particular ideological or philosophical position at the expense of achieving change. What might work is what is advocated: Garner suggests that "standing aloof in principled isolation seems like a futile gesture" and that "a failure to accept the realities of practical politics is not a neutral act since it can damage the case being put by those who are prepared to negotiate and compromise."[86] For this reason, Garner seems willing to accept the expediency of working within the moral orthodoxy, despite its flaws and the apparent imputation of acquiescing to them.[87] The discussion of the moral validity of certain kinds of direct action (particularly illegal ones) is also interesting, as is Garner's point that "It is no accident that the use of direct action in defence of animals has burgeoned at precisely the moment when a concerted philosophical attempt to justify granting rights to them has occurred."[88] This is an important observation, possibly deserving greater exploration since it is just feasible that the two factors emerged as consequences of less easily grasped social shifts rather than one being a causal consequence of the other.

Garner's book is most powerful in its analysis of how the political system works, and how the animal protection movement can use it to make gains.

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[85] Here is an example of how this works: "Conflict between groups and individuals emphasising the animal protection approach and those emphasising a human-centred conservationism has been endemic. In Britain, both the LACS and the HSA, for instance, have had run-ins with the RSPB because of the latter's unwillingness to oppose the shooting of grouse on the grounds that wildlife habitats are managed effectively as a result." Ibid., p.164. Contrary to this analysis, the RSPB have for some years criticised grouse shooting estates on the grounds that they often persecute rare raptors such as hen harriers (who damage their economic interests by preying on grouse). The RSPB investigations unit regularly engages in joint operations with police and are often the main source of evidence in prosecutions for such crimes (see almost any issue of *Legal Eagle: The RSPB's Investigations* Newsletter). Within the limitations of their remit, then, this is less a human-centred conservationism than one focussed on conserving species and biodiversity for their own value, regardless of human economic interests.

[86] Garner, Animals, Politics and Morality, p.208 & 209

[87] Ibid., p.247

[88] Ibid., p.227

Nevertheless, he recognises the great importance of winning over the public, claiming that "only when people's attitudes toward animals change, and this is reflected in their consumer and voting behaviour, will the greater protection for animals, desired by the movement which campaigns on their behalf, become a realistic proposition."[89]

Jasper and Nelkin

James Jasper and Dorothy Nelkin's 1992 book The Animal Rights Crusade: The Growth of a Moral Protest presents an overview of the history of campaigns central to the movement as well as some apparent explanation of the thoughts and feelings of protagonists on both sides of the various issues. Although they at no point explicitly say so, it seems that the material is almost entirely exclusive to the movement in North America. Considering Lyle Munro's observation of significant differences between how things work in the U.S.A., the U.K. and Australia, it is worth noting this point.

Jasper and Nelkin, then, cover the "birth" of the movement, its links to the moderate humane tradition and the growth of militancy. The tensions between the animal and environmental movements, as well as something of the philosophical bases of these tensions are covered, as is the history and importance of campaigns against the use of animals in laboratory research and the fur, meat and entertainment industries. The account is interesting, particularly in the detail of the historical development of various campaigns, but is not without very significant problems.

Before exploring these problems a little context is necessary, since this might be thought to mitigate the shortcomings of the book. Jasper, (whose project the book essentially was) was sympathetic to the animal protection movement but Nelkin (his senior partner) was not. Jasper has also published several articles with higher academic standards than the book in question, which was aimed at a wider audience.[90]

One of the most obvious problems is the lack of substantiation or example presented for most of the assertions that the authors make about the motivations and

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[89] Ibid., p.251

[90] I am grateful to my external examiner, Robert Garner, for providing these necessary points of context.

thoughts of movement members as a whole, as well as several points presented as fact. A fairly homogenous or generalised picture is painted, in which the reader is effectively expected to trust the knowledge and analysis of the authors without having any real idea of how they reached their conclusions or what kind of data they are based on. The only indication throughout the whole book of how their sociological knowledge might have been gathered is given in two sentences buried in the acknowledgements section. This leaves it unclear each time an observation is made to what extent it might be based on real data and to what extent on speculation or opinion.

This tendency toward generic assertion and its accompanying shortfall of any real substantiation – familiar to readers of Tester's tirade – is vastly compounded by the loaded nature of much of the language that Jasper and Nelkin use. They often seem to relish walking a fine line between description and parody. A good example of this is in their use of Christianity as a central metaphor for the movement (references to "missionaries", "the bible", etc., abound). Consider the following passage: "In the strident style of Old Testament prophets, scalding and condemning their society, organizers point to evils that surround them and to catastrophes that will befall society in the absence of reform."[91] The recurrent religious metaphor subtly and mischievously imports a sense of the movement as slightly unreasonable and ridiculous, based on blind faith in something that cannot be known for sure rather than on a degree of knowledge about reality that genuinely exceeds that of the average citizen. Indeed, a certain populist arrogance is displayed throughout, as the authors seem to subtly hint at their own possible alignment with a mainstream perspective, without ever being so clumsy or unacademic as to admit this outright. Here is one example: "The smug zeal of moral crusades is familiar. Seeing the moral world in black and white, many activists… are politically naïve and dismissive of majority sensibilities."[92] And again: "Those willing to grant moral rights to chickens easily make comparisons that offend mainstream tastes."[93] Such sentences are simultaneously factually correct and ideologically loaded in a way that recalls the rhetoric of populist politicians and tabloid newspaper journalists. Indeed, much of the fascination of the book lies in this tension between a cleverness and a sloppiness of

[91] Jasper and Nelkin, The Animal Rights Crusade, p.8
[92] Ibid., p.46
[93] Ibid., p.46

writing style that the authors manage to maintain throughout, never quite taking a stance on the political issue, but playing with the reader's perception of their material. It is worth noting that in a later publication Jasper is slightly more upfront, flippantly dividing the movement into "realos" and "fundis" (realists and fundamentalists) and asserting boldly with little supporting argumentation that "The argument for better, more caring treatment is strong; that for absolute rights is weak."[94]

Analytically speaking, The Moral Crusade does make a few bold claims. One of the more significant is in a persistent inclination to label the motivations of animal liberationists as "sentimental anthropomorphism." According to the authors, ownership of pets underlies sentimental anthropomorphism, despite some discomfort on the part of movement leaders and philosophers about the status of pets.[95] The reader might note, again, that sentimental anthropomorphism is a term loaded with ideological implications – "sentiment" suggesting something perhaps even more unreasonable than emotion, and anthropomorphism invoking the kind of discourse that the scientific establishment has historically developed to suppress human-animal connections. Jasper and Nelkin have no problem claiming that we "project onto animals the characteristics of humans – sensitivity to pain, emotional bonds such as love and loyalty, the ability to plan and communicate."[96] Of course, if we "project" these things then presumably they were not there to begin with! (Note that the authors also recall Tester's insistence that animals are "blank paper" when they claim that "they are blank slates onto which people have projected their beliefs about the state of nature."[97]) As sociologists, Jasper and Nelkin are acutely aware of the ideological power of language. Indeed, some of the more interesting parts of the book are those rare occasions when they do actually take the trouble to present and to analyse the actual words of protagonists – for example a dispute between an activist and a researcher that illustrates the sense of connection with animals felt by the activist. As they say, "The scientist had chosen precise and emotionally neutral terms; the activist felt such neutrality inhuman, cruel, and threatening to his own

[94] James M. Jasper, "The American Animal Rights Movement" in Robert Garner (Ed.), Animal Rights: The Changing Debate, (1996), Basingstoke: Macmillan, p.137-138
[95] Jasper and Nelkin, Moral Crusade, p.52
[96] Ibid., p.6
[97] Ibid., p.6

self."[98] This acute awareness of a sensitivity to language seems to suggest that Jasper and Nelkin choose their own loaded terms quite deliberately and provocatively, rather in the manner of a mischievous uncle teasing a politically correct teenager with hints of roguish xenophobia.

What must also be mentioned here is the treatment of animal liberation philosophy, to which a chapter is dedicated. Philosophers, we are told, served as "midwives" of the movement in the 1970s. Furthermore, "almost every animal rights activist either owns or has read Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation*," which "has become a bible for the movement."[99] Nevertheless, despite this bible status, "the growing crusade for animals soon outpaced Singer's position" and "most fundamentalists reject [it]."[100] These are certainly statements that could do with some kind of empirical backing up. As an active hunt saboteur and enthusiastic new vegan at around the time that Jasper and Nelkin would have been writing, I personally had no knowledge at all of Singer's work, so am somewhat sceptical about the "bible" status of the book and its concomitant rejection (although I am willing to concede that this might be a difference between the U.S.A. and the U.K.). However, something that even Singer himself might object to is Jasper and Nelkin's claim that "Articulating the intuitive feelings of those inclined to sentimental anthropomorphism, Singer's plea for equal consideration has since become the principle of the movement."[101] Since (for better or worse) Singer very carefully and deliberately took the trouble to distance his actual argument from sentiment and anthropomorphism he might consider it unfair that he be accused of articulating such things.

Jasper and Nelkin, then, portray the philosophy of Singer (and also Regan) as being of central importance to the movement. Nevertheless, they are very sceptical about any real value that such work may have, pointing out quite bluntly that "Philosophical arguments are limited. They cannot prove that animals do or do not have rights, since rights claims, based partly on intuitions, cannot be clinched by logical debate or empirical proof."[102] Even the practical or strategic value of the work to the movement is doubted, as Jasper and Nelkin tell us that "For most people,

[98] Ibid., p.120
[99] Ibid., p.90
[100] Ibid., p.93
[101] Ibid., p.91
[102] Ibid., p.99

membership in the human species is itself a morally relevant boundary... Men and women do not define their loyalties because of philosophical argument. Loyalty is a moral intuition based on values and experience. While philosophy can help articulate existing intuitions, it can rarely change them."[103] So, if Jasper and Nelkin are to be believed then even the power of Singer's and Regan's work to make converts is trifling. Rather, it merely appeals to those who have pre-existing "sentimental" tendencies that the philosophies serve to "articulate." In perhaps the clearest expression of their position on the matter, the authors proudly reveal their own transcendent intellectual superiority: "To people with strong pro-animal convictions formed by compassion for pets, the arguments of the animal rights philosophers are plausible. To others, they fall flat. Disputes over moral values can be explained sociologically, but not settled by philosophical debate."[104] There is perhaps a shred of truth buried very deep in this statement, but the arrogance and indifference with which it is put is astonishing.

Lyle Munro

Lyle Munro offers another sociological account of the animal protection movement in his book Compassionate Beasts: The Quest for Animal Rights. He has also more recently published Confronting Cruelty: Moral Orthodoxy and the Challenge of the Animal Rights Movement.[105] In the introduction to Compassionate Beasts he points out that one of his motivations in writing the book was to "take an entirely different approach" from that which Tester had adopted in Animals and Society, and thereby to correct some of Tester's errors. Of particular importance to him was Tester's clear failure to canvas and report a meaningful sample of views from those who are active within the movement in order to support his peculiar assertions about what motivates them. Munro highlights that whereas Tester took an excessively abstract and speculative approach, his own method is based almost exclusively on interviews and questionnaires completed by movement members, which are reported and interpreted in a fair and unbiased way. This material is supplemented by an account of the coverage of various issues in the media, which he

[103] Ibid., p.100
[104] Ibid., p.99
[105] Lyle Munro, Confronting Cruelty: Moral Orthodoxy and the Challenge of the Animal Rights Movement, (2005), Brill.

comments on in ways that seem occasionally to be addressed to the movement itself in an attempt to suggest ways to improve tactics.

Whereas Tester obviously had a theoretical axe to grind but produced little supporting evidence, Munro produces a wealth of detailed and considered data but imposes few abstract conclusions upon it. Perhaps the most striking analytical device that he uses is the division of the movement into activists and advocates – a division that is reflected in the structure of the book as well as in his own terminological flourish. Activists, who are active "in the streets," are the grassroots animal protectionists that engage in protests, demonstrations, direct action, etc. Advocates, whose realm is "in the suites," are the organisational wing of the movement and tend to deal more directly with such tactics as media campaigns and political lobbying. Munro acknowledges that this division is far from perfect, but defends it by pointing out that most of his interviewees had little difficulty in deciding which category they fell into.[106] Various observations are made concerning the significance of the division. For example: "In my terminology, animal welfare advocates in the suites represent the "mind" of the movement while grassroots activists in the streets provide the movement's passion or "heart.""[107] Although there is little ideological loading to the split, a few observations might benefit from further explanation. For example, the assertion that "Expressive concerns motivate the amateurs and more instrumental goals motivate the professionals"[108] seems rather arbitrary and unsupported, despite a brief reference to a similar observation made by other commentators about the environmental movement. Munro's data is gathered from the UK, the USA and Australia, and he finds a difference in the significance of the "suites" / "streets" division in each nation. In the UK grassroots activism dominates, in America the organisational advocacy route seems more significant, and in Australia there appears to be a fairly even mix of the two.[109]

In regard to the critique of the logical approach to animal liberation that was considered earlier, Munro does identify Singer's Animal Liberation as a catalyst to the movement. Nevertheless, as the title to his book suggests, Munro identifies compassion as the crucial element in the movement. He claims that "Moral resources or moral capital – in the form of people's compassion for animals – is fundamental to

[106] Lyle Munro, Compassionate Beasts: The Quest for Animal Rights, (2001), Westport: Praeger, p.4
[107] Ibid., p.23
[108] Ibid., p.29
[109] Ibid., p.29 & 208

the animal liberation cause,"[110] and that "compassion and its correlates, empathy, pity, and sympathy are the foundation stones of the animal movement."[111] So, although the rational philosophy is a useful tool that the movement is sometimes able to make use of, Munro suggests that it does not provide the essence or underlying rationale of the movement. Indeed, Munro's observations seem to clearly suggest – in common with the ecofeminist position – that philosophical approaches that account for the compassionate response may present a closer fit with the motivations that people have for accepting or joining the movement. Munro also reports the views of Mark Berriman, president of the Australian Vegetarian Society, to the effect that appealing to members of other social movements is important:

> Like many leaders of new social movements, he realises that forging what appear to be "*logical, natural, inevitable connections*" between people in new social movements – animal rights, natural-health, peace, women's, and environmental movements – is no easy task but must be accomplished. The alternative, he suggests, is that "*we'll all go down the gurgler together.*"[112]

[110] Ibid., p.73
[111] Ibid., p.75
[112] Ibid., p.89

2

The Sustainability of Thinking about Animal Liberation

The Perception of Rules

Early approaches to animal liberation took their cue from traditional moral philosophy in establishing supposedly objective grounds on which to debate the morality of actions carried out by individuals – with the apparent aim of altering such behaviour. This approach appears to implicitly suggest that the aim of ethical theory is to provide a set of rules which individuals can and should follow in order to become morally good people. The establishment of rules is a natural consequence of the emphasis given, by early liberationists such as Peter Singer and Tom Regan, to the use of logical thought to establish unshakeable foundations for the condemnation of abusive practices and the consequent conversion of individuals to the cause. But the attempt at objectivity and the apparent universality of Singer's and Regan's claims led to much criticism from environmental philosophers who were struck, amongst other things, by the lack of awareness that Singer and Regan displayed about the way that ecological systems function (the ubiquity of pain and death, and the necessity of the consumption of one creature by another being perhaps the most obvious among many themes[1]). The debate that ensued from this clash in perspectives can be interpreted in many ways, but it would perhaps not be too contentious to claim that (except for the fortunate presence of a few wise voices such as Mary Midgley) it was characterised by a degree of inflexibility in the ways that the theoretical systems put forward were perceived and debated. This inflexibility was perhaps a consequence of the ways in which the theories were framed. The work of Singer and Regan was of enormous benefit in raising the profile of animal

[1] See particularly J. Baird Callicott, "Animal Liberation: A Triangular Affair", in Robert Elliot (Ed.), Environmental Ethics, (1995), Oxford: Oxford University Press or Chapter 23 of Paul Shepard's, The Others: How Animals Made Us Human, (1996), Washington DC: Island Press

liberation (particularly in academic circles),[2] but the framing of the theories in ways that encouraged their reification as apparently definitive or ontological truths has also perhaps had deleterious consequences for the relationship of animal liberation with other movements, most particularly the environmental movement.

It is ironic, then, that one of the most perceptive early accounts of how rules are used in decision making was given by the editor of the leading journal in the field of environmental ethics, and that it specifically countered the idea that a set of rules for environmental decision-making should be seen as providing a formula that could be applied in all situations to consistently produce the most appropriate behaviour. In Foundations of Environmental Ethics, Eugene Hargrove drew an instructive analogy with the use of rules in chess playing, observing that, in chess, rules were primarily useful not because following them at all times would lead to winning (which it would not), but because they aided the learning process and the player's ability to understand the ramifications of a situation. Rules were useful because they provided a kind of shortcut to seeing the moves with the most potential. As he puts it, "even though the rules are not usually applied consciously, they unconsciously affect perception during the decision-making process."[3] The worth of rules in this context, therefore, is not to be found by slavish obedience to them, but by allowing them to loosely structure one's engagement with the possibilities provided by each game scenario as it arises. He continues:

> Although rules are, of course, valuable, they cannot fully account for the subtleties expressed unconsciously in the perceptual dimensions of the decision process. The lists of rules in beginning chess books do not form a rational system of interlocking rules of action. For the most part each rule is independent. There is no definite hierarchy. There is no order of precedence between rules... The rules themselves are so general that numerous examples can easily be brought forward in which following them would miss a win or even lose the game. There is also nothing in the rules that provides assistance in choosing between them when more than one applies and there is no way to take them all into account.[4]

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[2] Robert Garner, Animals, Politics and Morality, (1993), Manchester: Manchester University Press, p.63

[3] Eugene C. Hargrove, Foundations of Environmental Ethics, (1989), New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., p.6. Hargrove was founding editor of the journal *Environmental Ethics*. Although I have made extensive use of Hargrove's chess analogy in this chapter, I should make it clear that there is much that I very strongly disagree with in Foundations.

[4] Ibid., p.8

The point of Hargrove's analogy was that environmental ethics, as a developing field, should be aware of how the human mind makes decisions and should use this awareness in the development of theory. The specific way that rules tend to structure the mental engagement of chess-players with their game so that success is increased provided a model for how decision-makers might use rules in the resolution of dilemmas concerning interactions with the environment (and beings within that environment). The crucial point of departure from the usual conception of rules is that for Hargrove they are seen as much less rigid, and they cannot be relied upon to always produce the best course of action. Thus, "our environmental ethic, when we really have one, will be a collection of independent ethical generalizations, only loosely related, not a rationally ordered set of ethical prescriptions."[5]

If we accept Hargrove's conception of how rules should be understood then two possible ways of thinking about the particular kind of rule-oriented theory produced by Regan and Singer seem apparent. The first would be to applaud the construction of rules – together with hugely impressive rational justifications for them – that have without the slightest doubt improved the perception of the plight of animals enslaved within human communities. The guidelines that Regan and Singer provide for the improvement of moral behaviour would then be considered useful in providing a degree of clarity to help each of us in the decision-making processes of day to day life. The second response, on the other hand, would be to suggest that Singer and Regan had failed to adequately understand the nature of this decision-making and so had constructed rules that, in their apparent rigidity, did not lend themselves to such a potentially ambiguous process. It might also be pointed out, as it was early on by John Rodman and has been since by several ecofeminists,[6] that although the rules might lead to the improvement of moral behaviour in relation to animals, the way that they are framed assumes a need for rational *control* of the self rather than assuming that the self is basically good and will make the right choices when it has the relevant information. The second of these two possible options is the one most often taken as being the closest to the way that Singer and Regan wrote their accounts. The first assumes a prior acceptance of an approach to the reception

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[5] Ibid., p.8

[6] John Rodman, "The Liberation of Nature?" *Inquiry* 20, (1977) or, for example, Marti Kheel, "From Heroic to Holistic Ethics: The Ecofeminist Challenge" in Greta Gaard (Ed.), Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature, (1993), Philadelphia: Temple University Press. This point will be considered further in Chapter 4.

of rules such as Hargrove proposed, and while such approaches were forthcoming in the development of the debate between animal liberation and environmental ethics, they were not apparent in the early work of Singer and Regan themselves. From this perspective, Singer and Regan had failed to produce theory that was compatible with the requirements of a complex world, and had succeeded only in so far as they presented a reductive picture of the moral entanglements within which contemporary animal abuse is enmeshed.

But there is one issue that might problematise this analysis slightly. In his discussion, Hargrove also points out that "the determination of basic strategic and tactical rules depends more on their intelligibility than their theoretical precision."[7] His point, illustrated by reference to his own inability to improve his game by studying "hypermodern" chess theory, was that although more complicated and nuanced rules may *potentially* produce the better game, rules that were easier to understand were more readily adopted and implemented. This makes particular sense when considered alongside his point that rules are used primarily to improve perception – usually in situations where every possibility cannot be considered. So the theoretical constructs employed by Singer and Regan – utilitarian and rights theory respectively – to assess the moral implications of actions involving animals, might well be considered to be extremely useful specifically *because* they provide simple, forceful, easy to remember formulas. If accepted by individuals as providing useful guidelines for the improvement of moral behaviour then they are likely to structure the perception of the world in specific ways. These changes in perception will presumably lead such individuals, without unnecessary complications and caveats, to change personal behaviour in order to resist, as much as possible, complicity in animal abuse supposedly carried out on their behalf.

What this discussion suggests is that rules can be applied in ways contrary to those that we are usually led to expect, but that this is dependent on both the ways that they are expressed and the ways that they are approached and incorporated into the thought processes that guide behaviour. While I have dwelt here on the relevance of these observations for understanding the work of Singer and Regan, they can also be usefully applied to ecofeminist accounts of the ethics of human-animal relations. This will be apparent toward the end of the thesis.

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[7] Hargrove, Foundations, p.5

Frameworks of Meaning

Hargrove's analogy with chess-playing is a valuable and prescient one because it anticipates the development of theory more specifically tailored to compatibility with human psychology, and because it opens the door for a degree of diversity in the development of ethical responses to environmental dilemmas, while not upholding an uncritical relativism. There are, of course, some apparent weaknesses in the analogy. One of these is that while the objective of chess is to win the game (i.e. it is inherently competitive), the objective of an ethics that is not based on a rigid conception of rules is presumably to foster a kind of harmonious (and hence non-competitive) relationship with the 'other'. This suggests that psychological engagement with rules in such an ethical sphere should perhaps be less strategically goal-oriented than focussed on taking account of the needs of that other – and other others (whether they be individual animals or humans, a threatened species, or an ecosystem). This, in turn, suggests that a subtly different type of engagement will be appropriate – one that motivates action (or restraint of action) *on behalf of the other*, although it will nevertheless be similarly focussed upon the improvement of perception. What is required from this type of engagement, as Ted Benton has argued,[8] is less the imposition of a generic set of preconceived guides for behaviour and more an openness to the specific needs and characteristics of the other. Whether rules of any kind are the best way to facilitate this kind of perceptive openness is an important but difficult question.

Without conclusively jettisoning the idea of rules it may therefore be useful to think further about what rules are 'doing' psychologically and how this relates to the goals of animal liberation. Hargrove's analogy specifically claims that decision-making is a kind of seeing – a perceptual and intuitive process – and that rules are useful to this process because they structure perception and thinking in particular ways that lead toward the most potentially useful types of action. One way to think about why this occurs would be to consider that they provide an internalisable symbolic framework into which potentially ambiguous experience can be related and thereby made sense of in particular ways. This interpretation might be related to the idea, attributed to Clifford Geertz, that experience is fundamentally undifferentiated

[8] See Ted Benton, Natural Relations: Ecology, Animal Rights and Social Justice, (1993), London: Verso, p.165-172

and behaviour ungovernable without the provision of cultural patterns to provide orientation.[9] A more contemporary updating of this idea can be found in Paul Maiteny's paper "The Psychodynamics of Meaning and Action for a Sustainable Future." For the remainder of this chapter, and implicitly at various points to come, I will draw upon Maiteny's account of the relation between 'inner' experience and the symbolic contexts provided by culture. The aim of this is to allow a degree of clear-sightedness about the psychological contexts within which animal liberation philosophy attempts to achieve change. It is worth briefly reviewing the principal relevant features of Maiteny's account.

Maiteny describes a process of perpetual exchange between the internal and external symbolic contexts of the individual and the physical world upon which the individual acts. The individual needs the symbolic frameworks provided by culture in order to make sense of the world, and of experience, and in order to act successfully:

> Meanings and values do not arise spontaneously. They are gleaned from the cultural *collective-interior* environment of beliefs, norms, meanings, values, theories, and so on. Individuals organize, express and seek fulfilment of their inner impulses by way of the cultural resources that are accessible to them. Humans necessarily draw on cultural resources to make experience meaningful... [W]e engage in inner 'symbolic activity' as a pre-requisite to engaging in effective 'work activity' in the outside world.[10]

But each individual is not merely a passive receptor of meanings imposed from outside:

> Even the meaning of symbols shared by individuals in the same social milieu – e.g. political, religious or business institutions – can be experienced in quite different ways by each person. This results in the misunderstandings and re-negotiation of meaning so common within institutions and society. Internal meanings and their externalised expressions are, therefore, perpetually interacting with each other. They are mutually dependent and constitutive.[11]

Maiteny therefore describes a dialectical process of the exchange and modification of meaning that takes place through the internal and external symbolic activity of

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[9] See Clifford Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures, (1993), London: Fontana Press (originally published 1973), p.46

[10] Paul Maiteny, "The Psychodynamics of meaning and action for a sustainable future," *Futures* 32 (2000), p.342

[11] Ibid., p. 346

individuals. Individuals are portrayed as active and to some extent purposive within this process. It is worth noting, however, that the purposes of our individual participation in this process are not limited to a kind of functional effectiveness in the world. Rather, it is implicit to human nature that our experiential satisfaction is bound up with our desire to live lives that make sense to us. As Maiteny puts it, "The search for *internal sustainability* implies the search for *meaningful and fulfilled experience in life.*"[12] We need adequate symbolic frameworks not simply to enable us to reflect and to act efficiently, but also to give form to the ways that we conduct, experience and represent those aspects of our lives that involve decisions about how we live, and those aspects that fall within the realms usually labelled either spiritual or emotional. This inherent need for meaning in our lives – and therefore, to some extent, for meaningful lives – is a need that is adaptable. It can be fulfilled in diverse and complex ways, although this does not mean that we are infinitely malleable or that our bodily and genetic natures exert no pull on the directions our cultural forms may take.

The Ongoing Negotiation of the Meaning of Animal Liberation

These observations provide useful ways of approaching the significance of animal liberation theory – whether of the exclusively logical type or of the more nuanced forms that came later. They also make it appropriate to make a slight detour and to sketch out very briefly a picture of the evolution of this theory, as well as to hint at the potential usefulness and purpose of this picture.

If we accept that the development of frameworks of meaning is inherent to the human organism then it can be seen as completely natural for us to attempt to work out – and possibly also to attempt to improve upon – systematic, symbolically mediated understandings of our relationships to other creatures. It would even, it seems, be contrary to our nature to not make such an attempt – or at least it would be so for those whose lives encompass regular interaction with them.[13] What is curious about current human-animal relations in the West, particularly those structured

[12] Ibid., p. 345

[13] Mary Midgley has observed that although academic concern about human-animal relationships is a relatively recent phenomenon, when we look at history, "we are at once struck by the extent to which the human imagination has always occupied itself with other species." Mary Midgley, "Bridge-building at last" in Aubrey Manning and James Serpell (Ed.s), Animals and Human Society: Changing Perspectives, (1994), London: Routledge, p.191

around food relationships, is that the majority of people have very little direct contact with the animals concerned. This has enabled the dominant meanings our culture generally subscribes to to become incomplete, fragmentary and often outdated – inadequate to the task of either representing or moderating the scale and character of our current use and abuse. This enables the persistence of a kind of collective self-delusion in the West about the nature of our relationships with animals – although this delusion appears to be to some extent threatened by awarenesses that are incompatible with it and that must therefore be repressed by a variety of mechanisms. Maiteny refers to symbolic frameworks as making sense of what he calls "inner impulses", and it will be central to my approach that the natural relational capacities of the human being include an ability to relate to others – including animals – in an empathetic way. This ability need not be a prominent or frequently used one, being subject to individual experience, contrary impulses and the structuring effects of cultural frameworks, but I shall explore the probability that it is both innate to human social functioning and fundamental to the psychology of animal liberation. Animal liberation theory, from this perspective, might be seen as an attempt to build a representational structure that is both more clear-sighted about what we actually do to animals than our culture generally allows, and that attempts to systematise the sense of discomfort that can accompany this knowledge into a coherent framework of meaning with persuasive power.

What is also apparent, however, is that the forms taken by this attempt arise from a process of negotiation with other cultural currents. For example, Singer and Regan both base their claims to legitimacy on their adherence to logical principles that are often presumed to ensure objectivity (and, indeed, the types of rule that they develop are common consequences of this style of thought). Objectivity has been conventionally considered, at least in post-Enlightenment Western culture, to be the best route to the establishment of general truths about the world,[14] and so the use of cultural forms that are considered to give access to it is, for Singer and Regan, the way to give their frameworks the greatest credibility. But as awareness of the limitations of logical forms has grown, particularly within environmental

[14] At least, I should say, unless the problematising of the notion of truth that has accompanied postmodernism is taken into account.

philosophy,[15] other approaches to animal liberation have begun to seem increasingly more appropriate.

It may be useful here to briefly borrow again from Hargrove's analogy with chess, and in particular his description of the process of 'progressive deepening', which he identifies as an integral part of the decision-making process.[16] Hargrove describes the development of moves through a repeated investigation and examination of the favourite solutions to a problem. The analogy with the process by which academic debate advances, and has advanced in the development of animal liberation theory, is rather obvious but nevertheless worth making:

> The problem being solved is actually only very dimly perceived when the investigation begins, but it becomes clearer as the investigation proceeds. Each attempt to solve the problem also contributes to a better understanding of the problem, which, as a result, goes through a series of changes as it approaches its final form. The reinvestigation of previously rejected solutions is periodically necessary to determine whether one of them is now the solution to the problem in its newest form. Because the problem is in flux until it is solved, the decision maker cannot simply apply the appropriate rule by rote.[17]

Applying this description to the development of animal liberation theory suggests a basic working narrative such as the following:

The early philosophical claims for animal liberation addressed themselves specifically only to this one topic and were consequently criticised for their ignorance of related matters such as ecology, indigenous social justice issues and the problems of employing and extending rigid conceptions of rule-oriented morality. As critiques emerged, the understanding of the problem itself changed so that the monolithic and internally coherent symbolic frameworks advanced by Singer and Regan were perceived as less and less adequate to the complex moral entanglements of the wider world. Awareness of the problem increased in academia, as did the

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[15] The ecofeminist and deep ecology movements incorporate strong critiques of the detachment cultivated by logical forms, as does ecopsychology. I consider these aspects of ecofeminism and ecopsychology in later chapters. See, for example, Warwick Fox, Toward a Transpersonal Ecology: Developing New Foundations for Environmentalism, (1990), London: Shambhala Publications, p.225, Marti Kheel, "The Liberation of Nature: A Circular Affair", *Environmental Ethics* 7, (1985), p.135-149, Deborah Slicer, "Your Daughter or Your Dog? A Feminist Assessment of the Animal Research Issue" in *Hypatia* 6(1), (1991) and, Josephine Donovan, "Animal Rights and Feminist Theory" in Greta Gaard (Ed.), Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature, (1993), Philadelphia: Temple University Press

[16] Hargrove, Foundations, p.7. The term is originally from one of Hargrove's sources on the psychology of chess, Adriaan de Groote.

[17] Ibid., p.7

profile of environmental ethics more generally, and the work of thinkers from diverse backgrounds further expanded the understanding of the problem, incorporating within the framing of the problem and the types of solution proposed a more diverse array of insights. The work of several ecofeminist philosophers in the 1990's made great leaps forward in the development of theory that addressed its many dimensions, and incorporated insights from other theoretical perspectives. Unlike the "progressive deepening" involved in the understanding of a chess problem, however, in animal liberation philosophy the process so far has no clearly distinct end point, and no decisive move to be made, despite the seeming lack of radical advances on the ecofeminist perspectives of a few years ago.

This narrative about the development of theory in terms of an expanding conception of the problem and a negotiation of possible solutions within a context of interdisciplinary exchange is not without its weak points. It represents as a unified effort what were at times a series of mutually uncomprehending and occasionally contemptuous attacks.[18] Perhaps more dangerously it might be interpreted as representing the 'problem' as a kind of discrete technical puzzle for which a workable algorithm must be found, rather than as an impassioned attempt to represent, systematise and hence 'solve' through symbolic forms the complex and often competing pulls of a variety of deeply felt moral intuitions about unprecedented real world abuses. The narrative is inevitably, to some extent, reductive. But it does perhaps provide a basis for a further expansion and deepening of our understanding of a slightly different question. This question might best be approached obliquely through yet further recourse to Hargrove's powerful analogy:

> I have found that the direct study of rule application is not the only way in which one's chess perception can be improved. A beginner who is given a book of rules will undoubtedly make substantial improvement. However, greater improvement can be expected if the beginner is also given a book of the theoretical history of the rules. The book of beginning rules and the book of theoretical history complement each other, the first providing the details to be sweated out and transformed into perception, the second the overview that explains in part at least the how and sometimes even the why of the rules.[19]

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[18] See particularly Chapter 23 of Paul Shepard's The Others: How Animals Made Us Human, (1996), Washington DC: Island Press

[19] Hargrove, Foundations, p.9

While I will not attempt in what follows to give an exhaustive history of the "rules" of animal liberation, the issues that I raise do circle around the question of the how and the why. I hope to some extent to improve our understanding of these important dimensions of animal liberation philosophy, and to begin using this understanding to comment on the theoretical approaches that seem to be the strongest and most appropriate.

The Sustainability of Symbolic Frameworks

This description of the progressive modification of symbolic frameworks through a process of criticism and negotiation that includes the restructuring of the problem or issue that they address, as sketched above, needs further qualification when applied to frameworks that structure fundamental attitudes to life, as the issue of animal liberation can. Such frameworks are not simply abstract or easily disposable entities: when adopted by individuals as ways of making sense of experience then they unavoidably become intimately bound up with questions of identity and they also have implications for wider aspects of experience and behaviour. This is not to say that anybody who supports a broad objective such as animal liberation will necessarily subscribe to a formal theory about it, but rather that where such a theory has been accepted as the appropriate guide and justification for behaviour then emotional and identity investments are likely to be made. This may lead people into psychologically difficult situations if clashes become apparent between different frameworks of meaning or between frameworks and experience that is incompatible with them. This, in turn, suggests that processes of negotiation and critique exist not only in the academic context, but also in inter- and intra-individual contexts of the wider world.

As will probably be clear from the above, I shall be assuming throughout my analysis that what boundaries exist between academia and culture more generally are permeable ones and that animal liberation theory, although developed within academic forums, is intended to ultimately reach beyond academia and to communicate with the wider world. Since not everybody reads academic texts, the success of this intention depends upon the dissemination of ideas and attitudes through social processes such as those described here by Kay Milton:

> Culture is sustained and modified through social interaction, in which individuals act on the basis of their own knowledge, their own cultural understandings. In other words, by engaging in social activity, people are bringing their knowledge to bear on a situation and participating in the generation of new knowledge or the reinforcement of existing knowledge. Social activity cannot help but contribute to this process, which encapsulates cultural reform... Social interaction becomes an arena in which the participants each assert their particular way of knowing the world, in which they try to make their knowledge count in the process through which culture is continually recreated.[20]

Animal liberation theory must therefore be both psychologically sustainable within the context of individual lives, and capable of adapting to interactional processes between individuals.

At this point there is much to be gained from returning to Maiteny, who is particularly concerned with the relationship between individual / collective symbolic activity and the sustainability of relations with our ecological and social environments. He argues convinncingly that a move to more ecologically sustainable relations with the natural world will depend ultimately upon the sustainability of changes in the frameworks of meaning that structure individual and social values and goals. It is similarly true that the sustainability of improvements in human-animal relations will depend on the sustainability of the frameworks that are used to motivate and maintain these improved relations. This suggests that clashes with different frameworks, and with experience, need to be minimised and that there is therefore a significant convergence of interests between the academic process of theory development described above, and the more pragmatic goals of animal liberation as an exercise in the politics of persuasion.

The process, detailed by Maiteny, by which individuals come to reject inadequate frameworks of meaning is therefore of great interest here for two principal reasons. Firstly, it describes the means by which individuals may become dissatisfied with the self-deceptive or instrumental frameworks for human-animal relations that are generally dominant in contemporary Western cultures – and so seek alternatives such as animal liberation theory. Second, it describes the process by which animal liberation theory, if it is adopted by individuals as a true picture of appropriate human-animal relations but subsequently proves insufficiently attuned to

[20] Kay Milton, Environmentalism and Cultural Theory: Exploring the Role of Anthropology in Environmental Discourse, (1996), London: Routledge, p.21

the complexities of the world and to the subjective experiences people have of both the world and the theory, may also be found inadequate and hence not produce lasting changes in behaviour. Maiteny describes the realisation that an inadequate framework of meaning is being used, and hence the breakdown in the effectiveness of this framework, in the following way:

> Eventually, inner feelings of uneasiness always emerge and we begin to doubt the integrity and meaningfulness of what we are doing. We become unsure of the truth of our habits of seeing the world – habits that have become 'second nature'. We can respond to this predicament in two ways. We can try and maintain a false sense of security (or sustainability) by denying our inner experience, pretending it does not exist, and defending ourselves with rationalisations and arguments. Or we can choose to let ourselves become uncomfortable, accepting our limitations and looking for support.[21]

The experience of letting go of inadequate frameworks is described by Maiteny as 'regression', which can be a subjectively disturbing process but which effectively enables new and potentially more appropriate frameworks to be accepted:

> Regression is a difficult experience to convey, but feelings are associated with it – fear, anxiety, loss, meaninglessness, difficulty in coping with one's life – which result in a sense of inner fragmentation and unsustainability. This can be so overwhelming that one is forced to let go of preconceived, 'second nature' images of oneself and the world. This is frightening, but not as risky as denial. Only then does one become receptive to new or familiar, but revitalised, myths, frameworks or theories that more adequately make sense of experience than the old ones. They are more dependable and help us feel more real and in touch with both inner and outer worlds by making them meaningful once more.[22]

This process is one that most individuals who reject the currently hegemonic Western view of human-animal relations go through, which suggests that understanding its implications for animal liberation theory is important. In order to illustrate this I will briefly compare it with observations from a paper by Barbara McDonald in which she discusses her research involving interviews with twelve vegans about the process through which they became vegan.[23] These individuals do not claim to have adopted a formal or academic theory of animal liberation, although

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[21] Maiteny, "Psychodynamics", p.350.
[22] Ibid., p.351
[23] Barbara McDonald, "'Once You Know Something, You Can't Not Know It': An Empirical Look at Becoming Vegan," *Society and Animals*, 8(1), (2000). The vegans interviewed by McDonald were from a range of occupations including body piercer and University professor.

reference was made by one interviewee to a reading of Singer's Animal Liberation as part of the catalytic experience. Nevertheless the importance of frameworks of meaning is central to the account developed by McDonald of the paradigm shift from meat-eater to vegan and, as we might expect, this shift resonates in many significant respects with the process that Maiteny describes. It is summarised in the following table, which I have reproduced as it appears in McDonald's paper:

Elements of the Vegan Learning Process

Who I Was	-	The background and experiences that made the participant who they were prior to the learning experience.
Catalytic Experience	-	The experience that introduced the participant to some aspect of animal cruelty, and resulted in repression or becoming oriented.
Repression	-	The repression of knowledge.
Becoming Oriented	-	The intention to learn more, make a decision, or do both.
Learning	-	Learning about animal abuse or how to live as a vegetarian or vegan.
Decision	-	Making the choice to become vegetarian or vegan.
World View	-	The new perspective that guides the vegan's new lifestyle.

Table 1: Reproduced from Barbara McDonald, "Once You Know Something..."

It is significant that, as does Maiteny, McDonald describes the importance of the decision to either repress and deny information and experience that is incompatible with frameworks currently governing behaviour, or to accept this information and experience and search out a new framework or "perspective". Where the second option is taken, the search for new understandings is vital to the sustainability of the change and its success depends on the attitude taken toward the necessary learning, as well as some degree of social support. The interviewees, who had all made the transition successfully, described their experience in the following way:

> Becoming oriented required openness to new information and the potential of a new and challenging lifestyle. Lena noted that "you have to start opening yourself up to different things." Cary was struck by the atmosphere of openness at a vegetarian conference he attended: "It just came together...and people were very open. You know, no blockers on."[24]

[24] Ibid.

The openness described here seems to be significant for two reasons. Firstly, as a general attitude to life that the interviewees might have developed before their conversion to veganism, it is potentially significant in their choice not to deny the information or experiences that led them to make the change. Secondly, it is crucial to the successful reception of the necessary new frameworks and therefore the sustainability of the change in orientation to the world. This need for 'openness' is portrayed by Maiteny in the following way:

> Creative regression entails an ability, and decision, to place one's trust in a safe person or setting that facilitates: 1. letting go, or losing hold of habitual ways of seeing the world and oneself; and 2. opportunities for reorientation and the establishment of new and meaningful constructions of oneself and one's world.[25]

If the process of reorientation is successful and the newly acquired frameworks of meaning are experienced as appropriate for the individual's needs then a feeling of reassurance is associated with them. Maiteny points out that after a successful transition from inadequate frameworks to more adequate ones, individuals "feel more real and in touch with both inner and outer worlds". Similarly, McDonald reports that for her interviewees the decision to become vegan "felt comfortable, and once made, was final. The vegans in this study felt that their decision to become vegan was in harmony with the greater scheme of things."[26]

While this comparison of Maiteny's theory with McDonald's research has focussed attention on individual experiences of transformation, Maiteny makes clear that his account is also applicable at the group or societal level. His observations are therefore of great importance to the potential success of animal liberation at a similar range of levels. If the theories or philosophies developed in support of animal liberation are to be envisaged as a component part of the frameworks of meaning that are intended to replace the inadequate ones currently subscribed to by mainstream Western culture – as I believe it is implicitly intended that they are – then it is important that they are themselves as resistant as possible to the kind of disillusionment that Maiteny describes. One way to achieve this is, perhaps, to ensure that the frameworks themselves embody the kind of openness that is necessary, as an attitudinal characteristic, for the successful reception of new

[25] Maiteny, "Psychodynamics," p.351
[26] McDonald, "'Once You Know Something'"

frameworks by previously disillusioned individuals. Frameworks that are rigid and dogmatic will ultimately require some repression or denial of information or experience in order to remain intact. On the other hand, frameworks that are able to absorb and incorporate such information and experience, while being compatible with other frameworks as much as possible, are likely to be inherently more sustainable in their own right – and ultimately to enable those who adopt them as a part of their worldview to enjoy a greater degree of satisfaction in the unfolding of their complex experience. What this means is that, despite the need for clarity and moral vigour in the formation of animal liberation theory, frameworks should not lend themselves to fundamentalist interpretations. They should, rather, encourage the perpetuation within the lives of those who adopt them of that initial feeling that one is "in touch with both inner and outer worlds," and "in harmony with the greater scheme of things." This is not to suggest that animal liberation theory should perhaps avoid being clear-sighted about the huge problems it faces in combating institutionalised animal abuse in the West. The scale of these problems alone is potentially enough to cause disillusionment. What I am claiming is that the theory should be flexible enough to exist alongside a diversity of other frameworks and concerns, and should encourage open discussion of difficulties and paradoxes as they arise.

Frameworks and Reality

It is perhaps necessary at this point to say something about the relationship I shall be assuming between symbolic frameworks and the world that they claim to refer to. This relationship poses difficult epistemological questions which are ultimately beyond the scope of this thesis, but some clarification must be given as to the basis on which I shall be proceeding – especially as I shall next be attempting to address the bearing of certain cultural tendencies that are broadly labelled 'postmodern' on the development of animal liberation.

The transition to the postmodern intellectual climate has introduced a great deal of doubt about the relation between the world and the sense of the world produced by frameworks of symbols – a relation that, to the modern mind as commonly characterised, was assumed to be direct and unproblematic. It has been pointed out that the sense of the world that emerges from our frameworks of symbols

is constructed by those symbols, and so cannot ever be a transparent representation of the 'real' world. The account of the development of animal liberation theory that I am working toward is implicitly informed by this revelation of ambiguity in the relation between the world and the sense of the world that emerges from frameworks of symbols, since it is central to my approach that no theoretical construct can be complete and adequate to all eventualities. Truth, I shall assume, is inherently more complex than our representational structures – and our potential apprehension of it through those structures is to a considerable extent contingent and subjective. However I shall not take the nihilistic and paradoxical position that frameworks of symbols cannot represent and inform our engagement with reality. Such a position is effectively similar to a determination to dwell indefinitely in the state that Maiteny calls regression – a potentially paralysing state in which experience makes little sense and which is accompanied by feelings such as "fear, anxiety, loss, meaninglessness, difficulty in coping with one's life" and which results in "a sense of inner fragmentation and unsustainability." While this state is functionally beneficial in facilitating the transition between inadequate and more adequate frameworks of meaning, if adopted as more than a transitional state then it is likely to leave us in a permanent state of disorientation that undermines our ability to live either effectively or morally. I shall therefore conveniently sidestep the complexities of epistemology and adopt a position that is perhaps closest to that described by the ecopsychologist Andy Fisher as plural realism:

> My general ontological outlook – which I call *plural realism* – is that there are innumerable ways of disclosing or interpreting reality. This position does not naively suggest, however, that all perspectives are equally valid; it does not rule out criticism and debate. What it does do is seek a "middle way" between the extremes. Most notably, it is neither objectivism nor relativism. That different interpretations are possible, that many truths can coexist, refutes objectivism. That better interpretations are possible, that our experience can always adjudicate the truth or falsity of an assertion, or lead us into more satisfying contact with reality, refutes relativism. Hence, to think of truth in plural terms is not to say that anything goes. In other words, as a plural realist I hold that many different interpretations of a phenomenon are possible, but also that these will not all be equal in their truthfulness or openness to the phenomenon in question.[27]

[27] Andy Fisher, Radical Ecopsychology: Psychology in the Service of Life, (2002), Albany: State University of New York, p.93

This approach is the most practically useful one to the processes of analysis and critique and seems to be the implicitly and intuitively adopted attitude of most academic enquiry. It is compatible with a non-paralysing awareness of the ambiguity in the relation between symbols and reality, but does not deny that there is some kind of relation (even if only a functional one). I shall therefore proceed on this basis.

