

BETWEEN THE SPECIES

An Interview with Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka

Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka are authors of *Zoopolis: A Political Theory of Animal Rights* (Oxford University Press, 2011). This interview was conducted by Angus Taylor.

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ANGUS TAYLOR

BTS: Your aim is to move the animal-rights debate beyond the field of ethics and into political philosophy. Drawing insights from citizenship theory, *Zoopolis* proposes recognizing domesticated animals as full citizens of our communities, treating wild animals who live outside our communities as members of their own sovereign communities, and treating those “liminal” non-domesticated animals who live within the spaces of our communities as denizens with appropriate rights. This is an ambitious vision that would fundamentally transform our understanding of politics and how we think about our communal life. The initial reaction of many will be that this vision is wildly utopian and impracticable. And yet you claim that it actually stands a better chance of success than traditional animal-rights theory (ART). Could you explain?

DONALDSON/KYMLICKA: As many others have noted, traditional ART often seems committed to a strange and unattractive view of “species apartheid,” as Ralph Acampora once called it. For Francione (explicitly) and Regan (implicitly), we humans meet our obligations of justice to animals by cutting off all relations with them—we live in our world, and we “let them be” to live freely in their world, with as little interaction as possible. However, an effective animal-rights strategy cannot be based on this vision. For one thing, it fails to offer any guidance on many of the fundamental issues we face. Humans and nonhumans do not inhabit separate worlds, but inevitably share the same homes, cities, and territories. This is the case not just with domesticated animals, but also many kinds of wildlife (think raccoons, rats, crows, squirrels, etc.) who have adapted to human built environments. Every time we erect a building, a roadway, a fence, or a dam, we are having an impact on animals. If ART is to contribute to these debates, we need to think about what justice requires in conditions of co-existence, not

ANGUS TAYLOR

radical separation. Our *Zoopolis* model may be ambitious in its vision of human-animal relations, but it takes seriously the realities of species intermingling, rather than wishing them away.

The species apartheid vision is not just unrealistic; it's unattractive to many people who love animals, and want to live with animals in a just social arrangement. Traditional ART rightly highlights all the ways humans harm and exploit animals, and this emphasis on suffering and harm provides one important inspiration for animal advocacy. But we think even more people would be inspired if we were to highlight as well the potential positives in human-animal relations, rather than assuming that these relations are inherently unjust. Our *Zoopolis* model draws strength from the many examples of animal advocates and researchers who have figured out important lessons about how to co-exist with other animals, and indeed create new forms of community together. While our theoretical constructions of animal citizenship and animal sovereignty may seem novel and unfamiliar—and certainly no government has come close to endorsing them—they are intended to help make sense of a wide range of actually-existing experiments in inter-species justice. Paradoxically, traditional ART provides very little help in understanding some of the most exciting developments in animal rights, whether in terms of rewilding to support wilderness animals, or co-existence projects for liminal animals like coyotes or pigeons, or intentional communities that view domesticated animals as full members.

We should also note that while it may be novel to apply citizenship concepts to animals, we have a long history of figuring out how to make these concepts do real work in the human context. On questions of human diversity (across gender, race, ethnicity, culture, age, ability, sexual orientation), we have

ANGUS TAYLOR

learned many lessons about how to create forms of citizenship which are inclusive, while respecting difference. Similarly, we have learned about negotiating diversity at a more global level, about how states can cooperate, and help one another, and respect (or at least tolerate) differences rather than engaging in endless processes of invasion and colonization. It's a central part of our story that many of these lessons are transferable. There's a vast store of concrete knowledge and experience in the human case which can be transferred to similar challenges of inclusion, accommodation, cooperation, and diplomacy in our relations with animals. Traditional ART rightly highlights parallels between our treatment of animals and various human *injustices* (slavery, torture, colonization, genocide), but we can also learn a great deal by considering parallels in how we have advanced *justice*, and citizenship concepts have been a vital part of this in the human case. We think these concepts and lessons have a real resonance that ART can take advantage of.