3

Animal Liberation and Postmodernism

Introduction

As a popular movement enlisting support that ranges from the simple avoidance of eating meat to determined political activism, animal liberation has grown enormously in recent decades.[1] The influence of Singer's hugely important book Animal Liberation is sometimes associated with the beginning of this surge in support, but clearly it would be unrealistic to attribute the growth in interest in animal liberation issues to any one factor or group of factors. Steve Baker has pointed out that this "significant rise in animal rights issues... coincides historically with a growing cultural awareness of the idea of postmodernism," although he goes on to note that "the politics and philosophy of animal rights have little in common with postmodern art's representation of the animal, with its apparent refusal to draw the line even at bestiality or butchery."[2] Nevertheless, Baker does establish some important attitudinal and theoretical common ground between animal liberation and the concerns of postmodern art and literature. In this chapter I will attempt to explore a number of cultural developments that are usually labelled as 'postmodern', and how they relate to the concerns of animal liberation. These factors, I will conclude, are invariably complex and contradictory, meaning that although their influence may have benefited animal liberation to some degree, this benefit is not without its problems for the further gains that are undoubtedly needed. There are two entwined strands to this analysis: I will consider animal liberation in the context of Western culture in what may be called a 'postmodern' world – a world influenced by the diffusion of certain broadly postmodern ideas – but will also be interested in what implications theoretical approaches to postmodernism might have for theories of animal liberation. It is perhaps worth making clear that although not adopting a self-consciously postmodern epistemological stance, I am acknowledging the powerful

[1] For example, the UK based Vegan Society currently claims that "UK dietary calories from animal products have fallen 25% in 25 years." Some of this fall might be accounted for by the appalling health scares that modern animal farming has generated. (http://www.vegansociety.com/html/)
[2] Steve Baker, The Postmodern Animal, (2000), London: Reaktion Books, p.174

influence of such a stance on the social world that we inhabit, and the relevance of certain powerful postmodern insights to the development of adequate theories of animal liberation.

By way of explaining this approach, I would argue that definitions of what exactly constitutes postmodernism are appropriately unreliable, and this makes it difficult to decisively group many ideas, attitudes, or social developments as being wholly within this category. The term is occasionally used as a way of grouping temporal developments – so that all contemporary cultural interventions would be considered postmodern – but this approach is unsatisfactory because it ignores the forthright opposition that many writers of a more realist persuasion express toward what they understand the postmodern as. To group these writers clumsily in with those that they argue against would seem rather unfair and paradoxical. It is, however, ironic that some of the most prominent and paradigmatic 'postmodern' theorists are in fact also harsh critics of the postmodern world. An obvious example of this would be Jean Baudrillard whose account of the contemporary destruction of a meaningful relation between representations and reality has come under attack, as Linda Hutcheon points out, "for the metaphysical idealism of its view of the 'real,' for its nostalgia for pre-mass-media authenticity."[3] By describing, in what few would genuinely doubt are exaggerated terms, the distance between contemporary representation and reality, there is perhaps a sense in which Baudrillard's prose somehow seems to be working to *increase* this distance. Nevertheless, if such apparently arch theorists of the postmodern as Baudrillard choose to align themselves against many of the developments that they describe then it seems problematic, particularly in the context of an ongoing debate about whether postmodernism is politically progressive or paralysing, even to attach labels such as 'postmodern' to their ideas, or 'postmodernist' to the writers themselves. However, the extent to which almost all contemporary academic theory is influenced to some extent by insights that can be associated in some way with postmodernism does introduce a slightly paradoxical element to attempts to argue convincingly against these developments. This difficulty is specifically acknowledged by Fredric Jameson, who introduced his Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism with the words "I would not want to have to decide whether the

[3] Linda Hutcheon, The Politics of Postmodernism, (1989), London: Routledge, p.33

following chapters are inquiries into the nature of such "postmodernism theory" or mere examples of it."[4] Perhaps reassuringly the mirror image of this problem confronts those unequivocal enthusiasts for the postmodern who see their task as to purge the many problematic features of modernity. As Hutcheon has commented, "Complicity is perhaps necessary (or at least unavoidable) in deconstructive critique (you have to signal – and thereby install – that which you want to subvert), though it also inevitably conditions both the radicality of the kind of critique it can offer and the possibility of suggesting change."[5]

These observations support the understanding that postmodernism should be conceived less as something that occurs after modernism and thus replaces it, than as a response to it that radically modifies or critiques its foundations while co-existing with it. The general attitude that I shall therefore adopt toward postmodernism is not one of being wholeheartedly either for or against it, but of appreciating the pervasive influence on our lives and our outlooks of postmodern perspectives. Whether to its benefit or its detriment, animal liberation exists – and indeed has evolved overwhelmingly within – a culture that is to *some* extent postmodern. To suggest that the movement or the philosophy should somehow ignore or abhor this fact, or on the other hand should not engage the problems presented by this fact, would be shortsighted. Baker has – in rather parodic terms – described the potential schism between realist and postmodern approaches to animal studies in the following way: "On the one side, animal advocates, activists, and academics who are directly concerned with the actual mistreatment of "real" living animals; on the other, a group of rather self-indulgent scholars who seem more concerned with exploring fancy theories of representation than with addressing the real plight of the represented animals."[6] It should be clear however, as the bulk of Baker's work implicitly indicates, that this is a spurious distinction. Our representations will continue to remain central to the fate of animals and the relationship – as well as the perceived relationship – between these representations and reality is therefore of considerable moral significance. As Baker also makes clear, and as we will see in the next chapter, the image and the reality of the animal is a potentially powerful tool

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[4] Fredric Jameson, Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism,(1991), London: Verso, p.x

[5] Hutcheon, Politics, p.1-2

[6] Steve Baker, "Animals, Representation and Reality," *Society and Animals*, 9(3), (2001)

with which to liberate ourselves from some of the more oppressive ideological implications of modernity.

Representations and Reality in a Postmodern World

Perhaps the most important factor in an account of the influence of postmodernism on animal liberation would be the problematising of the relationship between our representations of reality and reality itself. While it will be impossible to do full justice to this problematising here, I will attempt to introduce some key ideas in a concise format while suggesting something of their relevance to our ultimate topic.

Modernity can be bluntly characterised as the attempt to use rational principles of enquiry to uncover the true nature of the world, and is therefore deeply dependent on the principle that the descriptions of the world that such enquiry reveals have a direct relation to reality. Postmodern thought, reacting against the reductive certainties of this attitude, has introduced various shades of doubt about the transparency of this relation. At its most extreme, this doubt has taken the form of radical social constructionist assertions to the effect that "nothing exists except as it exists in discourse, i.e. the only reality that things have is the reality they are given in the symbolic realm of language."[7] This position should not, however, be taken as epitomising a postmodern attitude and is arguably as reductive as the previous assumption of transparency in representation. As we will consider later, an important distinction is made by many writers, such as Hutcheon, between the *problematising* and the *rejection* of a relation between representation and reality.

A clear view of what postmodernism means for animal liberation, then, is likely to be complicated by the diffuse, transdisciplinary nature of attempts to understand it and by the varied theoretical influences within it.[8] Constructionism, especially in its more radical forms, is overwhelmingly a product of the social sciences, while as Vivien Burr points out, "Postmodernism as an intellectual movement has its centre of gravity not in the social sciences but in art and architecture, literature, and cultural studies."[9] While including within my account an

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[7] Vivien Burr, An Introduction to Social Constructionism, (1995), London: Routledge, p.86. Please note that Burr is describing rather than advocating this position.
[8] On this point see Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations, (1991), London: Macmillan, p.29
[9] Burr, Introduction to Social Constructionism, p.12

emphasis on an interdisciplinary understanding that encompasses the artistic and the literary may at first appear less relevant to the concerns of animal liberation than a strictly social scientific or philosophical emphasis, it is likely that the diffusion of postmodern attitudes and orientations throughout Western culture has been greatly advanced by the influence of artistic and literary forms of culture. The forms that postmodernism takes within artistic and literary production and criticism is therefore of interest to my concerns here, since these forms offer valuable access to the workings of postmodernism in the culture outside of academic debate, where attitudes might be experienced and assimilated without great awareness of intellectual controversy or complications. This approach is not intended to downplay the importance of social factors, such as the influence of consumer culture or globalisation, but to complement it with an awareness of the contemporary role played by cultural production and reproduction in the development of subjectivity in the West.

Even the more specifically artistic forms taken by postmodernism are far from uniform in their attitude toward representation. However, despite describing several seemingly contradictory approaches, Hans Bertens is able to identify a clear common denominator: they all seek to transcend the "search for autonomy and purity or for timeless, representational, truth," since this search has "subjected experience to unacceptable intellectualizations and reductions."[10] The beginnings of postmodernism in a deliberate subversion of modern representational forms – together with the very specific ways that they give shape to knowledge – could therefore be argued to involve an attempt to find ways to reaffirm or recontact types of experience or knowledge that were unexamined or repressed by modernity. Perhaps most significantly, modernity's implicit belief that all aspects of reality could be unambiguously described and accounted for within the range of representational forms is shown to be a delusion. There is a parallel recognition that what is communicated through representations may have as much to do with the requirements of the particular representational form that is used (for example grammar in writing) as with the reality that is supposedly addressed. The specific ways that such forms structure expression or communication make it extremely unlikely that the content of any representation can be unaffected by characteristics

[10] Hans Bertens, The Idea of the Postmodern: A History, (1995), London: Routledge, p. 5

and conventions of the form adopted. In this sense, the understandings of the world produced by representational exchange are understood to be constructions – their shape being facilitated by the conceptual materials and the techniques of combination from which they are assembled.

This aspect of representation can be seen as having both enabling and constraining effects. In very broad terms, modernity might be said to be founded upon an extreme faith in the enabling effects of representation, the forms of which provide access to the many types, and the many benefits, of abstraction. Postmodernism, on the other hand, seems more acutely – even painfully – aware of the limitations of form. Jean-François Lyotard contends that "modernity takes place in the withdrawal of the real and according to the sublime relation between the presentable and the conceivable."[11] As he goes on to point out, this awareness of the blind-spot in the modern outlook places the postmodern painter or writer in a difficult position if they are to be honest with their audience or with themselves: "They must question the rules of the art of painting or of narrative as they have learned and received them from their predecessors. Soon those rules must appear to them as a means to deceive, to seduce, and to reassure, which makes it impossible for them to be "true.""[12]

This awareness of the limitations of form opens up the possibility of a resensitising, within the being of the postmodern subject to types of awareness or experience that do not fit easily within representations. Steven Best and Douglas Kellner discuss this as a matter of the privileging of one mode of awareness over another and trace the importance of the distinction between the two modes within postmodern thought back to Lyotard's early work Discours, figure, which, as they assert, rejects "the textualist approach which privileges texts and discourses over experience, the senses and images... [and] defends the claims of the senses and experience over abstractions and concepts."[13] While modernity's excessive faith in the power of representation led it to devalue incompatible types of awareness or

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[11] Jean-François Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge, (1984) Manchester: Manchester University Press, p.79

[12] Ibid., p.74-5. It may be worth considering that rules in this context usually have more to do with technique than with truth, and therefore that the formulation here invites a slippage from the rather impenetrable position that it is impossible for the rules of representation themselves to be 'true' to the more extreme (but perhaps more grammatically plausible) position that no representations can ever have truthful content. Whether such a slippage would be the responsibility of Lyotard, his translator, or the reader is unclear to me.

[13] Best and Kellner, Postmodern Theory, p. 149

experience, the problematisation of representation that takes place either explicitly in postmodern theory, or implicitly in postmodern artistic creation, can be a way of hinting at such types of awareness or experience, while also suggesting that it may not be possible or necessary to apprehend them more directly. Indeed the very urge to apprehend them more directly may be seen as unwelcome – as too reminiscent of the obsessive control mentality of modernity. Hutcheon quotes Roland Barthes as asking "Is it not the characteristic of reality to be *unmasterable*? And is it not the characteristic of system to *master* it? What then, confronting reality, can one do who rejects mastery?"[14] Representation is problematised, we might therefore say, because of its integral relation to both political and conceptual domination, and because its reliance on structuring forms renders it never quite adequate to apprehending the wholeness, the complexity or the ambiguity of the real world. Postmodern representation sets out to explore the paradoxical and compromised nature of representation and to attempt to find ways of accessing, without imposing too much extrinsic structure upon, those aspects of experience and awareness that resist easy categorisation. In Lyotard's words, "it is our business not to supply reality but to invent allusions to the conceivable which cannot be presented."[15] This demands new approaches to representation; as Best and Kellner describe it, Lyotard "champions imagery, polysemic poetic tropes, and ambiguity in writing, valorizing poetry as a model for all types of writing."[16]

Of course the purpose of theory, and often of art, is to be able to communicate something about the world, and taken to an extreme a favouring of amorphous or ambiguous possibility over precise meaning could be nonsensical, politically paralysing and disturbingly suggestive of schizoid detachment. What constitutes such an extreme is perhaps a matter that can only be left to the judgement of individual writers/artists/theorists, since meaning seems unavoidably inflected by personal perceptions. However the potential impotence of a *radically* sceptical view of representation remains troubling. Bertens addresses the difficulty as a "refusal to claim power, that is, to move from a negative to a positive conception of postmodern politics" and claims that "power must not only be subverted but also exercised."[17] However the issue is less one of a refusal than of an integral tendency in the theory.

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[14] Roland Barthes, quoted in Hutcheon, Politics of Representation, p.37
[15] Lyotard, Postmodern Condition, p.81
[16] Best and Kellner, Postmodern Theory, p.152
[17] Bertens, The Idea of the Postmodern, p.199

If representation is inherently problematic, as to the postmodern mind it so obviously is, then power is also always compromised because it must depend upon it. The intimate relationship of power and representation makes it difficult to make a play for one without depending in some way upon the other for legitimation. From a purist standpoint, the two are inseparably intertwined and unavoidably compromised.

But it is important to not lapse too far into reductive certainties; the above account should be qualified slightly. Some postmodern theorists do make extreme claims regarding the disjunction between representations and reality, although it is possible to suspect that this is occasionally (and rather ironically) a result of their own susceptibility to rhetorical simplification.[18] Bertens has suggested that "The vehemence of the attack on representation surely has to do with the stranglehold that representational modernity until quite recently had upon our imagination, not to mention our institutions."[19] He argues that the most radical claims for the disjunction of representations and reality should not themselves be interpreted as literally true. Rather, they should be seen as oppositional discourses forged from the perceived necessity to exorcise the totalising spirit of modernity. From this perspective, it is the supposedly objective, universalising representation or metanarraive that is problematic, rather than representation as such. For Bertens, "Radical postmodern theory must be regarded as a transitional phenomenon, as instrumental in the creation of a more moderate new paradigm that is already building upon its achievements while ignoring its more excessive claims."[20] Adopting a similar line, Hutcheon is at pains to point out that while postmodernism problematises representation, she understands there to be no "dissolution or repudiation" of it.[21] Rather, her account suggests that postmodernism, and particularly postmodern literary strategies, can be interpreted as attempts to cultivate forms of reflexivity and self-knowledge:

> In challenging the seamless quality of the history/fiction (or world/art) join implied by realist narrative, postmodern fiction does not, however, disconnect itself from history or the world. It foregrounds and thus contests the conventionality and unacknowledged ideology of that assumption of seamlessness and asks its readers to question the processes by which we

[18] For an example of this possibility, please refer to note 12 above regarding Lyotard's discussion of the deception imposed by representational form.
[19] Bertens, The Idea of the Postmodern, p.242
[20] Ibid., p.242
[21] Hutcheon, Politics of Postmodernism, p.50

> represent ourselves and our world to ourselves and to become aware of the means by which we *make* sense of and *construct* order out of experience in our particular culture.[22]

Clearly there is an inherent political content to this questioning, and one that might be particularly important in our media-saturated culture. Postmodern strategies might conceivably facilitate a limited redistribution of representational power from those able to influence and control it at the macro level back toward individuals who are subject to it. While at the macro level political power is still clearly firmly in the hands of elites, the facilitation of individual scepticism regarding the ability of representations to capture the complex dynamics of reality does seem to work against their *ideological* power. This might have clear benefits for animal liberation as it suggests an increased probability of scepticism toward such insidious pressures as advertising, the pervasive representation of social norms and the complacent or deceptive depiction of human-animal relationships within these. Baker has pointed out that "Attitudes to living animals are in large part the result of the symbolic uses to which the concept of the animal is put in popular culture."[23] Clearly however, the more sceptical people are concerning the fundamental ability of culture to represent animals and the moral dimensions of human-animal relationships faithfully, the more likely they might be to think critically about the forms of abuse that often hide behind smugly presented norms. However, while a postmodern concept of representational truth may help to do away with common rhetorical simplifications such as "eating meat is natural," it also appears to jerk the rug rather decisively from underneath such grand attempts at the claiming of political legitimation as "animals have a right to life." While proponents and opponents of such discursive tactics may invest considerable emotional or libidinal energies in them – for political or personal reasons that may or may not be apparent to themselves – from an even mildly postmodern perspective one might come to feel that debates about such claims seem to take on a slightly unreal dimension, based as they are upon concepts such as 'natural' or 'rights' whose referents lack materiality. While one need not be specifically 'postmodern' to see this problem, the normalisation of such terms through their continuous use in language may obscure the ambiguity of their construction. The effect of postmodern culture, then, may be to bring to

[22] Ibid., p.53
[23] Steve Baker, Picturing the Beast: Animals, Identity and Representation, (1993), Manchester, Manchester University Press, p.25

consciousness the immateriality of so many of the objects of consciousness, and of culture.

The psychology behind such an individual scepticism has been explored in some depth by Eugene Gendlin, whose psychotherapeutic practice has facilitated insightful philosophical critiques of representation as well as the development of a technique for 'focussing' on the layers of experience or awareness hidden behind the kind of explanations that come easily to hand. Gendlin's focussing technique relies upon representation – usually verbal – to continuously refine explanations that seem inadequate, but what is focussed *upon* is the sense of a situation as it exists in the body. The bodily sense is inherently more complex – or in Gendlin's term intricate – than any explanation, although explanation is used in the refinement of attempts to access it and, where it causes problems such as anxiety, to resolve it. Gendlin's theory is of particular interest here because of the vividness with which he is able to conjure the depths of intricate experience behind what we can directly or easily describe. For example he points out that:

> When someone asks: "How can I tell if I'm really in love?" we smile. We know there is no such single criterion, principle, or *general* category, as if a situation were a mere particular, subsumed under it. On the contrary, the general words mean newly in and from this intricacy. And so it is also with questions like "Why do you like your work?" or "When are you really yourself?" Not only big things – little ones also have the same intricacy. For example, "Why did you move away just now?" We give a simple reply to tell "the reason," but the intricacy cannot be subsumed under those category-words; rather, it lets them work, and changes them.[24]

The implicit awareness of intricacy described here suggests a particular kind of sophistication in our use of representations, but Gendlin does not believe that all people have this. While he believes that this sophistication is common today, particularly in the middle-classes, he argues that it was not typical a few generations ago when, for example, people identified more strongly with their social roles and status. For "traditional people," Gendlin argues, "feelings occur only in the culturally defined contexts."[25] While in the past, and in some cultures today, this identification with external forms is taken as a sign of good mental health, when such people are

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[24] Eugene Gendlin, "A Philosophical Critique of the Concept of Narcissism: The Significance of the Awareness Movement" in David Michael Levin (Ed.), Pathologies of the Modern Self: Postmodern Studies on Narcissism, Schizophrenia, and Depression, (1987), New York: New York University Press, p.268

[25] Ibid., p.273

encountered in contemporary Western life, Gendlin asserts, they may instead "seem to be an empty shell, clinging to outward patterns."[26] Scepticism toward these outward patterns – and hence representation more generally – might therefore itself be seen as something of a contemporary social norm. This has important implications for the ways that moral theories are framed. The influence of postmodern scepticism toward large scale representations makes it less likely that people will invest heavily in formal, prescriptive moral theories such as those that Singer and Regan create. Theory that feels more appropriate for the kind of people that Gendlin discusses will take account of their experiential intricacy, and will not attempt to fit such intricacy into rigid patterns. It will, in terms of the ideas developed in the previous chapter, embody an openness rather than purporting to account for all dimensions of a situation within an abstract formulation.

Gendlin discusses the development of the contemporary sophisticated awareness of the limitations of form in terms of different types of ego-functioning, but what is also very apparent is the extent to which it is compatible with the kind of consciousness that Hutcheon sees as being deliberately cultivated by postmodern creativity. Indeed the relationship of artistic endeavour to an awareness of the limitations of form seems likely to be one that goes much deeper than contemporary trends, but what the postmodern focussing of creative attention in this area implies is the intensification of a desire to communicate this insight more widely. The success of this communication might conceivably be reflected in Gendlin's comment that "Experiential openings that only poets and mystics once enjoyed, are now common."[27]

The temptation to see connections between this growth in "experiential openings" and such phenomena as a growth in vegetarianism or support for animal liberation is strong. Such a temptation may or may not be justified. I have already suggested that we might expect a postmodern awareness to be sceptical toward the discourses that construct human superiority, and what Gendlin adds to this is an awareness of how our bodily and emotional unease with the inadequacy of the understandings produced by discourses can provide a guide to potential ways forward. This suggests that there may be two potentially powerful sources of unease – the first originating in what knowledge an individual has of what is done to

[26] Ibid., p.273
[27] Ibid., p.277

animals, and the second in a nascent cultural awareness of the inadequacy of the discourses that legitimate this abuse.

There are further implications of this scepticism toward discourses. If representations – and this must necessarily include philosophical theories – are viewed as inherently incomplete and imperfect representations of the world then there is a reduced perception of a need for them to be ultimately congruent with each other. Truth becomes plural and perspectival. This perception is present at the theoretical level, where the modern idea of a potential for theories to be ultimately unifiable into a single vision of Truth is rejected. But it is also apparent on a more personal, intuitive level. Although a postmodern awareness, such as that described by Gendlin, may use discourses and frameworks of understanding, and even identify with them, any investment is likely to be less wholehearted – we might say fundamentalist – than it would be for a more modern way of thinking. This has important implications for such issues as the clash between animal liberation and more ecological philosophies. As Bertens has observed, "We always find ourselves inside other-determined discourses, which inevitably provide us with our moral and political horizons... and conflicting loyalties appear at the intersections of such discourses."[28] To a postmodern awareness that is attuned to the inherent incompleteness of discourses, such conflicting loyalties need not result in excessive crisis, or in the psychological need to reject one set of discourses and identify wholly with the other, although, importantly, an attempt to find or formulate better or more compatible understandings may result. An important effect of this may be that the kind of disillusionment with frameworks of understanding that I described in my first chapter is likely to be less severe, and less likely to result in changes of commitment. This may work in favour of animal liberation – for example an awareness of the clash with ecological theory may not result in the rejection of either – but it may also work against it. Where people are personally invested in practices such as meat-eating, the potential effects of exposure to animal liberation discourses may be weakened. For example, where such exposure presents a challenge to a person's conception of their identity, it may appear less necessary to that person to change behaviour in order to achieve a satisfactory self-image. It is important, however, that discourses (most likely to be of the non-metanarrative, less abstract or

[28] Bertens, The Idea of the Postmodern, p.143. Bertens is discussing the work of Richard Rorty at this point.

objective kind) that survive scepticism *and* succeed in engaging bodily or emotional responses *are* still likely to be effective. The problematising of representations gives feelings and intuitions a weight that was denied to them by the allegiance to objectivity favoured by modernity.

Representations, Modernity and Oppression

Bertens traces the emergence of postmodernism to the 1950s and notes that it developed momentum during the course of the 1960s.[29] This dating is interesting as it is compatible with the suggestion that an awareness of the Holocaust was a stimulus to the postmodern frame of mind. The potential inhumanity of rationalist efficiency and political metanarrative is certainly illustrated by Nazism, and Zygmunt Bauman, for one, has referred to the Holocaust as "that extreme manifestation of modern spirit and practice."[30] But the label "extreme manifestation" is not without its problems. While Nazism certainly embraced many principles of modernity, it would seem impossible to associate it with the emancipatory goals and ideals that are often claimed for modernity, even after observing that modernity always has involved the creation of out-groups to whom these goals and ideals do not apply. Michael Zimmerman seems to rather undermine Bauman's claim when he notes that "National Socialism condemned modernity outright."[31] However, the central issue for our concerns here seems to be an emerging post-war awareness – influenced by the growing inescapability of the genocidal uses to which technology can so easily lend itself – of the contradictory nature of the modern project: its professed (and legitimating) emancipatory intentions and the extent to which its methods, as manifested particularly by the industrialist mentality, so often lead in the opposite direction. Max Horkheimer and Theodore Adorno's work[32] was, of course, pivotal in crystallising this awareness, and is considered to be an important influence on the development of postmodern attitudes.

With this in mind, postmodernism would at least appear likely to have some kind of relation to the growth of animal liberation. Factory-farmed animals in the contemporary West suffer the excesses of industrial objectification in ways that are

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[29] Ibid., p. 3
[30] Zygmunt Bauman, Postmodern Ethics, (1993), Oxford, Blackwell, p.249
[31] Michael E. Zimmerman, Contesting Earth's Future: Radical Ecology and Postmodernity, (1994), Berkely & Los Angeles: University of California Press, p.114
[32] See Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer, Dialectic of Enlightenment, (1997), London: Verso

comparable, although not identical, to those suffered by victims of the Holocaust.[33] This objectification is often legitimised by metanarratives, oriented around a supposed human supremacy, that facilitate dissociation of feelings of guilt and responsibility. Just as many ordinary Germans – even those living in proximity to the camps – were able to live lives mostly unaffected by their vague awareness of what might be happening, so the experiences inflicted on 'food' animals often appear to exist only at the edges of our awareness, largely unacknowledged and undealt with psychologically because of the apparent inferiority and difference of the victims. What postmodernism challenges, suggests Bertens, "is not modernity per se, but its essentialist, rationalistic and humanistic underpinnings."[34] Each of these underpinnings would appear to be inextricably implicated in the hierarchical mindset that legitimates contemporary farming methods, as well as the ease with which a majority of us are able to accept these methods and their abuse of animals for food. As I have previously suggested, a postmodern attitude of scepticism toward the pervasive representations that construct animals as inferior, and as available to us, as well as our general magnanimity and the naturalness of our eating 'meat' produced under contemporary conditions would obviously seem promising for animal liberation.

But it is important that this should not be seen as only an accidental or generic effect of a postmodern scepticism toward representations. Knowledge not only of the Holocaust, but also of the injustices involved in other Western racist, colonial and domestic histories has sharpened the postmodern focus of attention on those who have been victims of opportunistic representations of moral hierarchy. As Bertens points out, postmodern thought tends to be particularly interested

> in those who from the point of view of the liberal humanist subject (white, male, heterosexual and rational) constitute the 'Other' – the collective of those excluded from the privileges accorded by that subject to itself (women, people of color, non-heterosexuals, children) – and… in the role of representations in the constitution of 'Otherness'.[35]

These 'others' are usually human – as Bertens' list makes clear – but the principle of scepticism being specifically directed toward representations (often structured

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[33] See Charles Patterson, Eternal Treblinka: Our Treatment of Animals and the Holocaust, (2002), Lantern Books
[34] Bertens, The Idea of the Postmodern, p.190
[35] Ibid., p.8

around dualisms) that legitimate hierarchy would seem likely to have a certain momentum of its own. In a process that mirrors Peter Singer's fundamentally modern argument that extending the circle of moral inclusiveness by logical inquiry would lead naturally to the inclusion of animals,[36] so the gradual postmodern erosion of faith in the representations that reductively construct moral hierarchies and difference seems likely to lead to a reduced willingness to be consciously complicit in all types of exploitation. Integral to this process is the awareness that our representations of others will always be incomplete and hence to some extent flawed, and that our use of these representations to absolve us from affective complications associated with our behaviour is likely to be self-serving. As Bertens suggests, "If all representations are constructs that ultimately are politically informed, then it should be possible, for instance, to break away from our current ones and really confront the Other."[37] Postmodern scepticism, then, implies a deliberate breaking down of culturally entrenched stereotypes and prejudices – and most particularly those that justify domination or exploitation. From such a perspective there is a great potential for moral cautiousness: for an attitude of restraint that is motivated by a fundamental uncertainty about the moral dimensions of our actions where they impact upon others. However the sting in the tail, for animal liberation as much as for other liberation movements, is that abstract or supposedly objective representations that attempt to actively work against exploitation and injustice – such as Singer's – may also be undermined. Expressing this postmodern attitude to representations of a universal morality, Lyotard has asserted that "Any attempt to state the law… to place oneself in the position of enunciator of the universal prescription is obviously infatuation itself and absolute injustice."[38] The key insight is that any moral code that is advanced can only be advanced by either an individual or a group of individuals, and it will therefore always incorporate perspectival content. Claims of universality or absolute foundations are likely to appear inherently suspect, no matter how reasonably and rationally framed.

But this leaves the question of whether any postmodern foundations for morality are possible at all. Bauman makes a case for a theory of morality that is

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[36] Singer, The Expanding Circle: Ethics and Sociobiology, (1981), Oxford: Clarendon Press
[37] Bertens, The Idea of the Postmodern, p.11
[38] Jean-François Lyotard, Just Gaming (Theory and History of Literature), p.99, Quoted in Cary Wolfe, "In the Shadow of Wittgenstein's Lion" in Cary Wolfe (Ed.), Zoontologies: The Question of the Animal, (2003), Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, p.28

distinctively postmodern in incorporating many of the insights described here, yet finds strong reasons for moral behaviour. It therefore seems appropriate to give a review of some particularly noteworthy points of his argument. Bauman's version of morality, although like much postmodern theory making no explicit attempt to address either animals or the natural world more generally, nevertheless has some considerable relevance because of its orientation toward our relations with 'others' – a term that might easily be taken to refer to non-human others, even though this seems not to be Bauman's explicit intention.

Representations and Morality

Bauman agrees with Bertens that the emancipatory goals of modernity are preserved by postmodernism, but is very critical of the 'modern' attitude to moral thinking. To the modern mind, as he describes it, morality was a matter of constructing or obeying moral frameworks that were derived from accepted first principles by the use of logical reasoning. These frameworks, being supposedly rationally founded, were implicitly understood to have universal applicability. But problems always arose with these moral theories – they would prove flawed in theory or practice, or contradictions with other principles or theories would be discovered. This, however, did not lead to the rejection of the belief that a complete and coherent version of morality could be discovered. As Bauman points out, modernity always retained its faith in the possibility of "rules that 'will stick' and foundations that 'won't shake'":

> Any allegedly 'foolproof' recipe could be proved wrong, disavowed and rejected – but not the very search for a truly foolproof recipe, one that will, as one of them surely must, put paid to all further search. In other words, the moral thought and practice of modernity was animated by the belief in the possibility of a *non-ambivalent, non-aporetic ethical code*. Perhaps such a code has not been found yet. But it surely waits round the next corner. Or the corner after next.[39]

As should be clear from Bauman's tone, he does not share this belief in the possibility of an ethical framework free from contradiction or flaws. He specifically asserts that morality is always to some extent compromised, and "that a non-aporetic, non-ambivalent morality, an ethics that is universal and 'objectively

[39] Bauman, Postmodern Ethics, p.9

founded', is a practical impossibility; perhaps also an *oxymoron*, a contradiction in terms."[40] This is important to bear in mind, since his own theorising of a postmodern approach to ethics does embody some limited inconsistencies. If we accept Bauman's own critique of modernity, however, it follows that internal contradictions and inconsistencies need not be fatal to his account, which in any case strikes that particular balance between description and prescription which makes much postmodern theorising peculiarly resistant to logical critique.

For Bauman morality is manifested in personal responses to moral dilemmas, but this does not imply the adoption of a completely relativistic stance. Indeed, he specifically censures those postmodernists who recommend such a stance.[41] Bauman believes instead in the existence of a "moral impulse" which resides in the human subject. This impulse manifests itself in an attitude of being "for the Other," and exists prior to the construction of any moral rules or codes. Indeed, rules and codes can tend to work *against* the impulse as they seem to reduce or limit the extent of moral behaviour to a matter of simple compliance, offering us the illusion that if we obey the moral code then we can rest assured that we have done enough to qualify as morally good. For Bauman, morality is fundamentally infinite. We can never really do enough to be truly moral beings, since there would always seem to be more we could have done for the benefit of others. And, crucially, we can never be totally sure that what we have done is the right thing. But this sense of doubt is what constitutes the moral impulse and what motivates the truly moral self. In Bauman's words, "This uncertainty with no exit is precisely the foundation of morality. One recognizes morality by its gnawing sense of unfulfilledness, by its endemic dissatisfaction with itself. *The moral self is a self always haunted by the suspicion that it is not moral enough.*"[42]

The central feature of this vision of postmodern ethics, then, is that individual conscience must always adjudicate the rights and wrongs of any matter. There are important implications of this, one of which is that doing what one feels to be the right thing may involve going against social norms and standards. Indeed, Bauman specifies the Holocaust as the paradigmatic example of the importance of individual refusal to accept authority or socialization, and of instead listening closely to the

[40] Ibid., p.10
[41] Ibid., p.14
[42] Ibid., p.80

demands of conscience.[43] This idea of morality manifesting itself in disobedience to authority and socially upheld norms is one of the more radical features of Bauman's account and it is interesting to note that it offers the rare possibility of theoretical justification for some of the more extreme forms of direct action practised by animal liberationists. It is important that in centring moral adjudication firmly in the individual conscience and relying upon the moral impulse, there is no suggestion of any need for a rational, supposedly objective, balancing of good and bad consequences, such as would be necessary for a philosopher such as Singer. As Bauman claims, "What makes the moral self is the urge to do, not the knowledge of what is to be done; the unfulfilled task, not the duty correctly performed."[44] This version of morality, however, although extending the possibility of legitimation to more radical forms of action, also withholds the ultimate comfort of knowing that one has done the right thing. While Singer's utilitarianism might give radical activism a clear conscience if, to pick an example, the relief of suffering of animals liberated from a laboratory seemed to outweigh any negative effects of the action, Bauman's idea of morality would not allow any such unambiguous reassurance. His verdict on the implications of his model for those who wish to use ethical theory to construct what he calls the "Law" is therefore *just as applicable* to those whose moral impulse leads them to break it:

> To be frank, this is not the kind of foundation ethical philosophers dreamt of and go on dreaming about. It leaves quite a lot to be desired, and this is perhaps why the seekers for the building site of Law prefer to look the other way. No harmonious ethics can be erected on this site – only the straggly shoots of the never ending, never resolved moral anxiety will on this soil grow profusely.[45]

Despite his acknowledgement of the imperfectability of ethics and the incurable ambivalence of morality, as Bauman sees things this is the only option that is truly viable once the problems with the approach favoured by modernity are acknowledged. Postmodernity, he claims, "is *modernity without illusions*."[46]

Regarding the practical ability of postmodern ethics to nurture adequately moral lives, however, Bauman's account seems itself to be rather ambivalent. On

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[43] Ibid., p.249
[44] Ibid., p.80
[45] Ibid., p.80
[46] Ibid., p.32

one hand he seems to claim that our moral impulses are functioning adequately, asserting that

> It is in this sort of world that we must live; and yet, as if defying the worried philosophers who cannot conceive of an 'unprincipled' morality, a morality without foundations, we demonstrate day by day that we can live, or learn to live, or manage to live in such a world, though few of us would be ready to spell out, if asked, what the principles that guide us are, and fewer still would have heard about the 'foundations' which we allegedly cannot do without to be good and kind to each other.[47]

This is an optimistic assessment, certainly from the point of view of animal liberation and environmental movements – with their justifiably "worried philosophers" – that, although having made significant recent gains, are still very much seen as minority concerns. Bauman himself later acknowledges an alternate view of contemporary morality when he goes on to describe the point at which the moral functioning of a postmodern culture seems to break down. The principal problems that he identifies revolve around the question of distance, and particularly the way that technological society may extend, beyond our ability to feel or morally comprehend, the spatial or temporal reach of the consequences of both individual and collective actions:

> Moral responsibility prompts us to care that our children are fed, clad and shod; it cannot offer us much practical advice, however, when faced with numbing images of a depleted, desiccated and overheated planet which our children and the children of our children will inherit and will have to inhabit in the direct or oblique result of our present collective unconcern. Morality which always guided us and still guides us today has powerful, but short hands. It now needs very, very long hands indeed.[48]

The prospect of what our current technological capacities can inflict on those who are temporally and spatially distant from us is not the only point at which postmodern morality proves inadequate. Bauman uses the metaphorical figures of the vagabond and the tourist to delineate what he calls "postmodern types," and to illustrate the failing of those types to acknowledge the moral dimensions even of their relations to those that they encounter in close proximity. The vagabond and the tourist both pass physically close to the lives of others but their orientation toward encounters is founded on the desire for pleasure and sensation. The only meaning

[47] Ibid., p.32
[48] Ibid., p.218

that is derived from encounters is likely to be an aesthetic meaning. The freedom to attach what meaning one desires and the freedom to be unconcerned by moral difficulties has invariably been paid for, and the commercial transaction appears to remove any need to examine one's involvement too closely:

> One thing that the vagabond's and the tourist's lives are not designed to contain, and most often are excused from containing, is the cumbersome, incapacitating, joy-killing, insomniogenic moral responsibility. The pleasures of the massage parlour come clean of the sad thought about the children sold into prostitution; the latter, like the rest of [the] bizarre ways the natives have chosen, is not the punter's responsibility, not his blame, not his deed – and there is nothing the punter can do (and thus nothing he *ought* to do) to repair it.[49]

These two primary strands in Bauman's account of the moral failings of the postmodern age (spatial and temporal distance separating actors from consequences, and perceived moral distance, assisted by the structuring conventions of financial transaction, separating actors from those they come into contact with) both have clear resonances with analyses of the moral failings of contemporary society advanced by both animal liberation and environmental theorists. For example, many writers have emphasised the importance to the continued viability of some of the most potentially troubling aspects of animal exploiting industries – for example the slaughterhouse or the factory farm – that they be hidden away from public view. And the financial transactions through which animal products arrive in the consumer's possession directly aid dissociation by acting to undermine the sense that the consumer is involved in the destructive and abusive processes that produce them. The feeling of responsibility for any abuse – even the necessity to be aware of the possibility of its existence – is effectively removed from the postmodern consumer, thereby lessening the likelihood of the moral impulse suggesting any potential complications.

Bauman's acknowledgements of the potential contemporary impotence of the moral impulse to actually be "for the Other" are of great importance since they demonstrate a powerful reason why the development of moral frameworks of *some* kind or another might still be thought pragmatically desirable, even if we accept the lack of absolute foundations or complete certainty. The problem as Bauman approaches it still revolves around responsibilities to humans – albeit humans

[49] Ibid., p.242

separated from us by spatial or temporal distance. He makes no real attempt to consider those other types of moral responsibility that are addressed by environmental and animal liberation ethics. Nevertheless his analysis is strikingly applicable with only minimal modifications. Here it seems that another type of distance is also involved – that distance being the conceptual one between the type of other (human) that we more usually take account of and others such as individual animals, species and ecosystems. A consideration of recent debates about their inclusion in our moral understandings suggests that the more radical otherness of these others does not (and should not) automatically remove them from the reach of our moral impulse, but it can often tend this way. Since my concern here is to get some measure of what Bauman's theory says about these matters, it seems important to note that regardless of his lack of attention to the other others, his response to the general dilemma of distance is to resist the construction of any kind of moral framework that might help to bridge the gap. While he acknowledges that "algorithmically prescribed, unambiguously correct ways of acting" might be acceptable for the resolution of purely technical dilemmas, any such thing is not appropriate in the moral sphere. What he does concede, drawing on Hans Jonas, is that caution may be the best policy:

> Once a moral stance is taken, however, only heuristic guidelines are feasible: rules-of-thumb that do not carry even the reassuring warranty of past habits, and cannot honestly promise more than a sporting chance of success and some hope of avoiding the worst. What future ethics should be guided by, suggests Jonas, is the *Heuristics of Fear*, subordinate in its turn to the *Principle of Uncertainty*.[50]

Bauman is aware of the potential inadequacy of this solution for our collective future, but sees it as the only one viable if we are to preserve a sense of what it really means to be moral. The moral act must be decided upon by the individual conscience in its response to the other, and if that other is not apparent, and the response is not forthcoming, then it is difficult to say anything further. This is perhaps a painful conclusion to state so bluntly, and while the bulk of Bauman's argument feels intuitively right, there is something persistently troubling here. It is perhaps difficult to decisively renounce a desire for certainty. To be clear, Bauman's postmodern ethics offers no support for the construction of absolute moral laws,

[50] Ibid., p.221

even prohibitions on acts such as murder. Only the individual moral impulse has the absolute right of censure for one's actions.

While this initially seems unhelpful in the extreme for both animal liberation and environmental ethics, it may not be so. In fact, if it is possible to set aside for a moment the underlying rationale by which the endpoint is arrived at, Bauman's conclusions are remarkably compatible with the observations about the application of rules made by Eugene Hargrove and discussed in the previous chapter. Hargrove, to recap, argued for a version of ethics that "will be a collection of independent ethical generalizations, only loosely related, not a rationally ordered set of ethical prescriptions."[51] Rules are relevant to such an ethics only in so far as they help to improve perception – they are therefore precisely the "heuristic guidelines" that Bauman is prepared to allow. Comparable approaches to the development of ethics have emerged in related fields such as deep ecology and ecofeminism. For example, the deep ecology theorist George Sessions argues that

> A logically air-tight formulation of a non-anthropocentric ecological metaphysics or an impeccably formulated "environmental ethics" is not going to solve our problems, even if such things are possible, although they would be of some use and value just as the formulation of paradigms has some value. However, our problems seem to channel down ultimately to human psychology, or states of consciousness, or more generally to the state of being of the whole organism. . . . Those philosophers who see the philosophical environmental problem mainly as one of developing an ethics of the environment fail to understand the major scientific / epistemological / social paradigm shift which is now underway. Conceptual analysis will be valuable but . . . the attempt to solve these ecophilosophical problems on purely logical or conceptual grounds is to fail to realize that this approach is itself part of the old paradigm which needs to be replaced. [52]

Similarly, the ecofeminist theorist Val Plumwood contends that "What is needed is not so much the abandonment of ethics as a different and richer understanding of it... one that gives an important place to ethical concepts owning to emotionality and particularity and that abandons the exclusive focus on the universal and the abstract associated with the... rationalist accounts of ethics."[53]

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[51] Eugene C. Hargrove, Foundations of Environmental Ethics, (1989), New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., p.8

[52] George Sessions, Quoted in Warwick Fox, Toward a Transpersonal Ecology: Developing New Foundations for Environmentalism, (1990), London: Shambhala Publications, p.225

[53] Val Plumwood, "Nature, Self, and Gender: Feminism, Environmental Philosophy, and the Critique of Rationalism," *Hypatia*, 6(1), (1991), p.9-10

Is there a reason for the degree of agreement between these diverse rejections of rationally derived and supposedly universal ethical systems? John Rodman in his early and obviously influential critique of Singer also opposed the logical approach to morality as a way of arguing for a need to move beyond what he called the "moral/legal stage of consciousness"[54] and to reclaim a version of ethics that nurtures a more sensitive and congruent relationship between human nature and the natural world – an ethics, that is, of humans as *natural beings*. Likewise Bauman argues that the 'modern' idea of ethics is essentially repressive of the human spirit, and that this is no accident since "modern legislators and modern thinkers alike felt that morality, rather than being a 'natural trait' of human life, is something that needs to be designed and injected into human conduct."[55] These lines, then, are similar to those that Rodman had argued along around 16 years earlier, although there is little evidence that either has read the other. This parallel tendency in diverse intellectual spheres perhaps suggests further questions: Is there an underlying and intuitive gravitational pull that has led a postmodern account such as Bauman's toward an understanding of ethics that is, at the least, not incompatible with so much environmental theory? Is there perhaps something in our human nature – our animal nature even – that understands how alienating the 'modern' approach to culture and representation can be, even prior to the form that this understanding takes in our theorisation? There can clearly be no definitive answers to questions such as these, although the next chapter will attempt to hint at possible ways of approaching them.

[54] John Rodman, "The Liberation of Nature?" *Inquiry* 20, (1977).
[55] Bauman, Postmodern Ethics, p.6

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The Natural and the Postmodern

"I believe that the unity of experience tends to reassert itself in the long-run, despite the dichotomies that we draw across its surface"
- John Rodman.[1]

Symbols and Otherness

Postmodernism is a product of the recent Western world, and as such it undoubtedly embodies many of the alienating and undesirable aspects of contemporary Western culture. Fredric Jameson has argued that it "expresses the inner truth of that newly emergent social order of late capitalism,"[2] and that "Postmodernism is what you have when the modernization process is complete and nature is gone for good". He also notes that "It is a more fully human world than the older one, but one in which "culture" has become a veritable "second nature.""[3] If we take Jameson's word for it then this might seem to foreclose any possibility of finding redeeming features, particularly from environmental or animal liberation positions. But this summary does not do justice to the diverse implications of postmodern culture. While contemporary capitalism is indisputably doing incomprehensible amounts of damage to the natural world, and to nonhuman others within it, the socioeconomic reductionism of Jameson's assertion ignores the extent to which oppositional stances may be generated within postmodern culture, and even the extent to which a moderate postmodern worldview may facilitate a sensitive appreciation of – and emotional resonance with – the natural and the wild. In this section I would like to expand on my previous account in order to incorporate more specific attention to the possibility that certain aspects of postmodern culture may be 'nature-friendly' in the ways that they influence subjectivity. I will, again, not be presenting a one-sided picture, however.