BTS: You criticize ART for focusing on intrinsic capacities and negative rights. What is the problem here?

DONALDSON/KYMLICKA: To be very clear, our criticism is of the *exclusive* focus on negative rights. We support the basic AR position that all sentient beings have basic inviolable negative rights (not to be killed, harmed, tortured, imprisoned, enslaved, denied the necessities of life). Anyone who has a subjective experience of life is vulnerable in ways that require the protection of basic negative rights. Our criticism of traditional ART is that it focuses on these rights to the exclusion of what we call membership or citizenship rights, i.e., the rights that individuals have by virtue of membership in different political communities. Consider the human context. All humans, across the globe, have basic human rights to life and liberty. These

ANGUS TAYLOR

are shared, universal rights. But humans also belong to distinct political communities, and this generates territorially-specific citizenship rights. As a Canadian citizen I have certain rights and responsibilities in Canada which do not apply when I travel to Sweden. For example, I have the right to vote in Canada, and the right to public subsidies for education, housing, or job training (and the responsibility to pay income tax to support these rights of membership). I would not expect any of these rights (or responsibilities) as a visitor to Sweden. Universal basic rights are of fundamental importance, but membership rights are equally important to creating the social contexts that support the flourishing of their members. A world in which humans only had universal basic rights accorded to all based on their intrinsic moral status—but no citizenship rights based on membership in particular societies—would be a morally impoverished one.

Our argument in *Zoopolis* is that the same basic logic applies to animals. They are not just sentient individuals entitled to universal negative rights. They are also members of distinct political communities entitled to membership rights. In the case of domesticated animals, the relevant political community is a mixed human-animal community, and so they should be seen as members of our society and as our co-citizens. In the case of truly wild animals, we should think of them as forming their own distinct and sovereign wild-animal communities, with rights to live autonomously on their own territory. Liminal animals occupy an in-between position, reflecting their status as living amongst us but not as cooperating with us. They are neither fully members of a shared society with us nor fully sovereign of us, yet with aspects of both membership and sovereignty. Sorting out these issues of membership is crucial to creating justice and enabling flourishing for animals, as for humans.

ANGUS TAYLOR

The problem with traditional ART is not just that it is incomplete in virtue of ignoring these membership rights. The deeper problem is that by focusing exclusively on negative rights we can be led to very perverse conclusions regarding our obligations of justice. For example, one way to ensure that we no longer kill, torture, own, or enslave domesticated animals is to bring about their extinction. If they no longer exist, we cannot violate their negative rights. This is an evasion of justice, not a solution to injustice, in part because it ignores the fact that domesticated animals have membership rights in our society. We cannot focus single-mindedly on reducing harm, suffering, and negative-rights violations. We must also figure out how to create the positive conditions in which everyone can flourish.

BTS: Animals have typically been excluded from the moral community because they lack rational moral agency. ART has argued that moral agency ought not to be a condition of membership; animals, like many humans who cannot rationally reflect on moral principles, are moral *patients*—i.e., what happens to them matters to them and this fact is enough to give them significant moral status. By contrast, you adopt a broader notion of moral agency, one that includes many who are not rational. What is this broader notion, and why adopt it?

DONALDSON/KYMLICKA: Once again, our position is more an addition to the traditional ART position than a rejection of it. We agree with traditional AR theorists that sentience, not moral agency, is the basis for intrinsic moral status or membership in the moral community, and the inviolable negative rights that go with this. However, when we talk about political community, ideas of agency are crucial. Our model of animal citizenship (for domesticated animals) and animal sovereignty (for wilderness animals) rests on assumptions about the capac-

ANGUS TAYLOR

ity of animals to be active shapers of their own lives and of the terms of their relationship with us, not just passive recipients of human beneficence.

If humans and animals lived in radical separation it might be sufficient to think of animals as moral patients, since our obligations to animals would start and stop with leaving them alone. How they might or might not enact their agency within their own societies would not be our concern. But if we recognize the inevitability (and desirability) of co-existence, and shared forms of society, then it is vital that we think of animals not just as passive recipients of our care, but as active subjects who, to varying degrees, have capacities for being partners or co-creators in the kinds of relationships we have with them, and the kinds of societies we share. Ideas of consultation, participation, and consent go to the core of our “political theory of animal rights”, since they are central to ideas of political community and legitimacy.

Figuring out how to create opportunities for animals to be agents in their relations with us—and how to ensure that we interpret their agency correctly—are obviously huge challenges. But here is one of the many contexts where we can learn important lessons from human struggles for justice. In recent decades, children’s rights advocates and disability advocates have forcefully challenged the reigning ideology (at least in Western democracies) which positions them strictly as wards of the state rather than full citizens. They do not want to simply be passive recipients of the state’s protection and provision. They want to participate in key decisions affecting their lives, and in shaping a shared society so that it is designed, from the ground up, with them as full and equal members, not as afterthoughts subject to paternalistic management. The slogan of

ANGUS TAYLOR

the disability rights movement “Nothing about us without us” helps capture this idea. Yet, particularly in relation to young children and those with severe intellectual disability, this participation will not take the form of rational deliberation about propositions on moral principles. Enabling agency and participation in these contexts requires creating new ways of soliciting and being responsive to individuals’ subjective good, relying on more embodied forms of communication made possible by particular forms of trust and cooperation, themselves rooted in underlying moral emotions and pro-social dispositions. A lot of work has been done recently in developing these more expansive or inclusive ideas of agency, and we firmly believe they are relevant for thinking about animal agency as well. Animals, like humans, differ widely in their capacities for agency, but we must recognize, respect, and nurture these capacities where they exist. Anything less is domination.

BTS: You firmly reject the “extinctionist” policy regarding domesticated animals. Why?

DONALDSON/KYMLICKA: We have three primary objections to the extinctionist policy. First of all, extinctionists often speak of domesticated animals as though they are inherently deformed—slavish, incompetent, and diminished shadows of their majestic and free-living forebears. It is always troubling when individuals and groups are stigmatized as inherently undignified in this way. Each of us is a unique individual, with unique capacities, and we have an inherent dignity regardless of how we compare to others. Domesticated animals may have been bred for dependence on humans, but we are all dependent on others to varying degrees and in different ways across the life span, and there is nothing inherently undignified in this. The more dependent amongst us are no less dignified than

ANGUS TAYLOR

the most independent or self-sufficient. Indignity arises when others, and society, respond to our dependency with mockery, abuse, or neglect.

Think about dogs. Dogs (and their wolf ancestors) are a highly social species. Through domestication they have evolved to be highly attentive to humans, to love us, to care about us, to want to be with us, and to cooperate with us (and with each other). And, we might add, humans have evolved to have a similar orientation to dogs. Many dog breeds are quite dependent on us for forms of care and protection. Does this make them somehow less dignified than members of self-sufficient and solitary species such as tigers or crocodiles? Are humans less dignified than tigers and crocodiles because we are members of a highly social, cooperative, and interdependent species? It's true that domesticated animal breeding, undertaken to serve human interests and whims, has resulted in many chronic health problems for animals, but this does not mean that those individuals lack in dignity, and many of these problems would disappear again if domesticated animals regained significant control over their sex and reproductive lives.

That brings us to the second problem with extinctionism, namely, that bringing it about would require involuntarily sterilizing all domesticated animals (or involuntarily confining them to sex-segregated spaces). In the human case, proposals to coercively sterilize individuals, and to deny them the opportunity to bear and raise young, are viewed with deep suspicion. Sex and reproduction are not entirely unregulated (e.g., we have laws against coerced sex, sex with minors, etc.), and we do engage in paternalistic interventions (e.g., in the case of children, or of individuals lacking the intellectual capacity to consent to sex, especially if their health would be endan-

ANGUS TAYLOR

gered by pregnancy). But these regulations and paternalistic interventions must meet a very high standard of justification, either in terms of protecting third parties from sexual predation or coercion, or protecting the interests of the individual whose sexuality is being restricted. Defenders of extinctionism, by contrast, typically justify this policy as protecting future generations of domesticated animals who are at risk of being born into slavery/ domination. They have not explained how this coercive interference in sex and reproduction is in the interests of the individual animals who will be sterilized or segregated, and hence have not explained why it should not be seen as a serious violation of their basic interests in sexuality, freedom of association, or family life.