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[1] John Rodman, "The Liberation of Nature?" *Inquiry* 20, (1977), p.104
[2] Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society", in Hal Foster (Ed.), Postmodern Culture, (1985), London: Pluto Press, p. 15
[3] Jameson, Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism, (1991), London: Verso, p.ix

The central questions here might be said to revolve around what we call 'meaning,' including our desire for it, and the different ways that we might attempt to possess it. While it is impossible to imagine human culture without the creation of meaning, a postmodern reflexive awareness of the ways that meaning is generated through discourse and representation might prove to be an awareness that is more open to the complexities and ambiguities of the natural world. Of particular importance in understanding this is Steve Baker's work on postmodern art and its engagement with the animal. Baker is very interested in the postmodern opposition to the idea of the expert, and of expert knowledge. This is a particularly postmodern concern – modern attitudes tend to valourise the expert since expert knowledge is considered to be objective, and the foundation of progress. However expert knowledge is envisaged from a postmodern perspective as rather complacent. Baker makes much of the distinction that Lyotard draws in the introduction to The Postmodern Condition: "It remains to be said that the author of the report is a philosopher, not an expert. The latter knows what he knows and what he does not know: the former does not. One concludes, the other questions..."[4] The type of knowledge that the expert has, moreover, is such as to preclude sensitivity to other or incompatible awarenesses – awarenesses that the postmodern conception of the plurality of truth tends to assume are likely to be present. Drawing on Carlo Ginzburg, Baker illustrates the sense in which expert knowledge tends to distance the expert from experience, because "knowledge means imposing a blueprint on reality instead of learning from it," while to "understand less, to be naïve, to be surprised – these can lead one to see something deeper, something closer to nature."[5] For this reason, postmodern art may take it upon itself to "estrange" its audience from what it thinks it knows in order to cultivate an orientation toward ongoing discovery and fascination. There are complex repercussions to this.

From a realist position such as that held by Jameson, this kind of effect might be experienced as disorientating, as fragmentary, and as disturbing. Indeed it might be experienced in ways that are similar to the experience of regression described by Maiteny and referred to in my first chapter. In each case, the experience is of confusion caused by the undermining of frameworks of meaning that orient us to the

[4] Jean-François Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge, (1984) Manchester: Manchester University Press, p.xxv. Also quoted in Steve Baker, The Postmodern Animal, (2000), London: Reaktion Books, p.39

[5] Carlo Ginzburg, quoted in Baker, Postmodern Animal, p.49

world. However it would perhaps be unrealistic to claim that individual works of art are likely to provoke such a profound loss of bearings as might occur when our basic meaning structures crumble – the idea is perhaps more that we glimpse briefly the shadow side of our preconceptions and realise that things might not be shaped quite as we previously thought. However as previously suggested, just as the rejection of basic frameworks of meaning and orientation leaves us in a state that requires an attitude of perceptive openness in order to assimilate new ways of making sense of the world, what the postmodern undermining of preconceptions and 'expert' knowledge might seem to work toward is an attitude of *continual* openness, such that frameworks of understanding are *always* contingent, never assured. Serious disorientation, then, is likely to result only if one has previously invested very heavily in one's preconceptions – if one sees one's understandings as being of an absolute and inviolable kind, rather than as being inherently conditional and incomplete.

In this respect, all knowledge might be thought to be of a similar type to the knowledge that is possible of the postmodern work of art or literature. By embodying ambiguity within their constructions of meaning, postmodern creative forms in a sense model a world that resists attempts at unambiguous knowing. This is not to suggest that nothing can be communicated within such forms, merely that what is communicated is unlikely to satisfy any needs for certainty or completeness that an audience might have. The postmodern work of art is ultimately unknowable in its meaning, since it seeks to question and disrupt certainties rather than to embody them. However it is important to realise that the unknowability that we are talking about has much to do with the means by which 'knowing' takes place. Warren Montag examines Jameson's complaint that certain works do not "speak to us" and possess instead "the contingency of some inexplicable natural object," claiming that "Jameson seems unable to grasp that this unknowability reflects the inadequate character of the theoretical constructions through which the object is known, rather than the nature of the object itself."[6] Just as the theoretical constructions through which we attempt to know reality are inadequate to apprehending its wholeness or complexity, so too it seems that the theoretical constructions through which we attempt to apprehend the 'meaning' of a work of art

[6] Warren Montag, "What is at Stake in the Debate on Postmodernism" in E. Ann Kaplan (Ed.) Postmodernism and its Discontents, (1988), London: Verso, p.97 & 98

are unable to capture all dimensions of its being. This leads to the inevitable question: if the postmodern work has this "contingency" of a natural object, is the postmodern really what you have when nature is "gone for good"? Or does the postmodern in some important sense mirror the natural more accurately than does the modern?

We might perhaps illuminate this further by making some very basic observations about different ways that art might be engaged with. The work – the 'object' – has its being in an 'objective' way – it has characteristics and qualities that are objectively real (which is not to say completely knowable) – however in conjunction with a potential 'knower' it is pregnant with possibilities for significance (in the broadest sense) or for sensory revelation that may or may not be taken up. If the viewer has a need for definitive, focussed statements of meaning then she may be disappointed and experience the object as pointless. But by bringing to it a set of open-ended ideas, associations and awarenesses the subjectivity of the viewer might interact with the object in such a way as to produce provisional, imperfect, non-literal meaning. If the viewer forgets that this meaning is such then she might have suffered from a failure of reflexivity. If she finds no meaning at all then her concept of meaning might be too rigid and her sensibility again too fixated on the literal. Montag complains that Jameson's Marxism makes him unable to conceive of a purpose for art other than literal representation, pointing out that approached with this attitude, "a work is either anchored to and controlled by a reality which is the guarantee of the meaning of the work to the extent that it is external and therefore foreign to the work, or the work has no relation to reality and is thus simply false, illusory."[7] He continues that were we to "retreat to the notion of art as representation" then this would have the effect of "paradoxically conserving an external reality at the expense of the reality of the work of art itself." He continues, "It is a strange materialism indeed that insists on the illusory nature of the social products it confronts and converts them into shadowy simulacra in order the more readily to denounce their falsity."[8] This is interesting: Montag seems to be asserting the autonomous reality of the work against the claims of a dogmatic rationality that attempts to constrain meaning within a literalised representational format and to reduce the being of the work in order to fit this scheme. He seems to be saying that

[7] Ibid., p.96
[8] Ibid., p.97

the work should be allowed to *be* according to its own characteristics (its nature, perhaps): it should not have to signify in rigid and particular ways in order to be considered of worth.

Montag's stance on this point is a particularly postmodern one, and resonates with Baker's work on the idea of the 'real animal.' Baker is interested in postmodern art's use of the animal to confront us with what lies outside of our representational structures. In this sense the animal can be seen to function for the postmodern artist in ways very similar to those in which the artwork functions for a critic such as Montag. Baker refers to the postmodern animal "whose ambiguity or irony or sheer brute presence serves to resist or to displace fixed meanings."[9] Furthermore, he points out that the artist often takes pains not to allow her own intentions for the work to impose symbolic structure unnecessarily onto the animal's being. In Baker's words:

> [N]on-manipulation of the animal can perhaps be seen as one postmodern ambition or ideal... [T]he postmodern animal is there in the gallery not *as a meaning* or a symbol but in all its pressing thingness. Symbolism is inevitably anthropomorphic, making sense of the animal by characterizing it in human terms, and doing so from a safe distance. This may be the animal's key role in postmodernism: too close to work as a symbol, it passes itself off as the *fact* or reality of that which resists both interpretation and mediocrity.[10]

In this sense Baker shows how the animal can act as a potent reminder of some of what has been omitted by modernity's confidence in representational forms. The animal not only lives without using these forms, but preserves the most vital and intriguing aspects of its being as essentially unavailable to the types of knowing enabled by these forms. So while Jameson charges that in postmodernism nature has been replaced completely by a culture that then becomes "second nature," Baker shows how the reverse is also true: postmodern art draws the ultimately unassimilable animal presence into cultural, representational and discursive worlds that struggle to make conventional (for them) 'sense' of this presence. These seemingly closed worlds are then confronted with the limitations of their potential to know, and subjectivity is potentially opened outward toward the world in the process. While Western representation has historically used animals to fill multiple

[9] Baker, Postmodern Animal, p.20
[10] Ibid., p. 82

symbolic roles, Baker points out both the apparent resistance of the real animal presence to remaining safely imprisoned in these roles, and the common cause made of this resistance by postmodern art's reluctance to satisfy our reductive needs for unambiguous meaning.

The significance of these observations might be reinforced by observing that there are important echoes of the postmodern concerns touched on above in some cultures that retain closer links to the natural world, and the wild, than our own. To this end I would like now to turn to a work of literary criticism that focuses on novels by Native American writers. Although the novel is not a Native American art form, William Bevis argues of the works that he examines that "In the handling of plot and nature the novels ... are Native American... [B]oth "plot" and "nature" lead to culturally conditioned concepts and to pervasive differences in white and Native American points of view."[11] One of the many such differences to emerge from Bevis' analysis is that between the way that nature is used in the work of traditional (non-postmodern) white writers and their Native American counterparts. As he explains it:

> When Keats mentions the murmurous haunt of flies on a summer's eve, or Emily Dickinson at death tells of a great blue fly interposed between herself and the light, we scramble to figure out why. The remarks have an effect on us because we are accustomed to using nature, abstracting it, confining it to our purposes. In [James] Welch's work, such interpretive reaction to each natural phenomenon would engender (and has engendered) silly misreadings. The natural world in Welch is strangely (to whites) various, objective, unsymbolic, as if it had not yet been taken over by the human mind.[12]

The difference in attitudes here is of great importance. While Western writing styles have traditionally valued the creative use of symbolism, including the investment of animals and nature with symbolic meanings that might not derive from their own being, this approach is not favoured by the Native American authors that Bevis discusses. These authors specifically resist the imposition of constructed human meaning onto nature and part of the reason for this seems to be that to do so is disrespectful. Bevis' discussion of a passage from the work of D'Arcy McNickle

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[11] William Bevis, "Native American Novels: Homing In" in Brian Swann and Arnold Krupat (Ed.s), Recovering the Word: Essays on Native American Literature, (1987), London: University of California Press, p.580

[12] Ibid., p.599-600

illustrates this. The passage uses an animal metaphor in a description of the removal of Native American children from their families in order to be educated in 'white' schools: "The students came from many miles away and from many tribes, all snatched up the way coyote pups are grabbed and stuffed into a sack while mother coyote sits on her haunches and licks her black nose."[13] Bevis analyses this dense passage as follows:

> The passage presents coyote pups in a straightforward comparison to human children. Naturally, when the coyote mother is introduced we expect a parallel to human mothers; then, as she "sits on her haunches and licks her black nose" we seek the meaning of that action in human terms. Are coyotes and Indian mothers whacked on the nose as children are snatched? No, coyote snatchers in western Montana tell me, the pups can be taken without a blow. Is this chilling indifference? Not on the part of humans; in McNickle's novels, several children are taken and mothers vehemently protest. The parallelism simply breaks down. The mother coyote takes over the text, licking her nose for coyote reasons and thinking coyote thoughts. Nature is not subordinate to humans. Animals have their own rights in life and art.[14]

Just as Baker's postmodern animal "is there in the gallery not *as a meaning* or a symbol but in all its pressing thingness," so McNickle's coyote mother has a similar presence in his text. She is the other, resistant to either symbolic or anthropomorphic interpretation. We are perhaps aware of her as a subjective presence in a fuller sense than Baker's use of the word "thingness" might suggest is felt by the postmodern artist (although it should be noted that in many cases Baker is not discussing living animals). Even so, Bevis' informal use of the word rights is echoed in Baker's work by a quotation from his own interview with the postmodern animal photographer Britta Jaschinski: "This is what the work is really about, saying look at them, they've got their own existence and personality and they've got their dignity and beauty. It's just about their rights really."[15] Both the postmodern artist and the Native American writer seem united in their desire to recognise the autonomous subjective presence of the animal as an extra-human, extra-discursive reality and, it seems, *to recognise the existence of some kind of moral dimension to how we enmesh these beings in representations*. As Bevis puts it of the animals in

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[13] D'Arcy McNickle, Wind from an Enemy Sky, (1978), San Francisco: Harper & Row, Quoted in Bevis, "Homing In," p.599

[14] Bevis, "Homing In," p.599

[15] Britta Jaschinski, quoted in Baker, Postmodern Animal, p.147

the fiction that he discusses, "They "function" to reveal that the narrator respects what's there."[16]

It is worth being clear that the contrast between the white tendency to see animals and nature in terms of their usefulness to our own psychological and symbolic processes and the Native American one to "respect what's there" is not simply a theoretical point that has been teased out by the perceptive critic. In a different work, McNickle seems to take a more explicitly didactic approach in a passage that, as Bevis explains, "deliberately juxtaposed the "micro" sacredness of nature to white symbolism."[17] The passage is worth reproducing at length. In it, the Native American child Archilde is at Mission School when a cloud appears that

> by curious coincidence... assumed the form of a cross – in the reflection of the setting sun, a flaming cross. The prefect was the first to observe the curiosity and it put him into a sort of ecstasy...
> "The Sign! The Sign!" he shouted. His face was flushed and his eyes gave off flashing lights – Archilde did not forget them.
> "The Sign! Kneel and pray!"
> The boys knelt and prayed, some of them frightened and on the point of crying. They knew what the sign signified... The Second coming of Christ, when the world was to perish in flames!

The cloud vanishes, but Archilde is shown to have been wiser than the prefect:

> It was not the disappearance of the threatening symbol which freed him from the priests' dark mood, but something else. At the very instant that the cross seemed to burn most brightly, a bird flew across it... It flew past and returned several times before finally disappearing – and what seized Archilde's imagination was the bird's unconcernedness. It recognized no "Sign." His spirit lightened. He felt himself fly with the bird.[18]

Here the bird functions in a more complex way than the coyote did, but its appearance still helps to illustrate the error of allowing a symbolically constructed understanding of reality too great a hold on perception. As Bevis comments, "What a marvellous scene: Archilde trusts the bird to know if its world, their world, is coming to an end... The bird... reassures him through its "unconcernedness," and he feels a symbiosis with this individual, sentient (with the capacity for knowledge and

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[16] Bevis, "Homing In," p.599
[17] Ibid., p.603
[18] D'Arcy McNickle, The Surrounded, (1936), New York: Dodd, Mead, p.101-103, Quoted in Bevis, "Homing In," p.603

concern) brother in the sky."[19] For Archilde, then, the knowledge possessed by the bird is seen to actually *take precedence* over the symbolically mediated forms of knowledge favoured in the white school. This suggests that Archilde's attention to nature makes him more aware of the arbitrariness and the abstraction involved in constructed understandings than those who attempt to 'teach' him through their uncritical adoption. Although nobody would suggest that Native American cultures did not make use of symbolically mediated understandings of the world, other more intuitive types of knowledge are shown to be equally important– and to be in no way devalued as they can be in mainstream Western or 'modern' thought. The subtle linking of religious fervour with excessive belief and emotional investment in 'signs' is pointedly contrasted by Bevis' analysis of this and other works with a more grounded sense of sacredness and truth, which are seen to be immanent in the surrounding natural world and the beings that populate it.

Meaning & Context

There is clearly much that these Native American novels have in common with the concerns of the postmodern artists that Baker discusses, but an important difference is by now also apparent. Animals, for the postmodern artist, tend to be more radically 'other' to the human than they are for the Native American sensibility described by Bevis and expressed in the novels of Welch and McNickle. For the Native American, although animals may be objects of great fascination, it seems that animal difference is less absolute, less unfathomable. Animals are other, and yet they are also part of an "immediate brotherhood in a divine familial system."[20] Speculating as to potential reasons for this difference is not difficult. While the Native American cultures described in the novels that Bevis analyses retain strong links to the natural world, postmodern art tends to emerge from the nature-impoverished environment of the Western city. Two prominent factors therefore seem likely to be involved: the differing perspectives emerge from different experiential possibilities, and also from different cultural traditions influenced by these possibilities (as well as other factors). This observation suggests a further point of contrast: attentiveness to nature, for appropriate cultures, seems to provide a mode

[19] Bevis, "Homing In," p.603-604
[20] Ibid., p.604

and a source of orientation to the world other than a discursive/symbolic one.[21] The postmodern mind, lacking both the degree of intimacy with nature suggested by traditional Native American culture, and the sustained contact with the natural world that might allow this to evolve, perhaps feels less comfortable and secure when confronted with the inherent limitations of the types of knowing that characterise the discursively constructed worlds of meaning favoured by modernity. The sense of reassurance and connectedness that Archilde experiences from his awareness of his place in the natural world is perhaps to some extent unavailable – or at least elusive – for a culture that evolves primarily within the bounds of the city. This, perhaps, is one sense in which Jameson's claim about postmodernism is true.

This also might help to account for what appears to be the increasing postmodern fascination with the ontological 'difference' of animal being. This fascination has been made use of or addressed in various ways within different artistic projects, and in some of the cases described by Baker animality even seems to work as a metaphor for the mysterious source of artistic creativity – a place outside of the knowable human consciousness. This suggests a potent clash of meanings around the theme of art and alienation. Perhaps unexpectedly, although the artist may draw on ideas of our animal being as part of an explanation for the urge to create – in itself a fairly embodied and ontologically secure prospect – the postmodern artist's activity or production is sometimes portrayed as the expression of a degraded form of that animal being. Discussing this theme in three postmodern novels, Baker observes that

> In all three novels the implication seems to be that in the 'wild' animal world, movement is embodied, unclumsy, and elegantly aesthetic. Only in the unnatural setting of the postmodern human world is art necessary as a poor approximation to this: an approximation which is echoed in the unfitting, dislocated and anomalous form of the artist's (drugged, imprisoned or monstrous) body.[22]

Although we could pedantically argue against the claim that art is only necessary for the *postmodern* human, this would be to miss the point. What Baker's

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[21] To give an example, Bevis quotes Chief Plenty-coups as follows: "All my life I have tried to learn as the chickadee learns, by listening, – profiting by the mistakes of others, that I might help my people". He comments on this: "The effect is to direct our attention to detail, to small habits – chickadees listen? Profit by mistakes? – to individual differences, to natural nuance." Bevis, "Homing In," p.604

[22] Baker, Postmodern Animal, p.163

discussion suggests is that these novelists are finding ways to describe a sense of loss that attends their meditations on animality. This loss might obviously be thought of as related to the suppression of their own animal nature, but perhaps also as having to do with a sensed desire – expressed as an aesthetic idealisation – for greater meaningful contact with animal others (meaningful, that is, in the sense experienced by Archilde as he recognises the bird's unconcernedness). Such a desire might be explained to some extent by Edward O. Wilson's concept of biophilia.[23] The desire is also a cultural theme that has a long history in romantic thought.

In an influential essay, "Why Look at Animals?", John Berger examines this particular theme, and observes that "the life of a wild animal becomes an ideal, an ideal internalised as a feeling surrounding a repressed desire."[24] Berger's discussion of the theme is intriguing, and perhaps relevant to the discussion here. He describes the difficulty of the Westernised human encountering an animal in an authentic way – particularly in terms of encountering the animal's gaze and experiencing being the object of it. As he claims, "The fact that they can observe us has lost all significance. They are the objects of our ever-extending knowledge... The more we know, the further away they are."[25] He identifies that something vital to the reciprocity of relationship has been lost as the animal has been marginalised by scientific modes of understanding and human progress (or perhaps, in Baker's terms, by our expertise). For Berger the zoo is paradigmatic of this shift in relations since here the animal becomes the object of our gaze, but this is very rarely experienced by us as a two way process. And, crucially, this leads us to experience zoos as unsatisfactory if we visit them in order to encounter the animal, since any real sense of encounter is exactly what is precluded. This has to do with two mutually reinforcing factors: our own culturally instilled assumptions and preconceptions about the essential or categorical difference between humans and animals, and the fact that the animals themselves are structurally prevented from transcending (as interactants) the conditions of their captivity:

> The animals, isolated from each other and without interaction between species, have become utterly dependent upon their keepers. Consequently

[23] See Stephen R. Kellert and Edward O. Wilson (Ed.s), The Biophilia Hypothesis, (1993), Washington: Island Press

[24] John Berger, "Why Look at Animals?" in John Berger, About Looking, (1980), London: Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative, p.15

[25] Ibid., p.14

> most of their responses have been changed. What was central to their interest has been replaced by a passive waiting for a series of arbitrary outside interventions... In all cases the environment is illusory. Nothing surrounds them except their own lethargy or hyperactivity. They have nothing to act upon – except, briefly, supplied food and – very occasionally – a supplied mate. (Hence their perennial actions become marginal actions without an object.) Lastly, their dependence and isolation have so conditioned their responses that they treat any event which takes place around them... as marginal.[26]

So while we may feel on some level that we desire more meaningful encounters with animals, the zoo is founded on – and reinforces – completely incompatible principles. We might note that while a postmodern subject might harbour an intuitive scepticism about the explicit notion of human supremacy, such scepticism is unlikely to be supported by experiences that institutions such as the zoo permit.

These observations are not without support. Paul Shepard, for example, notes that "The animal, refusing eye contact with us in the zoo, seems to convey a final insolence and abandonment in which we, mistaking who has done what, feel ourselves to be forgotten."[27] And Gary Paul Nabhan describes the following incident in which he took his children to a zoo: "While I tried to steer them toward tapirs and gators – uncaged but on the other side of ten-foot-wide moats – they spent their time feeding ground squirrels that had "broke into the zoo" to take advantage of squandered feed."[28] Children, as will become clear in the next chapter, have a particular sensitivity and openness in relating to animals that often tends to be lost with adulthood, although adults find this story far from inexplicable. The appeal for the children of the autonomy and interactive alertness of the squirrels in comparison with the more exotic but unreachable inmates is easy to imagine. Nevertheless Westernised adults occasionally, perhaps, seem to actually prefer that animals stay safely trapped within the roles that have been assigned to them, rather than confronting us too bluntly with that disturbing/fascinating presence that overthrows our comfortable sense of both them and ourselves.

This possibility is taken up very effectively by H. Peter Steeves, who offers a broadly phenomenological analysis of contemporary human-animal relations that

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[26] Ibid., p.24

[27] Paul Shepard, "On Animal Friends" in "Stephen R. Kellert and Edward O. Wilson (Ed.s), The Biophilia Hypothesis, (1993), Washington: Island Press, p.290

[28] Gary Paul Nabhan, Cultures of Habitat: On Nature, Culture and Story, (1997), Washington D.C.: Counterpoint, p.75

seems to concur with Berger in many respects, noting that, "The architecture of the zoo makes the point: we are in control; we look down on you."[29] Although there are obvious practical reasons for the physical control that zoos maintain (without this control, after all, there would be no zoo), for Steeves this control is also about a fear of encountering animals in an authentic way. This is not a fear of any physical danger that animals might present, but rather a fear of the subjective experience of meeting them without the psychological safety net of our practised moral distancing and superiority. As he puts it,

> They [zoos] exist to offer encounters with animal Others without fear, but they cannot succeed. They announce our fear of being-with animals, a fear of our own captivity, the fear of losing a comfortable past notion of ourselves as at large and in charge. They sublimate and repress our fears even as they bear witness to them, brick by brick, bar by bar.[30]

If Steeves is right about this then the paradoxical nature of zoos (and hence by implication also of the attitudes that they embody) is compounded. Not only might zoos be places where people go to encounter animals and fail, as Berger asserts, but they might also be places where they go to encounter animals *without really wanting to encounter them* – certainly not as equals. We should not forget that for Berger the zoo stands metonymically for the central human experience of animals in the West: as he writes, "The zoo to which people go to meet animals, to observe them, to see them, is, in fact, a monument to the impossibility of such encounters."[31] And Steeves clearly agrees, extending his analysis in many directions and finding expressions of a similar fear of authentic encounter to be common in our relations with the animal world. Examples of such expressions are the neutering of pets, which saves many pet 'owners' from confronting their complex and contradictory feelings about animal (and human) carnality, and the commodification of animal foods, which circumvents an impetus to ponder an animal's suffering and its 'sacrifice', as well as our own mortality and (nowadays distant) potential status as prey and a meal for others. What Steeves argues that we fear, and that Western culture works very hard in myriad subtle ways to protect us from, is not the knowledge of these things as information, but rather a more embodied kind of knowledge that is not easily accounted for in

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[29] H. Peter Steeves, "They Say Animals Can Smell Fear" in H. Peter Steeves (Ed.), Animal Others: On Ethics, Ontology and Animal Life, (1999), New York: State University of New York Press, p.141
[30] Ibid., p.141
[31] Berger, "Why Look at Animals?", p.19

words. To give one of his examples, "To know the origin of the hamburger is to be-with the animal and experience the sacrifice."[32] This "being-with" is not reducible to simple observation or physical presence since moral relations require a particular kind of knowledge of, and proximity to, the animal, and an openness that our representations seem constantly work against:

> I do not know what would be required to know a cow or a bear or an egret. I've never shared a life with one. I am constantly struggling to know the squirrels, the ants, the frogs outside my door. It is difficult. They have been cast in so many cultural roles that it is hard to see them differently – hard to forgive the thieving squirrel when he takes the finest seeds from the bird feeder. So many local animals have been killed off; the ones that remain have been conceptually murdered by casting them as pests, vermin, infestations, and thieves.[33]

Having to a great extent created the conditions – often deliberately – for our own failure to authentically encounter and to know animals as autonomous others, we seem able to acknowledge our realisation that we might have lost something important. Although this realisation has a long history, it has been rejuvenated by the contemporary postmodern fascination with animality. Several of the works that Baker discusses attempt to summon something of the reality of an autonomous living animal's presence through means that are more respectful and imaginative than the zoo. Perhaps the most powerful example of this is provided by the artists Olly and Suzi, who produce portraits of wild animals and then encourage the animals, "without manipulation or coercion, to 'interact' with the work and mark it further themselves."[34] Baker's description of this work reveals its importance:

> A work such as *Shark Bite*... exhibited along with the ragged corner ripped off by the shark, spat out and subsequently recovered, attests to the presence or existence of the living animal. The photographic documentation of the event... offers an important but somehow *lesser* – or at least more conventional, more familiar, and thus more easily ignored – record of its existence. It is only the painting as object, as thing, marked by the animal itself, which can indelibly record the immediacy and 'truth' of the encounter.[35]

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[32] Steeves, "They Say Animals Can Smell Fear", p.167
[33] Ibid., p.173
[34] Baker, Postmodern Animal, p.12
[35] Ibid., p.13

It hardly needs saying that the value and interest of such work is at least to *some* extent a function of the unlikelihood of most of us ever encountering wild animals as impressive as this in such an immediate fashion ourselves. But while we might not wish for quite such a close encounter with an animal as potentially dangerous as a shark, the work described here seems to hint at something about animals, encounter and discovery that we intuitively sense is both important and missing from our lives.

The above discussion, then, might be considered to both support and to problematise Bauman's suggestion that, "All in all, postmodernity can be seen as restoring to the world what modernity, presumptuously, had taken away; as a *re-enchantment* of the world that modernity had tried hard to *dis-enchant*."[36] Comparing, for example, the Native American sense of what lies beyond symbol systems with the postmodern sense suggests that while there is much unexpected and valuable common ground, there might be things that we are not currently in a position to re-learn quite so easily. Bevis refers to the interrelationships of the natural world as, for the Native American, "the system which makes meaning possible,"[37] suggesting that the experience of nature and of animal life as the ontological ground of human life seems much more profound – and secure – for this sensibility than it is for the modern or the postmodern subject. The matter could therefore be stated not just as one of knowing that there is more to reality than we can represent, and of finding novel ways of alluding to it, but also as about having an alternative set of experiential reference points that are able to guide understanding. The limited interjections of the animal and the natural into the cultural provided by artists such as Olly and Suzi, while powerful and important, seem not to provide this kind of intuitive experiential orientation.

In this chapter and the one before it I have attempted to explore a few cultural currents that might have a bearing on the ways that people in the contemporary West think about animals and their personal and economic relationships with them – as well as the moral dimensions of these relationships. I have explored some of the positive implications of a postmodern scepticism toward representations, including the idea that it might conceivably encourage people to see past such pervasive and harmful cultural constructions as the idea of human supremacy, potentially putting

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[36] Bauman, quoted in Hans Bertens, The Idea of the Postmodern: A History, (1995), London: Routledge, p.231

[37] Bevis, "Homing In," p.604

them in greater touch with more personal and intuitive senses of what animals and our treatment of them might mean. But I have also identified a problem that might conceivably make this less likely, and that postmodernism is unable to fully address: the difficulty – almost impossibility – of individually *encountering* animals as potential equals in the industrialised Western world. Because of this difficulty, issues to do with the morality of our treatment of animals can sometimes be experienced by Western non-liberationists as trivial, deluded or disconnected from their immediate lives and direct concerns.

But this discussion also suggests something further: that there may be something about the animal presence that makes it peculiarly ironic or paradoxical to 'liberate' the animal by including it within the scope of a rigid or logical moral theory that adheres to the basic principles of modernity. Both the Native American writers discussed here and some of the postmodern artists seemed to feel a desire to assert the 'rights' of the animal – rights that they intuitively extended to how the animal was represented in their work. Respecting the animal meant not subordinating its being to human structures of meaning – something that it is perhaps difficult for any philosophy of animal liberation to do while also having a realistic hope of changing abusive institutions. Since the economic abuse that animals are subjected to in the West is so much more serious than the representational abuse, attempting to give formal moral rights to animals (or some comparable philosophical tactic) in order to protect them might seem to be the only option, regardless of whether it contravenes the more intuitive and elusive rights referred to above. But we should perhaps face the possibility that, although it may be tactically useful, such a solution does involve a compromise of the integrity of our experience. As Rodman understood, it is solutions such as this that begin to emerge when – to steal and to subvert Jameson's phrase – "the modernization process is complete and nature is gone for good."

In the next chapter I will explore some very different theoretical approaches to these issues, but some important themes will nevertheless recur, albeit in slightly different forms.

5

"Someone in There": Selfhood, the Body and the Animal

Ecofeminism and Sympathy for the Animal

Much of the discussion so far will hopefully have served to inform our understanding of a central difficulty facing a progressive philosophy of animal liberation. Our nature, it seems, has need of frameworks of meaning in order to help us orient ourselves in a world that might otherwise overwhelm us. Indeed the need for a cultural frame appears to be as innate to the human organism as a variety of other instincts are to animals that depend less upon culture than we do. However the problematising of representation and the relativising of knowledge that have accompanied the emergence of the postmodern world have made it clear to many that a wholehearted investment in any one framework of meaning might be unwise – that truth is perhaps better seen as perspectival than absolute, and monolithic moral philosophies are likely to be flawed when applied to a world that reveals itself in often incomplete or ambiguous ways. While it is possible to take a pessimistic view of the possibility of moral frameworks to guide action – a view commonly termed nihilism – the history of the development of animal liberation philosophy is perhaps paradigmatic of a realisation that, as Bauman in a sense suggests, while moral absolutes might not exist, moral feelings are much harder to do away with. Indeed the theoretical bases for animal liberation advanced by ecofeminist philosophers in the 1990's appeared to not only critique and to some extent move beyond the early debate between animal liberationists and ecological philosophers but to effectively side-step the nihilistic abyss as well. This was achieved principally by employing two interlinked tactics: becoming self-reflexive about motivation, and building on existing wider elements of social critique. These approaches were a result of the application of feminist thinking to the issue and should not be seen primarily as an attempt to rescue existing animal liberation theory from the problems it was in – particularly those problems caused by the clash with ecological philosophies of

various types that the ecofeminists were keen to criticise.[1] Rather, ecofeminists found that their own experiences and theoretical backgrounds enabled them to see more subtle and embodied ways of framing the issue than had thus far been advanced, and a hugely important set of contributions consequently emerged.

In this chapter I will briefly introduce a few of the important ideas that these theorists put forward. This cannot be an exhaustive account of the topic, and some of the most important thinkers are neglected because more critical discussion of their work will occur later in the thesis. What should be immediately apparent from the ideas that I do discuss here is the extent to which these writers defend a more open, non-prescriptive and empathic approach to ethics that is analogous to that discussed in the previous chapters. Having introduced these ideas I then review at some length the work of Gene Myers, whose study of the psychology of children's relationships with animals adds, I believe, an infinitely valuable depth and clarity to our understanding of many of the issues that have been discussed. His insight into the processes shaping the formation of personality and the role that relations with animals play within these processes both broadly supports the ecofeminist analysis and sheds essential light on what might be at stake for humans in the ethical dimensions of our food relationships.

The work done by such writers as Carol Adams, Marti Kheel, Brian Luke, Josephine Donovan and several others marked a determined departure from the previous directions of thought on animal liberation. What is particularly noteworthy is that these writers were all interested in resisting not only the abuse of animals but also the use, by preceding theorists such as Peter Singer and Tom Regan, of an emotionally detached rationality to produce a kind of theory that is supposedly morally compelling – or that sees, as Luke suggests, "social control as the purpose of ethics."[2] The ecofeminist writers express a desire not only to liberate animals, but to encourage a more general liberation from the influence of a patriarchal social system – and hence of patriarchal forms of reason and representation. The moral duty to, for

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[1] These include a spectrum from the logical approach based on rights and obligations to the Deep Ecological idea that valuing nature could be best encouraged through the development of an expanded conception of self. See particularly Marti Kheel, "From Heroic to Holistic Ethics: The Ecofeminist Challenge" in Greta Gaard (Ed.), Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature, (1993), Philadelphia: Temple University Press, p.248-255

[2] Brian Luke "Taming Ourselves or Going Feral? Toward a Nonpatriarchal Metaethic of Animal Liberation" in Carol J. Adams and Josephine Donovan (Ed.s), Animals and Women: Feminist Theoretical Explorations, (1995), Duke University Press, p. 290

example, adopt a vegetarian diet – expressed by both Regan and Singer – is seen as fatally compromised by its adherence to a concept of morality in which one set of social controls (those instructing us to eat meat) are replaced by another set (telling us not to). For many ecofeminists both sets of controls act to compromise freedom and the theories of Singer and Regan are therefore not compatible with a genuine spirit of liberation.

Clearly a central difference between the ecofeminists and the earlier philosophers is their view of the motivations of the human subject. Regan and Singer make an implicit assumption that people will, in general, act in their own interests (or in ways evolved to forward their own genetic interests where forms of altruism are acknowledged), unless forbidden by moral strictures. This is a view of human psychology that is essentially compatible with the Freudian conflict-driven psychodynamic model, as well as with most traditional moral theory. The purpose of ethical theory from this perspective is to place rationally derived limits on the freedom of behaviour of individuals. As Kheel describes it, "Ethics, according to this world view, comes to replicate the same instrumental mentality that has characterized our interaction with the natural world. It is reduced to the status of a tool, designed to restrain what is perceived as an inherently aggressive will."[3] The ecofeminists tend to feel that this approach does not speak to their own moral experience or accord with feminist theory concerning how women approach moral issues.[4] They prefer to adopt a belief that people are basically good and that this goodness will manifest itself in caring behaviour (or other appropriate forms) unless it has been perverted by such forces as capitalism or patriarchy. This view of human being, it seems, arises partly from arguments within feminism and partly from an introspective analysis of the journey that each individual writer undertook in rejecting the institutional structures of contemporary animal abuse. The rejection of these structures is almost unanimously experienced by these philosophers as a recovery of some authentic part of the self that had previously been suppressed by conformity to social norms. Luke provides a moving illustration of this experience when he discusses an episode in his own pre-vegetarian life in which he cooked a

[3] Marti Kheel, "From Heroic to Holistic," p.250

[4] Carol Gilligan's work on women's moral psychology is a particularly significant influence here. See Carol Gilligan, In a Different Voice, (1982), Cambridge: Harvard University Press

live lobster, despite finding himself physically unable to remain in the same room with the dying animal after having begun this process. As he interprets this episode:

> I now see this as a paradigmatic failure of authentic agency, an incapacity to act: especially the wilful self-deception and blocking of perception, but also the fragmentation of a person who does not recognize his sympathies as a potential basis for action. It is not that I considered sparing the lobster but decided against it, rather, *the possibility never occurred to me*, even though I sweated and agonized over the suffering I expected to inflict.[5]

For Luke, then, animal liberation is synonymous with self-liberation. Coming to realise that he did not have to cook and eat the lobster – or any other form of meat – opened up for him "a broader range of action", leading him to assert that animal liberation "is creative, not restrictive."[6]

This experience with the lobster appears to have affected Luke quite deeply and was presumably an important catalyst to him becoming vegetarian, but clearly many people in the contemporary West never have such direct involvement in the death of food animals. Kheel draws attention to the experiential difficulty of making sympathetic connections when we have no direct interaction with the animal or animals involved in our choices. This dilemma – the dilemma of physical and emotional distance – is one of the central problems for the cultivation of an authentic emotional response in the West. Her proposal to deal with this problem is to emphasise that we need to uncover the details that lie hidden behind the processes that provide us with animal products, and that we must make certain imaginative leaps in order to better inform our instinctive responses. As she says,

> We might, for example, decide, on an abstract plane, that we are justified in eating meat. But if we are dedicated to an ecofeminist praxis, we must put our abstract beliefs to the practical test. We must ask ourselves how we would feel if we were to visit a slaughterhouse or a factory farm. And how would we feel if we were to kill the animal ourselves? Ethics, according to this approach, begins with our own instinctive responses. It occurs in a holistic context in which we know the whole story within which our actions take place.[7]

While not rejecting reason or rationality *per se*, Kheel does emphasise that an approach that ignores emotional responses is flawed. The framing of an issue in

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[5] Luke, "Taming Ourselves?" p.314
[6] Ibid., p.315
[7] Kheel, "From Heroic to Holistic," p.257

conventional logical terms can often implicitly suggest a particular type of resolution as being appropriate, and part of the way this is achieved is by excluding certain information – for example incompatible or paradoxical aspects of the problem. Commenting on the way that purely logical debates over animal liberation are framed, Kheel claims that "In order to engage in holistic ethics, we must also disengage from patriarchal discourse. Patriarchal discourse creates dilemmas that it then invites us to resolve."[8] In resolving moral dilemmas – often de-contextualised and oversimplified to such an extent that they fail to accurately represent real world conditions[9] – purely through logical adjudication of the factors considered rationally important, we fail to take adequate account of our emotional capacity to holistically comprehend and feel what is the best course of action. Kheel therefore believes that the predominance of concepts such as rights (in a formal sense) is symptomatic of the failure of our natural, relational moral instincts, and goes on to claim that, "The founding of ethics on the twin pillars of human reason and human will is an act of violence in its own right. By denigrating instinctive and intuitive knowledge, it severs our ties to the natural world."[10] This is a central point: for Kheel our sympathy for abused animals is a completely *natural* response, and will guide our decision-making if we do not succumb to its suppression and alienation through either logical theorising or our distancing from direct involvement in circumstances that might provoke it.

This offers some hugely important ways of thinking about the personal issues, but Kheel's account does seem to highlight a paradox that lies within the ecofeminist approach: it addresses itself primarily to the individual who is already able to contemplate the ethics of her animal use in an open-minded and emotionally honest way, but it is also painfully aware of how Western culture systematically acts to suppress such a response in the majority of the population through a variety of mechanisms, including the hegemony of rationality. Donovan points out that

> The way we see the world – what in fact we see – is shaped by our understanding of its power relations and by our values. Much of this is taught, passed on through the mechanisms that reproduce cultural ideology,

[8] Ibid., p.259
[9] For more on this point see Deborah Slicer, "Your Daughter or Your Dog?" Hypatia 6(1), (1991)
[10] Kheel, "From Heroic to Holistic," p.255

> such as the schools, the churches, the media. It therefore often reflects uncritically the viewpoint and interests of the dominant powers in society.[11]

A consequence of this, she notes, is that "Caring is an important ethical point of departure, but to be effective it must be informed by an accurate political view."[12] Whether an "accurate" political view is possible is a question that might be worth asking, but the crucial point that Donovan makes is that an adequate response to an ethical dilemma requires at least an awareness of the political and ideological context in which that dilemma arises. Without this awareness the response is incomplete and also potentially impotent. One problem that ecofeminism perhaps struggles to address is how a significant scale of social change might be achieved when such an awareness is systematically suppressed by so many diverse cultural mechanisms. This is a question that I will return to in a later chapter, when I consider the possible relationship between animal liberation and ecopsychology.

There are other important questions that the grounding of sympathy for animals in a natural, instinctive tendency does open up. While the ecofeminist approach certainly acknowledges the importance of some kind of framework to give meaning to emotional responses, there is perhaps insufficient attention given to the likely objection that emotional responses themselves might be to some extent constructed or elaborated by cultural factors. The approach seems to carry an implicit suggestion that it would be possible for *all* humans to experience animal liberation as a positive step, if only the defences of cultural conditioning (and, perhaps, economic necessity) could be broken down. But from some perspectives this might seem to be an intuitive assertion, based on personal experience perhaps, but lacking a sufficient theoretical underpinning. It poses an obvious question: what evidence is there that, for example, Luke's experience while cooking the lobster is meaningful in anything other than a strictly personal sense? This is, or should be, a central question for the ecofeminist accounts that we have touched on, as well as for the understanding that I am working toward here.

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[11] Josephine Donovan, "Attention to Suffering: Sympathy as a Basis for Ethical Treatment of Animals," in Josephine Donovan and Carol J. Adams (Ed.s), Beyond Animal Rights: A Feminist Caring Ethic for the Treatment of Animals, (1996), New York: Continuum, p.162

[12] Ibid., p.160

Gene Myers and Children's Connection with Animals

Perhaps the most compelling set of reasons to believe that a caring attitude toward animals is a natural part of our being as humans has been advanced by Gene Myers. In his book Children and Animals: Social Development and our Connections to Other Species he presents the results of his ethnographic research with a class of nursery school children (of ages between 3 years, 5 months, and 5 years, 4 months at the beginning of the study) over the course of a year. The purpose of this research was to explore the complex relationship that these children had with animals and, in his words, "to find and sort out its core importance, if any there was."[13] This was done primarily by detailed observation of the children's interactions both with animals that were resident in the classroom and with others that were brought in for visits, with supplementary material provided by home journals and taped conversations with the children that were made by their parents.

Myers presents strong support for the idea that children come into the world prepared to respond to animals and to care about their wellbeing, but the value of his work does not end there. Alongside the evidence that he presents, Myers develops an interpretive framework and a cultural critique that is of great philosophical importance, both for our concerns here and for other areas of inquiry. Because the issues that Myers addresses are so central to any understanding of the psychology of animal use, abuse and liberation, I will now present a rather lengthy overview of this work. In the interests of clarity I have split this overview into five sections, but I should point out both that this division is my own rather than Myers' (having been created to address my own particular concerns), and that these sections inevitably overlap and blur into each other. At certain points in my overview it will be useful to provide brief pointers as to the relevance of Myers' concerns; however the substantive task of developing the implications of this work for animal liberation will take place in the chapters to follow. Nevertheless, if I succeed in representing Myers faithfully then it should be possible to comprehend in what follows a holistic paradigm shift in thinking about human-animal relations.

[13] Gene Myers, Children and Animals: Social Development and our Connections to Other Species, (1998), Boulder: Westview Press, p.1

Animate Relatedness and the Emerging Self

The foundation of Myers' thinking about children's relationships with animals is the importance of what he calls "core" or "animate" relatedness. Animate relatedness occurs in the non-linguistic dimensions of interaction, and makes sense to interactants because of an intuitive or instinctive tendency to interpret and respond to the behaviour of others. Myers' observation of children leads him to believe that such relatedness is extremely important to children, particularly as they are still in the early stages of acquiring proficiency with language. And a crucial departure point from previous theory is Myers' insistence that children's relationships with animals, carried on through animate relatedness, are incorporated into their developing sense of self. Although the idea of a relational basis for a sense of self is well established, humans are usually considered to be the only relevant others contributing to its formation. Myers traces this assumption to the exclusive emphasis given by the early social psychologist George Herbert Mead to symbolic interaction through language. For Mead and the tradition that followed him, a person can become self-aware only through the reflected verbal appraisals of others. As Myers describes this perspective, and assesses its implications:

> The "verbal gesture," enables self-reflectiveness, the only means by which the person integrates the various perspectives of others. Thus, selfhood is only attained in the context of a society of other language users, in which animals are not participants.
>
> This perspective reduces the significance of animals to symbolic meanings, assumes linguistic processes override others in which the animal is a more equal participant, and generally regards other humans as the significant environment of the person.[14]

Although the human and the linguistic realms become more important as children develop their skills in these areas, Myers finds that this exclusive emphasis on them as the basis of an emergent sense of selfhood does not accord with his own observations of children in the age range from three and a half to six years old. Rather, he finds that these children develop a sense of self based on interaction with a range of others that can include animals, and that animate relatedness is central to this. Commenting that his own observations are compatible with other recent research with infants, he reasons that "The infant comes prepared to integrate sense

[14] Ibid., p.39

experience as a whole and to respond to invariant features of its world – including especially the patterns of its own bodily experience and the actions of other persons."[15] The self is seen as an integration of such experiences, and may involve relations with animals:

> The self is a uniting concept. It embraces activity, thought, and feeling. And as many psychologists have argued, the self develops from patterns of interactions with others over time – that is from relationships… We feel a sense of relation to other species that seem to have "someone in there"; and we can explain something of who we are in reference to them.[16]

The basis of the sense of self – and the sense of the other – is a phenomenon that does not depend solely on linguistic interaction, but rather also includes the ability of the child to engage in core or animate relatedness, which may take place with animals and which emerges from the child's embodied sense of interaction and of its meaningfulness on a preverbal level.

Myers identifies four core traits that children respond to when developing the sense of self (and other) from animate relatedness with an interactant. These traits are apparent in interaction with both human and non-human animals and are, in his own words,

> *agency* (the animal moves on its own and can do things like bite, crawl, look around, and so on), *coherence* (the animal is easily experienced as an organised whole), *affectivity* (the animal shows emotions – or, better, patterns of excitement, relaxation, and many different qualities of feeling), and *continuity* (with repeated experiences an animal becomes a familiar individual).[17]

The presence of these traits in an interactant enables children to experience a feeling of being in relationship, and it is this that leads to the development of a sense of self and other, as well as an incorporation of the relationship into the child's emerging awareness of self. Myers refers to a wide range of psychological studies indicating that even children of less than a year old readily discriminate animate from inanimate objects, including one claiming to establish that an eight-month-old boy "possessed a preverbal category for animal."[18] Furthermore, children seem to intuitively have an awareness that subjectivity resides in those who display the core

[15] Ibid., p.9
[16] Ibid., p.49
[17] Ibid., p.4
[18] Ibid., p.66

traits[19] and quickly learn to "respond with detailed appropriateness to the differences in various kinds of animal's coherence, affect and agency."[20] For Myers this is a basic and potentially universal human capacity – as he puts it, "children's relations to animals tap processes that lie deep in our own human animality and that bind us not only to each other but also to other species. The preverbal meanings of self-initiated motion, of unitary coherence, of displayed affects, and of sharing a past can transcend species boundaries for us."[21]

Myers also argues that animals have special characteristics that make them particularly interesting to children. One of these (interestingly, in view of Baker's account of the animal's importance to postmodern art) is that they do not make attempts to socialise children or initiate them into correct language use, instead allowing children the freedom to express themselves with or without words, without the need to negotiate meanings and conform to social and grammatical structures.[22] Interaction with an animal tends to take place through the gauging of information carried in forms such as body language, tone of voice, and so on. These "gradient" or "analogical" forms are less rigid in their meanings, as well as in their demands on the child, and responsiveness to them is likely to be more intuitive. In this and other senses, animals do not attempt to impose roles on children and so interaction with them is often less fraught by the need to match expectations and perform according to sets of rules or norms. As Myers notes, this was "humorously suggested by some children's admiration of animal's freedom from "mommies" and from the requirement to go to school."[23] And, referring to Gregory Bateson's description of the double bind, Myers points out that an animal cannot present children with such an alienating situation because "it does not present verbal messages that clash with nonverbal ones."[24] Factors such as these, which contribute to the overall attractiveness of animals for children, suggest that they are likely to be more significant than we might otherwise expect in the formation of self.

Overall, the picture that Myers paints is one in which the subjective immediacy of encounters with animals is much greater for children of the age range that he studies than we tend to experience as adults. Because these children are still

[19] Ibid., p.77
[20] Ibid., p.9
[21] Ibid., p.17
[22] Ibid., p.113-4
[23] Ibid., p.11
[24] Ibid., p.111

in the process of being socialised into language use, their experiences and expectations of encounter are less focussed on linguistic communication than they would be as adults, and they are correspondingly more sensitised to the embodied dimensions of interaction. For them, Myers finds, the interactive possibilities of animals offer "an optimally discrepant environment for development" – an environment that offers "a challenge that just exceeds the person's present skills."[25] As development proceeds however, the dimensions of self established through animate relatedness may persist in some form alongside the more linguistically oriented ones as these increase in importance. The self, for Myers, is an "experiential integration" that emerges from the assimilation of the various relationships that these different types of relatedness enable the child to engage in – although as we will see later, social and cultural factors may lead to the exclusion of some aspects from the sense of self as the child is socialised. This understanding enables Myers to account for the phenomena he observes when the children are confronted with animals, talk about animals, or play at being animals.

This theoretical approach to the formation of self has important resonances with the account of postmodernism that I developed in the previous chapter. If it is essentially correct and the forms of animate relatedness that precede linguistic relatedness cause the individual to highly value interaction with animals, then the problematising of representation – and particularly linguistic representation – that takes place in postmodern culture may have implications for the balancing of the types of relatedness involved in the constitution of the sense of self. Specifically, individuals may become more aware of the dimensions of animate relatedness, and hence of the aspects of their self that value interaction with animals. In broad terms, the postmodern fascination with animals discussed by Baker may be one manifestation of this, and an increased openness to animal liberation may be another. The ecofeminist focus on care, and on sympathetic responses to knowledge of animal abuse, is also likely to make sense primarily to individuals for whom relations with animals – and animate relatedness – are a strong or valued component of self. Children, it seems, fall into this category, and Myers pays great attention to demonstrating that they do indeed tend to care about what happens to animals.

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[25] Ibid., p.78

Is Children's Caring about Animals Socially Constructed?

In Myers' account, children's caring about animals is a primary function of their natural experience of relating to them, and their incorporation of this experience into their sense of self. It is intimately linked to the child's fascination with animals and to the ways that this fascination is expressed. Myers sees these responses as constituting a moral sense that effectively precedes cultural inputs and that is likely to reflect "deeply entrenched or inherent dynamics to psychological development."[26] This contradicts interpretations that have stressed the socially constructed nature of caring responses to animals, and Myers makes a point of undermining such interpretations. Some children seemed to exhibit the tendency toward caring more strongly than others, and there also seemed to be some variation in the ways that it was expressed, but insofar as children are able to respond and relate to animals, he presents a strong argument and some convincing evidence that some basic form of caring about them is universally likely to occur, at least *prior* to its subversion by human social and cultural influences.

Although there are obvious dangers in generalising (or universalising) from isolated incidents, Myers' ethnographic approach appears to be fairly rigorous and at key points he considers alternative interpretations alongside the arguments that he advances for preferring his own. Despite not having the space here to enter into such debates in any depth, it does seem to be worth introducing a few of the many examples that Myers uses to support his contentions, as these are the basis of his own elaboration of his theoretical account. One of the earliest is his description of an incident with the boys Toby and Scott. Toby had been watching a group of birds through the classroom's glass doors, and in conversation with Myers had expressed how "amazed" he was by them. Myers is particularly interested in his subsequent exclamation, which appears not to be directed at anyone other than the birds themselves: "You funny birds… (pause) you funny birds… you funny birds." Myers rejects such potential explanations for this utterance as that it is a "psychosocial projection or an unrealized potential for more rational thought or a partly internalized cultural concept" in favour of the more basic observation that this is an example of "a young child recognizing and captivated by the nearly ineffable

[26] Ibid., p.146

sameness-and-difference of another living animal."[27] What happens next however is more suggestive of the emergent moral sense that will be of interest to us:

> We were close to a cage containing two diamond doves, recently brought to the class by the teacher, Mrs. Ray. Toby heard the doves, pointed to them, and noted they were making sounds. Meanwhile, Scott left and came back with scotch tape around his fingertips; he threatened to "cut" us with his fingers thus armoured. Mrs Ray intervened (just as well, since as ethnographer I avoided sanctioning the children lest they hide behaviours from me). But Scott's tape had given Toby an idea. Toby fetched the tape and put some around the tip of his index finger. He came back to the doves and moved this finger along a small area of the wires of the cage. Then he told me, "I cut the cage open." "Why?" I asked. Toby explained, "I'm pretending." "Why?" Toby: "So they can go out there and be with the other birds." Then, with his taped finger, he "cut" a small square in the glass on the door next to the cage. Satisfied, he left to take up another activity.[28]

From other incidents that are related it becomes clear that Toby has a particular feeling for the autonomy of animals, and their desire for free movement. He is seen to regularly protest about animals being caged or otherwise restrained, or to note their desires for freedom. For example, when a snake is brought in for a visit, "Toby asked that the snake be let go, saying, "Why don't you let it just crawl around?""[29] With the turtle he offers a similar complaint: "Toby: Just let him go – just let him go where he wants."[30] And again with the monkey:

> "Mindy and Rosa are on the floor looking in. Toby arrives: "Look [he's] trying to get out of his cage. He's trying to get out of his cage. Yikes."... Ms. Dean: "Do you think he's happy in his cage right now?" Toby: "No, see he's trying to get out." Mr. Dean: "You think he wants to get out?" Toby: "Cause look-it he's sticking his claws out."[31]

Other children also showed concern for the freedom to move of various animals. Agency exhibited by an other is one of the core traits that Myers identifies as having the potential to enable a child to feel herself to be in relationship. As he further elaborates its implications, for an animal to have agency, "is not only perceptually compelling. For children, it also conveys subjectivity – a sense of the animal as possessing its own interior life and goals. In response, children are inclined to

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[27] Ibid., p.3
[28] Ibid., p.2-3
[29] Ibid., p.54
[30] Ibid., p.47
[31] Ibid., p.54

respect these goals, in effect caring about the animal's own well-being."[32] So for Myers, children's intuitive awareness of the animal's subjectivity leads fairly naturally to a type of caring response that respects the animal's desires. Being caged or restrained compromises agency, and it seems that Toby and the others respond to this, interpreting the animal's animate actions as indicating a desire for freedom – and tending in many cases to support this desire (although note here Toby's "Yikes," indicating a certain fear of the monkey's potential agency if uninhibited).

Myers' description of children's caring as being developmentally independent of cultural influences makes a lot of sense here. The caging and restraint of animals is generally culturally accepted in the West, particularly in these classroom situations, and the apparent fact that the protests by Toby and others for the freedom of certain animals were made against this adult consensus seems to suggest that their response was not a result of construction by cultural forces. Myers uses such responses to knowledge of animals suffering more severe harms to offer a critique of the social constructionist perspective, particularly as it was used by Keith Tester in his notorious assessment of the "animal rights" movement. Tester's insistence that "animal rights" were "invented" and were a socially constructed "fetish" can clearly be justified to the extent that the concept of rights (including human rights, of course) is itself socially constructed and has no analogue in the natural world.[33] But Tester went further than this, and Myers very reasonably takes issue with his claim that "animals are only made the site of *moral worries* to the extent that they are useful in establishing social definitions of the properly human" (emphasis added).[34] Tester's location of the source of moral concern for animals purely in discursive processes is incompatible with Myers' own observation that "The relations of language, cultural messages, feelings in the body, and individual subjectivity in development are complex."[35] The account that Myers develops, partly in answer to Tester, is of huge importance to our own concerns.

Evidence is presented that the children are aware of cultural conflicts over the treatment of animals, and on one occasion a child even offers the view that an

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[32] Ibid., p.48
[33] It might be noted that the natural world also has no analogue of the Western meat industry.
[34] Keith Tester, Animals and Society: The Humanity of Animal Rights, (1991), New York: Routledge, p.195 quoted in Myers, Children and Animals, p.146
[35] Myers, Children and Animals, p.146

animal "has his own rights."[36] But Myers points out that "nursery schools are pervaded by *conflicting* moral messages about animals," and therefore that it is unlikely that children's caring responses are so simply constructed. Indeed, some of the most fascinating incidents involve the children's socialisation into an appreciation of the value of ecological processes, and their own affective responses to this. The children occasionally feed "bugs" (which do not exhibit the core trait of affectivity) to the classroom's resident toad and the "motif of ecosystem as impersonal economy"[37] was introduced on several occasions. Some interesting responses from the children were apparent on occasion, however. One example occurs when a deer hunter visits the class to discuss his activity. He tells the children that he hunts to obtain food and then, as Myers relates the incident, "He asks the kids, "Do you eat meat? Do you eat hamburgers?" Reuben nods, smiles open-mouthed and starts screaming quietly and crawls excitedly off the rug. The man adds that meat comes from cows and chickens."[38]

Reuben's response occurs despite both the hunter and the teacher actively constructing hunting and meat eating in a positive light. It appears that in this case the issue of where meat comes from provokes an unpleasant response despite their efforts. Further striking evidence that adults constructing events in a particular way often made less of an impression than children's own responses was provided by a visit from a turtle and its keeper, Mr Lloyd, and by conversations children had with their parents subsequent to this. The crucial issue here was the fate of many baby turtles in the wild. As Myers recounts it:

> Mr. Lloyd: "They lay [their eggs] in the sand and then they forget about them." Billy: "Why?" Mr. Lloyd: "They never – they never see their babies. That's the way reptiles are. Turtles are reptiles and they do not take care of their babies." Billy: "Do the babies die?" Mr Lloyd: "Some – a lot of the babies die. Because so many things eat them and they've nobody to take care of them. See when you're born, your mommy and daddy take care of you. A little turtle doesn't have anybody. So the turtle gets eaten by other animals and that's important too because if all the baby turtles that hatched out of eggs lived, we'd have far too many baby turtles, so some of them have to die to feed other animals and that's part of what we call the food

[36] Ibid., p.147. Although note that the use of the word rights may have been informal and non-specific or intuitive here, as it was when deployed by both the postmodern photographer and the critic of Native American literature encountered in the previous chapter.
[37] Ibid., p.148
[38] Ibid., p.148

chain. Everybody in the wild kind of eats everybody else. But a few of them survive.[39]

Both Mr Lloyd and the teacher are then shown working together to reassure the children that the deaths of the baby turtles are part of nature's plan and that there is no need for the children to be concerned (as Mrs Ray puts it, attempting to take the children along with her, "... some of them are *meant* to be food for other animals. Wow, that's wonderful to know."[40]) But the children seem to struggle emotionally with this issue, and several children reported the fate of the turtles to their parents – about which Myers comments, "Only issues such as this were so common in these conversations."[41] The tape recordings of conversations between the child Joe and his mother were particularly revealing. Myers reports that in the initial one, in which Joe first reports the predation of the baby turtles, his intonation was "a blend of curiosity and dismay". Nevertheless, he seems to have basically accepted the explanations given. A later discussion about the same topic, however, seems particularly significant to Myers and is worth reproducing at length:

Mother: You told me that some of the babies, that there were some other babies but they died?
Joe: Don't – I don't want to talk, about that.
Mother: You don't want to talk about it? ... How come?
Joe: 'Cause it makes me sad.
Mother: *Oh*, the other day I asked you if it makes you sad, and you said "No." Do you remember what you said? I said, "Why wasn't it sad?" – Remember what you said?
Joe: Yeah, but now it *is* sad.
Mother: Now it is sad. Yeah, I can understand why it's sad.
Joe: Don't – don't talk about it.
Mother: Well, I just wanted to ask you not about it being sad, but when you *weren't* sad about it, you told me why you weren't sad. You said it wasn't sad because, why? Do you remember that? You taught me something... I remember you said, "It isn't sad because it's part of life." I thought that was interesting... that you said that.
Joe: Well, now it is, it *is* sad.
Mother: I see. Okay, well, let's not talk about it then.[42]

It is clear here that Joe is experiencing feelings that are totally incompatible with the repeated attempts of the adults concerned to socially construct the predation of the

[39] Ibid., p.149
[40] Ibid., p.149
[41] Ibid., p.149
[42] Ibid., p.150

turtles in an emotionally neutral, or even positive, way. Their use of persuasive representations to attempt to console him and to align him with the consensus adult view seems not to have worked. Myers is therefore almost certainly correct to conclude that Joe's feelings here are predominantly independent of social processes – or at least of discursive and exclusively human ones. As he comments, "The teacher's reconstrual of the animal's deaths had at first been repeated by Joe, but it appears now that it only superficially buffered the sense of loss symbolized by the baby turtle's deaths. In this second talk, Joe was overwhelmed and clearly could not mitigate his feelings with the teacher's words."[43]

Further Explorations of Children's Caring Response to Animals

Myers' own theoretical framework for understanding this caring attitude toward animals is potentially immensely potent for advancing our understanding of the variety of human-animal relationships across cultural contexts. It is based upon the importance of animate relating and children's apparently innate tendency to imitate animals and to enjoy "animal pretend play," in which they translate an animal's body into their own and temporarily take on an animal identity. This type of play is seen by Myers as being important to the form taken by the child's emerging sense of human identity and to the ways that the child understands the relationship between humanity and animality. Specifically, animate relatedness and pretend play as animals is argued to foster and develop an intuitive sense of continuity between human and animal embodiment that culture – or Western culture – subsequently disrupts. The child's caring about animals is elaborated by these embodied experiences of continuity and relatedness. In this section I will explore Myers' account of how this works. It is important to point out, however, that Myers' theory emerges from his close observation of children, and that it makes the most sense in the context of his descriptions of their behaviour. I will reproduce some examples here, but will be unable to give illustrations of every point.

We have already seen how animate relating is theorised by Myers as central to the development in children of an awareness of self and other. Interacting enables children to sense their own individual organismic coherence, and that of their partner in interacting; their separateness is established, but with repeated meetings so is a

[43] Ibid., p.150

feeling of connection, in which the sense of self evolves to encompass an integrated sense of the relationship. This in itself motivates children to care about animals, because "the child's sense of self is constituted among the available interspecies community,"[44] and because the disruption of this community is experienced by the self as a loss. But children's play at *being* animals is a way in which the sense of self is further deepened and enhanced through experiencing what it might be like to exist in an alternative embodiment. This increases the tendency toward caring what happens to other creatures.

In Myers' observations it is clear that imitation is an important form of play for the children that he studies: one girl's parents even claim that she takes on the identity of a cat "almost every day. If not a cat she pretends different animals."[45] And, surveying evidence that it takes place in other cultures he speculates that although the forms taken might vary, "Translating the shape of the animal's body into one's own – the key continuity – may be a broadly shared characteristic of childhood."[46] The argument that this tendency is universal also seems strengthened by citations establishing that "The work on early imitation shows that even newborn infants recognize some equivalences between externally perceived behaviour – that is, perceived body movements – and literally internal proprioceptive states."[47] The idea that children have an innate tendency to imitate others and to understand the bodily form of those others in relation to their own appears reasonably well supported.

The analysis of animal pretend play is an inherent part of Myers' critique of traditional theories of the development of the self, with their exclusive orientation to linguistic self-awareness. He points out that imitation of animals can inform the sense of self, and can communicate in ways that are essentially unavailable through linguistic means. A good example is given in the following transcript of a videotaped session:

> Ivy shows what it would be like to be a dog. Mr. Grier, the dog owner: "And what would you use to get [the ball]? … Why wouldn't you use your hand?"

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[44] Ibid., p.84
[45] Ibid., p.133
[46] Ibid., p.141
[47] A. Meltzoff & A. Gopnik, "The role of imitation in understanding persons and developing a theory of mind" in S. Baron-Cohen, H. Tager-Flusberg, & D. Cohen (Ed.s) Understanding Other Minds: Perspectives from Autism, (1993), New York: Oxford University Press, p.339, Quoted in Myers, Children & Animals, p.137

> ... Ivy: "Because you can't hold – dogs can't hold it up." Ivy holds both arms extended to the floor in front of her, partially lifting her straightened right arm three times.[48]

Myers points out that Ivy's verbal communication was much less effective at getting across her meaning than her translation of the dog's body into her own and her enactment of the dog's physical difference. By doing this, however, she not only got her point over with a minimum of fuss, she also illuminated for herself some of the subtle similarities and differences between her own embodiment and that of the dog, including some of the possibilities each offered. Such acts of imitation are considered likely to deepen a child's sense of self and of human identity. According to Myers there are two complementary ways that this takes place: "The child sees himself or herself as being like the animal and thus feels more *connected* to it; at the same time, accommodation and differentiation are required, and so the sense of what it means to be human and not the other species is *clarified*."[49]

Myers finds that children make attempts to preserve and to represent the animal's otherness not just by imitating its embodiment, but also through avoiding talking (as much as possible, except where necessary to frame the play for others) and by reproducing the animal's orientation to social forms, space and time. As an example, he points out that for humans "tables are not just physical objects; certain rules surround their use", but when a child is imitating an animal in pretend play "space is correlated to the "animal's" own shape."[50] He is also careful to point out that the evidence from his observations suggests that the essence of pretending is not just to *look like* the particular animal being imitated but, crucially, also to take on its inner "feel."[51] Imitation in pretend play therefore appears to involve an openness to the other that is very close to what we would normally refer to as empathy, and Myers' account therefore suggests an important link between imitation and caring about harm. As he says of empathy, "Many definitions of it exist, but most entail temporarily taking the other into ourselves and then imaginatively comparing the internalized other's feelings with our own."[52] The way in which imitation could lead to this is perhaps suggested most clearly by an incident that occurs in a discussion

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[48] Myers, Children and Animals, p.14
[49] Ibid., p.120
[50] Ibid., p.125
[51] Ibid., p.119 and p.130
[52] Ibid., p.90

about turtles and the safety that their shells might afford them. In the course of this discussion Billy demonstrates, as best he can with his very different embodiment, how a turtle might protect itself from a shark by drawing itself into its shell, and then subsequently re-emerging when the danger had passed. Myers' interpretation of this incident conveys a fairly convincing sense of what this might mean to the child:

> For Billy, the turtle symbolizes not only safety and coherence but also the whole affective experience of surviving an imagined life-threatening situation. Notably, Billy's symbolization took the embodied form first of a tightly closed-off protective posture and then of an expansive, mobile, and agentic one – conveying affective qualities that would be hard to represent verbally. Imitation and incorporating the animal's well-being were united in this symbolic activity.[53]

It is perhaps worth noting that the sense in which Myers here uses the concept of symbolism recalls the distinction made in the previous chapter between the "modern" use of animal symbolism and what animals mean to the Native American writers studied by William Bevis. In several incidents that Myers relates, animals are symbolic or meaningful to children in an intuitive, personal sense that is immanent in the child's engagement with them, and this is very close to the theme that Bevis' identifies in the Native American fiction that he examines. For example, just as the boy Archilde in McNickle's novel, "felt himself fly with the bird," so we also seem here to feel Billy swim with the turtle. What the animal "symbolises" in each case derives from the mimetic sense of its presence or reality that the child experiences, and the feelings associated with this. It is therefore a very empathic, embodied and experiential sense of symbolism.

The precise processes that underlie the child's apparent enthusiasm and ability to do this are clearly complex and, of course, not easily available to linguistic or strictly rational interpretation. Throughout his book Myers makes various observations that appear to support an interpretation of imitation as a correlate of an affective continuity between self and other that may be experienced and expressed in a variety of ways – some more conscious and deliberate than others. For example, he frequently notes a phenomenon that he refers to as the transmission of "vitality affects" or as "mood contagion." Vitality affects are patterns of arousal displayed

[53] Ibid., p.57

over time, and can be "perceived across differing sense modes and situations."[54] Vitality affects are particularly significant between humans and animals because animals tend not to exchange information through facial expressions in quite the ways that humans are accustomed to expect with each other. Children are able to read vitality affects in animals, but Myers is particularly interested in the way that they often appear to pick up and mirror the affect displayed by an animal in interaction – although unlike in imitation they may do so in ways that differ from those displayed by the animal. Myers gives the following example of children playing 'fetch' with a clearly excited dog:

> The children's response showed recognition of the mood – they were excited. For all, this mood waxed and waned with each episode of ball throwing and fetching. The children's excitement did not just come from wanting to throw the ball, which could be interpreted as the governing cultural frame of the interaction. That a deeper level of vitality affect was operating was shown in the variety of responses showing a similar affect. Two girls scrambled around and clung to each other, as if afraid. But they were smiling and verbally denied they were really scared. Their arousal contours followed the dog's excitement, illustrating how vitality affects can be expressed or experienced in a variety of concrete actions.[55]

Similarly, when ferrets visit the class and are made extremely passive by being well fed and held in a particular way, "the session ended up being the calmest of all the animal visits."[56]

Myers links this phenomenon to the sharing of vitality affects between a very young child and mother, which plays an important role in bonding. "For example," he notes, "if the infant hits something playfully on the floor, the mother might make a sound like "kaaaa-*bam*," analogically reproducing in the verbal mode the arousal contours of the suspenseful preparatory swing and then the hit."[57] This "cross-modal" mirroring serves an important developmental function by confirming that the mother is able to comprehend and share the child's subjective feeling and experience to some extent – which is important to the child for obvious reasons. But the phenomenon of the transmission of vitality affects also appears to enable the child to share in the affective state of an animal. The ability to engage in shared processes such as these appears to be fairly fundamental for humans and Myers argues that the

[54] Ibid., p.72
[55] Ibid., p.72
[56] Ibid., p.73
[57] Ibid., p.90-1

conscious imitation of animals in pretend play is both a manifestation of this ability and a way in which it enables the child's knowledge and awareness of the animal to be strengthened and refined.

The overall cause *and* effect of imitation then, despite the fact that it implies differentiation of the self from the animal, is the growth in the child of a feeling of connection to animals through a "deep animate commonality." The child knows that it is different, but this is a difference within experienced continuity rather than a categorical difference. The experienced feeling of continuity and connection enhances the motivation to care about harm occurring to animals, particularly where knowledge is possessed about specific harms occurring that might be experienced vicariously through the types of process described above. But Myers suggests that as children grow and are socialised, they are exposed to influences that encourage the formation of a different type of self. This process undermines the tendency of the child to experience connection and to extend care to animals. We will now examine his account of this process.

Human Identity and the Animal Other

Myers draws a distinction between two different types of human identity or senses of self in relation to animals. The first is the type described above: a type fostered by relating to animals on an animate level and imitating them in pretend play; a self that is experienced as essentially similar to the animal, although differing in some important specifics. The second is a type that is experienced as categorically separate from animals and that experiences little sense of continuity or connection with the animal world. The latter type, he believes, is the one that is overwhelmingly experienced by adults in Western culture. This appears to be no accident.

Myers identifies what he calls a "fault line"[58] running through the way that Western culture deals with distinctions between both humanity and animality, and the mind and the body. An artificial polarisation is embedded in our ways of thinking about each of these closely inter-related distinctions. In this, as in other aspects, Myers' account is reminiscent of ideas favoured by ecofeminism: in this case the ecofeminist analysis of how dualistic thinking structures Western perceptions of

[58] Ibid., p.161-2

hierarchy.[59] Myers provides a very useful account of some ways in which these distinctions are passed on to children and how this affects the development of the sense of self and the child's relations with animals.

The child's early sense of self – a self in connection with animals – is seen to be under various socialisation pressures that influence it toward the adoption of a categorically human identity. Language is identified as playing a significant role in this. Since language depends upon categorisation, its adoption has important implications for experience. In Myers' words: "Language makes categorical distinctions across what are continua on the preverbal level. These distinctions can be treated as set in reality, making pretend, metaphorical comparison and linguistic expression of similarity more difficult."[60]

But language is also itself a faculty that is commonly considered to definitively set humans apart from animals – a marker of an important boundary. Myers shows adults identifying several such ideologically loaded distinctions to the class – as well as children seeming to contest the categorical boundary that these differences apparently erect. It is worth reproducing a couple of the amusing exchanges that Myers notes on the topic of language and the human-animal boundary. The first shows an adult placing strong emphasis on language as a uniquely human ability:

> Drew: "Why is the turtle talk[ing] in the microphone?!" Mr. Lloyd: "Do turtles talk?" Kids: "No." Drew: "What if it just made noise in the mike?" Mr Lloyd, interrupting: "No, turtles don't talk."[61]

Although he cautions against overinterpreting such humorous incidents, Myers also notes an occasion on which Joe "contested this philosophically critical categorical boundary… even against adult incredulity". As can be seen in what follows, Joe places considerable weight on monkeys being "related" to humans:

> Ms. Dean: "Can he understand English?" Chris and Dawn answer: "No." Joe: "Yes." Ms. Dean: "Yes?"… He repeats this, nodding for emphasis to Chris and Mrs Ray behind him. Ms. Dean: "Do you think he can hear what we're saying and understand exactly what we're saying?"… Joe nods: "Uh-huh, because he's *related* to us." Ms. Dean: "Because he's related to us? So

[59] There are many accounts of this; see particularly Val Plumwood, Feminism and the Mastery of Nature, (1990), London: Routledge
[60] Myers, Children and Animals, p.159-60
[61] Ibid., p.161

> he would automatically know English – but how about Japanese people? Would he understand what Japanese people say?" Joe: "Nooo!" Chris: "Only Japanese monkeys." Mr. Dean: "You mean he'd have to be a Japanese monkey?" Chris nods. Ms. Dean: "He'd have to be a Japanese monkey to understand Japanese people?" Joe: "Uh huh." Chris: "Yes."[62]

So although we could observe here that the adults are correct and Joe is basically incorrect in what he says, this passage also shows a conflict between the adult concern with drawing a categorical distinction between human and monkey, and Joe's insistence on reasoning from his awareness of continuity. The fact that the adults seem so keen to instruct the children in these differences should not be overlooked. The construction of the human-animal distinction in categorical terms – perhaps even as an opposition – makes it increasingly hard for children to identify with animals as they get older, and promotes the exclusion of the previously experienced continuity with them from the sense of self.

This effect is strengthened by the way that language also facilitates evaluations of behaviour as good or bad. To this end, "animals are appropriated as symbolic markers of desirable and undesirable."[63] In practice, although certain animal traits might be praised, animals in general tend to be used to show children how not to behave. Myers provides demonstrations of the need to train animals in order for them to share human social spaces being used to subtly communicate messages to children about their own socialisation. In one incident recounted, the presence of the monkey in the classroom was used by an adult to specifically draw parallels between the monkey's unruliness and that of a child. And, notes Myers, "This analogy was exhibited in practice. On the one hand, children witnessed adults controlling animal's behaviours, physically or by command; on the other, children were the recipients of adult dictate."[64] Although this might seem to place children and animals on an equal footing, effectively it provides an incentive to accept socialisation, since children do not want to be subject to negative evaluations from adults, and may even align themselves with the adult view through their own experiences of unsocialised others. Myers provides the following illustration:

> Children of course grasp that growing up involves control over bodily functions, and they draw parallels between maturing humans and animals.

[62] Ibid., p.161
[63] Ibid., p.162
[64] Ibid., p.163

> For example, when the turtle's and toad's ways of urinating spontaneously were discussed, Dawn was reminded of how her baby brother sprinkled on her. Thus, children again are in alliance with adults over the issue of their own socialization. After all, they want to grow up, and be on the human side of the boundary, if a boundary there must be.[65]

Myers argues, then, that children learn to distance themselves from animals and to adopt a human identity and sense of self that increasingly excludes the previously experienced sense of connection and continuity through two mutually reinforcing types of process. The first is the setting of a categorical boundary between human and animal, and the second is the negative evaluation of the animal and animal behaviour relative to the human. Although there are practical reasons why children are taught along these lines, this can also be seen to involve some loss of the integrity of the developing person. "The categorical self," Myers notes, "is an experiential integration like the other senses of self, but it is based on an abstraction from the full set of features of the self."[66] And, crucially, the adoption of a categorically human identity appears not to be a morally neutral event. It has a complex inter-relationship with the child's emergent moral sense, which has thus far been naturally evolving in concert with the ability to identify with animals and to care about their welfare. This will be the subject of the final section of this rather lengthy overview of Myers' account.

Moral Development and the Sense of Self

If a child's innate tendency toward animate relatedness, imitation, and the development of a sense of self that incorporates relationships with animals (and experiences continuity and connection with them) leads that child to care about harm occurring to animals, then the creation of a categorically human self seems to work against this effect. But this may not be a simple causal relationship. Myers' account also suggests that an awareness of harm occurring to animals – perhaps specifically as a result of the child's own eating of meat – may constitute a further impetus toward the adoption of an exclusively human sense of self.

The children in the study were at such an age that they were beginning to become aware of the issue of where meat comes from. Some children were aware of

[65] Ibid., p.165
[66] Ibid., p.166

the existence of vegetarians, but there appears to have been no significant social influence on the children that would push them in this direction:

> Some children knew such people, such as Laura's uncle. But two-thirds of the parents said meat-eating had not been raised as an issue or that it had but there was no disagreement. They conveyed acceptance of meat and justified the choice with nutritional and ecological reasons. None of the parents actively advocated vegetarianism to their children, though several did say they would allow the children to make their own choice when older.[67]

Nevertheless, some children had voiced concerns about the matter:

> According to the parent surveys, two children did not like meat because of how it tastes. Four children had asked for information and three of these were hesitant to eat meat once they had learned where it came from: Mindy, Yasmin, and Joe. Mindy said, "Yuck, I don't want to eat cow meat anymore." Joe once told his mother he did not like to eat dead animals. Thus, despite the parental acceptance of meat eating there was some resistance to it, especially when the origin of the meat was clear. One reason may be disgust, but another is probably the children's recognition that killing animals violates the valued animate properties of the other.[68]

The children's dawning awareness that animals are killed so that they can eat them appears likely to involve some interesting psychological processes. For Myers, children's concern for animals "reveals an inherent and self organizing dynamic of morality. It does so more vividly than does their moral development toward other humans, because in the case of animals the culture encourages a discontinuity – or, at best, a complexity that is hard to navigate with moral sensibilities intact."[69] In fact, his account suggests that in some cases children might *not* navigate their culture's confused and contradictory attitude to animals in such a satisfactory way. He considers the following discussion between three of the girls in the group:

> Cassia, Ivy, Adrienne discuss meat eating at the game table. Cassia: "Do you know people eat animals?" Ivy: "And animals eat people." Cassia: "And animals eat animals." Adrienne: "*You* eat animals!"[70]

About this exchange Myers offers the following comments:

> The children felt conflicts over eating meat; although this may be unavoidable, it may also signal the loss of continuity of concern. The

[67] Ibid., p.148-9
[68] Ibid., p.153
[69] Ibid., p.154
[70] Ibid., p.153

> abstract quality of these three girls' talk should not be missed; the issue feels somewhat vague. Indeed, they have no contact with the reality discussed. The nursery school culture helps keep it out of the way; for example, children's books idealize farm life.[71]

Here, then, "the loss of continuity of concern" is directly linked to the conflicts over meat. Myers continues by discussing various analyses of how adults use a range of distancing mechanisms to reduce the psychological dissonance caused by knowledge of harm to animals, and points out that "What the children have not acquired – and are in the course of acquiring – are these distancing mechanisms."[72] Later on these same three girls are discussed further when he reports on his findings from interviews with the children. He notes differences from the rest of the group: these girls tended generally not to be keen to identify with various animals, and he observes that "they showed markedly less self-other continuity with the animals than did the other children."[73] A range of factors may have influenced this. These were three of the four oldest girls in the class, which perhaps implies the acquisition of a more developed sense of a categorically human identity. Myers also suggests that gender socialisation may make girls quicker to develop this type of self-concept, since behaviours likely to be associated with being "animal-like" are perhaps more censured in girls than boys.[74] He also notes that, "These were the three we saw earlier intently discussing meat eating; perhaps some moral distancing and superiority is working as a defence against this discomfort."[75]

This last possibility is one that troubles Myers. Throughout his book he shows that in specific instances involving direct interaction with animals, adults intuitively nurture children's concern for them. As he puts it, "they are responding as they feel they must to respect and support the morality implicit in the sense of connection the children feel to the animals involved."[76] It is problematic, therefore, that this sense of connection is not respected or supported in other ways. The "complexity" communicated to children through our culture's varied symbolic uses of the animal, as well as the specific animal use practices that these children are

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[71] Ibid., p.153
[72] Ibid., p.153
[73] Ibid., p.166
[74] Ibid., p.166. Myers lists such behaviours as "aggressiveness, rough-and-tumble, dirtiness, the "grotesque" body, and so on."
[75] Ibid., p.166
[76] Ibid., p.152

forming a nascent awareness of, encourage a distancing that undermines this sense of connection and its implicit morality.

There are perhaps two concerns that Myers has: the psychological impact on children, and the possible environmental implications of the processes that he describes occurring within the self. These two concerns are closely interlinked, although some tension is nevertheless apparent between them. Taking the first of these:

> Children need acknowledgement and support of their feelings about harm to animals. A sense of connection creates psychological and spiritual challenges in dealing with loss and violence to those to whom one is connected – and those one opposes. If society were to really grasp what is at stake in child development, we might well reduce exploitation of animals to a minimum dictated by a stricter sense of necessity.[77]

Although Myers' primary lines of argument are therefore invaluable in beginning to appreciate the destructive effects of Western animal abuse on human wellbeing, it is necessary to note that he integrates his observations into a worldview that is above all ecological. He makes this explicit by following the above words with a caution to the effect that "the aim of development cannot be the elimination of all conflicted relations and feelings. Vulnerability, loss, the taking of life are constants. Rather, the aim is continuity of openness and inclusion."[78] He makes little attempt to align himself with a specific philosophical ethical position, but he pointedly makes clear that for him, caring about animals sometimes necessitates prioritising the protection of species over individuals.[79] So, although the account that he develops shows children having negative emotions about the deaths of animals in ecological processes, Myers is careful to make sure that his essentially psychological theory cannot be used to provide a rationale for the philosophical elevation of individual animal welfare concerns over those of an ecological community. Such distinctions are not central to the importance of the work, but are perhaps considered necessary by him, in view of the philosophical clash, to qualify the strong resonance between his account and an animal liberationist perspective.

Nevertheless, Myers is intrigued by the possibility that resistance to our contemporary slide towards environmental crisis will be aided by the preservation

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[77] Ibid., p.171
[78] Ibid., p.171
[79] Ibid., p.171

into adulthood of a sense of self that values greater connection with animals. He acknowledges that this is perhaps speculative, but it seems fairly clear that this is the primary political context in which he wishes his work to be perceived. Discussing the emergence of a categorically human self in the girls Cassia, Ivy and Adrienne, he notes that "Probably no deficit in normal development would be detected with these girls... But this does not negate the possibility of unrecognized (or theoretically unformulated) developmental potentials."[80] For Myers these developmental potentials are not just vague possibilities though – they are the origins from which his culture has seemingly estranged itself through the apparent necessity to defend psychologically against the knowledge of what it does to other creatures.

To conclude, then, the account that he develops overwhelmingly seems to support the arguments of many ecofeminist animal liberationists – who also do not attempt to prioritise animals over ecosystems. It particularly illuminates Luke's experience with the lobster and the suggestion that by ending his consumption of meat he was able to liberate an authentic part of his self. By demonstrating some of the subtle and pervasive ways in which Western culture is able to construct experience in order to distance humans from their natural sense of connection with other animals, as well as from their feelings about inflicting harm on them, Myers also shows how a sense of self that is able to choose perspectives and actions that preserve the integrity of the self is also often a casualty of that culture. Rejecting these constructions can be experienced as isolating and as difficult to explain in terms acceptable to those who have consented to them, but also as a valuable step to take. Luke's "creative" decision to reject the elements of his socialisation that had conspired to make him think that boiling a lobster alive was normal behaviour, are perhaps very subtly reflected in the child Joe's refusal to talk about the deaths of the baby turtles. Joe may simply have wished to avoid a painful topic of conversation; he may also have understood that in this instance the forces of adult representation were not going to allow his sadness a positive valuation – and that preserving it was important.

[80] Ibid., p.167

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Culture and Innateness in the Ethics of Interaction

The Human-Animal Boundary and Human Nature

In this chapter I would like to expand upon the account that I have presented of Myers' theory and to relate it to other relevant concerns. Some of the material I consider here will serve to support my interpretation of what Myers says, and some will hopefully widen his analysis and clarify its relevance to our goal of understanding animal liberation in greater depth. I hope to add support to Myers' appreciation of the developmental importance of the connection that children feel with animals, and particularly of the problematic nature of its cultural suppression as they mature. The implications of this view for our understanding of the moral dimensions of our relationships with animals (both personal and economic) will also be considered. Indeed I will begin by commenting briefly on the implications of Myer's account for Bauman's failure to specifically include relations with animals under the scope of his postmodern ethical theory.

Bauman draws heavily on the French philosopher Emmanual Levinas, who conceives of a moral stance as one of "being for the Other," and sees this as arising as a response to the "face" of the Other.[1] Such references to the face throw up interesting questions when considered in the current context. Myers points out that the mode of children's responsiveness to animals might differ from their responsiveness to humans because many animals do not use facial expressions to exchange information in quite the same ways that humans do. It probably is not difficult to conceive of instances in which the facial expressions of animals do tend to have an effect upon us that calls forth some analogue of the caring response: think, perhaps, of fluffy kittens or koala bears. It would of course be arguable that such responses are contingent on coincidental resemblances to human facial cues

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[1] See Zygmunt Bauman, Postmodern Ethics, (1993), Oxford, Blackwell, p.72-3. The question of anthropocentrism in relation to Levinas' work is considered in Matthew Calarco, "Deconstruction is not Vegetarianism: Humanism, Subjectivity, and Animal Ethics", *Continental Philosophy Review*, 37(2), (2005)

that we are more practised in recognising, or perhaps to similarities with human infants that call forth an instinctive response. But many animals *do* communicate affective characteristics fairly effectively to humans – this seems to be an important basis for the preference for certain species as pets. And as Myers shows, children instinctively respond to facial and bodily cues from animals with a fascination that is surely of the same type as our adult responsiveness to the faces of other humans. As he states the matter:

> Animate qualities of animals – and of other humans – are continuously present in all face-to-face interactions. Thus, the sense of self and other is a constant dimension of experience, carried on with subtle variability, creating connection across degrees of difference. It is this… that primarily underlies the concern for animals voiced by children…[2]

My point is that it is surely reasonable to interpret references to the "face" in Bauman (and Levinas) in precisely the way that Myers uses the term "face-to-face" here: as alluding to the animate dimensions of interaction and the embodied and affective meaningfulness of these for us. Such an interpretation would specifically include bodily dimensions of interaction and would clearly include the animal. Such an interpretation would also seem to be more compatible with Bauman's own insistence that moral responsibility is infinite than would an interpretation that limited its scope to humans.

How then should we think about the absence of animals from explicit inclusion in Bauman's theory? Is this perhaps simply a result of negligence stemming from Bauman's own unawareness of his adoption of what Myers refers to as a categorically human sense of self (a sense of self, as we have seen, that can function as a means of psychological defence against knowledge of harm occurring to other types of animal). If this were so then there would be a heavy irony in Bauman's own astute observation that "Modernity had the uncanny capacity for thwarting self-examination; it wrapped the mechanisms of self-reproduction with a veil of illusions without which those mechanisms, being what they were, could not function properly…"[3] But such an irony need not be too problematic here: Bauman's awareness of such a tendency in modern thinking in no way necessitates that he be completely immune from it. Indeed, perhaps this example suggests that it would be

[2] Gene Myers, Children and Animals: Social Development and our Connections to Other Species, (1998), Boulder: Westview Press, p.84
[3] Zygmunt Bauman, Postmodern Ethics (1993), Oxford, Blackwell, p.3

better to reframe the capacity that he identifies as to some extent a human, rather than a modern, one – although I would still like to retain some faith in a postmodern ability to sense beyond the cultural mechanisms that nurture blindly anthropocentric attitudes.

Is this overly optimistic? If, as I suggested previously, a postmodern awareness of the limitations of symbolic representation (particularly in relation to animals and nature) has important similarities with such an awareness in less anthropocentric cultures, such as those of hunter-gatherers, then these cultures are likely to reveal important evidence in support of my optimism. And if our social responsiveness to animals is naturally of the same basic type as our responsiveness to humans then we might also expect to find some important evidence for this from cross-cultural analysis. I will explore the significance of hunter-gatherer cultures for this debate in greater depth in a subsequent chapter, but here it will be useful to note an important correlation between two commonly made observations in the anthropological literature. Firstly, it is often observed that there is no clear divide, or categorical boundary, between the culture's conceptions of humanity and of animality. And secondly, despite the apparent paradox that hunter-gatherers depend to varying extents on killing animals for food, the words "respect" and "reciprocity" are used with striking frequency in descriptions of the human-animal relationship in such cultures, suggesting strongly that some moral dimension to the relationship is of significant importance.

A couple of brief examples will illustrate the point. Tim Ingold observes that for the Cree the difference between human and animal is not that between an organism and a person, but between one kind of organism and another. As this might suggest, the Cree also consider there to be no radical break between social and ecological relations: rather the former are held to constitute a subset of the latter.[4] This is a central point: although animals may be hunted and eaten, they are not held to be of categorically lower moral status. Although I will nevertheless argue later that there are still certain tensions between an ecological and a social way of relating to animals, this perhaps suggests that the rapprochement of the two achieved by hunter-gatherers does not imply a psychological need for such extreme defences against caring responses as the Western model appears to. This makes a degree of

[4] Tim Ingold, The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill, (2000), New York: Routledge, p.50 & 60

sense since the modes of exploitation are themselves less extreme and less inherently disturbing. In a different study, Signe Howell points out that among the Chewong people of the Malay tropical rainforest the idea that animals or nature are available to be exploited or controlled by humans would be considered "absurd". Rather, he claims, "People interact with the forest, their sociality is directly engaged in relationships with other conscious beings as well as with the parts of the forest that are not envisaged as personages."[5] Summarising a variety of similar observations among several studies, the sociologist Adrian Franklin observes that, "many peoples consider themselves and non-human species around them to occupy a common social and moral field."[6] In this formulation of Franklin's we can perhaps see the essence of the argument that we have been circling for some time: that the social capacities of humans naturally include animals and that social responsiveness and moral inclusion are intuitively correlated. What the anthropological evidence strongly suggests is that this can be true not only for children, but also for adults, and that this way of encountering animals can – in the right circumstances – be culturally encoded and reproduced, rather than suppressed as it so often is in the West.

Perhaps this is a suitable point, then, to revisit the question with which I introduced my depiction of Myers' theory: are sympathetic responses to animals merely personal and idiosyncratic – the outcomes, perhaps, of individual experience and temperament – or are they expressions of a fundamental aspect of human nature? This is no small question, and is central (although often in an unexamined way) to many debates that have arisen during the development of animal liberation philosophy. For example, Keith Tester perceptively notes that animal liberation is quite fundamentally about the social definition of what is properly human[7]. But by following the extreme constructionist orthodoxy that there is no essential human nature to be addressed, he fails to adequately consider the possibility that animal liberation may express and imply something that is more or less *accurate* about what it means to be human.