And finally, as noted earlier, we consider the extinctionist policy an evasion of justice, not a solution to injustice. When a human group has been incorporated into a society as a caste group to serve others (as with slaves), our solution to the problem is not to bring about the group's extinction, but to make them full and equal members of the moral community. The overarching goal is not just to end domination or servitude—we could accomplish that by nuking the planet. The goal is to give full recognition, respect, and rights to individuals *as they are*, and to move forward in relations of justice that will allow all to flourish in the ways that they can. Of course, many extinctionists are deeply sceptical that relations between humans and domesticated animals can ever be just. But as we noted earlier, a large part of this scepticism rests on an indefensible assumption that domesticated animals are somehow degraded or unnatural in their very nature, regardless of how we treat them. In any event, we clearly have a duty to at least try to create relations of justice, rather than just washing our hands of domesticated animals by imposing extinction on them.

ANGUS TAYLOR

BTS: Among the issues you touch on briefly is the vexed one of medical experimentation. You reject the idea that medical research that involves harming animals can be justified on the basis of lifeboat cases (where some individuals are facing great harm and someone among them must be sacrificed): the animals on whom we experiment are not themselves facing harm until we decide to harm them. Yet you justify the non-lifeboat exploitation of animals by members of pre-modern societies in circumstances of necessity. Almost everyone would agree that people in the past (or even present) who have had to hunt animals for survival have had the right to do so. How then is the modern child who needs a transplanted pig's heart-valve in order to survive any different from the child of the palaeolithic or indigenous hunter who needs the meat from a wild boar in order to survive? Why does one case fall outside "circumstances of justice" but not the other?

DONALDSON/KYMLICKA: Well, consider a case where a modern child needs a transplanted human heart-valve in order to survive. We don't think it's permissible to snatch a human from another society in order to harvest his or her organs, even if these organs could be used to save several individuals needing transplants. If an individual's tragic need for a transplant does not justify suspending the principles of justice that govern relations within our society or between societies, why would it justify suspending principles of justice in relation to pigs?

Figuring out how exactly to specify the "circumstances of justice" is a tricky affair. There is no definitive or canonical list of the necessary and sufficient conditions to determine whether we are in the circumstances of justice (in relation to other humans or animals). But it's important to remember that this idea is invoked within political theory to make sense of *ex ante*

ANGUS TAYLOR

collective commitments to justice—that is, to explain why and under what conditions people would commit to collectively govern their future relations through principles of justice. Such a commitment is not realistic if one group’s survival systematically depends on the destruction, displacement, or domination of another group. But under propitious circumstances, people can make a credible commitment to pursue their own flourishing in ways that allow for the flourishing of others. This is the commitment we have made to other humans within our society, as well as to other human societies, even though we know that there will be tragic cases of individual need that go unfulfilled due to this commitment (as when a child needs a human heart transplant). Moral progress throughout history is in large part a progressive expansion of this commitment. While we never have a guarantee that our individual survival will not require the use of others, we nonetheless commit ourselves *ex ante* to pursuing our flourishing in ways that respect the rights of others, and the circle of this commitment has expanded historically. We are now in a position to expand it yet again to include animals.

BTS: So your perspective is sensitive to the historical context of human interaction with animals. This is surely important in countering charges that ART is a merely an indulgence of privileged Westerners or, worse, that it exhibits a contemptuous attitude toward other cultures or the poor. But where do we draw the line if we are not to slide into cultural relativism? What ethical weight should we allow traditional cultural values regarding animals to carry in today’s world?

DONALDSON/KYMLICKA: The treatment of animals provides no grounds for Westerners to feel superior to other cultures, given that it is the West that is responsible for inventing

ANGUS TAYLOR

and then diffusing the techniques of industrial-scale animal exploitation, whereas many non-Western societies have historically had much more respectful relations with animals. Viewed objectively, respect for animals is clearly not the exclusive property of any one race, culture, or civilization—and certainly not the West. For centuries, Western societies have defined animals as “property,” and our current concepts and categories for discussing animals (e.g., “livestock”) are deeply imbricated in this property framework. We need entirely new models for thinking about human-animal relations, and non-Western societies are a rich source of ideas here. For example, some communities in South America view dogs as village dogs, members of the village but not the property of any one individual or family. We can learn from this, or from the way other communities negotiate tolerant co-existence with feral or liminal animals, rather than resorting to the extermination strategies that we in the West so often rely on.

As with human rights, any sensible approach to animal rights will combine certain universal norms with recognition of the inevitable and appropriate diversity in implementation and interpretation. For example, different societies and different cultures will make different choices about how to balance freedom and protection from risk. We can see this in the way different societies deal with restrictions on children’s activities and mobility in order to reduce risks. Similar issues will arise in relation to animals, and there is no one right answer here. Similarly, different societies are in very different situations in terms of their ability to achieve certain rights, particularly positive social and political rights. For example, a very poor society might not be able to afford free secondary education for its children, but should work towards this goal, and children’s education in a low-tech agricultural society might strike a dif-

ANGUS TAYLOR

ferent balance between practical and more abstract forms of learning than a highly technological and industrialized society. We should expect similar legitimate variations in how societies understand the socialization and contribution of animals.

We can learn here from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which provides a helpful framework for thinking about rights in a diverse global context. It recognizes appropriate diversity and conditionality in the interpretation of children's rights, but insists that this should not be confused with cultural relativism with regard to basic negative rights. No society has the right to kill, torture, enslave, or deny the necessities of life to its members in the name of culture. Whenever we impose harms on others—human or animal—it is not sufficient to say “this is what we do around here.” All of us must be held morally accountable for how we treat others. There are vegans and AR activists in all cultures, working to reform and re-imagine their cultural practices in line with changes in our understanding of animals, and the changing circumstances of justice. And this is vital if we want to achieve meaningful, and lasting, reform.

BTS: You suggest predation as one means of controlling liminal populations. But in some cases introduced predators might pose dangers to humans or might have unforeseen deleterious effects on fauna and flora. Aren't there circumstances, not terribly unusual, where we ought to bite the bullet—use the bullet, or whatever—and just cull animals ourselves? Won't there inevitably be a certain amount of violence in our relations with liminal creatures, including those displaced or killed (intentionally or unintentionally) by agriculture?

ANGUS TAYLOR

DONALDSON/KYMLICKA: It's true that there will inevitably be violence, conflict, and inadvertent harm in our relations with liminal animals, and indeed all creatures, including our fellow humans. For example, we know that cars cause significant human casualties, and not just to those who choose to drive but also to innocent bystanders. These casualties aren't directly intended, but they are inevitable. In *Zoopolis* we discuss in some depth how to think about the trade-offs between risk to individuals and the benefits to society of roadways—e.g., how we decide when risks are simply negligent, and how we decide whether risks are borne fairly amongst all members of society, or disproportionately borne by certain segments. Human social life inevitably creates risks and burdens for individuals, and the goal should be a fair distribution of these inevitable and inadvertent risks, not their complete elimination, even though this means any one of us might end up being the unlucky individual at the wrong place at the wrong time. But it's essential to note that accepting the inevitability of inadvertent risk does not justify the direct and targeted harm or killing of individuals in order to benefit society. Just because an individual might be the unlucky victim of socially beneficial roads (or trains or planes or power lines, etc.) doesn't mean that we can turn around and kill individuals in order to help reduce health care costs, or to reduce overpopulation.