The question, in this much larger form of whether there is any essential human nature prior to socialisation (the nature/nurture debate) has been around for a

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[5] Signe Howell, "Nature in culture or culture in nature? Chewong ideas of 'humans' and other species" in Phillippe Descola and Gísli Pállson (Ed.s), Nature and Society: Anthropological Perspectives, (1996), London: Routledge, p.136

[6] Adrian Franklin, Nature and Social Theory, (2002), London: Sage, p. 73

[7] Keith Tester, Animals and Society: The Humanity of Animal Rights, (1991), New York: Routledge, p.192.

long while. Harlan Lane, in his discussion of the philosophical controversy stimulated by the discovery of the "Wild Boy of Aveyron" in 18th Century France outlines two prominent positions advanced: that a human being without culture is essentially incapable of any kind of effective functioning, and the opposing Romantic view that culture separates humans from their essential nature, which it would be desirable to rediscover.[8] He notes that a reward of 600 francs was offered at the time to anybody who could conclusively clarify the relation between the development of mankind and his (sic) physical and social environment – a reward that it seems remains unclaimed![9] The arguments have been recurring in various forms – of varying explicitness – ever since, with some surprisingly strong assertions being made. For example, Erik H. Erikson, in his pioneering work on identity noted that

> I, for one, have never been able to accept the claim that in mercantile culture or in agricultural culture, or, indeed, in book culture, man was in principle less "alienated" than he is in technology. It is, I believe, our own retrospective romanticism which makes us think that peasants or merchants or hunters were less determined by their techniques. To put it in terms of what must be studied concertedly: in every technology and in every historical period there are types of individuals who ("properly" brought up) can combine the dominant techniques with their identity development, and *become* what they *do*.[10]

From such a position human nature seems almost infinitely malleable and it becomes difficult to make any claims about what kind of culture, lifestyle or moral system suits the human organism best. But such a stance is, of course, almost impossible to reconcile with an awareness of human evolutionary origins. And, as Anna L. Peterson has persuasively argued, "The theory of natural selection is too big, too compelling, too implicated in what it means to be human to remain on the sidelines as we think about the Good and the good life for our species."[11]

Peterson relates the willingness of many academics to embrace an extremely relativistic stance to an awareness of the destructive and exploitative uses to which many discourses drawing on our biological nature have been put.[12] She points out

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[8] Harlan Lane, The Wild Boy of Aveyron, (1977), London: George Allen & Unwin, p.26
[9] Ibid., p.28
[10] Erik H. Erikson, Identity: Youth and Crisis, (1968), New York: Norton, p.31
[11] Anna L. Peterson, Being Human: Ethics, Environment, and Our Place in the World, (2001), London: University of California Press, p.173
[12] Ibid., p.154

that claims, for example, about the inherent superiority of one race over another, or to the effect that biological differences between the sexes justify traditional and oppressive role stereotyping have nurtured a pervasive perception that human freedom is best served by emphasising our cultural detachment from biological constraints. Arguments drawing on our biological nature have been perceived as conservative and limiting to human potential, at the same time as postmodern insights about the perspectival and often opportunist nature of discourses in general have further nurtured a wariness toward such claims, particularly when moral judgements are implied. But there is another hidden irony here if we see that a desire to emphasise human freedom and becoming might actually imprison us inside restrictive notions of human separateness from the natural world and reinforce our suppression of affective and relational responses to natural others – as Myers argues that the "categorical boundary" does. The belief that humans are unique among animals in being shaped wholly by culture may initially take form as a liberatory belief, then (as it seems to have done for Erikson), but it perhaps also risks nurturing a smug and domineering attitude toward the rest of nature, as well as repressing aspects of the human self. This irony can be resolved, of course, if we accept the common sense solution that human cultural constitution and separateness from nature are simply fallible discourses (corresponding in a useful way to some aspects of reality, but not to others), and that culture shapes us more than it does other animals but that we also have a biological nature that influences our behaviour and our thinking – and therefore also our morality and culture – in a complex dialectical process.

A Bodily Interactional Order

This common-sense position is argued for by Eugene Gendlin in the context of his rebuttal of the traditional Freudian belief in a human body that has no interactional order of its own, and is only an "autistic" body of tensions and drives. Gendlin observes that this idea of the body's very limited influence seems to have arisen from observations of cultural variety. The dubious perception that such variety is more or less absolute seems to lead inevitably to the idea that culture is the sole or primary determinant of human behaviour. But Gendlin's psychotherapy is largely premised on the idea that our bodily discomfort with the representations through

which we express ourselves can lead to new insights about better ways to interact or to live. For Gendlin such discomfort cannot be simply a matter of imposed cultural forms failing to satisfy the basic tensions or drives of a simple but disorganised *id* – rather the body has an intricacy of experience, insight and desire that *exceeds* the ability of cultural forms to give it expression. This intricacy exerts a complex influence on the development or adoption of cultural forms – an idea which together with the influence of differing external conditions, might have the potential to account for cultural variability while also allowing a role for a genetic/biological heritage. Gendlin asserts that:

> *Human cultures did not create their interaction patterns. Culture could only have elaborated what was already the very complex behavioural order of the animal body.* In humans we can no longer separate what is animal from what is culture, although the animal is ever with us. Of course, culture reforms it through and through, but never as its only organization. What repression "modifies" was never only simple drives, but already very highly organized interaction patterns. There never could have been an inherently unorganized, autistic, merely individual, tension-body. But this means that cultural, political and social forms cannot be thought of as imposed upon such a body. The relationship of social forms to the body is not that of a pattern imposed on simpler drives.[13]

Although we will problematise it later (and indeed Gendlin does himself), this formulation is extremely useful and seems able to accommodate a wide range of academic insights and traditions, from sociobiology to moderate forms of social constructionism, without the need for any kind of ultimate hierarchy of natural or cultural influences on our motivations or behaviour. It is also implicit to Myers' approach: Myers criticises the notion that "The body becomes socialized but offers no order of its own that can help determine the outcome" and notes instead that our evolution "took place in an interspecies context… wherein language grew in already highly social bodies."[14]

This way of understanding things also does one other thing rather effectively. While cultures are generally remarkably diverse, there are similarities between some that seem difficult to explain without accepting an influence from some kind of

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[13] Eugene Gendlin, "A Philosophical Critique of the Concept of Narcissism: The Significance of the Awareness Movement" in David Michael Levin (Ed.), Pathologies of the Modern Self: Postmodern Studies on Narcissism, Schizophrenia, and Depression (1987), New York: New York University Press, p.264

[14] Myers, Children and Animals, p.41-42

common denominator, such as the bodily interactional order that Gendlin proposes. This can be illustrated by returning to our central topic. We have already noted certain commonalities in hunter-gatherer ways of relating to animals and to nature, but James Serpell finds that these commonalities go much further than might be expected to arise by chance:

> A remarkable degree of consistency in attitudes and beliefs about animals exists (or existed until recently) among hunter-gatherer societies from regions as far apart as Siberia, Amazonia or the Kalahari Desert of Southern Africa. Briefly summarized, these beliefs include the notion that animals are fully rational, sentient and intelligent beings, in no way inferior to humans, and that the bodies of animals, like those of people, are animated by non-corporeal spirits or 'souls' that survive the body after death. While it is recognized that certain skills are needed in order to be a good hunter, it is also believed that no amount of skill or ingenuity will succeed if the animal quarry is unwilling to submit to being killed. Game animals must therefore be treated at all times with proper respect and consideration in order to earn their goodwill. Failure to treat the animal respectfully may cause either the animal's spirit or that of its spiritual guardian to demand some form of posthumous restitution. Types of spiritual retribution that may result from disrespectful behaviour include the infliction of illness, injury, madness or death on the hunter or other members of his family or clan, or loss of success in future hunting.[15]

Serpell gives an extensive list of references in support of these assertions, and then quotes Tim Ingold to the following effect: "The hunter hopes that by being good to animals, they in turn will be good to him. But by the same token, the animals have the power to withhold if any attempt is made to coerce what they are not, of their own volition, prepared to provide."[16] Even a brief survey of relevant anthropological sources would provide a wealth of essentially similar observations.[17] (I should make it clear that I am not arguing here that all hunter-gatherer societies will conform to ideas of reciprocity or mutual respect at all times, or even that all hunter-gatherer

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[15] James A. Serpell, "Creatures of the Unconscious: Companion Animals as Mediators" in Anthony L. Podberscek, Elizabeth S. Paul and James A. Serpell, Companion Animals & Us: Exploring the Relationships Between People & Pets, (2000), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.113

[16] Tim Ingold, quoted in Serpell, "Creatures of the Unconscious", p.113

[17] Here are a few that are not on Serpell's list: Henry S. Sharp, "Dry Meat and Gender: The Absence of Chipewyan Ritual for the Regulation of Hunting and Animal Numbers" in Tim Ingold, David Riches and James Woodburn, Hunters and Gatherers: Property Power and Ideology, (1997), Oxford: Berg, p.186; Adrian Tanner, Bringing Home Animals: Religious Ideology and Mode of Production of the Mistassini Cree Hunters, (1979), Memorial University of Newfoundland, p.136-7, 148; Hugh Brody, The Other Side of Eden: Hunter-Gatherers, Farmers, and the Shaping of the World, (2000), London: Faber and Faber, p.14,223; Laura Rival, "Blowpipes and Spears: The social significance of Huaorani technological choices" in Phillippe Descola and Gísli Pállson, Nature and Society: Anthropological Perspectives, (1996), London: Routledge, p.146, 161

cultures will encode such principles. Shepard Krech III, for example, has provided persuasive evidence of the existence of Native American hunting that did not conform to such guidelines.[18] But the evidence does strongly suggest that the ideas and beliefs governing interaction between humans and animals in hunter-gatherer cultures do *commonly* draw on these principles, and that they are often quite deeply rooted in the traditions concerned.)

Interpreting the fact that such specific ideas and beliefs recur widely in cultures that are geographically very separated from each other is difficult to do convincingly without acknowledging what also seems most striking about them: that they appear to project onto animals some psychological essence of expectations that commonly govern interactions between human equals. These include some form of reciprocity, fair play and mutual respect. The fact that it is unlikely that the prey animals will directly be able to exact retribution for violations of these unwritten rules of encounter is strong evidence that the expectation is an expression – culturally encoded – of aspects of our *human social nature*, or of our body's intuitive interactional order. Put another way, applying Gendlin's thoughts to these observations suggests strongly that the complex pulls of our social nature may have influenced the rules that these hunter-gatherer societies felt to be essential in regulating their relationships with the animals with which they came into contact.

This way of understanding the evidence may seem tenuous from some perspectives if it is interpreted as implying that there are human genes coding for the specific types of social behaviour to which we are alluding. Although such a possibility is not out of the question (sociobiologists would perhaps have little problem in accepting such an interpretation) it is not actually necessary to the argument that our bodies have a common interactional order, or that specific forms of social behaviour are 'natural' to us. Developments in developmental neurobiology and neural network modelling, particularly as interpreted by the connectionist paradigm, have suggested that genes are better conceptualised as algorithms rather than descriptions, and that since they are able to rely on many predictable regularities in input, they do not need to code for much information that will be made available by their environment. Jeffrey Elman *et al* argue that "Since it has become evident that genes interact with their environment at all levels, including the

[18] Shepard Krech III, The Ecological Indian, (1999), New York: Norton

molecular, there is virtually no interesting aspect of development that is strictly "genetic," at least in the sense that it is exclusively a product of information contained within the genes."[19] They identify four different levels of interaction that genes engage in during development. The first two are internal to the organism: the molecular and the cellular. The third takes place with an external environment that is common to all members of the species (two examples given are patterned light and gravity). The fourth is the particular learning environment of the individual, which is able to give rise to unique knowledge. Each level of interaction affects the outcome of development – including neural development – and it is this that is thought to result in many complex but nevertheless predictable patterns, including aspects of behaviour, that are not strictly encoded as genetic information. This paradigm has, in the words of Elman *et al*, "provided vivid illustrations of the ways in which global behaviours may emerge out of systems which operate on the basis of purely local information."[20]

Such a perspective suggests that there is no need to believe that the full intricacy (to use Gendlin's term) of our body's interactional order is genetically encoded. It would only be necessary to accept some kind of innate basis for certain core social tendencies in childhood. Together with the reliable recurrence of common experiential factors – equivalent, perhaps, to the third level above – these tendencies would nurture social development toward common patterns. I would propose that many of the more influential core social tendencies – quite possibly the most important ones – would be of the type that Myers alludes to when he describes children imitating animals, mirroring vitality affects, or otherwise imaginatively tapping into the other's subjective experience in a visceral, sensual, empathic way. These tendencies, which might broadly be denoted by the term mimetic, seem to be of great importance for early social experience and learning, and when viewed in an evolutionary context would clearly have great survival value. It therefore seems reasonable to accept the probability of a natural basis for these core tendencies and processes, as Myers has done. If we then consider that over the course of a child's development many types of social experience (drawing on and engaging these processes, as well as others) will recur and that there are likely to be certain common

[19] Jeffrey L. Elman, Elizabeth A. Bates, Mark H. Johnson, Annette Karmiloff-Smith, Domenico Parisi & Kim Plunkett, Rethinking Innateness: A Connectionist Perspective on Development, (2001), Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, p.21
[20] Ibid., p. 4

patterns to this experience (examples of which might include relationships with carers, conflict with others or bargaining to achieve desired ends) then it seems reasonable to expect the emergence of an interactional order that is rooted in the body and has commonly predictable characteristics, but that may still be elaborated beyond this common bodily experiential base toward culturally learned patterns. This picture is still one in which nature and nurture have a complex interrelationship, but in which they further blur into each other because what is 'natural', rather than being wholly encoded in genes, includes a pattern of emergent behavioural characteristics that draw on the interaction of truly innate social capacities with common or near universal developmental experiences. Since cultural variation also means, however, that some experiences will be common or near universal only *within* particular cultures, the body's interactional order will be extended gradually into patterns that involve an incredibly complex interweaving of universal and culturally specific modes of relating.

This way of accounting for a human interactional order is remarkably flexible and seems particularly useful in thinking about morality. It extends the possibility of thinking about morality as simultaneously both personal/subjective (as Bauman insists that it should be) and also culturally mediated or reproduced in both subtle and obvious ways. It suggests that personal or subjective responses to moral situations are rooted in a bodily capacity to engage in empathic type processes (among other capacities), but are unavoidably inflected by the formative experiences an individual has had, which, as described above, will be on a spectrum from the common or near universal to the culturally specific. However these personal responses can then be envisaged as occurring within a more explicit cultural context of moral rules, laws, standards, etc, that attempt to codify norms and to exert controls on the freedom of behaviour of individuals (and to ensure conformity to correct behaviour through various types of sanction, coercion or censure).

A Bodily Interactional Order and Culture: Harmony and Dischord

The picture takes on an important further dimension if we consider the possibility that imposed cultural forms, including moral rules and norms of behaviour, might either develop and elaborate in a complementary fashion the patterns that develop from innate sociability through healthy social experience

toward an integrated and comfortable interactional sense, or alternatively might encode messages that contradict the sense of this emergent interactional order, thereby setting up the conditions for inner conflict and repression. This, perhaps, is the point at which our argument would become fundamentally incompatible with a social constructionist perspective. Even a constructionist perspective would have to accept the existence of some basic innate social characteristics: our linguistic abilities surely depend upon them and constructionist theory depends upon our having such abilities. But an extreme constructionist perspective would be unable to accept a split between an interactional order rooted in our innate sociability and the explicit (i.e. encoded in discourse and representation) content of a cultural system. Any conflict would have to be envisaged as an inconsistency between different discourses – our social nature being thereby reduced to merely our linguistic capacities. The existence of conflict between discourse and a bodily interactional order would not, however, be incompatible with the kind of soft postmodernism described in an earlier chapter, since such a perspective often *presumes* a dichotomy between experience, intuition or reality, and the possibility of rendering it precisely in discourse and representation. By purposefully problematising discourse and representation such a perspective, as we have seen, can seek to resensitise the human subject to exactly such non-discursive layers of experience as a bodily interactional order might imply. The postmodern subject might therefore, perhaps, be more in contact than her modern predecessor with such an order and the moral sense that it suggests. This is an implicit hope in Bauman's argument, although as he demonstrates with his metaphorical figures of the vagabond and the tourist, contemporary capitalism provides many distancing devices to aid in avoiding the implications of the moral sense.

This possibility – of a split or mismatch between the tendencies of a complex bodily interactional order (which clearly is not reducible to the Freudian "tension-body" of drives and desires), and the cultural norms and forms that regulate behaviour in the West – is a very potent one. It is, of course, particularly compatible with Myers' posited contrast between a child's natural tendency to include animals in the range of social relations through which she constitutes her sense of self, and the later, culturally imposed sense of a categorically human identity – with all of the moral implications that this appears to have. We earlier identified two related possibilities that trouble Myers at the end of his book: that the suppression of their

affinities with animals is psychologically harmful to children (or, at least, that it prevents their adequately fulfilling all of their developmental potentials), and that it also aids the development of a structure of selfhood that is compatible with the extreme environmental destruction that is the contemporary norm – and therefore that it furthers this destruction. The general idea of the split or mismatch that we have been considering is also one of the central themes foundational to the discipline of ecopsychology, and ecopsychologists are considerably less tentative than Myers in positing similar ill-effects arising from comparable alienations. Andy Fisher, for example, is forthright in suggesting that "Both epidemic human psychopathology and the ecological crisis can... be fruitfully understood in terms of a general violation of the life process under capitalist social relations."[21] Fisher's term "the life process" clearly encompasses a wide range of developmental (and other) issues, but his argument is resonant in many ways with our concerns here. Indeed his stated manifesto, transplanted into our current context, is perhaps suggestive of how a reformed and progressive animal liberation philosophy might be seen as integral to the healing process that he envisages as the task of ecopsychology:

> I see two main requirements for ecopsychological practice: that it offer support for resisting or opposing the life-denying tendencies within modern society and for building an ecological society instead; and that it revive those essentially human forms of practice, largely forgotten, that involve meaningful and reciprocal engagement with the natural world.[22]

Ecopsychology has much to offer us here, but before we begin to properly explore this, there are a few further issues to tidy up.

In a sense the ecopsychological position that we have moved toward has reversed the original argument found in Gendlin's work: that culture cannot be simply imposed upon a disorganised, "autistic", human body, but must instead elaborate the social complexities native to the human animal body – the body's interactional order. While we have concurred with Gendlin's rejection of the simple "tension-body", we have moved to a claim that at times culture can and does impose itself upon – and indeed directly contradict and suppress – the logic inherent in his bodily interactional order. Although this may at first appear to disagree with Gendlin's original formulation there are several profitable ways to think through this

[21] Andy Fisher, Radical Ecopsychology: Psychology in the Service of Life, (2002), Albany: State University of New York Press, p.xvii
[22] Ibid., p.xix

superficial disagreement. In doing so, we can perhaps see several aspects of the culture/nature relationship more clearly, particularly as they relate to animal liberation.

Firstly, we should note that Gendlin did not posit his formulation as absolute. It arose within a discussion of how the "old forms" (the cultural norms of behaviour and communication that worked for previous generations) can seem inadequate to the increasingly complex situations people find themselves in in the contemporary world. Conflict between established culture and what the bodily interactional order suggests about contemporary situations is therefore actually an integral part of Gendlin's account, although he tends to envisage this as being mainly a result of social changes and increases in people's psychological sophistication leading to dissatisfaction with previous norms. As he puts it:

> The traditional stories are not sufficient to get us through a day. We have to define and structure much of every situation freshly, from moment to moment. The situations are more complex; we *make* them more complex. Did the change in social situations come from individual intricacy, or must we experience more intricately because the situations changed? Both, of course...
> At first what we experience is an unclear, complex blank. We are stuck. We don't know what to say or how to act. But tacit in the stuckness are *both the old rules and why they won't work just now.*[23]

Gendlin is saying that our increasing psychological sophistication or intricacy is responsible for our experiential sense of the inadequacy of the old norms, and *vice versa.* Or rather, holistically, he is perhaps saying that our awareness has enlarged beyond the safe boundaries that the old norms provided, leaving us confused, perplexed, but ultimately unwilling to abandon this state and retreat to the fortress of our previous certainty without new insight. "Once acquired," he asserts, "like westernization and middleclassness, no one wants to go back to the previous condition. And no one can. It shows that intricacy is a further development."[24]

The initially unclear bodily sense of the situation, for Gendlin, is the key to resolving dilemmas. His focussing process, as described previously, relies on continuously refining statements about a situation, based on ones bodily sense of the accuracy of those statements, until the bodily sense indicates that a satisfactory

[23] Gendlin, "A Philosophical Critique", p.274-5
[24] Ibid., p.275

impression of it has been achieved. The body's interactional order, then, helps to make sense of the situation and by indicating discomfort with dissatisfactory formulations, helps to develop it into some kind of conceptually manageable or graspable shape (which is not to say to comprehend it in its entirety). This process, presumably, is roughly comparable at the individual level to the one whereby Gendlin suggests that culture is able to elaborate the bodily interactional order: what makes intuitive sense is what is retained, what does not is at some point jettisoned. Both personal beliefs and culture can then be envisaged as an accumulation of what is retained through making sense to our bodies – to our 'gut feelings' about the world.

But in our intricate real world this has to be a simplification: some situations cannot be adequately resolved and some solutions therefore seem likely to remain tenuous and slightly discomforting. Methods of dealing with such discomfort are themselves infinitely complex: psychological defence mechanisms such as dissociation, repression and rationalisation are not merely individual matters, but rather can represent styles of engagement with the world that attempt to convert discomfort to comfort at many societal levels. As Stanley Cohen has argued, in discussing how contemporary societies are able to tolerate routine abuses of human beings, "All normalization – that is to say, all living calls for some pretence, living 'as if' what is happening is not happening. People can live a long time with horrors, yet continue as if everything were normal."[25] A 'gut feeling' that something is wrong, then, does not necessarily lead to anything other than an avoidance of that gut feeling – an avoidance that Cohen also argues can be systematised through language rules and other culturally learned techniques. Self deception can clearly be less painful than complete honesty (the term "painful" implying, not entirely metaphorically of course, a bodily reaction). Self-deception may therefore come to be incorporated and retained as an aspect of culture just as moral norms and Gendlin's interactional order may. It can even be envisaged as a way of dealing with the demands of the interactional order that *also* speaks through our gut level sense of a situation, but that does not further the interactional order in a healthy or integrated way.

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[25] Stanley Cohen, States of Denial: Knowing about Atrocities and Suffering, (2001), Cambridge: Polity, p.81-2

This suggests a further point about the split between a bodily interactional order and culture: we can have conflicting *types* of bodily sense about how to behave. The human body, being a structure of incredible complexity, makes complex demands on us – only some of which arise from our social or moral nature. One of the most obvious is absolutely central to this debate and is one of our highest priorities as natural organisms: our bodies demand adequate nutrition. This point is obvious but its implications are not always fully appreciated in the theorising of animal liberation. Writers such as Singer customarily give an ethical opt out clause for societies such as the Inuit who (perhaps more so traditionally than in the present day) live in ecological niches where they cannot survive without hunting and eating animals. But I would suggest that it is human nature not just to want to survive, but also to want to thrive. To thrive may, in many ecological situations, mean using animal flesh to supplement the intake of protein and fat that can be gained from vegetable sources. The human body, once aware of the possibility of this kind of satisfaction, may therefore make demands that conflict with the demands of a bodily interactional order that intuitively wishes to maintain harmonious relations with animal others. How this fairly fundamental conflict is dealt with culturally – including the extent and character of animal use or abuse involved – is, I will suggest later, not only of incalculable importance for relations with animals, but also may influence in subtle ways how the body's social/moral sense is manifested in the cultural frames governing many different types of interaction. Western culture traditionally deals with this conflict through the various mechanisms constructing an unequivocal superiority, the deeply embedded assumption that nature and animals are available for our unlimited use, and the suppression of natural bodily feelings of empathy and respect – ways that seem opposed to the development of a healthy and integrated social/moral sense.

I will next turn to important ecopsychological analyses of comparable processes operating in our culture as a whole. This offers the possibility of deepening our perception of the processes at work and the extent to which the Western treatment of animals fits neatly into a larger picture of the industrial appropriation of the natural world and the suppression or distortion of our own human nature. The underlying direction of this next chapter is therefore to suggest that animal liberation is quite fundamentally an ecopsychological issue, but also that an ecopsychological understanding might be essential to a progressive and truly

liberating animal liberation philosophy. They perhaps each need the other to inform and complete their own perspective. Much of the philosophy of animal liberation – including surprisingly, I will suggest later in the thesis, some ecofeminist contributions – might benefit from understanding in greater depth the way that Western culture's excessive emphasis on rationality might have subverted the terms in which a healthy and natural human-animal relationship is envisaged. And conversely, ecopsychology could benefit from a much more critical and politicised appreciation of just how opposed to a healthy bodily interactional sense (and life) modern institutionalised animal abuse really is. For example, Fisher astutely notes that "children innately anticipate the kind of symbolic nutrition offered by animals,"[26] but he fails to adequately consider the possible effect on them of the symbolic nutrition provided by factory farms, cattle markets, and mechanised slaughterhouses, not to mention the systematically cultivated dissociation of any such horrors that might otherwise trouble our collective awareness.

[26] Fisher, Radical Ecopsychology, p.146

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Ecopsychology and the Acceptance of Meat

Morality and Nature

Ecopsychology's sharp focus upon the degree to which Western culture fails to sufficiently articulate and accommodate our human animal nature can be traced to such early works as Paul Shepard's Nature and Madness, in which he laments the narcissism of Western culture and claims that Westerners are "possessors of the world's flimsiest identity structure."[1] Central to Shepard's overall argument is the absence for the majority of Westerners of an authentic relationship to other species of animal – an absence which he believes gives us no suitable other against which to define ourselves and to understand ourselves as members of natural communities. As he puts it, "The loss of the wild others leaves nothing but our own image to explain ourselves by – and hence empty psychic space."[2] Shepard pioneered the idea that interaction with animals is essential to healthy human development, and that we have a fundamental psychological need to define our human identity in relation to them, but he also strongly opposed the sentimentalized attachments associated with pet-keeping, as well as liberationist accounts of moral responsibility or even sympathy toward animals. Shepard's ideal human-animal relationship was a hunting relationship and he reductively considered the predator-prey relationship to be the very essence of the natural world, claiming that "the structure of nature is a sequence of killings."[3] So although he was an early champion of the idea that our bodily and psychological natures include a need for certain kinds of contact with animals, and are harmfully suppressed by our culture, his account is missing an appropriate sense of the natural human inclusion of animals in the community of others to whom our social and moral instincts intuitively apply. He is prepared to grant some validity to efforts to improve the lot of domesticated animals, grudgingly acknowledging that "all the traditional motives related to mercy, compassion, and kindness apply, but

[1] Paul Shepard, Nature and Madness, (1982), San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, p.124
[2] Paul Shepard, "On Animal Friends" in Stephen R. Kellert and Edward O. Wilson (Ed.s), The Biophilia Hypothesis, (1993), Washington DC: Island Press, p.294
[3] Paul Shepard, Traces of an Omnivore, (1996), Washington DC: Island Press, p.15

only when the reform is limited to the management of enslaved animals. To project this logic onto wild animals is to envelop the natural world in the fantasy."[4] This exclusionary attitude is ironic considering the extent to which he valourised hunter-gatherer culture since, as we have seen, hunter-gatherers commonly have an acute sense of social responsibility toward wild animals that must be carefully balanced with their dietary dependence. Shepard's misunderstanding of the direction given by our bodily nature is particularly well illustrated by considering his vehement insistence that the keeping of pets is a perverted expression of Western narcissism and social isolation alongside James Serpell's contrasting evidence that pet-keeping is common in hunter-gatherer cultures[5] and Philippe Erikson's persuasive and well researched argument that among certain forest-dwelling Amazonian Indian groups pet-keeping actually functions psycho-culturally as a means of making restoration to animals and their spiritual masters for the hunting and killing of others of their species.[6] I will return in the next chapter to this important matter of a blind-spot in ecopsychology's outlook, but now it will be necessary to explore some resonances with the account that I am developing.

Andy Fisher's ecopsychology attempts to counter our Western alienation from our own nature through an emphasis on a resensitising to experience. Because Western culture since modernity has favoured scientific and rational ways of coming to understand the world, Fisher argues that, while these cannot be rejected, there is a need for us to become more conscious of what our own experience suggests about the world and about how we derive our values. "The success of science," he points out, "has brought about the surrender of our own experience, including the claims it makes on the "outer" world."[7] This is problematic because science and reason are effective at achieving given technological ends but they are also "rudderless" – they cannot offer us any moral direction in life, and culturally they have overwhelmed what should be our intuitive sensing of value and orientation.

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[4] Shepard, The Others: How Animals Made Us Human, (1996), Washington DC: Island Press, p.307
[5] James Serpell, In the Company of Animals: A Study of Human-Animal Relationships, (1996), Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, p.66
[6] Philippe Erikson, "The social significance of pet-keeping among Amazonian Indians" in Anthony Podberscek, Elizabeth S. Paul and James Serpell (Ed.s), Companion Animals and Us: Exploring the Relationships between People and Pets, (2000), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
[7] Andy Fisher, Radical Ecopsychology: Psychology in the Service of Life, (2002), Albany: State University of New York Press, p.54

Tied to this effect, argues Fisher, is "the entire tradition surrounding the division of the world into subjective experience and objective reality."[8] Here he implicitly draws on a large body of work critiquing this tradition (Cartesianism) and its dominance in the outlook of modernity. Fisher leans often throughout his book on the work of David Levin, and Levin's analysis of modernity's obsession with objectivity implicitly informs his stance. Levin argues that because modernity favours knowledge that can supposedly be established objectively (and this traditionally includes what can be determined through rational argument), the subjective is very effectively devalued. "Reification, the institutionalization of objectivity," he asserts, "requires the most extreme subjectivization of individual experience."[9] Modernity, then, effectively drives a wedge between these two potentially complementary ways of knowing the world, exaggerating the distance between them. It then effectively constructs them as a dualism, suffusing this dualism with a psychologically harmful value judgement in which the subjective is devalued. Culture-wide, this results in the isolation of "inner experience" within the increasingly "subjectivised" worlds of individuals, meaning that potentially unifying experiences remain at the level of the personal or idiosyncratic. Levin goes on to argue that this is detrimental to the ability of people to live out the implications of inner experience by acting morally on the world. At one point he claims that "From the beginning of human history, disciplines of cultural self-criticism have existed – for that is what history is. This attests to the vitality of "inner experience" as an irrepressible source of critical judgement regarding the spiritual condition of its culture."[10] But it seems that "irrepressible" is overstating the case: Levin goes on to argue that modernity weakens this capacity of experience to imply a critique of culture through undermining and radically individualising experience itself. In his words:

> The essence of nihilism is being actualised in the historical self-destructiveness of the Self, which increasingly finds itself so thoroughly reduced to the "mere subjectivity" of an ego-logical existence and so profoundly isolated in its absolutely sovereign "individuality" that it can no

[8] Ibid., p.54
[9] David Michael Levin, "Psychopathology in the Epoch of Nihilism" in David Michael Levin (Ed.), Pathologies of the Modern Self: Postmodern Studies on Narcissism, Schizophrenia, and Depression (1987), New York: New York University Press, p.29
[10] Ibid., p.35

longer trust itself to speak for the truth, the reality, of "its own" experience.[11]

Fisher also recognises this effect and aims to counter it through cultivating a renewed attention to experience. This is the central thrust of his "experiential approach," the aim of which is "To make the mysterious reality we actually live the primary ground."[12] Drawing also on Gendlin, he has a strong faith in the capacity of our experience and our bodily natures to suggest better ways of living, if we develop ways of listening to them, and he insists on the "basic goodness" that is "our original nature."[13] In the context of the argument being developed here it may make a certain sense to qualify this basic goodness as largely composed of a basic *sociability* inherent to our body's interactional order: an ability to sense healthy ways of interacting that incorporates an ability to take the perspective of the other and to balance this intuitively with one's own needs. Crucially, it is this aspect of our experience that potentially unites Fisher's account with the perspectives of Myers and several animal liberationist ecofeminists.

For Myers, as we have seen, children's inner conflicts over eating meat may "signal the loss of continuity of concern"[14] – by which we may interpret him as meaning that they may signal the loss of a child's faith, and complete investment of self, in exactly this nascent social/moral sense and its intuitive feeling for the animal other. This is an important loss: while children clearly have much to learn from adults and obviously cannot follow their intuition or subjective experience in all things, an early disillusionment with their social/moral intuitions is potentially quite significant, as we will find Levin arguing shortly. Singer – ironically considering his commitment to objective reason – describes the case of moral psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg's son, who "at the age of four made his first moral commitment and refused to eat meat."[15] This youngster seems to have had admirable faith in his own moral sense/experience: it apparently took several months to convince him that he was wrong and that eating meat was the morally correct course!

This, then, is the background against which the adoption of a categorically human identity seems to make sense for a child. Although Myers shows the

[11] Ibid., p.26
[12] Fisher, Radical Ecopsychology, p.54
[13] Ibid., p.109-110
[14] Myers, Children and Animals, p.153
[15] Peter Singer, Animal Liberation: A New Ethics For Our Treatment of Animals, (1975), New York: Avon Books, p.226

formation of this type of identity, or view of the self, to be taught to children through a fairly systematic construction and reconstruction of their experience, he also suggests that the children themselves make use of this device as a way to defend psychologically against the discomfort that they may feel about their growing knowledge of animals being made into food. The sense of distance from animals that a categorically human identity creates helps to diffuse the moral and affective complications of this potentially disturbing situation. When first adopted by a child it appears likely to provide a very useful way of rationalising the complex ethical or emotional dimensions of the situation as being primarily an idiosyncratic response that is not shared by others. Allegiance to the apparently objective adult consensus is then psychologically much easier for the child, both because it lessens the apparent importance of her own subjective experience of dissonant and disturbing responses to the knowledge of killing, and because it does not isolate her socially or bring her into conflict with carers. Parents, therefore, presumably also find this effect both reassuring and useful.

But is this acceptance of an apparently objective consensus in opposition to the natural inclusiveness of the caring response good for the child, or are Myers' fears about the loss of "continuity of concern" grounded? Alongside his critique of modernity's division of the world into objective fact and subjective experience, Levin writes persuasively on the subject of morality and its bodily basis, and his arguments seem to strongly support the suggestion that this moment in a child's life – the acceptance of meat – may have harmful repercussions.

Levin devotes a chapter of his book The Body's Recollection of Being to the moral education of children through attention to what he terms "the body's felt sense of value."[16] Like so many other writers discussed so far, he rejects the "traditional" way of teaching morality in "an inherently mechanizing, technologically wilful way… by imposing precepts and principles not derived from the child's own body of morally perceptive feeling."[17] He argues that this way of teaching morality suppresses the child's potential to think about and to feel for herself what appropriate moral responses might be, and rewards the development of a rigid, dogmatic and even manipulative character structure. Instead, Levin insists that "We desperately

[16] David Levin, The Body's Recollection of Being: Phenomenological Psychology and the Deconstruction of Nihilism, (1985), Routledge, p.224
[17] Ibid., p.230

need a method of moral education which will avoid the chains of calculative ratiocination and subvert the technological reduction of human nature and comportment."[18]

Drawing on Carl Rogers, Levin stresses that a child's natural, bodily, source of moral judgment, or "valuing process," is inherently vulnerable since the child has no choice but to depend on adult support, love and approval, as well as to learn from significant adults how to behave and to survive in her environment. In order to obtain love and support, the valuing process is often surrendered, along with the child's confidence in her own ability to make moral judgements. In place of this the values of significant adults are internalised. Levin argues that although guidance is initially necessary to enable a child to make independent moral judgements effectively, the style of this guidance is of great importance for the subsequent ability of the child to trust her own capacity to comprehend the moral dimensions of a situation and to develop an appropriate moral autonomy. Crucially, in order for moral education to be truly effective, Levin believes that it must sensitize the child to the morally relevant dimensions of her own experience and teach her the significance of these. Unfortunately, the requirements for this type of education are high:

> What is called for is a gentle and caring approach that provides a truly nurturing space for the child to make *good contact* with his own evaluative processes, and elicit from the gift of his ownmost body of feeling a comportment that is properly grounded in its primordial universality. Naturalism in moral education therefore requires of its teachers, and of the culture at large, a basic *trust* in the innate potential for goodness carried by the universal body. This trust will only be confirmed, however, insofar as the method of education, and social conditions in general, are genuinely conducive to the harmonious unfolding of this potential. Unfortunately, I know of no society in which such conditions have prevailed long enough to demonstrate the truth and the beauty of a consistent moral naturalism.[19]

Clearly if a child has an intuitive social/moral dislike of the idea of eating animals but is persuaded away from this sense through such pervasive cultural devices as the constructed human-animal boundary and the dualistic "subjectivising" of moral discomfort against the objective acceptability of "meat," then this process is opposed to the harmonious unfolding that Levin describes. The developmental

[18] Ibid., p.230
[19] Ibid., p.233-234

importance of this event is little explored, theoretically or ethnographically, with Myers' research being by far the most integrated and insightful account that I have been able to discover. But if we accept Levin's arguments, then the developmental implications are potentially *very* significant, with the specific range of devices that Western culture appears to use to acculturate children to an acceptance of "meat" presenting an obstacle to the development in children of a trust in their own capacity for autonomous (though potentially unifying, since Levin insists on the "primordial universality" of our moral feeling) moral insight.

The magnitude of the importance of this obstacle is obviously difficult to estimate since the crucial psychological events occur so far removed from our usual adult mechanisms of perception and assessment. Most non-vegetarians would probably consider its importance to be minimal. But consider again the child Joe's refusal to talk about his sadness for the turtles that were eaten by predators, and that these were deaths in which he could not have felt implicated.[20] If the importance of these events is as great as Myers seems to be suggesting that it may be,[21] then the loss of continuity of concern for animals also means a loss of continuity of concern generally – which, despite the categorical boundary, also means a loss of concern for other people. This is completely in agreement with Levin's argument, and also offers one possible way of accounting for the strong historical links found by Robert Garner "between animal protection and other social reform movements."[22] It seems that historically individual concern for the moral treatment of animals and people has often tended to go together. And, intriguingly, there is also reason to believe that the "continuity of concern" can be restored once lost, and that this can even be achieved through reversing the process of the acceptance of "meat". In her study of converts to veganism, Barbara McDonald found that becoming vegan made several of her subjects more sensitive to other moral concerns – a process that for one participant involved extending moral concern to individual plants. As this participant put it, "It's like I have a much, much greater respect, certainly for all living things, and of course

[20] Myers, Children and Animals, p.150 (see also my discussion in chapter 4).
[21] Myers' wording is slightly ambiguous, but I interpret him as meaning that a child's moral sense as a whole may be compromised, rather than merely her moral sense in relation to animals. If it is not Myers' intention to argue this, then it is mine. See Ibid., p.153
[22] Robert Garner, Animals, Politics and Morality, (1993), Manchester: Manchester University Press, p.41

plant life. I don't even want to pull weeds really."[23] This experienced extension of an intuitive moral concern, at the very least, supports my argument that animal liberation should play a much more central role in the future development of ecopsychology.

However, the specifically acknowledged absence from Levin's account of a concrete example of a *society* in which his moral naturalism is allowed to fulfil its potential may perhaps seem to some degree to undermine the plausibility of these assertions. Perhaps one of the problems here is that life is always likely to involve situations in which following our most generous moral inclinations is not consistently possible. Some amount of moral disillusionment is therefore impossible to avoid. Nevertheless the deeply embedded acceptance of meat-eating in a majority of the world's cultures may *conceivably* be one of the factors predisposing many people to accept such disillusionment at a very early age. The discussion above suggests that the extent of this disillusionment, or the pattern that is thereby established, may have an undesirable influence on moral development in ways that extend far beyond animal liberation.

It is reasonable to assume, if we accept the substance of Levin's argument, that there are societies that come closer to fulfilling his ideal than others, indeed perhaps much closer than our own. The discussion in the previous chapter suggests that some traditional hunter-gatherer cultures may provide examples, at least as far as their relationships with animals are concerned. The acceptance in these societies of the human body's natural social inclusion of animals appears to include its extension into the moral codes and rituals surrounding the hunting and eating of them. It therefore appears to regulate these activities, to reinforce the sense of seriousness associated with the act of killing, and to provide a significant cultural influence toward achieving a sense of balance or integration between two very different types of bodily desire. This contrasts rather sharply with the Western situation, in which the mass exploitation of food animals is mostly unrestrained, and protest from the social/moral sense is systematically suppressed or evaded. There are problems, however, with attempting to approach these issues as hunter-gatherers do when one lives in the industrialised West. These problems should become more apparent later.

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[23] "Lena", quoted in Barbara McDonald, "'Once You Know Something, You Can't Not Know It': An Empirical Look at Becoming Vegan," *Society and Animals*, 8(1), (2000).

What does seem clear is that if rigid obedience to moral rules is to be rejected as harmful – as a broad consensus including Bauman, ecofeminists, ecopsychologists and others argue that it should be – then alternatives are needed. Levin's insistence that the body's moral sense must be educated and nurtured rather than alienated and suppressed is therefore perhaps less utopian than simply common sense and necessary. We should therefore note that his account of exactly how the moral sense manifests itself – what primarily it consists of – connects much in Myers' account directly to his own concerns.

Referring to Nietzsche and the phenomenologists Merleau-Ponty and Husserl, Levin identifies an "intersection" of their thoughts on the subject and elaborates this into his own theory about the nature of compassion and how to develop it in children. The essence of our moral nature, he argues, lies in a "primordial intercorporeality," which arises from our embodiment in "an elemental, pre-existent matrix of flesh which is inherently social, and which sets down each subject's incontestable and inalienable kinship with all other sentient and mortal beings long before there is the reflective life of an individual person."[24] This "primordial intercorporeality" manifests itself experientially in the capacity of our bodies to sense something of the experience of another through a process of mimesis. Through the incorporation of the other's experience that this involves, Levin believes that a compassionate or moral response naturally arises. Moral education, for Levin, therefore means that children's capacity to mimetically feel for the other has to be resolutely developed and strengthened:

> Thus, to sketch our approach very briefly, the teaching of compassion as the very heart of moral education would take place in, and consequently as, a carefully timed sequence of progressively more difficult steps, beginning with games of imitation; progressing to a more focussed experiencing of the mimetic 'transfer' as a bodily felt sense of being 'coupled' with the Other, touched and touching, and actually being moved, even at a distance, by the bodily presence of an Other; passing through the experience of this corporeal interaction, as a next step, in a way that brings out, or makes more explicit, its inherent, but as yet still implicit sense as constitutive of our communicative being-one-with-others; and then, eventually, developing this further, into a well-grounded, bodily felt sense of extensive kinship, basis for the articulation of our natural fulfilment through a life of compassion.[25]

[24] Levin, Body's Recollection, p. 239
[25] Ibid., p.240

Levin's formula for the cultivation of a child's moral sense therefore specifically includes much that Myers shows children doing naturally, particularly in his emphasis on children's imitation of animals in their play. As one of many possible examples of the importance that Myers attaches to this, remember Billy's enactment of a turtle, about which Myers comments, "Imitation and incorporating the animal's well-being were united in this symbolic activity."[26] But Myers also seems to show that the development of these natural tendencies is not encouraged past a certain point in the direction that Levin recommends. Children are naturally inclined to imitate animals at a particular stage in their development, but the mimetic capacity that informs both this imitation and its associated social/moral sense seems not to be specifically given much encouragement to develop further as the child matures and, as we know, education increasingly becomes premised upon the learning of more abstract types of knowledge that are assumed to have nothing to do with the body. Levin therefore criticises heavily the way education is currently performed, and the assumed dualism of mind and body that often underlies it. The contemporary education of children is inherently opposed to the development of their moral sense, he believes, because it overwhelmingly necessitates the suppression of their bodily energies and awarenesses, since these are assumed to detract from their mental focus. What is apparently suppressed is not just the tendency of children to be distracted, but also their sensitivity to the meaningfulness of bodily experience – including of course a mimetic feeling for the wellbeing of the other.

In this context, with the constructed human-animal boundary enthusiastically pressed on children, their mixed feelings about "meat" simmering under the surface, and the need to "buy" adult love by accepting adult standards, it seems no wonder that the intuitively experienced social/moral inclusion of animals is difficult to maintain at previous levels. But in learning to circumvent these natural tendencies rather than to develop them or to hold them in balance with contrasting needs, it may be that children also learn a psychological pattern that is convenient in other aspects of life. And, of course, much that they learn in other aspects of life is likely to reinforce the pattern. A possible result of this process, therefore, is the development of an ability to maintain a level of self-interested (which is not to say conscious, in

[26] Myers, Children and Animals, p.57

the fullest sense) control over moral values. As this would also suggest, the cultural and psychological ways in which the moral connotations of "meat" are dealt with seem to be suggestive of ways in which other potential moral dilemmas are sometimes approached in our technological/industrial culture – such as those relating to other aspects of the destructive appropriation of the natural world, the impact of life decisions on less privileged human communities, and even how individuals treat each other in daily life. It is important to note, however, that although the style of relating that is described here could be described as self-ish, it might also be described, and even initially experienced, as involving a loss of part of the self.

Rationality and Confusion

Our understanding of these psychological processes can be given greater depth by appreciating them as part of a larger picture of how contemporary industrial culture shapes individuals to be compatible with its needs. This larger picture has been described by David Kidner as involving the *colonization* of our human intelligence by reductive rational and abstract structures in a process that effectively replaces more subtle and embodied ways of experiencing and knowing the world, rather than coexisting with them. Kidner argues that both environmental and social problems can be traced to this exclusive emphasis that Western culture places on the value of the objective and the rational, and to the means by which alternative styles of relation are made unviable. It will be worthwhile to appropriate certain elements of this analysis. In particular, Kidner's account makes clear a central difficulty with Fisher's experiential approach. As I will shortly demonstrate, this difficulty also illuminates some of the problems faced by animal liberation and can help to clarify its possible relationship with ecopsychological thinking.