The same general principles apply in our relations to animals. Precisely because the "species apartheid" vision is unrealistic, we will inevitably be entangled with animals in various ways, and this will inevitably involve imposing risks. We need to acknowledge these risks, to minimize them where possible, and think about how the risks and benefits of these entanglements can be fairly distributed. At the moment, the arrangement between humans and nonhumans has been that we gain

ANGUS TAYLOR

all of the benefits of mutual relations, at minimal risk, while they bear all of the costs, with very few benefits. We need to completely rethink what it means to share society, and social risks, with nonhumans. This is a major challenge, but it is essential to emphasize that, as in the human case, the permissibility of imposing risks (when fairly distributed) provides no justification for direct intentional harm. I am certainly justified in stopping (even if it means killing) a liminal animal who poses an immediate threat to my life (just as I would be justified to kill a human in such an instance), but this right of self-defence is completely different from the idea that we can kill individuals (human or animal) to achieve social beneficial outcomes, like reducing population stresses. So neither the permissibility of imposing risks (when fairly distributed) nor the permissibility of self-defence (in cases of imminent threat) provide a justification for “culling” animals. A certain amount of violence is indeed inevitable in our relations with animals, as with humans, but this is not a license to kill. In general, we should assume that any actions which would be unacceptable *vis-à-vis* our fellow humans (e.g., population culling), are at least *prima facie* unacceptable in comparable circumstances *vis-à-vis* animals.

BTS: We wouldn't introduce cougars into our settlements to control human population, regardless of the benefit to society and however fairly distributed the risk might be—we should be able to control our own population without such drastic measures and without unacceptably restricting individual liberty. But, if I read you right, the value of liberty to individual rodents, combined with our limited means of controlling their numbers, might justify using cats as predators. Doesn't this amount to “culling” by other means?

ANGUS TAYLOR

DONALDSON/KYMLICKA: The hunting behaviour of cats is a thorny issue on many grounds. Cats are the only domesticated animal that is truly carnivorous and predatory, and this complicates their place in our theory. But to (over)simplify our account, we argue that insofar as cats are companion animals, then they are our co-citizens, and as such are subject to the same obligations as all citizens not to violate the rights of other animals. So no, we are not permitted to bring cats into our homes and encourage them to kill mice or rats, and we must monitor them outside to protect other animals (and find adequate forms of nutrition for them that do not require killing other animals). As for the rodents or other so-called “pests” (Canada geese, coyotes, pigeons, and so on), in *Zoopolis* we discuss many non-violent strategies for resolving conflicts with liminal animals (barriers and other modifications of the physical environment, population suppression through control of food sources, contraception, etc.).

The case of feral cats is different. In at least some cases, feral cats would qualify as liminal animals on our account, many of whom are predatory (e.g., coyotes, foxes, raccoons, hawks). We are not responsible for regulating the diet of liminal animals, or for intervening in predator-prey relations amongst them. For example, we are not responsible for protecting sparrows (or mice) from hawks, and so too we would not be responsible for protecting mice from feral cats. But this raises a very difficult issue about whether we should *enable* companion cats to become feral cats. It is part of our citizenship model that domesticated animals should be allowed to explore (safe, partial, gradual) exit options from human society, and we expect that some domesticated animals—some horses, for example—might well choose over time a more feral existence. But horses do not pose a lethal threat to other animals, whereas feral cats

ANGUS TAYLOR

have no natural predators in many contexts, and the birds and small animals that they prey on have not evolved to protect themselves from cats. In general, we argue that it is impermissible for humans to introduce species under these conditions. And so cats pose a conflict regarding how to weigh these two dimensions of our theory. This is one of many dilemmas we do not fully resolve in *Zoopolis*.

BTS: Many philosophers have argued that rights are applicable only within human society, where members must articulate claims against each other. The late Canadian naturalist John A. Livingston contended that extending rights to all of nature would amount to domesticating the entire planet. How does it make sense to talk of the rights of wild animals if they are to be regarded as members of sovereign communities, beyond human control?

DONALDSON/KYMLICKA: Whenever we talk of rights—whether human or animal—we need to clarify what is the moral purpose these rights are supposed to serve. On our account, the primary moral purpose of sovereignty rights is to protect organized forms of life on a specific territory from external threats of invasion, colonization, resource theft, and spillover harms (e.g., water pollution, radiation leaks, climate change). Whenever the wellbeing of individuals (human or animal) is tied up with the ability of their community to live autonomously on their territory, then we have the *prima facie* basis for claims to sovereignty. Sovereignty rights therefore combine a community's right to live autonomously with what Avery Kolers calls "a right to place." According such rights to wild-animal communities, far from leading to domestication or colonization, is needed precisely in order to protect wild animals from domestication or colonization by humans.

ANGUS TAYLOR

The situation would be very different if we said that humans had the sovereign responsibility to regulate how wild animals treat each other within their territories. If we said that human political communities had the responsibility for protecting prey from predators, for example, then we would be going down the road to human management and control of all of nature. The various wild animal species who share sovereign wilderness territory often are in competition with each other, but they typically share an interest in avoiding foreign domination, control, or injustice, and it is this shared interest that grounds the claim to sovereignty rights against human colonization. So, when we speak about rights for wild-animal communities, we agree it does not make sense to speak of individual animals having the right that we humans protect them from each other. But it does make sense to speak of wild-animal communities having rights claims against humans who would destroy their habitats, steal their resources, or colonize their territories. They need these rights precisely in order that they *not* be domesticated or colonized by humans, and brought under human management and control.

BTS: You say that respect for the sovereignty of wild-animal communities will require an end to the expansion of human settlement. Won't this in turn require an end to human population growth? Won't it also require an end to some forms of economic growth?

DONALDSON/KYMLICKA: Yes, to both questions. While it might be possible for humans to live sustainably, at current population levels, on the lands that we already occupy, this would be enormously challenging. It probably makes a lot more sense to gradually reduce our population: a) by making sure that girls and women have full access to education, em-

ANGUS TAYLOR

ployment, health care, and contraception—policies which have proven their effectiveness in reducing population growth to replacement or below-replacement levels; and b) by challenging excessively pro-natal policies and norms.

Respect for wild-animal sovereignty will require enormous changes to resource-based economies which are built on the plunder of territories occupied by wild animals. And we should note that the required change goes well beyond so called “sustainable” resource development. For example, it might be sustainable (for humans) to engage in certain logging or mining practices, as long as the level of exploitation is regulated so that degraded environments represent a small percentage of total wilderness at any given time, and have sufficient time to recover (a sort of “crop-rotation” mentality of resource extraction). The problem with this approach is that it permits any amount of harm to individual wild animals as long as their species populations will recover. On a sovereignty model, by contrast, we need to start from the premise that their territory is precisely *their* territory—it doesn’t belong to us, and isn’t ours to exploit, even in a “sustainable” manner. And so human activity in sovereign wild-animal territory would have to fully respect their rights not to be harmed by our activities, or have their environments degraded. In practical terms, this has enormous implications in terms of us ending our profligate waste of resources, and instead learning to conserve, recover, and reuse the resources that we already control. This may seem like a huge burden, but it’s also an enormous opportunity. The discipline of actually living within our means, instead of drawing on a blank cheque from nature and animals, is the kind of spur to human ingenuity which could lead to very creative ways of re-imagining human society and economic activity. Many people are already explor-

ANGUS TAYLOR

ing models of ethical sustainability on a small scale, and coming up with creative and exciting solutions.

It's also important to remember that while respecting wild-animal rights will limit our access to certain resources, it will dramatically increase availability of others. For example, by switching from an animal to a plant-based diet, we could free up enormous resources of land, energy, and water. These resources could be redirected to developing new forms of sustainable economic life, and they could be redirected to wild-animal communities, allowing them to recover and expand.