Fisher, in common with Kidner, identifies that the success of Western science, technology and rationality has been detrimental to our psychological relationship with our experience and to our ability to live in ways that accord with our bodily natures. As he puts it, "Because technology patterns or structures our lives it is no mere neutral set of instruments, as some like to claim. Rather, it determines – to the extent that we agree to live it – the sense, form, and telos of our existence."[27] Despite this, Fisher's programme for resistance tends to work primarily at the

[27] Fisher, Radical Ecopsychology, p.162

individual level, and for those who are already enlightened enough to understand something of the significance of their bodily and psychological discomfort with contemporary life, and to seek out alternatives to the technological/industrial pattern. For such individuals he identifies a range of "counterpractices" – or "practices that work with the life force in deliberately countering the pattern of technology."[28] But within his approach, transformation at the cultural or societal level is mostly geared toward improving the wellbeing of individuals, while changes in values are assumed to automatically follow from this and to occur primarily on an individual basis:

> If the life process be our concern, then I believe all people are entitled to keep themselves above what I call the *healing threshold.* Below this critical threshold our lives spiral downward, we fall through the cracks and self-destruct, we lack the support (both inner and outer) to get on top of our pain and find our bearings. Above this threshold our lives move forward, we gain strength, we enjoy the necessary support to learn, grow, and expand the spheres of our social concern – as we are naturally ordered to do. I am myself dedicated to creating a society in which all people are generally able to remain above this healing threshold (such a society being as far as I allow my utopian thinking to go).[29]

Kidner's emphasis on the extent to which the Western self is "colonized" by the assumptions of industrialism, however, seems to suggest that simply improving well-being and providing examples of counter practice that individuals may take up if they wish to, is unlikely to be particularly effective. As he puts it, "The form taken by modern subjectivity... is heavily influenced by the technological, commercial, and ideological structures that together define industrialism, although consciousness (a less inclusive term) finds it hard to discern this influence." [30] The influence is hard for consciousness to discern precisely because "the colonizing ideology is blind to those qualities and attributes that are inconsistent with it."[31] Clearly this means that the majority of people will remain fairly ignorant of what might be missing from their culturally shaped ways of encountering the world and others within it, regardless of their individual well-being. Kidner therefore pays much greater attention than Fisher to the need to restructure Western *culture* in order to remove the damaging exclusivity of the industrial/rational vision, and to revive and

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[28] Ibid., p.161
[29] Ibid., p.182
[30] See David Kidner, Nature and Psyche: Radical Environmentalism and the Politics of Subjectivity, (2001), Albany: State University of New York Press, p. 133
[31] Ibid., p. 143

reincorporate, at a greater-than-individual level, the suppressed dimensions of bodily awareness and intuitive sensitivity to the possibility of healthier ways of life.

What, then, is the scope within this process for the liberation of animals? Carol Adams has noted that although "meat-eating is unambiguously experienced as personal", it is in fact "inculcated through social processes,"[32] as well as that a primary goal of her work has been "to expose the roots of animal exploitation in the construction of the patriarchal subject."[33] She clearly indicates that although conventional wisdom tends to assume that meat-eating is a result of individual free choice, Western culture is actually structured in ways that make a truly free choice unlikely in the majority of cases. Indeed, although she does not use the term, her account of the social processes and influences involved could very credibly be described as one of colonization. Although some of the issues that she describes are unique to the culture surrounding meat, many involve less specific processes that are strongly in accordance with Kidner's account of the colonization of our intelligence by rationality and abstraction. I will now sketch some of these issues and show how concerns identified by Adams, and others, map onto the problems with rationality that Kidner identifies. Identifying this common ground will hopefully establish further the extent to which animal liberation is an ecopsychological issue. I hope to make it clear that the extent, and the acceptance, of the contemporary institutional abuse of domestic animals relies heavily on essentially the same colonizing psychological processes as those identified by Kidner as currently advancing the destruction of the natural world and the reduction of human potentialities. One implication of this argument is that tackling animal abuse adequately will require addressing the broader cultural tendencies that ecopsychologists identify as problematic; another is that ecopsychologists would be wrong to ignore the extent to which the popular acceptance of meat may strengthen and support the process of our colonization.

Distancing from Body and World through a Preference for Abstract Reason

Kidner argues that conventional theories of child development, such as those of Jean Piaget, normalise one possible developmental course and present it as a

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[32] Carol J. Adams, The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminst Vegetarian Critical Theory, (1990), Cambridge: Polity Press, p. 93

[33] Carol J. Adams, "Caring about Suffering: A Feminist Exploration" in Josephine Donovan & Carol J. Adams (Ed.s), Beyond Animal Rights, (1996), New York: Continuum, p. 170

universal phenomenon. In this course – the predominant one in the West – development proceeds according to a progressive detachment from the world and the growth of an ability to manipulate it dispassionately in both practical and symbolic ways that appear to constitute an infantile precursor to the scientific attitude. Central to this detachment from the world is the growing ability to separate conceptual thought from the material world and to prefer the relative freedom and autonomy of the virtual environment that this creates. These developmental processes involve a detachment from more than just the outside world however. As Kidner argues:

> The relation to the world that develops is abstract, overwhelmingly visual, and relatively unemotional... The price that the infant pays is a sense of self as constituted in the body – a sense of self that suggests an entirely different orientation to the world. Rather the child learns to objectify their body primarily as their visual image...[34]

Kidner argues that these processes entail a pathological alienation from body and world, and that they nurture a form of selfhood that is basically schizoid. But he insists that this type of self should not be seen as inevitable – rather it is a manifestation of tendencies specific to Western industrial societies. Moreover, he suggests that it is primarily the relative exclusivity of this style of relation that is problematic, that this exclusivity is consistent with the needs of the capitalist/industrial system, and that it has emerged in parallel with this system during a long-term dialectical process. The distancing from bodily responses that is involved is crucial to the efficient operation of the capitalist/industrial appropriation of the natural world precisely because it is our bodily responses that might suggest types of intuitive valuing that clash with those that reduce the world primarily to its economic usefulness:

> Bodily feeling is the basis of intimacy between ourselves and the world. Watching a kite soar in the thermals overhead, we feel ourselves soaring with it. Hearing the scream of a hunted animal as it is shot, we feel something of the pain and terror ourselves. And what we experience as we explore some unspoiled area of wilderness draws us into the place in powerfully felt ways that consciousness may be quite unable to categorize or understand. But if our body, and its associated capacity to sense aspects of nature, becomes something outside the boundaries of self, then we lose our somatically based abilities to relate to the natural world in this sort of way.[35]

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[34] Kidner, Nature and Psyche, p.150
[35] Ibid., p.150

Bodily feeling, then, has the potential to connect us both to the experience of individual animal others *and* to the wellbeing of less sentient aspects of nature, such as wilderness areas. The extensive suppression of bodily intuition, including the social/moral sense and any mimetic or embodied feelings of "connection" that might inform it, is clearly intrinsic to the environmentally destructive processes of Western capitalism, as well as a powerful influence supporting the industrial processes currently supplying consumers with animal foods. The widespread acceptance of both of these types of process – which in many cases are indistinguishable anyway – is aided by the preference for an abstract and technical understanding both of how things can be done, and of the related moral issues.

For example, it seems fairly clear that a tendency toward abstract thinking makes possible the dualistic understanding of body and mind that has permeated Western culture since the Enlightenment, and that has been extensively critiqued by environmental philosophers. This dualism is, as Myers points out, inextricably implicated in the construction of the categorical human/animal boundary.[36] But as well as supporting the apparent plausibility of the categorical boundary, the distancing of our thoughts from our bodily feeling for the world through a preference for an abstract understanding seems also to aid the destruction of the possibility of experiencing an authentic sense of relationship to any animal that might become food, and therefore the destruction of any claim that the social/moral sense might make on whether or how this comes about.

The early beginnings of this tendency can perhaps be detected in the "abstract quality" that Myers notes in the exchange between the three girls Cassia, Ivy and Adrienne (Cassia: "Do you know people eat animals?" Ivy: "And animals eat people." Cassia: "And animals eat animals." Adrienne: "*You* eat animals!"[37]) Myers comments that the girls "have no contact with the reality discussed", but this exchange perhaps also shows that they have little contact with their *feelings* about the reality discussed – the abstraction serving to rationalise and ultimately dismiss an emotional confusion, rather than to come to terms with it and understand its significance. Perhaps this is inevitable, since their knowledge of how animals come to be eaten seems incomplete, and not to derive from their own experience. Some

[36] Myers, Children and Animals, p.161-2
[37] Ibid., p.153

kind of direct experience of the reality and of the corresponding feelings would perhaps have to occur together to be assimilated adequately. But if the girls have learned to use abstraction and rationality in preference to their intuitive social/moral senses before this has any chance of taking place – in Kidner's terms if they have been successfully colonized – then an authentic emotional response is much less likely. Their distancing and defence mechanisms are largely already installed. As Myers seems to suggest, and as his examples perhaps illustrate, children seem to be learning this preference for abstraction as they also learn to deal with their feelings about meat.

These issues find important echoes in Adams' work. In particular, her analysis of the discourses surrounding "meat" describes the functioning of what she calls the "absent referent". Although a complex and slightly theoretically imprecise term, the absent referent, when applied to animals, denotes the fact that they – and particularly food animals – have for most Western consumers a reality that is primarily abstract and conceptual/discursive rather than derived from experience. Adams claims that "When I argue that animals are absent referents, in one sense of that term I mean that they are disembodied entities, beings whom we never touch, hear or see."[38] Despite having a very significant role in both the diets and the discourses of many Westerners, Adams suggests, their apparent existence is for the most part conceptual rather than experienced through their co-presence as living beings. The extent to which the discourses constructing our relationships with animals are culturally pre-established often serves to negate the possibility of unprejudiced encounter with animals, even should we encounter them physically. This is a point made by Peter Steeves and discussed in chapter 3. The extreme disjunction between an empathic or mimetic experiencing of the lives of these animals and the discursive and abstract processes by which people construct their understandings of animal farming – as well as any moral dimensions of it – means that what is actually done to animals has little or no experiential reality for consumers. As Adams goes on to put it, "Disembodied knowledge literally brings about disembodied animals, who have little potential of being touched, heard, or seen, except as a means to our ends."

[38] Carol J. Adams, Neither Man nor Beast, (1994), New York: Continuum, p. 137

Adams also links social pressures to accept meat with the establishment of these ways of thinking when she observes that

> Children, fresh observers of the dominant culture, raise issues about meat eating using a literal viewpoint. One part of the socialization process to the dominant culture is the encouragement of children to view the death of animals for food as acceptable; to do so they must think symbolically rather than literally.[39]

Her analysis is therefore broadly in agreement with the implication that we drew from Levin's and Myers' arguments earlier: that the acceptance of meat might constitute an important early training ground for children's detachment from the nascent social/moral sense. The abstract understanding – both of what occurs and of its moral dimensions – that is preferred by adults and demonstrated to children, is an understanding that can be cognitively manipulated and reshaped in order to suppress dissonant feelings. Children are unlikely to miss the wider usefulness of this. It is also the aspect of Western scientific/technological culture that ecopsychological critiques most often identify as problematic.

The Reduction of Natural Order and the Obscuring of Relationship

A purely rational understanding functions in many complex ways to achieve these effects, but some of the more important ways have been delineated quite clearly. Kidner particularly identifies the overwhelming blindness of Western culture to significant structural properties of the natural world, and relates this to our similar inability to comprehend (and to moderate) the complex processes behind the destructive effects of Western culture. He argues that the natural world, while appearing infinitely complex, is actually very ordered – although a purely rational approach often finds this ordering hard to grasp. Our excessive investment in rationality leads inevitably to the description of the natural world in terms that are primarily comprehensible in rational or scientific ways, but these can obscure our sensitivity to arational qualities of the world, as well as of our own societal functioning. Our dimmed perception of such alternative qualities, argues Kidner, can become part of the conceptual baggage of terms such as 'ecology':

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[39] Adams, Sexual Politics, p.75

> Much of what we hint at when we refer to 'ecology' has to do with the emergent properties of large systems – those properties that depend on, but are not reducible to, the properties of components of such systems. Similarly, much of what makes us human reflects the emergent properties of cultural systems that are scientifically inexplicable and empirically untestable. Rational understanding can explain the behaviour of individual cells fairly adequately, that of individual creatures rather less adequately, and that of the larger systems we are part of hardly at all – which is why we have little comprehension of the direction our society is heading in, and even less of the large-scale ecological systems it is displacing.[40]

Our ordering of nature is, rather, based on fitting living things into abstract categories based on their genealogy and on the properties that they are seen to possess. But following Kidner we might acknowledge that the natural world can also be perceived as more fundamentally about relationships, and that our style of rational categorisation can obscure this. He gives the following example:

> A butterfly, we learn, is like a moth, but different to a buddleia. In ecological systems, however, butterflies and moths have few significant relationships; while butterflies and buddleias do. Our systems of classification, then, are selectively based in those specific natural characteristics that we can recognise and cognitively order, and we tend to ignore those other less accessible natural characteristics that have to do with relation and systemic functioning.[41]

These ways of categorising and conceptualising the world are useful in the industrial appropriation of nature, both because they focus on the qualities most likely to be economically useful, and because they displace ways of encountering the world that are more perceptive of its interdependent relationships, and therefore more inclined to be respectful of these.

This insight clearly illuminates one of the means by which structurally endemic animal abuse is made to appear acceptable. If the subtleties of relationship and systemic functioning are subordinated to rational categorisation then it is much easier to perceive modern farming as analogous to natural predation and to not feel the revolt of our sensibilities that it might otherwise provoke. Meat can be seen as meat, regardless of the relationships that produce it. Kidner usefully compares the style of thinking based on reductive categorisation and ignorance of relationship to the description of a Beethoven symphony "in terms of decibels, pitch, and duration"

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[40] David Kidner, "Fraud, Fiction, and Fantasy in Environmental Writing," *Environmental Ethics*, 27(4), (2005)
[41] Ibid.

and points out that "Whereas the reduction of meaning is obvious when applied to Beethoven, it is less so when applied to the natural world, since we have been trained to see this world through the lenses of industrialism since infancy."[42] As a result of this training, "the world can be quantified in terms of physical characteristics such as board-feet or cubic feet per second – characteristics that all too easily come to seem fundamental defining attributes."[43] The destructive result of this style of thinking for natural 'resources' – a category in which billions of animal lives every year would have to be included – is fairly obvious, but since it is implicated both in a significant reduction of our ability to relate to the natural world, and also to ourselves, it also involves a very important loss of human potential and understanding. In Kidner's words:

> Industrialism requires monocultures, not biodiversity – in materials, products, people; and it selects those particular characteristics out of many possible ones that are consistent with its structures, so that these structures will appear as the only possible ones. The price we pay for the products of industrialism thus includes a gross simplification of the most significant structures of our lives, and consequently an enormous loss of meaning.[44]

This "loss of meaning" clearly encompasses the loss of a sense of deep relationship with food as well as the loss of an experiential intimacy with the animal world that might allow us to really feel the impact of our choices on animal others. In a sense this makes life somewhat nicer for the human, and makes much easier the popular option of glibness or bravado about the "naturalness" of meat and the ubiquity or desirability of killing. But it also implies a kind of blindness or lack of comprehension toward the *actual* relationships that feed us – which are surely some of the most significant that we could ever be involved in. While this problem is bigger than the role of animals within it, the life-long abuse and the mass destruction of animals that take place in modern farming is an event that our social and moral natures should really have an adequate comprehension of. To acquiesce in the easy perception that what happens to individual food animals is not of central relevance to our decisions about what to eat – to perhaps uncritically accept the assumption that we have a "right" to eat meat – would be to acquiesce in a massive reduction of our

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[42] Kidner, Nature and Psyche, p. 142-3
[43] Ibid., p. 142-3
[44] Ibid., p. 144

own humanity, if our humanity is understood as our natural existence as socially and morally motivated beings.

It is worth noting here, although this matter will be further explored in the next chapter, that environmentalists occasionally seem to collude in exactly this reduction when they critique animal liberation. For example, J. Baird Callicott argues that "Civilization has insulated and alienated us from the rigours and challenges of the natural environment. The hidden agenda of the humane ethic is the imposition of the anti-natural prophylactic ethos of comfort and soft pleasure on an even wider scale."[45] Callicott does not mention, however, the possibility that the provision of cheap, easily available meat in the quantities consumed in the West, without any need to think about the appalling treatment of the animal that it came from, might have more to do with this "prophylactic ethos" than has the stance of the ethical vegetarian who makes the choice to confront the extent of this abuse and her feelings about it.

Central to this ability to miss the intuitive importance of relationships is the ability to ignore the being of those others with whom relationship takes place. This, again, is an intrinsic aspect of a rationalised understanding and is fundamental both to Western environmental destructiveness and to institutionalised animal abuse.

The Reduction of Individual Being and Uniqueness

Since, as Kidner tells us, industrialism requires monoculture and categorisation is its primary ordering structure, it tends to emphasise uniformity rather than individuality or distinctiveness. Not only are the relationships and systemic qualities of the natural world largely obscured, but even the variation among individuals tends to be smoothed over as plants, animals, and even people become reduced to examples of their type. This reduction is useful in the creation of abstract models of reality and the operation upon those models of rationally derived schemes and calculations. The extent to which industrialism nurtures this way of perceiving the world, at the expense of a sensitivity to uniqueness and to what or who is literally present, constitutes a shrinking of our attention away from reality. This impoverished style of perception – and its influence upon relations with the

[45] J. Baird Callicott, "Animal Liberation: A Triangular Affair," in Robert Elliot (Ed.), Environmental Ethics, (1995), Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.52.

world and with others – is not inevitable, however, and Kidner demonstrates this by drawing on anthropology:

> Nonindustrial cultures typically abstain from complex abstract schemes, preferring to emphasize a thing's individuality and uniqueness to a greater extent than we do. For example, Veronica Strang notes that Australian aboriginals, if working on a cattle ranch, "did not count horses as they were brought in, but could tell whether any were missing because they knew them all individually… meanwhile, the white stockmen would be trying to count the horses."[46]

The relevance of this observation to contemporary relationships with animals barely needs stating: the majority of contemporary animal farming methods depend to an extreme extent on the reduction of uniqueness and obliteration of meaningful or personal relation. In many cases not only is the distinctiveness of each animal considered irrelevant, as in the instance above, but even the very fact that animals are animals can become a troublesome distraction from the qualities that are economically relevant. To give one example, the modern farmer is encouraged by an industry publication to "Forget the pig is an animal. Treat him just like a machine in a factory. Schedule treatments like you would lubrication. Breeding season like the first step in an assembly line. And marketing like the delivery of finished goods."[47] In keeping with the pattern that we have been detecting, this reduction of the animal's being is so extreme that any possibility of experiencing a moral dimension to the relationship is made almost impossible – and of course this is partly the point of the advice: to circumvent any remnants of an intuitive sensitivity to the animal's plight.[48]

This type of conceptualisation of the animal was identified as a particularly acute example of one of the foundational characteristics of industrialism by

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[46] Kidner, Nature and Psyche, p. 144-5. The quotation is from Veronica Strang, Uncommon Ground: Cultural Landscapes and Environmental Values, (1997), Oxford: Berg, p.182-183

[47] Quoted in Garner, Animals, Politics and Morality, p.109

[48] It is perhaps worth noting at this point that the extremity of this kind of degradation of animals probably lies behind the frustration that some animal liberationists express when confronted with arguments – such as Rodman's – to the effect that giving animals formal rights would somehow reduce their otherness. While such arguments overwhelmingly make sense to those philosophers whose primary concerns encompass wild animals and ecological processes, those concerned with improving the lot of the animals directly enmeshed in the sort of devastating industrialised processes hinted at above sometimes experience this as irresponsible romanticism. A much more extreme reduction has clearly already occurred and the attempt to use the cultural currency of rationality in the victims' favour, to these liberationists, seems to be the only realistic hope for improving this situation.

Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer in their Dialectic of Enlightenment. As they claimed:

> The true nature of schematism, of the general and the particular, of concept and individual case reconciled from without, is ultimately revealed in contemporary science as the interest of industrial society. Being is apprehended under the aspect of manufacture and administration. Everything – even the human individual, not to speak of the animal – is converted into the repeatable, replaceable process, into a mere example for the conceptual models of the system.[49]

In keeping with this early observation, Adams detects extreme conceptual obliterations of uniqueness and reductions of being occurring at different levels of the process of commodification that turns animals into meat. While the psychological distancing implicit in the deliberate conceptualisation of an animal as a machine operates in a different sphere from the practices of a majority of non-farming Westerners, a variety of comparable mechanisms serve to systematically reduce the awareness that most consumers have of the food animal's being. To give a pertinent example, Adams argues that the acceptance of meat is aided by the use of the word "meat" as a "mass term" – it serves to obscure the origins of any piece of flesh as originally part of the body of an individual creature with its own awareness and experience of life. As Adams describes it, "Mass terms refer to things like water or colors; no matter how much you have of it, or what type of container it is in, water is still water... Objects referred to by mass terms have no individuality, no uniqueness, no specificity, no particularity."[50] Referring to "meat" in this way is therefore more than simply the application of an abstract category, since it provides a ready means of achieving psychological distance from potentially disturbing knowledge about reality.

The denial of individual being is a particularly important component in the disengaging of intuitive social/moral responses. Adams argues that the exploitation of animals is aided by the fact that they "often are not seen as individuals and thus remain undifferentiated from each other."[51] It is because of this lack of differentiation, she claims, that "the concept of boundaries for animals – self-

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[49] Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer, Dialectic of Enlightenment, (1997), London: Verso, p. 84
[50] Adams, Neither Man nor Beast, p.27
[51] Carol Adams in Josephine Donovan and Carol J. Adams (Ed.s), Beyond Animal Rights : A Feminist Caring Ethic for the Treatment of Animals, (2000), Continuum International Publishing Group, p.178

imposed or otherwise – rarely arises." But the initial suggestion – that exploitation is aided by the perception of animals (and particularly food animals) as undifferentiated – can perhaps be better illuminated by thinking of it in terms of the bodily interactional order posited here. I have argued that the interactional order has the tendency, or the potential, to regulate our interaction with animals, but experience suggests that it is easier to empathise with an individual than with a group, as is perhaps suggested by the fact that sympathies for "food animals" are more easily stimulated when the animals are given an identity. The power of this change in emphasis can perhaps be seen by comparing two news stories.

In 1998 two pigs (the "Tamworth Two") managed to escape from an abattoir by swimming across a river and subsequently succeeded in living wild for a short while in nearby forests. Having been given the names "Butch" and "Sundance", their ability to evade capture became a popular news story, a BBC drama was made about them, and there was even a campaign to create a statue of them in the town where they escaped. When caught they were given safe accommodation in which to live out their days. This story contrasts markedly with a more recent one, in which the discovery of avian flu at an industrial scale turkey farm in Suffolk necessitated the mass slaughter of 160,000 birds. As the details of this very different story emerged, it became clear that it was an impossible task to conceptualise it as the destruction of 160,000 individual lives, even while the television provided images of the birds being herded up in their vast sheds and their carcasses subsequently dumped into skips by mechanical diggers. The conceptual obliteration of the individual creature that this scale of farming implies seems to effectively dilute the potential for an empathic response, even while we perceive its inhumanity. It is after all difficult to relate to, or imagine what it would be like to be, 160,000 turkeys. This news story, while it brought into the public domain important hints about the nature of contemporary farming, engaged little sympathy for the victims, and easily distracted the viewer's attention from the horror – and banality – of the massacre toward more rationally comprehensible issues such as the traceability of infection and "consumer confidence in the industry". The apparent incompatibility of the public attitudes revealed by these two very different stories is difficult to account for other than by acknowledging that Butch and Sundance were perceived as individuals, while the undifferentiated mass of turkeys remained anonymous and apparently unable to elicit any significant consideration at all.

The language and the culture that surrounds meat-eating works very effectively in many complex ways to achieve this sort of distancing, and it is clear that in most cases this operates through a denial or a reduction of the being of the individual animal. Kidner makes clear the problematic nature of this type of process from an environmental perspective, and the universality of this sort of distancing and reduction of being in Western culture – even vegetarians sometimes succumb to it – might also provide a common psychological model for the subverting of social/moral responses to humans. This is made particularly probable when it is so systematically applied to animals since we are naturally – before colonized by rationality and the discourses of categorical difference, as well as to a residual extent afterwards – inclined to respond socially to the animal in a fuller and more meaningful sense than we are to less sentient and responsive natural entities such as forests or geological features (although our response to these entities can perhaps be equally compelling and important). In Myer's terms, the animal has the four crucial core traits of agency, coherence, affectivity and continuity that intuitively engage our social instincts. The reduction of the animal's being, therefore, is potentially experientially close to the reduction of a human's, which suggests that it may provide a fundamentally compatible model for the reduction of the human. The two reductions engage and instantiate very similar psychological inclinations, since the being of animals and humans can be experienced as ontologically similar – a point that R.D. Laing has persuasively argued.[52]

Rationality and abstraction can be seen as multifaceted tools with which to improve the material conditions of one's life. They can be used to accelerate the appropriation of the natural world for human comfort, and can also be used to oppose and override the tendencies of an embodied sense of morality about how this occurs. Indeed, rationality can replace our embodied morality either through our own deliberate choice or also less consciously through our alignment with Western cultural preferences. I would like now to conclude this chapter with a few comments about what these observations might suggest about the construction of animal liberation theory.

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[52] See R.D. Laing, The Politics of Experience, (1967), London: Penguin Books, p.51-2

Rationality and Liberation

We have discussed the idea that a hegemonic Western rationality colonises our subjectivity – a process that involves a progressive detachment from bodily awarenesses and a distancing from intimate engagement with the world. But Kidner suggests that there is another side to this process, and that the unduly rational formation of self is "not merely the residue of a potential self – what is left after the arational elements have been shorn off – but is also the result of a more active process, a forced identification with a power so overwhelming that the ego's only hope for survival is to become consistent with this power."[53] Becoming consistent with this power may not, however, mean that all actions are inherently rational (environmental destruction being the obvious example), but rather that rationality is employed to achieve ends, and these ends tend to be those favoured by industrialism – although other types of motivation can also apparently be colonised.

This active identification with rationality therefore permeates the way that our culture deals with most topics and morality is no exception. There is some merit in the idea that this might be considered progressive, bearing in mind the long human history of atrocities committed through "irrational" prejudice and superstition. But, since rationality is, in Fisher's terminology, "rudderless," it is unlikely that a purely rational morality could ever exist, and therefore it seems that an exclusively rational moral theory can be employed only as a means to an end, rather than being used (as logical moralists such as Singer profess) to determine ends objectively. In practice, a logical approach to ethics seems to depend upon intuitions as the foundations of its edifices, as well as to motivate their construction. To give one example, the majority of logical theories of animal liberation rely upon the "argument from marginal cases" – which in turn depends upon the intuition that the lives of very young children and the mentally disabled are of moral significance. But beyond such founding intuitions, it seems difficult for logical approaches to ethics to agree on anything substantial, suggesting perhaps that logic – at least as implemented by human ethicists – might not be as impartial as is implicitly hoped or assumed. As Marti Kheel observes, the debates engendered by this type of philosophy often seem to quickly lose relevance to real cases and, to quote the particular example that she gives, "Ethical deliberation on the value of nature is conceived more or less like a

[53] Kidner, Nature and Psyche, p. 137

competitive sport."[54] This is pretty much the danger identified by a wealth of other theorists, including Levin: such a morality becomes exclusively "tool-like,"[55] geared to achieving pre-determined ends primarily through skilful technical manipulation.

Clearly one of the problems that animal liberation has historically faced has been that in a culture that values reason above all, caring what happens to animals has been widely and defensively perceived as evidence of improper sentimentality. And since a primary premise of debate is so often that it should be exclusively rational, this perception can be made use of to defeat arguments on behalf of animal liberation or of an intuitive social/moral sense. In whatever form it manages to survive the kind of dysfunctional socialisation described by Levin, Kidner and others, such a sense is therefore inherently disadvantaged by the need to articulate its insights within terms that are culturally acceptable. Kidner provides a good example of the subtlety with which the criticism that a particular stance is "emotional" can set the boundaries of what appears to be reasonable debate and also suggests that this may have links to psychopathology:

> Several years ago I was listening to a Canadian government official defending the annual seal cull then taking place in the Arctic areas of that country. What struck me particularly was one sentence: "The problem is that people get so *emotional* when they think about a man taking a seal pup." Here we have the power of language to conceal, to peddle ideology, and to deny those aspects of selfhood which are inconsistent with the comfortable, business-as-usual assumptions of most citizens of the developed world. Feelings, lacking a discourse that could effectively articulate them, seem inferior to rational calculations (how many fish a seal eats during the course of its life; how the population has grown; etc). Laundered language ("taking") is used to deprive the situation of its physical and emotional reality, to reduce it to pure quantity, calculation. We are not in an integrated world of mind and feeling, complete with feelings, intuition, and heartfelt reactions; rather we are in Descartes' realm of the pure intellect. Small wonder that existential psychiatrists such as Laing have referred to "an unbelievable devastation of our experience."[56]

Despite the difficulties of articulating embodied moral intuitions, particularly in contexts such as the one above that implicitly attempt to deny them any validity, the goal of integrating mind and feeling makes an excessive reliance on

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[54] Marti Kheel, "From Heroic to Holistic Ethics: The Ecofeminist Challenge" in Greta Gaard (Ed.), Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature, (1993), Philadelphia: Temple University Press, p. 249
[55] Both Levin and Kheel use the tool metaphor – See Levin, Body's Recollection, p.230; Kheel, "Heroic to Holistic", p. 250
[56] Kidner, Nature and Psyche, p. 277

the "tool-like" use of rationality to achieve moral ends dangerous. Such ends might actually be ones informed by emotion and the social/moral instincts, as it is entirely possible to suspect that Singer's and Regan's are. But the danger, nevertheless, is perhaps that in excluding this from what they explicitly say about morality, they involve a kind of deception – of self and others. And, in arguing purely on the rational grounds favoured by technological/industrial culture they effectively draw animal liberation into exactly that "identification with a power so overwhelming" that is ultimately problematic. They provide an answer to the accusation that animal liberation is based in emotion, but by denigrating emotion rather than showing that emotion is inextricable from morality.

The danger, however, seems to lie not in the *use* of rational or abstract thought, but in the dynamic that allows it to dominate (or even to appear to dominate) ways of thinking that might engage the full potential of the social/moral sense, as well as the extent to which the indispensable intention to illuminate a situation by thinking it through can slip psychologically toward the more problematic assumption that fundamental or universal truths can be accessed through the creation of abstract principles. Rights theory is perhaps particularly prone to this latter danger, although like utilitarianism it could retain great value if approached purely as a heuristic and sense-making device within the context of a larger and more integrative awareness. Either theory perhaps risks becoming a problem if it is thought to encapsulate all moral aspects of a situation – if its abstract reduction of the reality that it models comes to dominate rather than inform an embodied sense of morality that is able to take relevant perspectives and to balance them intuitively without prejudice. This latter type of approach will not produce unequivocal answers – for example to the perennial philosophical clash between species and individuals – but after years of debate neither has the purely rational approach, outside of the closed worlds of competing individual theories.

It is worth acknowledging that this in essence describes the sort of approach to morality that several ecofeminist animal liberationists have been working toward for some time, as well as being basically compatible with the meta-ethical thinking of writers as diverse as Hargrove and Bauman. Amongst others, Adams has been explicit about the fact that "emotions and theory are related" and has criticised the harmful effect that Singer's and Regan's exclusively rational approach to animal liberation may have had:

> Several animal advocacy men have told me that they spent years insisting that they did not care for animals, because they did not feel caring was an appropriate response. They needed to appear rational, "in control," distanced from animals. With the appearance of ecofeminists writings on animals, they felt such relief because they now had a language that legitimated the idea that they might care for animals and that this was an appropriate motivation for activism.[57]

She is therefore very clear about the sense in which she aims to provide theory that articulates some of the embodied intuitions that motivate animal liberation, rather than simply acknowledging that these exist and then prioritising reason over them (as Cathryn Bailey has demonstrated that Singer and Regan systematically do.[58]) She also attempts to inform the social/moral sense through demonstrating the operation of some of the subtle ideological constructions that systematically dissociate awareness of what "meat" now entails in the West. These are vital functions for animal liberation theory to perform – more so according to the analysis that I have been developing than the creation of an 'ethic' that attempts to technologise the moral dimensions of our relations with animals as a way of opposing the morally dysfunctional attitude that our culture has developed.

It is worth at this point considering again the difference between Fisher's assumption that increasing individual well-being will lead to a more morally engaged society, and Kidner's greater focus on the need for the reformation of culture to revive our bodily and intuitive senses of what a spiritually healthy life might be like. "Not all experience," argues Kidner, "can be directly taken as a valid guide to what is true or moral; and it is one of the tasks of a sophisticated culture to interpret and articulate experience appropriately."[59] This is perhaps the best way to envisage a solution to these problems: culture should provide *guidance* to extend and to complete the insights of a bodily order, but it should not attempt to replace them with a technologised morality. This implies the continued necessity of some form of culturally nurtured moral structure, although a predominantly heuristic and non-dogmatic one that is fundamentally realigned with both our own moral nature and with the needs of the natural world. The argument that I have presented here suggests strongly that such a moral structure would be opposed to the majority of

[57] Adams, "Caring", p.188
[58] Cathryn Bailey, "On the Backs of Animals: The Valorization of Reason in Contemporary Animal Ethics", *Ethics and the Environment*, 10(1), (2005)
[59] Kidner, "Fraud, Fantasy and Fiction"

ways in which animals are currently used in the West, since these – coupled with the lack of any real necessity – seem themselves opposed to the "harmonious unfolding" of our social/moral sense.

To conclude, then, it should by now be clear that a progressive animal liberation philosophy would be wise to incorporate the insights that the ecopsychological critique of rationality provides. As I have argued, much of the ecofeminist theory of animal liberation does precisely that – which is in itself not surprising as ecofeminism has produced several equally powerful critiques of rationality. I have also argued here that this type of animal liberation theory can effectively extend critiques of rationality by showing that specifically problematic aspects of the hegemony of rationality are supported by the cultural mechanisms that dissociate or attempt to legitimise Western animal abuse. Ecopsychology, as a theoretical discipline, would therefore be wise to give greater weight to the sense in which the culture surrounding meat, particularly, reinforces several harmful psychological tendencies associated with the industrial appropriation of nature, bringing them on a day to day basis into the homes and lives of a majority of Westerners. But ecopsychology and ecofeminism, like much environmental writing, are intriguingly conflicted about animal liberation. In the next chapter I will attempt to illuminate what may be going on here.

8

Animals, Rocks and Ontologies of Resistance

Introduction

In this chapter I will attempt to tackle a difficult topic: the definite fact that some environmental writers have a tendency to avoid endorsing an animal liberation stance, even when such a stance would appear to be a very natural implication of their own theoretical concerns. There are several possible reasons for this, however this chapter will elaborate on an obvious one: the tension between an animal liberation 'ontology' and one centred on ecological exchange and the importance of food chains. From an ecological exchange perspective, hunter-gatherer cultures are thought to demonstrate an ideal relationship to animals, and this high ideological valuing is sometimes used as a way to sidestep an adequate discussion of the many compelling reasons for vegetarianism and animal liberation in a Western context. The argument that I develop in this chapter will attempt to give a reason for the avoidance of this issue that does not downplay what is perhaps the most significant problem with taking a committed stance on animal liberation.

A Blind Spot: Ecopsychology

We should now be in a position to grasp something significant about how animal liberation, and perhaps to a lesser extent animal liberation theory, expresses important aspects of human psychology. If the argument that I have developed so far is valid then the liberationist attitude is motivated, at least in part, by the persistence or resurrection, against mainstream cultural conditioning, of the child's natural inclusion of animals in the world of social others to whom the body's interactional order or social/moral sense applies. While this inclusiveness tends to be encouraged while children are young, with the popularity of animal images in such things as cuddly toys and animal cartoons, growing up is overwhelmingly thought in the West to imply "growing out of" a world populated by significant animal personalities, rather than growing into one – albeit a more mature one – as it would be in some

cultures.[1] Animal liberation can to some extent be thought of as an attempt to maintain a respectful and broadly egalitarian attitude to the animal in adulthood. The factors motivating it, if we accept the arguments presented here, are part of human nature – at least in so far as we accept Andy Fisher's understanding that "Human nature is the felt process of completing needs, meanings, or intentions as they… arise in the interplay between body and world."[2]

From this we might expect Fisher's account, and ecopsychology more generally, to have important things to say about animal liberation – to sense its implications for our moral and emotional well-being and for reforming our relations with the world. This would seem especially likely as Fisher makes the reclaiming of emotional experience central to his healing project, and to his attempt to outline what an ecological consciousness might be like. He tells a story that has great resonance with our concerns here:

> When I was a child I had a compelling love affair with all things rocky: bedrock outcroppings, cliffs, mountains, sandy beaches, stones. I would sit for great lengths of time among limestone boulders on the shores of the Bruce Peninsula, just sensing their timeless presence, their heavy being. As a student geologist later in life, I undertook a research project on what is known as the "Kingston limestone," a lovely rock with a warm glow. From a local quarry I obtained a section of rock core and then diamond sawed it into cylinders two inches in diameter and five inches tall. These were placed one at a time between the plattons of a servo control compression testing machine, and then slowly squeezed to the breaking point, so as to measure their strength. As I watched that rock crumble, I felt a voice inside me scream; yet the mood of the laboratory overrode it. It was not until some time later that I let myself feel the shame for what I had done.[3]

If we interpret this incident in terms of the account that we have been developing, we might say that Fisher appears to have included rocks within the sphere of concern of his social/moral sense. His emotional response tells him that what he did to the rock was violent, because it contravenes the sort of behaviour that he intuitively feels to be appropriate toward objects of social/moral concern. Although he repressed this awareness at the time, because his social role required him to, his "existential sensitivity" later convinced him that it was wrong. As he claims: "The promise of an

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[1] My thanks to David Kidner for this point.
[2] Andy Fisher, Radical Ecopsychology: Psychology in the Service of Life, (2002), Albany: State University of New York Press, p.105
[3] Ibid., p.55

experiential approach for ecopsychology is that it may give such feelings a place, accord them their proper truth and weight."[4]

Fisher also describes how the "economisation of reality" under capitalism turns commodities into the central reality that is perceived – a process that occurs at the expense of relationships and "the life process" and that "silences nature's claims."[5] The necessary pieces seem to be in place for an important critique of industrialism's use and abuse of animal life. But Fisher seems remarkably unwilling to tackle such concerns head on, as are many other ecopsychologists who also emphasise the crucial importance of bodily and emotional knowledge. To give a further example, Sarah Conn recounts a story in which, while driving in Massachusetts, she stopped to buy strawberries from a vendor at the side of the road. She was initially very happy about this experience because she felt that "the berries connected me to the sunshine, the rain, the soil, the farmer." However, on noticing writing on the box that informed her that the berries were from California, her happiness changed: "A dark feeling swept over me, as suddenly I was also connected to the truckers, the oil companies, and the farming conglomerates, to the ozone hole, monoculture, and soil depletion."[6] Despite the absolutely catastrophic environmental damage that the meat industry inflicts – damage that unquestionably dwarfs that of the strawberry supply chain – Conn makes no mention of any dark feelings accompanying the sight of a hamburger.

But perhaps this is missing the point: these writers are only using illustrative examples drawn from their own experience to demonstrate the intimate interrelationship of their emotional responses and their moral responses to knowledge of harm. Their arguments are not directed toward animal liberationist ends and it would of course be perfectly reasonable for them not to have the space to do justice to this issue. Looking a little deeper, however, it begins to seem fairly clear that there are complex issues relating to the clash between animal liberation and ecological thought, and perhaps also to the enduring influence of Paul Shepard, that might lead to a suspicion or hostility toward a liberationist perspective. Shepard was vociferous in his condemnation of animal liberation. His critique is wide-

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[4] Ibid., p.55
[5] Ibid., p.84
[6] Sarah A. Conn, "When the Earth Hurts, Who Responds?" in Theodore Roszak, Mary E. Gomes & Allen D. Kanner (Ed.s), Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth, Healing the Mind, (1995), San Francisco: Sierra Club, p.157

ranging but central to it are two important – but nevertheless dubious – points: that food chains are a central component in the functioning of ecological systems, thereby having a spiritual significance that makes it a sort of heresy to attempt to opt out of them (as it seems to him and to others that vegetarianism does[7]), and that as a species that evolved largely in a hunting context it is a fundamental developmental imperative embedded in our psychological nature to need the sort of relationships to animals provided by hunting and eating them.[8] Roger King neatly summarises this way of thinking in relation to hunting, and the argument seems also to extend to the eating of meat: "If the predator is naturally and unavoidably within us, then refusing to hunt is an anti-natural choice, one which separates us from our natural selves and produces alienation within the cultures that have dispensed with the hunting way of life."[9]

Shepard's influence on Fisher is strong: in one of the few short passages that are relevant to our concerns here he quotes him to the effect that "Being human has always meant perceiving ourselves in a circle of animals. The crucial event in this encounter has been ingestion. We have attended passionately to this consuming force until the idea of assimilation has permeated the nature of experience itself." [10] We might, of course, observe here that "the idea of assimilation" resonates significantly with other "ideas," such as colonisation or appropriation of habitat, that are far from benign. Fisher, however, does not note any such problems, and instead thinks it best "to recognize that if we are to live, we have *no choice* but to eat others."[11] He goes on to identify the hunter-gatherer attitude of respectful kinship with animals as the ideal and regrets that "With factory farms, supermarkets, and fast food, there is of

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[7] Val Plumwood also makes this claim, although neither she nor Shepard questions whether herbivorous animals also somehow attempt to remove themselves from the functioning of ecosystems by eating only plants. See Val Plumwood, "Integrating Ethical Frameworks for Animals, Humans and Nature: A Critical Feminist Eco-Socialist Analysis," *Ethics and the Environment*, 5(2), (2000)

[8] See Paul Shepard, Traces of an Omnivore, (1996), Washington DC: Island Press, p.15 or Chapter 23 of The Others: How Animals Made Us Human, (1996), Washington DC: Island Press. Points such as these are, of course, fascinating but hugely contentious. It has been suggested that "true, planned, coordinated hunting of large animals began only about 20,000 years ago." (Jim Mason, quoted in David Nibbert, Animal Rights, Human Rights: Entanglements of Oppression and Liberation, (2002), Rowman & Littlefield: Oxford, p.22).

[9] Roger J.H. King, "Environmental Ethics and the Case for Hunting," *Environmental Ethics*, 13(1), (1991), p.74. Note that King is not supporting this attitude, only explaining it.

[10] Shepard, quoted in Fisher, Radical Ecopsychology, p.67

[11] Fisher, Radical Ecopsychology, p.67

course little of this left, and it becomes progressively harder to sense that eating might be a form of nature communion."[12]

There is an evasion here. Any moral implications that factory farms, supermarkets and fast food might have for Western eating habits are subtly avoided by the assumption that we have "*no choice*," and it apparently only remains for us to shed a few tears over the loss of our authenticity. Fisher's account very effectively obscures both the tortured life of the animal and the possibility of implementing a moral attitude toward it within Western culture. What is missing from his account is that he *does* have a choice about what he eats, and that the choice that his stated concerns suggest that he might face is fundamentally about whether to try to convince himself that his attitude can somehow be manipulated to accord with the hunter-gatherer ideal, or whether he should allow himself to feel the implications of his choice for animals – and the environment – in the same way that he allowed himself to feel his shame about the destruction of a rock. Fisher's psychological sophistication, hugely impressive though it is, seems not to have recognised his own defences against confronting this dilemma fully.

This reluctance to grasp the nettle of the moral implications of human-animal relations under contemporary capitalism is to some extent understandable. The vision of an ideal relationship with the natural world – a vision that we might strive toward and use to orient our actions – is strong in ecopsychology as it is in most important environmental writing. The naturalness of predation, the ecological intimacy of hunter-gatherer cultures and the influence of writers such as Shepard have imbued the idea of respectful and appropriate human predation with a strong charge of desirability that often seems to obscure any impetus to stand against the current realities of institutionalised animal abuse. But in this tension between making moral connections in the here and now, and avoiding them in the conviction that bringing about a more ecologically sensitive culture might require us to keep faith with our supposed carnivorous nature, there is a big danger that both the natural world and farmed animals seem destined to lose out. It may be, however, that we do not yet have the whole story about why writers such as Fisher seem so willing to sidestep the animal issue. An echo of his avoidance by a leading ecofeminist writer

[12] Ibid., p.67

suggests that there may also be other factors involved in the familiar theoretical reluctance to embrace a moral vegetarian stance.

A Blind Spot: Ecofeminism

Karen Warren has been criticised by both Josephine Donovan[13] and Greta Gaard for an apparent inconsistency in her classic paper "The Power and Promise of Ecological Feminism." In this paper she describes the way that rock climbing caused her to develop a deep emotional relationship with rocks, and thereby to care about them. This realization struck her during one early expedition, in which: "It felt as if the rock and I were silent conversational partners in a longstanding friendship. I realized then that I had come to care about this cliff which was so different from me, so unmovable and invincible, independent and seemingly indifferent to my presence."[14] Warren uses this emotional attitude of caring to ground her description of ethical attitudes and behaviours and in particular her distinction between "two different types of relationship humans or climbers may have toward a rock: an imposed conqueror-type relationship, and an emergent caring-type relationship." This contrast, she says, "grows out of, and is faithful to, felt, lived experience."[15] The apparent inconsistency, as Gaard describes it, is that "while a central portion of the essay discusses ethical ways of rock climbing, the conclusion romanticizes the slaughter of an animal. It would be easy (though incorrect) to infer, from the juxtaposition of these two narratives, that Warren believes a rock is more worthy of moral concern than is an animal."[16]

The source of this slightly familiar problem is that Warren relates a story purporting to reveal Native American ethical attitudes toward hunting – and to establish a symbolic and practical reciprocity and a full emotional engagement with the implications of one's actions as central to these attitudes. As is the case with Fisher, it seems that the point of this is to highlight the moral pre-eminence of hunter-gatherer attitudes toward animals and killing, and to show that human

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[13] Josephine Donovan, "Attention to Suffering: Sympathy as a Basis for Ethical Treatment of Animals," in Josephine Donovan and Carol J. Adams (Ed.s), Beyond Animal Rights: A Feminist Caring Ethic for the Treatment of Animals, (1996), New York: Continuum, p.167

[14] Karren J. Warren, "The Power and Promise of Ecological Feminism," *Environmental Ethics*, 12(2), (1990), p.134-5

[15] Ibid., p. 135-6

[16] Greta Gaard, "Ecofeminism and Native American Cultures: Pushing the Limits of Cultural Imperialism" in Greta Gaard (Ed.), Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature, (1993), Philadelphia: Temple University Press, p.296

predation can be respectful and morally engaged. But for Gaard this story is problematic, in part because the deeper meanings of the story and of the hunter-gatherer attitudes that it purports to reveal are unlikely to translate very faithfully from one cultural and linguistic context to a very different one, and therefore because possible inferences that could be drawn from it might be misleading. Considering Warren's emphasis on a strong contextual basis for morality – a basis that clearly arises from a deep respect for cultural diversity and the uniqueness of localised ethical knowledge – this is an interesting point. Despite her insistence on ethical understanding being inextricably tied to context, Warren clearly has much more faith in the possibility of an inter-cultural exchange and understanding of moral concepts than Gaard, who expresses a desire to "question the implication on which Warren's article concludes: that is, that killing another animal, if done "respectfully" in one culture, can be determined an ethical practice in another culture."[17] Gaard presents a convincing challenge to the idea that we have the conceptual resources to engage adequately with the morality of hunter-gatherer relationships with animals[18] – a point that will be to some extent supported by my analysis in the next chapter. She also, however, goes on to identify another big problem with invoking stories such as this without also attempting to fill in the glaring blank space where the stories of contemporary animal farming should be. As she puts it:

> In fact, the current practice of factory farming in America leaves no room for the Lakota narrative Warren describes. When animals are routinely boxed, caged, injected with hormones, forcibly inseminated, denied access to their young, and made to suffer immeasurably in transit to their deaths, it would be ludicrous indeed to graft the Lakota narrative onto the end of the American factory farming story. Yet this is the *only place for animals* in the ecofeminism set forth in Warren's essay.[19] (Emphasis added)

So the problem here is – as was the case with Fisher – not merely what Warren *says*, but also very much what she does *not say* about Western ethical relations with animals. Because she presents an apparently benign view of Native American hunting and says nothing about the more urgent topic of contemporary abusive farming relationships, Gaard interprets Warren as colluding to some extent in the abuse.

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[17] Ibid., p.296
[18] See Ibid., p. 301
[19] Ibid., p.297

Warren has since clarified her views on some of these matters, devoting a whole chapter of her book Ecofeminist Philosophy to the topic of vegetarianism. It is apparent from this, as we would expect, that she in no way condones the Western meat industry or factory farming. But she presents an intriguing account in which the vast majority of space is taken up with arguing against what she defines as an "animal welfarist" position – a position that reductively conflates a wide variety of nuanced and often conflicting theoretical frameworks for vegetarianism and animal liberation, including ecofeminist ones. Her use of the word "welfarist" is in itself curious since the term 'animal welfare' is conventionally used to refer to a much less radical position than the extreme rights perspective that Warren seems to denote by it.[20] And the degree to which she generalises the many diverse and differentiated positions that she discusses (thereby avoiding the need to make proper reference to what individual writers actually claim) facilitates a remarkably trite dismissal:

> They approach ethical issues about moral vegetarianism from a top-down, hierarchical structure by which rights of and consequences for animals "trump" all other considerations, at all times, in all contexts. For animal welfarists, moral vegetarianism is like an event everyone can and should practice always. To fail to do so is always to commit a moral wrong. This is not a view I share.[21]

Few *would* share this view – at least not explicitly. Warren's route to this understanding seems to be based on uncharacteristically poor scholarship. For example, acknowledging that ecofeminists such as Carol Adams and Marti Kheel have explicitly rejected the philosophical rights perspective she nevertheless raises instances when they have used the popular term "animal rights" in a fairly loose, informal context and takes this as justification to insist that, "While it may not be clear from reading the work of ecofeminist animal rights activists whether their *theoretical* positions are based in a rights perspective, it is clear that their *practical* positions support a universal moral vegetarianism."[22] But Warren does not clarify what she means by a "practical position" as distinct from a theoretical position, so her statement seems to make little sense unless she is suggesting that those that she refers to are politically active in attempting to enforce vegetarian dietary choices in

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[20] For more on this point see Nicola Taylor, "In it for the Nonhuman Animals: Animal Welfare, Moral Certainty and Disagreements," *Society and Animals*, 12(4), (2004), p. 319

[21] Karen J. Warren, Ecofeminist Philosophy: A Western Perspective on What it is and Why it Matters, (2000), Maryland: Rowman & Litlefield Publishers, p.143

[22] Ibid., p.126

the developing world – something for which there is no evidence. This confusion is especially perplexing since Warren claims for herself the right to use essentialist language without actually endorsing an essentialist position! Just a few pages before criticising Adams and Kheel, she states that

> I endorse strategic essentialism, the view that often it is practically (or strategically) useful to talk about moral persons, moral theories, even women and nature. Strategic essentialism permits as a practical strategy, talk about commonalities among individuals and groups as moral persons, selves, women, and nature without thereby implying any biologically determined, socially unconstructed, conceptually essentialist account of moral persons, selves, women and nature.[23]

This privilege is clearly not to be extended to Adams and Kheel, should they find it useful to employ the phrase "animal rights" in its popular, non-philosophical sense.

Warren considers herself to be a "contextual vegetarian" and yet reading the work of those that she criticises makes it apparent that they base their own vegetarianism on resistance to the Western context and make no explicit attempt whatsoever to extend their dietary choices to less privileged cultures. At the risk of speculating therefore, the most charitable interpretation of Warren's argument seems to be that she is inclined to intuitively resist any version of vegetarianism or animal liberation that does not make a point of consistently foregrounding its contextual nature. Without this foregrounding in pro-vegetarian or animal liberation theorising, she appears inclined to think the worst, and to assume that essentialist arguments with universal aspirations are presented, even when the arguments themselves clearly do not support this assumption. But bearing in mind that Warren does not otherwise appear to be a thinker prone to antagonistic or divisive pronouncements, and the fact that this distrust is not unique to Warren,[24] the question raised is this: what might be the reasons behind it?

Ontologies and Absolutes

In order to answer this question it seems necessary to me that we return our attention to the psychology of our use of theoretical structures such as those that have been advanced to shape animal liberation as a philosophical position and as a

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[23] Ibid., p.91

[24] Val Plumwood has in fact gone further with this misrepresentation than Warren, as the following discussion makes clear.

framework of understanding that people might use to orient their lives. In my first chapter I attempted to show something of the importance of such frameworks – how they can become existentially imperative as people begin to realise that the ways in which their culture deals with its use of animals, particularly as food, are deceptive, abusive and unnecessary. Finding alternative frameworks of meaning that support an avoidance of involvement in such abusive relationships becomes of great psychological importance to people – amongst other things it provides structure for their experience of being in a minority group at odds with the opinions of their culture. It also serves to make a certain amount of sense of the complex feelings that they might have about their knowledge regarding the experiences of animals, supporting the recognition of their concerns as morally important. Subcultural frameworks of understanding, mediated either by the written word or by social support from others, draw together and give shape to the complex emotions needed to resist the dominant cultural paradigm and offer the feeling of solidarity with others who also make use of these frameworks.

This process, however, clearly has implications for identity. As vegetarianism becomes an established element in an individual's sense of personhood it incorporates within identity both the individual sensing of reasons for change and the frameworks of understanding that support it. While this can be envisaged primarily as a psychological process, Deane Curtin emphasises the importance of the body as the medium for these changes, this being both the point at which our choices impact upon the world and the point at which the contingencies of that world come to have emotional and hence ethical reality for us.[25] Moreover, because of our embodied nature Curtin points out that, "morality and ontology are closely connected"[26]: the way we come to conceive, or "ontologise," the world is a reflection of the moral choices we make. This is clearly a dialectical process: we make moral choices based on our 'ontology' of right and wrong, while our moral ontology is modified by the choices that we make and the lives that we live. The embodied nature of our actions and their impacts upon identity in the unfolding of our lives is absolutely central to this process. Eating, in particular, is an embodied

[25] I am aware of a danger of seeming to lapse into the traditional dualism of mind and body at this point in the discussion – which is the exact opposite of my intention. This breakdown of articulacy on my part might perhaps also be seen as illustrating how the tendency of language to break experience into distinct categories (eg. mind/body) can condition the possibilities of expression.
[26] Deane Curtin "Toward an Ecological Ethic of Care," *Hypatia*, 6(1), (1991), p.70

activity and as such is likely to have strong implications for identity. As Curtin puts it, "personhood is embodied, and... through the food which becomes our bodies, we are engaged in food practices that reflect who we are."[27] While the dissociative practices that prevail in the context of Western meat-eating act to some extent against a widespread appreciation of this insight, the truth of Curtin's assertion can be seen in a variety of ways. We can trace such a link in forms of ethical eating such as bioregionalism, as well as in distorted forms such as those that link masculinity with the eating of meat – or even specific forms such as "beef."[28] The significance of the particular moral choice that Curtin discusses is perhaps also suggested by the way that it is commonly described as a matter of "becoming" a vegetarian. The identity implications are apparent in the way that we discuss it. Although frameworks of meaning are crucial to this change in identity, Curtin's argument suggests that the identity investments made in becoming vegetarian are likely also to carry a certain internal logic that can affect other moral choices and viewpoints.

My own understanding and the research that I have presented so far suggests that this is overwhelmingly likely to have positive effects, including a basic strengthening of the social/moral sense, as well as the wider inclusion not only of animals, but also of natural communities and features within it – as much evidence suggests that we are naturally ordered to do. But it is this same factor – the internal logic or ontological dimension of vegetarianism – that I suspect might be involved in the reluctance of environmental writers such as Fisher and Warren to fully endorse Western vegetarianism.

Curtin is very specific that "As a 'contextual moral vegetarian,' I cannot refer to an absolute rule that prohibits meat eating under all circumstances. There may be some contexts in which another response is appropriate."[29] But despite his personal clarity there is perhaps a minor danger inherent in vegetarianism, and this danger reveals itself as a tension in Curtin's work. Consider the following paragraphs:

> Our relations to what we will count as food shape one's sense of personhood, and how one understands one's relations to others. Through accepting the possibility that our relations to food can define who we are, one comes to see the choice of what will count as food as a moral choice

[27] Ibid., p.71
[28] See Carol J. Adams, The Sexual Politics of Meat (1990), Cambridge: Polity Press for more on this.
[29] Curtin, "Ecological Ethic", p.69-70

> that reflects who one is and as an ontological commitment to the way the world will be ordered by that choice.[30]

And:

> An ecofeminist perspective emphasizes that one's body is oneself, and that by inflicting violence needlessly, one's bodily self becomes a context for violence. One becomes violent by taking part in violent food practices. The ontological implication of a feminist ethic of care is that nonhuman animals should no longer count as food.[31]

In each of these excerpts from different versions of Curtin's paper we can detect that the framework that he advances for vegetarianism as an expression of situated, contextual ethical knowledge also reveals how vegetarianism might come to be experienced by individuals as based upon an "ontological" truth about moral relations. The danger is precisely that the individual might lose sight of the fact that the ontological ordering that she needs, acquires and develops in order to structure her own understanding of her own world is exactly that: a context dependent and imperfect framework of understanding. The inextricably interwoven strands of emotional responses, identity investments and the constant danger of linguistic or conceptual slippages of meaning, suggest that losing sight of this fact is a problem that we can expect to occasionally occur. As Curtin makes clear, we invest ourselves, our personhood, in the moral choices that we make, and maintaining our awareness at all times that the ontologies that both support and emerge from these choices are contingent and contextual is not always an easy thing.

In order to illustrate this danger it might help to acknowledge an occurrence of this kind of slippage in the writing of Carol Adams, who throughout her work has pointedly resisted the tendency to create an abstract philosophical narrative about moral relations with other species.[32] However, she has suggested that in order to resist the instrumental ways of thinking about animals that our culture systematically instils in us we should avoid 'ontologising' animals as edible or usable. She has been extensively criticised for these views by Val Plumwood,[33] who (like Warren) has

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[30] Deane Curtin, "Toward an Ecological Ethic of Care" in Josephine Donovan & Carol J. Adams (Ed.s), Beyond Animal Rights, (1996), New York: Continuum, p.70

[31] Curtin "Toward an Ecological Ethic of Care," (*Hypatia* version), p.70

[32] For example, she observes at the beginning of one book that "Issues I raise in the following pages are not meant to be a systematic laying out of a grand theory, but rather are suggestive of the issues that need to be addressed." Carol J. Adams, Neither Man nor Beast, (1994), New York: Continuum, p.14

[33] Plumwood, "Integrating Ethical Frameworks"

some sympathy with the aims of animal liberation in a Western context, but (like Warren) has claimed that Adams is espousing universal vegetarianism, which would carry obvious and problematic implications of criticising non-Western societies that may depend upon animal food. Plumwood's critique is both more focussed on Adams and more sustained than Warren's but the essence of it is remarkably similar. I have argued previously that these charges involve a systematic misrepresentation of Adams's thinking[34] and I stand by this analysis. However in thinking further about how such problems might arise I have become acutely aware of the difficulty in much animal liberation theory of adequately negotiating the tension between a moral ontology and a contextual understanding. This tension is most apparent in one particular aspect of Adams' work, and although it is not central to this work, or a fatal flaw in it, it does illustrate the danger that we are considering.

Because Adams focuses her theory on the way that Western culture operates, there is little place within it for a nuanced consideration of the very different life-paths of hunter-gatherers. This approach is particularly compatible with Warren's "quilting" approach to contextual theory-building. Hunter-gatherers effectively exist outside the scope of the work, which seems perfectly reasonable when Adams claims that

> The Cartesian dualism of human/animal, soul/body that inscribes animals as useable is not a legacy of most native peoples. Conversations with native peoples will be different because the ontological positioning of animals in their cultures is different. It is not my goal to condemn the diet of the Inuit, nor weigh in against the fishing rights struggles of native people in North America.[35]

Adams is clear, then, that she has no wish to extend a Western vegetarianism universally. However her discussion of "the relational hunt" is slightly more suggestive of the tension identified above. The "relational hunt" is an idealised construction of hunting supposedly based on hunter-gatherer culture and the ecosystemic role of predation, but often adopted by Western hunters as a justification of their activity. Such hunting is claimed by adherents to be acceptable because it is framed conceptually as about not dominating the hunted animal or dissociating awareness of its experience. This kind of hunting has perhaps been problematic for

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[34] See my own "Incorporating the Other: Val Plumwood's Integration of Ethical Frameworks," *Ethics and the Environment*, 7(2), (2002)
[35] Adams, Neither Man nor Beast, p.83

much existing animal liberation philosophy because – when engaged in honestly and for subsistence related reasons – it effectively seems to fall between the contexts of 'abuse' by over-privileged Western cultures and 'use' by those that are more embedded in the rhythms and cycles of the natural world. If such hunting is part of a genuinely alternative reclaiming of a natural, ecologically sensitive and morally attuned subjectivity and lifestyle (rather than this being an occasional or recreational fantasy or an opportunistic excuse, as seems likely in the vast majority of cases) then it appears difficult to criticise effectively without resorting to an absolutist or universal framework that refuses to countenance any form of human predation. Adams's discussion of the relational hunt attempts to reconcile her wish not to "ontologise" animals as edible with her respect for Warren's emphasis on resisting absolute claims. But the tension is inadequately resolved. Adams claims that,

> Ecofeminists who wish to respect a philosophy of contingency yet resist the ontologizing of animals [as edible] could choose the alternative position of saying "Eating an animal after a successful hunt, like cannibalism in emergency situations, is sometimes necessary, but like cannibalism, is morally repugnant." This acknowledges that eating animal (including human) flesh may occur at rare times, but resists the ontologizing of (some) animals as edible.[36]

Notwithstanding Warren's promotion of "situated universalism," this suggestion does seem difficult to interpret in a way that respects differences in context. The suggestion that eating animal flesh should be considered "morally repugnant," and should carry the same stigma as cannibalism is difficult to reconcile with the limiting of the scope of the theory to a Western context of institutionalised abuse. The linking of flesh eating to cannibalism is problematic for many reasons, not least because the issue of cannibalism has the emotional power to summon feelings of "moral repugnance" that may have little respect for relevant cultural boundaries.[37] And although the implication is clearly not explicit or intended, a possible way to

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[36] Carol J. Adams, "Ecofeminism and the Eating of Animals", *Hypatia*, 6(1), (1991), p.138

[37] Note, however, that the issue of moral repugnance is previously linked by Adams to knowledge about specific practices involved in Western farming. She claims that "On an intellectual level I marvel at the language of automation, factory farming, and high-tech production that provides the vehicle and license for one to fail to see these animals as living, feeling beings who experience frustration and terror in the face of their treatment. As a lactating mother, I empathize with the sow whose reproductive freedoms have been denied and whose nursing experience seems so wretched. As a consumer and a vegetarian, I visualize this information when I witness people buying or eating "ham," "bacon," or "sausage."" Ibid., p.134. Adams has also elsewhere addressed the spurious charge of cannibalism being directed against indigenous peoples to falsely justify European colonialism. She is aware of the considerable baggage that the term carries. See Sexual Politics, p.31

interpret Adams' thinking – on this point and only on this point – would be that hunter-gatherer living-patterns might seem to be marginalised: offered an exemption from the need to be moral because they are thought to live in a semi-permanent "emergency situation." As anybody familiar with Marshall Sahlins' theory that many hunter-gatherer groups are examples of the "original affluent society" will point out, this is a largely unsupportable assumption.[38] By risking the representation of hunter-gatherers as somehow exempt from the real business of being moral humans, Adams seems to have very subtly failed to remain true to her own awareness that the 'ontology' that is appropriate to her own, Western, moral context is not applicable to theirs. A careful reading makes clear, however, that this is not a central element to her thought, and that she is not advocating universal vegetarianism, but rather that the nuances of difference and similarity in contexts have been negotiated with insufficient subtlety at a rare point in her work.

What might be suggested by this is that there is a problem with the creating of 'ontologies' to serve specific ends in a bounded context. When confronted with situations outside of this context, individuals still seem to need some sort of framework of meaning to provide orientation and understanding, and the danger is that they use the frameworks they have, misinterpreting the new or different context in order to make their own sense of it. Ecofeminism, particularly as influenced by Warren, specifically aims for a moral understanding that is tied to its own specific context, but observing the appropriate differences between contexts can be difficult. While the lives of hunter-gatherers are very different from Western lives, if we are not to create a dualistic system which polarises 'us' completely from 'them' (a system such as has historically been used to justify colonial domination) then we will retain our intuitive tendency to respond to hunter-gatherers as people more or less like ourselves – which means that we can sometimes find it difficult to properly observe the relevant 'ontological' divergences that our different lifestyles imply.

What this also might be taken to suggest is that there may be some substance behind the theoretical reluctance of writers such as Fisher, Warren and Plumwood to fully embrace a Western vegetarian orientation, despite the fact that this reluctance is inadequately theorised and accounted for in their work. The misunderstanding and occasional misrepresentation of writers such as Adams appears to be a product of

[38] See Marshall Sahlins, Stone Age Economics, (1974), London: Tavistock

this lack of clarity about where to locate the possible dangers of a vegetarian or animal liberation "ontology." This lack of clarity seems to result in the dangers being wrongly projected into the theoretical foundations of an individual writer's work, when the problem might be better thought of as an occasional and accidental side effect of the ontological shift that both supports, and is implicit in, the adoption of a committed vegetarian or animal liberation stance or identity. The theoretical need to carefully negotiate clashes between animal liberation and ecological perspectives is well established and such negotiation is necessarily a nuanced and slightly ambiguous affair in which one's personal standpoint will influence the framing of the issue. The example given above of Adams's discussion of the relational hunt is therefore indicative not of a fundamental flaw in her theorising, but rather of a slight clumsiness in her negotiation of the clash in perspectives. As I have hopefully illustrated here however, such clumsiness is not one-sided and the elevation of an ecological perspective over an individual justice perspective can lead to similarly flawed theorising, including the strategic omission and manipulation of factors that would otherwise support a strong and completely appropriate commitment to animal liberation in the Western context.

Conclusion

I have attempted here to identify the source of the reluctance that some writers show toward embracing a Western vegetarian position. This reluctance, I have suggested, might be rooted in their intuitive awareness that vegetarianism and animal liberation tend to order the world in a particular way. Adopting an ontological position – which may be organised around both socially acquired and personally developed frameworks of meaning regarding the consumption of animal flesh – aids in making the changes in diet and lifestyle that resistance to the Western context of institutionalised animal abuse and cultural dissociation seems to require. But the adoption of such an ontological position, while it undoubtedly strengthens this resistance, may also occasionally lead to a lack of openness when encountering alternative contexts or situations in which this position is less appropriate. The emotional and identity investments that have been made may make it difficult to approach such contexts and situations without importing one's own ontological

framework or understanding to some extent. This danger is very occasionally apparent in theoretical writing, as well as in the context of lived experience.

Having acknowledged this, it is important to point out that this danger appears to be often vastly overestimated by those theorists who, although they briefly acknowledge the problems with contemporary Western human-animal relations, intuitively respond by sidestepping or arguing against a committed Western vegetarianism, despite this involving theoretical contortions and evasions. An insistence on the moral superiority of the hunter-gatherer attitude, without a proper exploration of how difficult it is to map such an attitude onto the Western context, appears to serve a dual purpose. Firstly, and rightly, it resists any possibility of criticising such cultures for their use of animals. Secondly however, it seems to work to emphasise the dominance of an ecological framework of bodily exchange over an understanding that acknowledges our social and moral natures and the intuitive inclusion of animals within these – even in cases where natural ecological functioning is overwhelmingly subsumed under industrial conditions. Although for hunter-gatherers this distinction between ecological and individual justice frameworks may make little sense, it is central to Western difficulties in negotiating the meanings of vegetarianism and animal liberation – even when these are seen as responses to the Western context of privileged abuse. It seems unlikely that a perfect theoretical integration of these frameworks can be achieved, but acknowledging that they arise as symbolic mediations of our intuitive responses to perceptions of the world perhaps means accepting that such responses to contexts should be primary – should be accorded greater weight against the abstract frameworks that we develop to understand and to enhance our intuitions, and then subsequently seem to elevate to 'ontological' status. As Kheel puts it, "Ethics... begins with our own instinctive responses. It occurs in a holistic context in which we know the whole story within which our actions take place."[39] It may be that the avoidance of a committed Western vegetarian position implicitly draws upon on a wider awareness of context – including psychological context – than Kheel intends, and is therefore to some extent understandable. But to entertain a predisposition to ethical evasion unequivocally means not knowing "the whole story," and is therefore ultimately an unjustifiable, and unethical, philosophical tactic.

[39] Kheel, "From Heroic," p.257

There is more to be said on some of the issues that we have touched on here, including the importance of context for how moral ontologies emerge, and whether hunter-gatherer relations with animals can illuminate our Western ones. I will next attempt to expand on these topics, and to relate them to the valuable but flawed work that Val Plumwood has done in developing an integrated ethical framework for relations with the world.

9

Respect and Context

Context and Abstraction in Animal Liberation

In the previous chapter mention was made of Greta Gaard's reservations about using beliefs attributed to hunter-gatherer cultures to illuminate moral dimensions of Western human-animal relationships. Such reservations caution strongly against a clumsy transposition of concepts from one culture to another on the grounds that concepts are rarely isolated units of meaning: their embeddedness within the cultural web of other concepts, beliefs and shared experiences makes them highly context dependent. Gaard's warning is of enormous importance. But there are perhaps also dangers in cultural solipsism. If dialogue between cultures is considered impossible then important sources of comparison and insight into Western culture might be neglected. Ecopsychologists in particular often look to hunter-gatherer cultures as a point of comparison with the West, since traditional hunter-gatherers can be seen to generally live in more ecologically integrated ways than Westerners do, and because their lifestyles are usually considered to more closely resemble those that humans adapted to genetically over the course of our evolution. The hope is that by looking to hunter-gatherers we might understand how to make our own lives more reflective both of our own nature and of the natural world. As I showed in the previous chapter, this comparison has sometimes been harmful to animal liberation, despite the almost ubiquitous emphasis in both anthropological, ecofeminist and ecopsychological accounts on the extent to which animals are shown "respect" by hunter-gatherers. Indeed, the beliefs of hunter-gatherers have often been very clumsily co-opted to oppose a committed vegetarian stance, by demonstrating that respecting animals can be compatible with killing and eating them. There is perhaps, however, something to be gained from exploring further the role that hunter-gatherers might play in the debate on animal liberation, while remaining acutely aware of the danger of taking words like "respect" on face value.

A worthwhile way to do this – one that aids our understanding of what types of theory might be genuinely useful – is by considering the treatment given by Val Plumwood. Plumwood has attempted the hugely ambitious project of developing an integrated framework for ethical relations with the natural world and with animals. This project draws on Karen Warren in arguing for the ethical importance of cultural context, but also insists on a cross-cultural vision of the ethics of human-animal relations. Such a vision is intended to, in Plumwood's words, "form part of the practice of progressive and aware people in a wide variety of global contexts, not just saints and seminarians in limited enclaves of privilege in urban North America."[1] This insistence on a global perspective is used as the basis on which to criticise other animal liberation and vegetarian theorists who, by focussing their attention on the specifics of the Western context, are purportedly guilty of "ethnocentrism"; Carol Adams is even accused of inadvertent racism.[2] While highly critical of factory farming and ostensibly in favour of what she decides to call a "contextual vegetarianism," Plumwood is also very resistant to embracing a strongly committed vegetarian or animal liberationist position – even one restricted in scope to the Western context. This at first seems to be a curious position to take, since it is in the West that the majority of animal use phenomena that she objects to are to be found. The universal perspective makes more sense, however, if it is understood that Plumwood implicitly insists on looking for abstract philosophical foundations for any stance, rather than being willing to accept the *primacy of context over abstraction* – even in the work of writers such as Kheel, for whom we have seen that "Ethics… begins with our own instinctive responses."[3] Plumwood obstinately insists on interpreting all such accounts of moral relations as adhering to the same unquestioned assumption that her own work embodies: *that context is important, but only within the bounds of an abstract universal framework or theory.*

This assumption is deeply problematic both because of the blatant misinterpretation of other writers that it leads to, and because as developed in Plumwood's own theory it implies that a fixed moral "ontology" – her own – can legitimately be imposed upon any situation. This is one of the fundamental errors of

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[1] Val Plumwood, "Integrating Ethical Frameworks for Animals, Humans and Nature: A Critical Feminist Eco-Socialist Analysis," *Ethics and the Environment*, 5(2), (2000), p. 291
[2] Ibid., p.291
[3] Kheel, "From Heroic", p.257

modernity: the assumption that a "foolproof recipe"[4] can be found for morality. In essence, then, despite her own powerful critique of rationalism, Plumwood remains trapped in a rationalist paradigm that leads her down a number of theoretical blind alleys. The following analysis will suggest how this undermines the potential radicalism of her theorising and leads to impotent conclusions. The role played by the unexamined idea that hunter-gatherers "respect" animals is central to this failure, and serves to illustrate why a search for abstract philosophical foundations for animal liberation is likely to be misguided, why distinctions between cultural contexts need to be treated with great care, and also perhaps why an adequate theory of animal liberation should have a clearer sense of how it is that people and cultures come to make sense of the ethics of their economic relationships with animals.

The Use and Abuse of Cultural Context

Central to her rejection of a committed vegetarian position is Plumwood's belief that such a position sees no ethical difference between the use of animals and the *instrumental* use of them. While she identifies instrumental use with factory farming and rejects both, she also argues that "We must inevitably treat the natural world to some degree as a means, for example, to food, shelter and other materials we need in order to survive, just as we must treat other people to some degree as means."[5] The *use* of animals for food is considered morally acceptable – indeed it comes to seem positively desirable in Plumwood's treatment – as long as it does not involve the conceptual reduction of the animal's being that accompanies instrumental use, for example in factory farming.

These lines of reasoning lead to subtle slippages in Plumwood's account. She posits the existence of something that she calls the "Use Exclusion Assumption,"[6] which is ostensibly linked to moral extensionism of the kind that Singer and Regan propose. The Use Exclusion Assumption (also less grandly referred to as the exclusionary imperative) suggests that nothing that is morally considerable can ever be considered as food, and therefore implies the dualistic splitting of the world into either that which is morally considerable and can never be eaten, or that which is not morally considerable and therefore is available as food. However while initially

[4] Zygmunt Bauman, Postmodern Ethics, (1993), Oxford, Blackwell, p.9
[5] Val Plumwood, Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason, (2002), London: Routledge, p.159
[6] Ibid., p.156

proposed as a means of critiquing philosophical moral extensionism, the Use Exclusion Assumption is made to appear applicable to any position that consistently seeks to avoid animal food. This is done by pointedly valorising the "use" of animals over avoidance of use, and by specifically implicating writers such as Adams, who has both explicitly rejected logical and moral extensionist approaches *and* explicitly located her critique within a specifically Western context.[7] Through these tactics Plumwood seems determined to undermine all vegetarian positions that attempt to employ a strong sense of personal commitment. Vegetarianism, and particularly its more rigorous form of veganism, becomes linked to the dualistic splitting of the world into that which is morally considerable and that which is not. There are, of course, hugely important reasons to do with consistency and commitment why many individual Western vegetarians or vegans find it existentially easier and more appropriate to exclude animal food completely from their diets, rather than being drawn into the sort of faint-hearted compromise scenarios that Plumwood envisages.[8] Reasons such as this are invisible to her analysis.

Plumwood illustrates the appeal of using animals by the familiar tactic of citing the respectful use of animals by traditional hunter-gatherer cultures. For example, she quotes Shagbark Hickory demonstrating a remarkable alignment with her own view:

> For most or all American Indians food (plant as well as animal) is kin. Relationships to plants and animals as, on the one hand, food and, on the other hand, kin creates a tension which is dealt with mythically, ritually, and ceremonially, but which is never denied. It is this refusal to deny the dilemma in which we are implicated in this life, a refusal to take the way of bad faith, moral supremacy, or self-deception which constitutes a radical challenge to our relationships to our food. The American Indian view that considerability goes 'all the way down' requires a response considerably more sophisticated than those we have seen in the west, which consist either

[7] For example, Adams makes the following claims: "I am not patching animals onto an undisturbed notion of human rights, but am examining the place of animals in the fabric of feminist ethics," and: "My argument about not using animals may be heard as one of ideological purity. But it is not that. The instrumental view of animals that concerns me arises within Western developed culture, in which a discourse of otherness has been used to maintain dominance. My critique is aimed at that dominance. The Cartesian dualism of human/animal, soul/body that inscribes animals as useable is not a legacy of most native peoples." Adams, Neither Man nor Beast, (1994), New York: Continuum, p.15 & p.83

[8] She gives the following examples: "Adventitious use (scavenging) might include cases where you find road-kill in still-edible condition, where someone is about to throw away a ham sandwich in perfectly good condition, or the waiter brings the wrong dish... Occasional use includes the case where the normal diet excludes animal products, but fish (nonfarmed) is eaten every third Friday to be on the safe side or for specific health reasons." Plumwood, "Integrating Ethical Frameworks," p.318

> in drawing lines of moral considerability in order to create an out-group, or in constructing hierarchies of considerability creating de facto out-groups in particular cases.[9]

This Native American sophistication, then, is set up as intrinsically more appropriate than – and effectively as morally superior to – a herbivorous vegetarian lifestyle. The herbivorous lifestyle is considered to create a moral out-group (plants) that is denied any kind of consideration at all. Plumwood is, of course, correct to criticise this inference of abstract philosophical rights positions, but the implication is also clear that decisively choosing to eat plants but not to eat animals makes one a disciple of "neo-Cartesianism" and insensitive to all ethical claims from outside the "in-group" of sentient creatures, even if there is no abstract philosophical rationale underpinning the stance.

Of course this sort of conclusion does not tally with the argument that I have been developing: that abstaining from meat primarily out of concern for the experience of 'food' animals strengthens the embodied social/moral sense and leads to the further development and extension of moral concern. Think, for example, of Barbara MacDonald's informant who, after becoming vegan reported that, "It's like I have a much, much greater respect, certainly for all living things, and of course plant life. I don't even want to pull weeds really."[10] For this individual, as for the majority of practising vegetarians and vegans, plants seem not to assume the status of an ethical out-group who deserve no consideration at all. Rather, perhaps, the moral consideration that is intuitively appropriate and practically possible to extend to plants is different in key ways to that which the condition of the much more sentient and aware farmed animal elicits (ways, of course, that can be smoothed over in the abstractions of theoretical discourse). As Levin argues, the crucial ability to listen to the body's social/moral sense is strengthened the more one does so – something that vegetarianism and animal liberation more generally tends to do. Mary Midgley concurs on this, claiming that "Compassion does not need to be treated hydraulically[,]... as a rare and irreplaceable fluid, usable only for exceptionally impressive cases. It is a habit or power of the mind, which grows and develops with

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[9] Shagbark Hickory, Quoted in Plumwood, Environmental Culture, p.260

[10] "Lena", quoted in Barbara McDonald, "'Once You Know Something, You Can't Not Know It': An Empirical Look at Becoming Vegan," *Society and Animals*, 8(1), (2000).

use. Such powers (as is obvious in cases like intelligence) are magic fluids which increase with pouring. Effective users do not economise on them."[11]

Plumwood's analysis is clearly too detached from the embodied experience of compassion: it is much too dependent on the development of a rational philosophical structure that is intended to be universally applicable. It invests too heavily in what Jim Cheney has referred to as "the kind of totalizing coherence with which we have been so preoccupied in the modern world."[12] As a consequence of this, it fails to understand and to take theoretical account of how embodied emotional responses mediate perception and cognition, and how 'ontologies' – such as both the Native American one that she valorises and those that evolve to accompany vegetarian lifestyles – emerge from experience and from the emotional responses demanded by concrete situations that people find themselves in. For hunter-gatherers, whose livelihoods depend to varying extents upon responsive social others whose future recurrence they cannot guarantee, "respect" seems often to express the embodied sense of being in a relationship that cannot be controlled, but must instead be maintained through mutual accomodation. For ethical vegetarians, positioned in a culture that treats animals in appallingly abusive and completely unnecessary ways, abstaining strictly from animal food expresses a personal refusal to be part of this system (as well as to embrace the more positive physical and psychological benefits that vegetarianism can involve). Both hunter-gatherer respect for the animal and Western vegetarianism or animal liberation can be seen as authentic responses, culturally encoded, to embodied moral/emotional experience and the contingencies of very different situations. Both arise, moreover, in a world that because of these very contingencies – these details of embodiment in place, time, lifestyle and culture – resists the imposition of idealised universal ethical schemas such as Plumwood attempts to create.

These contentions can be illustrated by considering a key assertion that Plumwood makes. She argues for a version of ethical eating that rejects the Use Exclusion Assumption and "the dualism of use and respect," and makes the following claim:

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[11] Mary Midgley, quoted in Anna L. Peterson, Being Human: Ethics, Environment, and Our Place in the World, (2001), London: University of California Press, p.68

[12] Jim Cheney, "Postmodern Environmental Ethics: Ethics as Bioregional Narrative," *Environmental Ethics*, 11, (1989), p. 121

> This alternative line of thought would make potentially ethically available forms of use that respect animals as both individuals and as community members, in terms of respect or reverence for species life, and would aim to rethink farming as a non-commodity and species egalitarian form, rather than to completely reject farming and embrace an exclusively plant-based form of existence that is doubtfully viable and alien to our own species life.[13]

But apart from the false essentialism of the claim that plant-based nutrition is alien to the human species (surely many humans throughout the world live and have lived quite adequately with little or no animal products in their diet) there is a huge problem with this claim. Plumwood's intention to rethink farming as a "species egalitarian" form appears to be completely ignorant of the very nature of farming, which almost by definition necessitates a level of calculated control that is incompatible with any meaningful understanding of equality. Indeed, the attitude toward animals engendered by farming is diametrically opposed to the hunter-gatherer attitude of respect for very solid experiential reasons. Theoretical prescriptions for the appropriate egalitarian mindset with which to approach the act of breeding and raising animals for the specific purpose of killing them are unlikely to carry much weight against these intrinsic existential constraints. It is worth exploring these assertions in some depth as their implications are central to the conflicts currently simmering in ecofeminist animal liberation philosophy, and doing so will lead us to other crucial insights into the nature of human-animal relations and the possibility of authentically incorporating our embodied social/moral instincts into the way we feed ourselves.

It is worth noting however, since the following discussion relies on a distinction between hunter-gatherers and farmers, that this distinction should not be viewed as a rigid categorisation into which all human societies can unproblematically fit. As David Harris makes clear, it is possible to discern a spectrum of subsistence activities that fall between these two apparently distinct classifications.[14] Nevertheless, as Hugh Brody has argued, a distinction between the two is of great analytic importance for understanding some basic aspects of the psychology of the relationships that humans have with animals, with the natural

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[13] Plumwood, Environmental Culture, p.156

[14] David Harris, "Domesticatory Relationships of People, Plants and Animals" in Roy Ellen and Katsuyoshi Fukui (Ed.s), Redefining Nature: Ecology, Culture and Domestication, (1996), Oxford: Berg.

world, and with each other. Brody is eloquent on the compelling reasons why the distinction is important and valid, and why claims that it is an essentially flawed construction are mistaken. The crux of the matter, for him, is that the distinction is made not just by Western academics, but also by a great many of the cultures that they make reference to. In his words:

> In the broad historical frame, the challenge [to the distinction] is incoherent. It also fails to accommodate the extent to which hunter-gatherers *do* have a strong sense of their own distinct characteristics, which *are* linked to distinctive socioeconomic systems. Nor does it account for the extent to which the dominating farmers and herders agree that the hunter-gatherers they have links with are indeed different (and inferior) to themselves for reasons to do with a particular hunter-gatherer relationship to resources, time, knowledge and beliefs.[15]

The possible significance of this crucial distinction is not registered by Plumwood as relevant to the global perspective of her analysis. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that she overwhelmingly uses material drawn from hunter-gatherer cultures to illustrate an ideal conceptualisation of animals that she then assumes can be implemented within the context of farming. I will now argue that such a project is unlikely to meet with success.

Subsistence Hunting and Respect

We have already observed that for a majority of hunter-gatherer cultures no absolute distinction is recognised between animals and humans. Rather, while differences are seen to exist, these tend to be differences perceived against a background of fundamental – or ontological – continuity. As Tim Ingold points out in reference to the Cree, "When Cree hunters claim that a goose is in some sense like a man, or that the two are even consubstantial, far from drawing a figurative parallel across two fundamentally separate domains, they are rather pointing to the real unity that underwrites their differentiation."[16] This unity, it is worth noting, is remarkably reminiscent of that reported by Myers as characterising the experience of children. For them, he notes, "The key point is that it is not a rigid kind of human-animal

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[15] Hugh Brody, The Other Side of Eden: Hunter-Gatherers, Farmers, and the Shaping of the World, (2000), London: Faber and Faber, p.337.

[16] Tim Ingold, "Hunting and Gathering as Ways of Perceiving the Environment" in Roy Ellen and Katsuyoshi Fukui (Ed.s), Redefining Nature: Ecology, Culture and Domestication, (1996), Oxford: Berg, p.133

distinction that is experienced but one underlain by a deep animate commonality."[17] Hunter-gatherer cultures, this might be thought to suggest, articulate in relatively undistorted forms this natural experience of deep animate commonality, rather than suppressing it as Western culture systematically does. But, as Myers argues and as the following evidence suggests, the continuity and development into adulthood of this experience of animate commonality or unity is dependent upon two vital factors. One, of course, is the lack of a prejudicial cultural frame (and preferably the presence of a supportive one). But, in a process that is clearly dialectical, the character of actual interactions with animals also appears to be crucial. Such interactions are important in shaping individual views of animals, and are therefore also of key importance in shaping and sustaining the cultural milieu that in turn frames the type of interaction. The types of experience of animals – including particularly the nuances of psychological experience relating to economic relationships – exert a powerful influence on how animals are conceptualised (rather than, as Plumwood seems to assume, the relationship being a one-way process in which culture shapes behaviour and experience without being also shaped *by* behaviour and experience). The important point is that culture does not construct the world without the world, and human activities and intentions within the world, shaping the process. As Kay Milton phrases this insight, "Meanings vary between cultures... because those who hold them engage with the world in different ways; they act differently within it. Thus, while an Icelandic fisherman comes to know whales as an economic resource... a whale-watching tourist might come to know them as a source of wonder and delight."[18]

The manner in which animals are engaged with is, then, crucial to how they are conceptualised. Although children seem to come into the world prepared to recognise the ontological continuity of human and animal, this insight is subject to either subversion or reinforcement as experience – which is likely to be heavily structured by intentions and by cultural context – increasingly modifies the child's outlook. This is implicitly recognised by several writers on the topic. Anna Peterson, for example, attempts to account for the hunter-gatherer perception of ontological continuity by claiming that "Perhaps long-term shared inhabitation of a particular

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[17] Gene Myers, Children and Animals: Social Development and our Connections to Other Species, (1998), Boulder: Westview Press, p.134

[18] Kay Milton, Environmentalism and Cultural Theory: Exploring the Role of Anthropology in Environmental Discourse, (1996), London: Routledge, p.62

ecosystem, along with the mutual dependence and the knowledge that it engenders, enables natives to perceive a continuum of shared traits rather than opposition."[19] But her formulation does not go as far as some anthropologists do in accounting for the experience of animate commonality or unity, and perhaps fails to capture the essence of the matter. Ingold makes a crucial connection between this experience and the acute awareness of interaction with another subjective presence that characterises hunter-gatherer hunting. It is worth being clear that he is not claiming that either awareness (of subjectivity in the prey or of ontological unity between animal and human) is a logical consequence of the other so much as that they both emerge from the type of engagement that this type of hunting cultivates. In his words:

> Now the ontological equivalence of humans and animals, as organism-persons and as fellow participants in a life process, carries a corollary of capital importance. It is that both can have points of view. In other words, for both the world exists as a meaningful place, constituted in relation to the purposes and capabilities of action of the being in question...
>
> A creature can have a point of view because its action in the world is, at the same time, a process of attending to it. Different creatures have points of view because, given their capabilities of action and perception, they attend to the world in different ways. Cree hunters, for example, notice things about the environment that geese do not, yet by the hunter's own admission... geese also notice things that humans do not. What is certain, however, is that humans figure in the perceptual world of geese just as geese figure in that of humans.[20]

This is knowledge that hunters are acutely aware of: they "attend to the presence of geese *in the knowledge that geese are attending to them.*"[21] The crucial point, then, is that animal and human are deeply aware of each other as subjective presences engaged in an interaction, and act on the basis of their perceptions of the significance of the other's behaviour. They are engaged in a continual process of assessing the other's action and attributing intentions and perceptions to that other. Thus, the Cree hunters believe that geese are able to distinguish predatory from non-predatory behaviour in humans as well as to communicate with each other about how

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[19] Anna L. Peterson, Being Human: Ethics, Environment, and Our Place in the World, (2001), London: University of California Press, p.122
[20] Ingold, "Hunting and Gathering," p.135
[21] Ibid., p.136

to avoid threats.[22] Moreover, for the hunters to understand this, and to not underestimate their prey, appears to be integral to the success of the hunt.

Other observations by anthropologists are suggestive of the same effect arising from the types of hunting commonly practised by hunter-gatherers. For example, Laura Rival's description of the hunting of monkeys by the Amazonian Huaorani people suggests that the intense channelling of attention, awareness and desire toward an intriguing animate other can lead to an experience of being in a mutually constituted relationship. Rival describes the way that Huaorani hunting is preceded by hours spent exploring the forest, deeply immersed in observations of animals, as well as in the maturation of fruit and the growth of vegetation. She likens this deep and emotional engagement to a silent conversation, and claims that the forest comes to be perceived as other creatures might perceive it. As she describes the experience:

> It is through hunting, a skilled practice which occupies many hours of their daily lives, that hunters acquire knowledge of the species which they consider 'close'. Familiar co-sharers of the same environment, these animals are recognised as having feelings, volition and a certain degree of consciousness. Hunters know from experience that animals communicate, learn, and modify their habits and ways in response to humans. Humans and the animals they hunt, therefore, are *social beings mutually engaged in each other's world.* This explains the correspondence between the ways in which people treat each other and treat animals.[23] (Emphasis added)

So if the example of the Cree and the Huaorani are typical[24] then hunter-gatherer hunting can itself be said to pattern the hunter's experience of animals in certain ways. Specifically, it actively cultivates the fascination with animals and the consciousness of them as subjective others that characterises childhood, and it extends these awarenesses into the adult sense of being involved in a social interaction in which the self is an other to the animal just as fully as the animal is an other to the self. It is no surprise, given these experiences, that hunter-gatherer cultures so often perceive animals as ontologically similar to humans and so often express "respect" for animals. The crucial point is that as well as being to some

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[22] Ibid., p.136

[23] Laura Rival, "Blowpipes and Spears: The social significance of Huaorani technological choices" in Phillippe Descola and Gísli Pállson, Nature and Society: Anthropological Perspectives, (1996), London: Routledge, p.161

[24] It is worth noting that Ingold is using the Cree as his primary example of "Hunting and Gathering as Ways of Perceiving the Environment" – the title of his paper.

extent natural, support for this respect is also an emergent quality of the type of relationship that their lifestyle depends upon. The cultural encoding of respect for the animal works – and is sustainable as a basis for moral behaviour – primarily because it expresses and reinforces tendencies that are experientially or existentially apparent in the specific mode of interaction between human and animal. Thus, while hunting entails causing an animal's death, anthropological accounts seem to suggest that some hunters (and hunting cultures) may have slightly conflicted views about this. In this sense, although Ingold argues that there tends to be no radical break between social and ecological relations for hunter-gatherers,[25] there nevertheless *can* appear to be an apparent conflict or tension between the social/moral sense and the ecological mode of predation. To give one example, Rival notes of Huaorani hunting that, "Occasionally, the targeted animal makes its 'soul' visible, and 'speaks with its eyes', pleading for its life to be spared. If such communication occurs, the hunter targets a different animal."[26]

But the degree of economic dependence upon the animal is an important factor with which to qualify this account. In his book In the Company of Animals, James Serpell argues along similar lines to those that I have presented here, and suggests that hunter-gatherers experience a certain amount of "guilt" about killing animals. This, he claims, is a natural result of both the fact that animals are not viewed as inferior to humans, and the sense of connection with the animal that hunting successfully usually involves. His argument is well supported by ethnographic examples, but the word guilt is perhaps more extreme than some anthropologists would favour, and it may be best not to interpret it too literally. Nevertheless it seems fairly unproblematic to agree with Serpell that various cultural mechanisms have been developed to deal with the apparent conflict between (in the terms that I have used previously), an intuitive social/moral sense or bodily interactive order and the goal of causing an animal's death. But Serpell points out that the seriousness of this conflict seems to be affected by the ecological circumstances that a particular culture inhabits. He refers to research illustrating that in "stable" environments the effect is much less pronounced than it is in harsh environments where the availability of food varies considerably. As he explains,

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[25] Tim Ingold, The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill, (2000), New York: Routledge, p.60

[26] Rival, "Blowpipes and Spears," p.149-150

> This variation seems to make sense. In extreme climates, such as those of desert or arctic regions, the population of game tends to fluctuate widely from year to year, and the hunters who inhabit these areas generally display considerable anxiety about nature, and the forces that influence these changes. When things go wrong; when the game suddenly vanishes without warning they naturally enough look for an obvious cause to which they can attribute the catastrophe, and which can then be avoided in the future. More often than not, in these situations, they assume that the fault lies with themselves; that the loss or disappearance of the animals represents a punishment for some moral transgression on their part. In this context, the pre-existing sense of guilt they feel about killing animals often appears to become the focus of concern. It is assumed that some supernatural agency is either seeking retribution for the animal's death or chastising the hunter for his failure to show the animal appropriate ritual respect.[27]

Examples are provided to support this understanding, as well as its inverse – that where animals are numerous and consistently easily caught, and potentially harmful environmental changes are rare, the degree of respect for animals that is evident in a culture may seem less striking. Another factor that Serpell believes influences the extent of guilt is the degree to which hunters identify with a particular species, usually through being economically dependant on that species above all others. Again this makes sense, since the importance of the relationship is clearly much greater in such circumstances and the consequences of the relationship appearing to break down (for example through the dissatisfaction of animals or their spiritual masters with the hunter's behaviour) would be perceived as serious.

Serpell's analysis reinforces and expands upon the idea that the kind of intuitive understandings that help to regulate social relationships between human equals – and that provide the basis for an embodied sense of morality and its elaboration into moral norms – can also be found to bear upon relationships with wild animals, as well as with the environment more broadly. Furthermore it shows it to be fairly important to the reliable and consistent functioning of this effect that hunters perceive animals as having the power to withdraw their willingness to be caught, and that the consequences of this happening are recognised as having significant implications for human welfare. This is not to suggest that self-interested or manipulative calculations are at the root of hunter-gatherer "respect" for animals, but rather that being in a highly valued but precarious relationship with an

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[27] James Serpell, In the Company of Animls: A Study of Human-Animal Relationships, (1996), Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, p.177

autonomous other naturally predisposes the human to a more sensitive appreciation of his or her social instincts.

Seeing the matter in this way may help to explain the often noted resonance for hunter-gatherers between hunting and seduction. It is perhaps worth giving a couple of examples. Kaj Århem notes that among the Makuna people of North-west Amazonia, a hunter "relates to his prey as a man to his female affine" and is "explicitly said to attract and seduce his prey."[28] Adrian Tanner notes many such examples of cultural cross-referencing among the Mistassini Cree, including "the common metaphorical allusion to sexuality which occurs in divinatory dreams, in jokes, in male talk about hunting, and in the use of hunting terminology in descriptions of sexual intercourse."[29] There is, Tanner also notes, "a love relationship between the hunter and his prey."[30] Superficial structural similarities might also be detected between the hunting relationship, as perceived by the Cree, and ritualised aspects of courtship. As Tanner observes, "The idealized form of these... relations is often that the hunter pays respect to an animal; that is, he acknowledges the animal's superior position, and following this the animal 'gives itself' to the hunter, that is, it allows itself to assume a position of equality, or even inferiority, with respect to the hunter."[31] Similar examples abound in the anthropological literature. Central to the apparent resonance between hunting and seduction is the perception that animals (or their spiritual masters) have *free choice* about whether the hunter is successful. It is worth noting that a relationship between hunting and sexual activity is also often evident in the culture of hunters from the West, but in this context the emphasis seems more commonly to be on sexual violence and rape, rather than seduction.[32] The reasons for this are undoubtedly complex and diverse, but may well have roots in the range of attitudes that develop with an agricultural economy.

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[28] Kaj Århem, "The Cosmic Food Web: Human-nature Relatedness in the Northwest Amazon" in Phillippe Descola and Gísli Pállson, Nature and Society: Anthropological Perspectives, (1996), London: Routledge, p.192

[29] Adrian Tanner, Bringing Home Animals: Religious Ideology and Mode of Production of the Mistassini Cree Hunters, (1979), Memorial University of Newfoundland, p.178

[30] Ibid., p.138

[31] Ibid., p.136

[32] See Brian Luke, "Violent Love: Hunting, Heterosexuality, and the Erotics of Men's Predation," *Feminist Studies*, 3, (1998), or Andrée Collard and Joyce Contrucci, Rape of the Wild, (1988), London: The Women's Press Limited, p.50, or Carol J. Adams, The Pornography of Meat, (2003), London: Continuum, p.84-5

Farming and the Categorical Boundary

If the types of engagement with animals that hunting and gathering involve seem to support a perception of ontological continuity and respect, those that emerge from farming them are very different. Farming animals (at least in pre-industrial systems) necessitates a relationship that is in many ways much more intimate than that involved in hunting. But it also depends upon having the ability to exercise control over animals on a day to day basis, which has pervasive implications for the ways that they are conceived of and engaged with. This orientation to control could be seen as one of the primary characteristics of farming and it has been claimed by several writers to be the fundamental difference between the ways that farmers and hunter-gatherers approach the world. For example, Brody points out that:

> The skills of farmers are centred not on their relationship to the world but on their ability to change it. Technical and intellectual systems are developed to achieve and maintain this as completely as possible. Farmers carry with them systems of control as well as crucial seeds and livestock. These systems constitute ways of thinking as well as bodies of information.[33]

Serpell concurs with this and draws out some of the crucial implications for human-animal relations. Drawing on Ingold's important essay "From Trust to Domination: An Alternative History of Human-Animal Relations"[34], he claims that "the change in relations between humans and animals associated with the switch from hunting to farming produced a fundamental shift in our mental and moral taxonomy."[35] This shift was unavoidable, Serpell believes, because the respectful attitude of hunter-gatherers toward animals is incompatible with the new relations prevailing under farming. "It would require, after all," he points out, "a supreme feat of self-deception for a farmer or herdsman to claim that his animals were free agents."[36] A basic lack of freedom and self-determination is inherent to the condition of a farmed animal, and therefore also to the way that it is viewed by farmers. Although this is taken to an extreme in contemporary farming, with its paraphernalia of "rape racks" and

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[33] Brody, The Other Side of Eden, p.255
[34] Tim Ingold, "From Trust to Domination: An Alternative History of Human-Animal Relations" in Aubrey Manning & James Serpell (Ed.s), Animals & Human Society: Changing Perspectives, (1994), London, Routledge. Also reprinted in The Perception of the Environment, details above.
[35] James A. Serpell, "Creatures of the Unconscious: Companion Animals as Mediators" in Anthony L. Podberscek, Elizabeth S. Paul and James A. Serpell (Ed.s), Companion Animals & Us: Exploring the Relationships Between People & Pets, (2000), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.117
[36] Ibid., p.116

automated feeding machines, even herding systems involve often quite sophisticated control techniques.

The "fundamental shift" that farming represents is therefore from a style of culture in which the primary anxiety is that animals will refuse to make themselves available if not treated with respect – which is to say, one sensitised to the suggestions of a bodily interactional order – to one in which animals are seen as likely to be perpetually available so long as sufficient control over them is maintained. While treating (or thinking of) animals with a limited amount of respect is still perhaps just about possible within the latter system, there is little fundamental impetus toward it beyond the basic element of care necessary to the animal's survival, as well as there being powerful reasons why it is likely to be counterproductive if taken too far. Farmers intuitively understand this, which is why they tend to avoid such practices as naming animals that are intended to be killed. Such psychological tactics are ways of maintaining a necessary emotional distance, despite day to day interaction, and are ways of deliberately *disengaging* the bodily interactional order or social/moral sense.

But farming does not lead only to the awkward combination of minimal care and emotional distancing that is necessary for interaction with domestic animals. As both Brody and Serpell point out, farming necessitates that many wild animals become "vermin", since they threaten the farmer's livelihood by damaging crops or preying on domestic "stock". Farming means that wild animals as well as domestic ones must therefore be "controlled" in order to preserve the conditions for economic success. There are therefore also powerful incentives to perceive wild animals as inferiors or as enemies, and to disengage any moral feelings about persecuting them. Brody even takes this argument so far as to assert that "The worldview and daily preoccupations of the peasant farmer and the twenty-first-century executive have much in common. The one is able to dominate, exploit and thrive far more effectively than the other. But their intellectual devices, their categories of thought and their underlying interests may well be the same."[37]

This phrase "intellectual devices" is clearly central to understanding the farmer's perspective on animals. Controlling others for one's own benefit involves the adoption of certain attitudes and cultural constructions that arise because the

[37] Brody, The Other Side of Eden, p.89

possession of a dominant position seems to lead to a need to justify the existence of a hierarchical structure and to escape from the moral conflicts that the situation suggests. Serpell unflinchingly characterises these tendencies as self-deception and it is difficult to disagree. He describes in detail a range of distancing devices that he acknowledges is "far from complete," and that are fundamentally unavoidable because "the moral dilemma is... far more intense for the farmer than for the hunter, since killing or harming the animal in this context effectively constitutes a gross betrayal of trust."[38] One particular psychological consequence of farming is both fundamental to Western conceptions of the animal, and also by now quite familiar to us. As he goes on to claim, "Farmers, herdsmen and others who benefit from the exploitation of domestic species have dealt with this ethical dilemma using a variety of coping strategies, but perhaps the most pervasive and durable was the idea that humans are both morally separate from and superior to all other animals."[39] This, then, is the foundation on which Myers' categorical boundary rests: the decisive rejection of the sense of ontological unity that accompanies the respect for animals that is felt naturally by children and is elaborated and embodied in the culture and experiences of so many groups of subsistence hunters. The farming of animals is fundamentally psychologically dependent on the maintenance of this boundary and on the denial of moral or ontological continuity. It is a construction that is developed intuitively by farmers as a way of dealing with their conflicting feelings about their relationships with animals, just as it may be adopted intuitively by children to deal with their feelings about meat. This makes it rather ironic, to say the least, that Plumwood should denounce a committed vegetarianism for supposedly employing moral dualism, while she simultaneously raises the possibility of animal farming as a "species egalitarian form."

Of course some types of domesticated animal, having lost their wildness and become comfortable in apparently sedentary, subordinate or dependant roles, may have seemed to reinforce the construction of the categorical boundary with their behaviour. Juliet Clutton-Brock offers us a categorisation of animals that is instructive in this regard. As she puts it, "A wild animal is one that runs away on sight, a fierce animal is one that fights back, and a tame animal is one that allows

[38] Serpell, "Creatures of the Unconscious," p.116
[39] Ibid., p.116

itself to be handled and has no concept of itself as potential prey."[40] Put in such blunt terms, the latter response is clearly the one most likely to invite a feeling of smug superiority, particularly where an awareness of the animal as prey is foundational to the human's engagement in relationship. It is in the nature of people, indeed of their bodily interactional sense, to respond to these undercurrents in interaction, to sense when they have the upper hand or when they have successfully practised deception, and to find it hard to maintain respect for the manipulated other.

This is perhaps reflected in the perceptions of those for whom the categorical boundary is not completely second nature. Andy Fisher, for example, quotes the words of Lame Deer, a Lakota medicine man: "There is power in a buffalo – spiritual, magical power – but there is none in an Angus, in a Hereford."[41] And, perhaps illuminating the low valuation of animals often found in those who are only familiar with domesticated species, people who have only recently adopted a pastoralist lifestyle often consider the flesh of wild animals to be inherently more valuable than that of domesticated ones. Mitsuo Ichikawa points out that the trade in meat maintained by Mbuti hunters of Zaire with their neighbours, who are rapidly losing contact with the forest wilderness, is aided by the high value placed upon it "as a source of 'wild power' which cannot be obtained from fish or domestic animals."[42] In a similar vein, Barry Lopez asserts that, "The Naskapi, to this day, believe that the destruction of their people, the rending of their spirit, has had mainly to do with their being forced to eat the meat of domestic animals."[43] It is difficult to interpret such claims adequately unless we accept that, for the people concerned, animal flesh has a spiritual significance that is inseparable from their feelings about the creature that it came from, and that the feelings aroused by contact with domesticated animals are qualitatively different from those aroused by wild animals.

The clash of the two attitudes that we have been discussing is also apparent in an intriguing story told by Peterson about pressures experienced by Navajo culture as it has been forced to adapt to the contemporary world. Peterson points out that

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[40] Juliet Clutton-Brock, "The Unnatural World: Behavioural Aspects of Humans and Animals in the Process of Domestication" in Aubrey Manning and James Serpell (Ed.s), Animals and Human Society: Changing Perspectives, (1994), London: Routledge, p.24

[41] Andy Fisher, Radical Ecopsychology: Psychology in the Service of Life, (2002), Albany: State University of New York Press, p. 111

[42] Mitsuo Ichikawa, "The Co-existence of Man and Nature in the African Rain Forest" in Roy Ellen and Katsuyoshi Fukui (Ed.s), Redefining Nature: Ecology, Culture and Domestication, (1996), Oxford: Berg, p.479

[43] Barry Hulstun Lopez, Of Wolves and Men, (1978), London: J.M. Dent and Sons Limited, p.95

traditional Navajo culture embodies a strong sense of resistance to the exercising of control over others (she refers extensively to the work of Gary Witherspoon, who writes that "Navajos abhor the idea or practice of controlling other beings in the normal course of everyday life."[44]) She goes on to describe a conflict that occurred recently over a zoo that was used to educate children about native species that are now absent or rare in the surrounding territory and their roles in traditional customs, as well as to ensure the presence of animals that healers required for traditional rituals. The story is worth quoting:

> The controversy began when two Navajo women told the outgoing president of the Navajo nation, Milton Bluehouse, that Holy People had appeared to them and warned them that "the Navajo people were not living according to tradition and that they were upsetting the natural order by keeping animals caged." The sighting of the Holy People, according to Harry Walters, requires the Navajo to ask: "Are we going the way we should?" Bluehouse responded to this message on January 11, 1999, his last day as president, by ordering the zoo closed and its animals set free. However, his successor, Kelsey Begaye, reversed the order in the face of protests from many Navajos, mostly children, and also questions from wildlife experts about whether the zoo animals would be able to survive in the wild... While the zoo remains open, the controversy has raised questions for the Navajo about their cultural values and traditions generally and especially their attitudes toward nonhuman animals. The existence of the zoo conflicts with the Navajo rule against keeping animals, even pets like cats and dogs, enclosed (a precept shared by the Koyukon, among other indigenous groups).[45]

Peterson's discussion of this story foregrounds the vexed relationship between the Navajo's current mode of subsistence and their established cultural beliefs. She notes that the mode of subsistence has changed from traditional hunting focussed on native wild animals to a contemporary situation in which hunting is rare and herding, wage labour and government support have become the main sources of livelihood. The decrease in contact with wild animals and the reduction in economic dependence upon them, as well as the simultaneous growth in reliance on domestic species, leads to what she calls a "paradox". Although traditional cultural values relating to animals have been preserved to an extent that clearly impresses her, she highlights the unavoidable fact that these values have been compromised and that they now sit uneasily with current cultural trends. Her conclusion illustrates the

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[44] Gary Witherspoon, quoted in Peterson, Being Human, p.112
[45] Peterson, Being Human, p.112-113

difficulty of maintaining a cultural conception of animals that is not experientially compatible with the ways that they are engaged with on a day to day basis:

> As the zoo dilemma emphasizes, Navajos today face the challenge of maintaining traditional attitudes toward the nonhuman world, including having respect for other animals' freedom and autonomy, on the one hand, while meeting the contemporary need for education and the preservation of Navajo knowledge and culture on the other... Clearly, many traditional Native Americans, including the Navajo and Koyukon, value nonhuman nature and limit human behaviour in order to protect that nature. It is less clear, however, to what extent and to what ends those values can survive in the absence of traditional subsistence activities that joined native peoples in intricate relations of dependence on native species.[46]

Liberation and Respect in the West

The preceding discussion has perhaps been a rather longwinded way to demonstrate why Plumwood's belief in the possibility that we could "rethink" farming as a species egalitarian form is misguided. But the point is an important one to make, as it demonstrates in depth the error of assuming that a workable ethical paradigm can be instigated purely by abstract or philosophical thought. Attempting to weld the kind of hunter-gatherer egalitarianism and "sophistication" described by Hickory and lauded by Plumwood onto the inherently hierarchical milieu of the farm is extremely unlikely to result in success because farming carries its own powerful internal logic that is intrinsically opposed to such a view and that is likely to override it, making it impossible to implement.[47] It should by now be clear that there is a very complex dialectical relationship – which cannot be controlled purely by conscious or philosophical design – between what is thought, what is felt, and what is done.

Plumwood is well aware that "The motivation for a ranking in terms of invariant species value and order draws much of its strength from the felt need to validate the use of non-humans in human lives."[48] But she completely fails to follow up the implications of this observation and instead falls back on denouncing the ranking rather than the motivation for it. This approach – with its implicit rationalist

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[46] Ibid., p.114

[47] This conclusion should obviously not be taken as equating to a cultural materialist anthropological viewpoint, which might suggest that all forms of cultural representation of animals or of the ethics of their treatment are developed purely to facilitate the optimum economic benefit for the humans concerned.

[48] Plumwood, Environmental Culture, p.171

assumption that the cognitive can and should maintain dominance over the experiential – leaves the apparent legitimacy of the basic experiential structures involved in manipulating and controlling the animal world (structures that provide the crucial existential template for the hierarchical worldview) philosophically unscathed. This is achieved through the persistent unexamined slippage from an admiration of the hunter-gather ability to maintain an egalitarian spirit of understanding of the natural world, to the belief that farming can somehow adopt and implement such a stance.

But what is it possible to say about the Western context, and specifically about the Western consumer, who neither hunts nor farms animals? The consumer is caught in a highly ambivalent situation. Initially tending, in childhood, to feel a sense of connection with animals and concern for their welfare, she nevertheless learns to internalise the categorical boundary and to compromise on the extension of care to animal others. Sympathy and concern are considered acceptable when extended to certain classes of animal (for example, pets), but not to others, and they usually tend to be extended in ways that are essentially compatible with the maintenance of the categorical boundary. Most Westerners learn and negotiate these cultural norms without difficulty, since the categorical boundary comes to make sense to them for reasons that compound each other. As Myers observes, existing in an overwhelmingly human milieu leads to the experience that human contact is central, and the modes of human interaction come to seem so compelling that "anything less seems unimportant."[49] The very limited contacts that are available with animals, as well as the stereotyped modes of contact all lead to a lessening of the sense of ontological connection with the animal (remember, for example, the discussion in Chapter 3 of zoos and the paradigmatic impossibility that they offer of authentic encounter with animals). As the modes of human communication become more complex and enveloping the opportunities to engage with communicative animal others can become increasingly circumscribed and unsatisfying.

But this is not the whole story. While the experience of *farming* animals provides powerful experiential incentives to create or to endorse the categorical boundary, the consumer's need to defend psychologically against the mixed emotions surrounding her consumption of meat (which she is not personally

[49] Myers, Children and Animals, p.17

involved in producing) *can* be significantly less. And while the opportunities for meaningful interaction with animals might be reduced, a submerged desire for such contact and the remnants of the fascination with animals that characterised childhood can perhaps combine with a postmodern sense of the fallibility of hierarchical constructions and the increasing awareness that there is actually no need for Westerners to eat animal foods in order to live healthy lives. These factors, despite the near ubiquity in Western culture of the long-established categorical boundary, mean that there is an opening for a new type of attitude toward animals – one that is able to reject the partiality of the hierarchical view and to seek a genuinely economically disinterested alternative.

Animal liberation can be seen as just such an economically disinterested alternative, and therefore as a very precious *opportunity* rather than as a duty, an injunction, or a criticism of other cultures. It can be seen as an opportunity to simultaneously nurture our social/moral sense, and to develop new ways of encountering animals that do not enmesh either us or them in our need to explain and justify "use" with convoluted constructions or romantically appealing but ultimately doomed attempts to recapture those very context-specific types of intimacy and respect that the world's remaining true hunter-gatherers rightly cherish in their relations with the natural and the animal worlds. In this sense it is, as Brian Luke rightly points out, "creative, not restrictive"[50]: amongst its many implications is the possibility of expanding the range of respectful imaginings and experiences of the human-animal connection. But seeing it as an opportunity means also seeing it as a privilege: Westerners are able to refuse "meat" and other Western forms of exploitation because most of them have the means to live healthy – indeed healthier – lives without it, as well as to vastly reduce their environmental impact in the process. Many people throughout the world do not have this opportunity or privilege, and obviously no reasonable form of animal liberation theory should imply criticism of such people or suggest an ethical need for them to change their ways. Having noted this, however, it is worth emphasising again that the extent to which any do this is vastly over-exaggerated by critics of a committed Western liberationist stance, such as Plumwood and Karen Warren.

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[50] Brian Luke "Taming Ourselves or Going Feral? Toward a Nonpatriarchal Metaethic of Animal Liberation" in Carol J. Adams and Josephine Donovan (Ed.s), Animals and Women: Feminist Theoretical Explorations, (1995), Duke University Press, p. 315

The opening and the opportunity that I have described is existentially coherent and contextually appropriate to a much greater extent than can be accounted for within an abstract philosophical framework of universally prescriptive power. Attempting to work animal liberation into such an ethical scheme is misguided, as should by now be clear. This is a difficult idea for critics of animal liberation to accept – as is evidenced by the fact that both Plumwood and Warren dwell at enormous length on the ethical importance of context, and then stubbornly refuse to recognise or discuss any version of a committed animal liberation or vegetarianism as addressing itself only to the West.[51] The implications of a committed liberationist stance must, it seems, be represented as universally applicable in order for its rejection to carry any real moral force! This in itself is suggestive of just how compelling the committed stance is in the Western context.

But to insist on the use of universal criteria to evaluate animal liberation is to remain trapped within the traditional rationalist assumptions of philosophy. Conversely, to prioritise the experiential coherence and contextual appropriateness of animal liberation within Western culture over its compatibility with an abstract universal framework is a hugely important and radical step to take, because of the resistance it offers to the hegemony of the rational and because of its determination to implement the actual contextual approach that both Plumwood and Warren claim to want, without ever achieving. This does not imply marginalising other cultures by omitting them from consideration, as Plumwood ridiculously insists that it does,[52] but rather remains true to the pre-philosophical recognition that the ways of living that are most appropriate in one cultural context cannot be unproblematically transported to another.

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[51] For an extensive demonstration of this point in reference to Plumwood (further to the discussion in the previous chapter of this thesis), please see my "Incorporating the Other: Val Plumwood's Integration of Ethical Frameworks," *Ethics and the Environment*, 7(2), 2002, p.153-180. In a brief response to this critique, Plumwood actually represented my own position as "universalist," despite my emphatic argument for a contextually situated understanding. See Val Plumwood, "Gender, Eco-Feminism and the Environment" in Rob White (Ed.), Controversies in Environmental Sociology, (2004), Cambridge University Press, p.53

[52] Plumwood, "Gender, Eco-Feminism and the Environment"

Conclusion

"But all description is merely analogy and metaphor, and as such is forever imperfect and respectful of mystery. We are more ignorant and limited than we can imagine."
- Jack Turner[1]

In this thesis I have explored some of the problems with monolithic, logical approaches to the theorising of animal liberation, and the possible implications of the incompatibility of such approaches with other important perspectives on how Western culture might be able to improve its relationship with the natural world. In doing this, I have attempted to present a balanced view and to not undermine the very significant heuristic potential that such approaches hold if they are not seen as providing access to absolute or universal truths. I have also attempted, however, to support and to develop a perspective that is less rigid in its ethical pronouncements, but that hopefully expands our understanding of the seriousness of the problem and of some of the many positive implications of taking a committed stance against the unprecedented scale and character of contemporary Western animal abuse, as well as against the self-deceptive constructions and dissociations that work to legitimate it.

It is perhaps worth acknowledging a slight clash of perspectives at the heart of this work, this being between the ethical / philosophical and the psychological / anthropological. It would perhaps have been easier to approach the topic from only one of these perspectives, which might leave open the possibility of a more conventionally satisfying conclusion. My failure to do so might even be taken as evidence of my ignorance of the common injunction against committing the "naturalistic fallacy" – against moving between an "is" and an "ought." But the assumption that the philosophical gulf between "is" and "ought" should be absolute has been argued to be indicative of a gulf between an ethics that exists only in the abstract spaces of academic debate, and one that is able to reflect to a greater extent the complexity and ambiguity of living – including the functioning of ecological systems. Bronislaw Szerszynski describes the significance of much environmental philosophy in the following terms:

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[1] Jack Turner, The Abstract Wild, (1996), Tucson: Arizona University Press, p.79

> Instead of accepting the gulf between fact and value that accompanies the modern, disjunctive view of language, it insists that nature does indeed tell us what to do. Ethics is no longer merely a human project, concerned with the internal, formal consistency of ethical codes, but is the recognition of laws inscribed within nature itself.[2]

The philosophical clash between ecological and traditional animal liberationist thinkers can, to a great extent, be seen in terms of this polarised view about where to locate the foundations of a moral attitude to the world. The approach that I have adopted here draws on the ecofeminist idea that "nature itself" does provide foundations for animal liberation – in the form of our own social and moral instincts – and that these foundations, if approached with sufficient sensitivity and flexibility, are likely to be able to be made compatible with other perspectives, including more explicitly ecological ones.

So although a slight awkwardness might be detected in the measured reconciliation of fact and value that this thesis implicitly relies upon, I would suggest that this awkwardness is unavoidable if we are to begin to transcend those disciplinary divisions and conventions that – while powerful and important enabling structures – might restrict a holistic perspective. The awkwardness is precisely the awkwardness involved in figuring out how to live in a world that is as complex – as intricate – as the beings who do the figuring. Peter Singer, a staunch defender of objectivity and rationality who explicitly argues that ethics cannot be based in biology, is well aware of the tension when he acknowledges that our partiality – and specifically our emotional ties to those who are closest to us – means that "a code of ethics for human beings will not fit the abstract imperatives of impartial reason."[3] His attempt to resolve these difficulties is perhaps no less awkward than the sidestepping of the injunction against committing the "naturalistic fallacy" that my approach draws upon here. Indeed Singer, for all his advocacy of the supposedly objective or impartial viewpoint, observes that "we cannot simply propose this [the impartial viewpoint] as the ultimate ethical standard and then expect everyone to act accordingly. We must begin to design our culture so that it encourages broader

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[2] Bronislaw Szerszynski, "On Knowing What to Do: Environmentalism and the Modern Problematic" In Scott Lash, Bronislaw Szerszynski and Brian Wynne (Ed.s), Risk, Environment and Modernity: Towards a New Ecology, (1996), London: Sage, p.111

[3] Peter Singer, The Expanding Circle: Ethics and Sociobiology, (1981), Oxford: Clarendon Press, p.73 & 155

concerns without frustrating important and relatively permanent human desires."[4] Considering ecopsychological (and other) insights about the possible psychological damage that is done to an intuitive morality by an excessive emphasis on the objective and the rational suggests that these could be some of the wisest words that Singer has written.

The naturalistic fallacy is usually invoked to point out the error of moving directly from an observation of a fact to the ascription of moral values or norms relating to that fact. This is a traditional tenet of philosophy. Singer notes that "Facts, by themselves, do not provide us with reasons for action. I need facts to make a sensible decision, but no amount of facts can compel me to accept any value, or any conclusion about what I ought to do."[5] This is an analytical position that might be invoked to attempt to invalidate my conclusions in this thesis. I have refrained from attempting to derive formal moral norms throughout my discussion, since I am uncomfortable with absolutes. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the principal claim developed for the positive moral value that I believe attaches to vegetarianism, support for animal liberation, and the avoidance of as much complicity in animal abuse as possible is based (although I would certainly not wish to suggest that it should be exclusively so) in the instinctive human social/moral sense. I believe that the healthy development and strengthening of this sense in children and adults is a moral value that most people would be intuitively happy to accept, and that the psychological and experiential "facts" that I attempt to get at in this thesis entail what values they do mainly because of this. Intuitions, as discussed previously in Chapter 7, are the ground on which both Singer and Regan base their extension of formal moral considerability to animals, through the device of the argument from marginal cases. The intuition that "marginal" humans (an uncomfortable term for young children and the mentally handicapped) have the same moral considerability as the average adult is held to be self-evident.[6] Intuitions, then, seem to be the things that convert facts to values in moral philosophy, and both Singer and Regan depend on them. Some writers, such as Robert Garner, have even noted Regan's "over-

[4] Singer, Expanding Circle, p.170
[5] Ibid., p.75
[6] Of course, history and anthropology might suggest that the formal moral considerability of all adults, let alone of all "marginal" individuals, is something of a cultural anomaly and therefore that attempting to apply it universally might be to some extent both illogical and culturally imperialist.

reliance on appeals to intuition."[7] Singer and Regan, we might also observe, are noticeably selective about which (or whose) intuitions they wish to validate as morally acceptable. Intuitions suggesting that the health of the natural world as a whole is a moral value are given no weight.

In my introduction I mentioned John Rodman's environmentalist critique of Singer, and especially its concern with the value of "the wild." In this critique Rodman finds one principle aspect of Singer's position to approve of, and it is perhaps worth picking that aspect up now. Rodman claims that "From a radical liberationist standpoint, vegetarianism is mainly relevant insofar as it promotes the abolition of domesticated animals, those caricatures of reality that human beings are especially prone to define their own identity in terms of."[8] Rodman finds domesticated animals problematic for a number of reasons, as do several other writers who concern themselves with the value of wildness, but the principal reason seems to be the impact that they have on the human sense of self. Paul Shepard takes a similar line to Rodman, pointing out that "When animals as domestics came literally into our households... they filled the lowest ranks of our society. There was the end of respect for the other on its own terms."[9] He continues: "On the face of it, behaving like a bear or a racoon may not be so bad. But when the pig and the dog have become the animals of reference instead of the bear and racoon, the animal as model of human degradation cannot be far off..."[10] Effectively, according to this line of thought, we degrade animals by domesticating them and in the process this degrades us because we define ourselves through those creatures closest to us. This line of thought is supported by several other writers – for example Gary Paul Nabhan and Elizabeth Atwood Lawrence.[11]

My analysis might be seen to complement this concern about the significance of domesticated animals to some degree, while also differing in emphasis. Recall the intuitive moral concern that several of the children that Myers worked with showed

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[7] Robert Garner, Animals, Politics and Morality, (1993), Manchester: Manchester University Press, p.34

[8] John Rodman, "The Liberation of Nature?" *Inquiry* 20, (1977), p.106

[9] Paul Shepard, "On Animal Friends" in Stephen R. Kellert and Edward O. Wilson (Ed.s), The Biophilia Hypothesis, (1993), Washington: Island Press, p.287

[10] Ibid., p.289

[11] See Gary Paul Nabhan, Cultures of Habitat: On Nature, Culture and Story, (1997), Washington D.C.: Counterpoint; Elizabeth Atwood Lawrence, "The Sacred Bee, The Filthy Pig, and the Bat out of Hell: Animal Symbolism as Cognitive Biophilia" in Stephen R. Kellert, and Edward O. Wilson (Ed.s), The Biophilia Hypothesis, (1993), Washington: Island Press, p.337

about the autonomy of various animals, and note that this concern appears to be mirrored to some extent in the hunter-gatherer heritage of groups such as the Navajo and the Koyukon that Anna Peterson describes – despite the difficulty of maintaining this heritage when faced with a contemporary dependence on domesticated animals such as sheep. If Myers is correct in arguing that the human sense of self is an "experiential integration" of the relationships that the individual is involved in, then relationships founded on self-interested control of another can be seen to be highly problematic – much more so than respectful predation on wild animals for genuine subsistence reasons. While Rodman and Shepard focus on problems with the use of domesticated animals as metaphorical analogues of the human, I would suggest that a much more important consequence might be that curtailing the autonomy of animals and maintaining control over them presents a problematic model of relations, and that this model of relations is likely to have effects on how people experience their own sense of self, and therefore also their relations with other people and with the natural world. And since a culture's economic and food relationships are so central to its construction of the world, this can be seen as not merely an individual matter, but also as part of the way that culture comes to structure relations in general. There are various ways in which to understand this. Exercising long-term control, we have seen, suggests and encourages the creation of what Myers refers to as the categorical boundary – perhaps the foundational and quintessential 'us and them' way of reductively constructing the world in order to legitimise hierarchy. It also implies finding ways of subduing any uneasiness that an embodied social/moral sense might suggest, as well as providing a template for techniques of control that can be used in other areas of life – including in relation to other humans.

This idea of the transference of styles of relation is supported by other research. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson studied findings in cognitive science about the complex effects of embodiment upon cognition and the consequences of these findings for philosophy. Their observations support the notion that relations are likely to generalise from one sphere to another. They claim that "once we have learned a conceptual system, it is neurally instantiated in our brains and we are not free to think just anything."[12] In a similar vein, Peter Kahn discusses the implications

[12] George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, Philosophy in the Flesh, (1999), New York: Basic, p.5

of structural developmental theory for human-animal relations, and notes that children's moral relationships with other animals help to establish their moral relationships with people.[13]

Perhaps most persuasively, there is a body of work specifically linking the beginnings of hierarchy in human societies to the move from a hunter-gatherer existence to one based on agriculture – and particularly the domestication of animals. Traditional hunter-gatherer societies are often argued to embody the same basically egalitarian principles in social organisation that so often structure their engagement with the natural world (indeed it is sometimes suggested that such cultures would not recognise a significant distinction between the two realms). James Woodburn, for example, observes that hunter-gatherers present us with "the closest approximation to equality known in any human societies."[14] John Zerzan concurs and argues that domestication decisively ends this principle of egalitarianism.[15] James Serpell reviews this idea in anthropology, and links the development of hierarchy to both the need to intensify food production that arises with agricultural expansion, and the extensive influence of what he calls "the same techniques of self-deception that legitimized the enslavement and subordination of animals."[16] Similarly, David Nibert surveys at great length the inextricably interwoven strands of the oppression and exploitation of both humans and animals throughout history, pre-history, and particularly under contemporary capitalism. As he argues, "The mistreatment of humans and other animals was not stimulated by prejudice; rather, prejudice resulted from the socially constructed ideological systems that legitimated oppression. Significantly, the ruthless treatment of humans and other animals was entangled."[17]

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[13] Peter H. Kahn, Jr., "Children's Affiliations with Nature: Structure, Development, and the Problem of Environmental Generational Amnesia" in Peter H. Kahn, Jr. and Stephen R. Kellert, Children and Nature: Psychological, Sociocultural and Evolutionary Investigations, (2002), London: MIT Press, p.100

[14] James Woodburn, "Egalitarian Societies" in John M. Gowdy (Ed.), Limited Wants, Unlimited Means: A Reader on Hunter-Gatherer Economics and the Environment, (1998), Washington DC: Island Press, p.87

[15] John Zerzan, "Future Primitive" in John M. Gowdy (Ed.), Limited Wants, Unlimited Means: A Reader on Hunter-Gatherer Economics and the Environment, (1998), Washington DC: Island Press, p.267

[16] James Serpell, In the Company of Animls: A Study of Human-Animal Relationships, (1996), Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, p.226

[17] David Nibert, Animal Rights/Human Rights: Entanglements of Oppression and Liberation, (2002), Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, p.31

Nibert goes on to argue explicitly that "The oppression of humans and other animals developed in tandem, each fuelling the other."[18]

This "entanglement" is apparent in anthropological accounts of the control techniques and conceptualisations that have been used in relation to both dominated humans and domesticated animals. Yutaka Tani, for example, compares the historical emergence of the guide-wether (a castrated male sheep or goat) in Mediterranean and Middle Eastern herding systems with the institution of the eunuch. He argues that "The position of the eunuch in the imperial order corresponds to that of the castrated male guide in the pastoral relationship. Very similar techniques of management are employed in the two domains, the control of domestic animals and the control of human subordinates."[19] Moreover, in ancient Vedic it seems that these "two domains" are classified under variations of the same term – "pasu" – so that "there is one expression for quadruped pasu and another expression for bipedal pasu... Under the term pasu, members of the two different semantic domains, domestic animals and subordinated domestic serfs or slaves are classified in the same category."[20] Tani goes on to find that "In the discourses of the Old Testament concerning animals, we find a similar attitude to domestic animals as to human domestic serfs."[21] Further comprehensive evidence of the extent to which cultural conceptualisations, psychological legitimations and actual control techniques have generalised between the domination of animals and the domination of humans can be found in Marjorie Spiegel's intricately researched The Dreaded Comparison: Human and Animal Slavery.[22] Such examples are not mere historical anomalies: contemporary capitalism continues to facilitate the exploitation of both humans and animals, regardless of the supposed moral considerability of the former, in ways that several writers have found comparable.[23]

Evidence can also be found, however, for the generalisation of morally inclusive attitudes between animals and people. For example, Elizabeth S. Paul finds

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[18] Ibid., p.50
[19] Yutaka Tani, "Domestic Animal as Serf: Ideologies of Nature in the Mediterranean and Middle East" in Roy Ellen and Katsuyoshi Fukui (Ed.s), Redefining Nature: Ecology, Culture and Domestication, (1996), Oxford: Berg., p.391
[20] Ibid., p.403-4
[21] Ibid., p.412
[22] Marjorie Spiegel, The Dreaded Comparison: Human and Animal Slavery, (1996), New York: Mirror Books/I.D.E.A.
[23] Nibert's detailed exploration in Animal Rights/Human Rights is invaluable here, as is that of Carol Adams in a range of works.

experimental evidence for humane attitudes toward animals generalising to people, and concludes that "human-oriented and animal-oriented empathy probably do possess some common determinant."[24] And Nick Fiddes notes a "speculative correlation drawn between societies, such as in Polynesia, which live by vegetable growing and whose political system was generally non-hierarchical, and those whose management of herds may have engendered more authoritarian politics."[25] Such examples, taken together, might be seen to suggest that although there are significant philosophical problems with the formal moral extensionist arguments of thinkers such as Singer and Regan, particularly from an ecological perspective, there is perhaps a pervasive experiential sense lurking behind the logical face of such theories. This experiential sense, my analysis suggests, is at least partly based on the natural inclusiveness of the human social/moral sense – an inclusiveness that for better or worse is able to sense and to respond intuitively to parallels between the animal and the human, even despite the pervasive effects of the constructed categorical boundary between the two.

Val Plumwood seems to recognise many of these strands when she notes the relation of species domination to dominations based on class, race and gender in the creation of what she calls a "complex dominator identity."[26] But as I argued in my final chapter, her attempt to rehabilitate animal farming means that her theory is unavoidably compromised. If we are really to grasp the nettle of what is wrong in our relations with animals then perhaps it would be wiser to recognise the degree of sense in Rodman and Shepard's desire to "abolish" domesticated animals, since this would constitute a decisive step toward rejecting that problematic "dominator identity." From the perspective that I have outlined here it may not be essential to end all relationships between humans and animals that involve a degree of co-adaptation – which is surely a feature of the natural world. But it would make sense to only preserve those relationships that entail a realistic degree of autonomy for both parties, and that are not based on protracted and self-interested manipulation and control by humans. Since pets, which both Rodman and Shepard are appalled by, are actually to be found in many of the egalitarian hunter-gatherer cultures that

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[24] Elizabeth S. Paul, "Love of pets and love of people" in Anthony Podberscek, Elizabeth S. Paul and James Serpell (Ed.s), Companion Animals and Us: Exploring the Relationships between People and Pets, (2000), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.173-4

[25] Nick Fiddes, Meat: A Natural Symbol, (1991), London: Routledge, p.172

[26] Val Plumwood, Feminism and the Mastery of Nature, (1990), London: Routledge, p.5

they recognise as embodying ideals, there may be a valid case for some vastly modified form of continuation for such a relationship, in-so-far as it can be done without caging, excessive disciplining, perverted breeding strategies or other curtailments of autonomy and respectful co-existence. Animal farming, however, is an institution that should be recognised to be fundamentally incompatible with an attitude of moral inclusiveness and respect for the other – which in the context of the argument outlined above may be taken to mean *any* other – and it is therefore problematic for a long-term vision of what a truly liberated society might look like. Opposition to animal farming therefore marks the intersection of animal liberationist aims with radical ecological thought, as well as being of potentially immense practical value in combating the huge influence that such farming has, for example, on climate change, wealth inequalities and land despoliation in the areas of the developing world that are farmed with cattle for the Western market. This is not, we should note, a solution that could ever be imposed on less privileged cultures than our own. Rather it is a solution with incalculable benefits for those that are able to adopt it.

Because of the significant problems associated with appearing to suggest imposing morality onto others, much of my argument has concerned itself with the psychology of individual involvement in the cultural institutions of animal abuse, and has most often addressed itself to the benefits of individuals choosing to resist – as much as is possible – this involvement. Vegetarianism or veganism is the primary means by which this can be done on a personal basis, and not simply because the Western meat industry is by far the biggest institutionalised abuser of animal life. As Singer argues of the use of animals as food, "There is… a sense in which it is the most basic form of animal use, the foundation stone on which rests the belief that animals exist for our pleasure and convenience."[27] In this context vegetarianism is clearly not simply an economic boycott, but also implies a decision to reject the complex tangle of constructions and evasions that have evolved, and been imposed on individuals at a very young age, to legitimate or to endorse hierarchy and abuse. It is a symbolic as well as a practical act of avoidance. David Wood points toward some of the symbolic ramifications when he claims that "Vegetarianism, like any progressive position, can become a finite symbolic substitute for an unlimited and

[27] Peter Singer, Practical Ethics, (1993), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.54

undelimitable responsibility – the renegotiation of our Being-toward-other-animals."[28] The weight of responsibility for a renegotiation of such magnitude is immense, which is precisely why options such as rights and utilitarianism have been so contentious: because they have rightly or wrongly been taken to entail connotations of closure and of completeness within their account of a relationship that is ultimately indefinable and also unavoidably personal.

But the question that remains largely unanswered is one that was raised in relation to Zygmunt Bauman's postmodern ethics, ecofeminist theory and to Andy Fisher's ecopsychology: if change is only a matter for individual conscience, then how will it ever occur on a meaningful scale within a culture that corrupts and represses the potential for personal moral experience and development? I have argued for an understanding of animal liberation that embodies an openness – a reluctance to create rigid "ontologies" of right and wrong – but that nevertheless provides foundations for moral engagement, the inclusion of animals, and perhaps certain heuristic guidelines for how this might be expressed in behaviour within the Western context. If such a liberation is to be successful then it seems that wider supporting cultural shifts would be required, often of the type identified by ecopsychologists. But here the paradoxes seem to multiply: How are cultural shifts to be achieved when the processes supporting the degradation of animals are supported *by* the degradation of animals? How are people to be convinced without using dominant but problematic conceptual schemas such as "rights," with all of the universalistic connotations that they convey? How can more morally engaged behaviours be nurtured without compromising autonomy?

These questions ultimately entail debates beyond the scope of what I have attempted to do here. But having acknowledged that, perhaps it is important to observe that the current situation does seem so oppressive and so destructive of animal and human integrity that, despite much of the material that has been presented in this thesis, the enactment of laws with the intention of dismantling abusive institutions and moving Western society toward a more respectful coexistence with animals would unmistakably seem to be a step in the right direction, albeit an incomplete and to some extent compromised one. Laws rarely depend on universal or "ontological" moral principles – often they simply adjust

[28] David Wood, "Comment ne pas manger" in H. Peter Steeves (Ed.), Animal Others: On Ethics, Ontology and Animal Life, (1999), New York: State University of New York Press, p. 32

what works and is to the general good. What the research that I have presented here suggests is that the closer we are able to move toward creating a culture that respects others and engages the human social/moral sense consistently, the less necessary such laws might become. Perhaps, then, a genuine liberation can only be approached on the societal scale by such a circuitous and incremental route.

But ultimately the liberation that seems most to be desired is one in which individuals freely choose to restrict the harm that they do to others to a minimum determined by their intricate and embodied sense of what is fair, necessary or just, without employing dissociations, evasions, reductive constructions or other forms of self-deception. My analysis suggests that this would unequivocally be a liberation consistent with the majority of the goals of the contemporary animal liberation movement, and would also further the reclamation of humanity from the "domestication" suggested by our contemporary culture's enthusiasm to sell us products that entail enormous suffering without any impetus to engage our consciences and to consider what that suffering means. It can perhaps therefore be a liberation that might coexist with, and augment, the kind of "wildness" that much radical environmental thinking yearns for. It is also a liberation that – at the level of the individual and the subculture – seems to have evolved and begun to flourish within the boundaries of contemporary Western capitalism. This, at least, is cause for hope.

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