BTS: *Zoopolis* addresses the question of our relations with animals in an explicitly political framework. Yet it says little about the economic imperatives that drive much of political life. In particular, capitalism militates against viewing non-human nature as anything but a storehouse of resources to be exploited for capital accumulation. Must effective animal advocacy be part of the struggle to transcend, or at least radically transform, capitalism? And if the prospect for transcending or radically transforming capitalism in the foreseeable future is grim, does that mean the prospect for animal liberation must be at least as grim?

DONALDSON/KYMLICKA: We certainly need to change the economic imperatives—as we just noted in our previous answer—and this is obviously a big challenge. Fredric Jameson once said that humans seem to have an easier time imagining the total environmental collapse of the earth than imagining an alternative to capitalism, which is a depressing thought. But in our view, the causal links between animal exploitation and capitalism may be more complicated than many people realize. It is widely assumed that we instrumentalize animals because

ANGUS TAYLOR

we live in a capitalist society. But some historians argue it is actually the reverse: the instrumentalization of animals preceded, and made possible, the rise of capitalism. Similarly, whereas Francione says that we feel free to mistreat animals because they are defined as property, many commentators argue it is the reverse: society defined animals as property because we felt free to mistreat them. All of this suggests that the roots of the instrumentalization of animals are older and deeper than capitalism or particular property regimes, and that getting rid of capitalism, on its own, might actually do very little to change those deeper roots. This indeed seems to be the lesson from the experience of Communist regimes in the twentieth century, which shared a deeply instrumental view of animals despite their rejection of capitalism and profit motives, and which were a disaster for animals. At the end of the day, the real enemy is ideologies of human supremacism, and far too often, the proposed alternatives to capitalism have shared in these supremacist ideologies. Of course, as a result of capitalism, we now have very powerful vested corporate interests in the exploitation of animals, who will resist any concerted social movement to challenge supremacist ideologies. But the sad truth is that we don't yet have a truly concerted social movement for animal rights, at least not here in Canada, and it's neither helpful nor accurate to lay that failure solely at the door of capitalism. Nor should we go completely in the other direction, and blame the instrumentalization of animals entirely at the door of, say, the Bible and Christianity, with its divine sanctioning of human supremacy. We seem to face a toxic brew of cultural, religious, and economic drivers of animal exploitation, all of which need to be tackled.

BTS: Historically, the political left in general has not challenged industrial society's focus on maximizing material pro-

ANGUS TAYLOR

duction and consumption. The traditional left has shown little interest in the sustainability of ecosystems and even less interest in animal rights. From the other direction, criticisms of ART by theorists of holistic environmentalism, as well as the values of environmentalist “humane meat” movements that have sprung up in recent years, show that critics of industrialism are not necessarily sympathetic to animal rights. Why has the left been so uninterested in, or even hostile to, animal advocacy? And what likelihood is there that even a revamped, green left will see animal rights as anything more than a contentious side issue?

DONALDSON/KYMLICKA: The left’s indifference to human violence against animals is a deeply puzzling problem. This is actually the topic of a recent paper of ours (Kymlicka and Donaldson 2014). One puzzle is the strained relations between animal advocates and the ecologists/greens. On our view, veganism is not just compatible with environmentalism, but would seem to be the heart and soul of environmentalism. The enormous destructive impact of animal agriculture, and loss of animal habitat, mean that these movements should be fundamentally allied. So why does the environmental movement seem to be embracing the “humane meat” vision of sustainability, even though it’s not supported by the evidence, which shows that animal agriculture of any type on any significant scale is unsustainable? Part of the answer, no doubt, is that many environmentalists just can’t bring themselves to give up their favourite meat and dairy. But it also appears to be a strategic decision stemming from fear that the green movement will be marginalized if it embraces veganism and animal rights. If so, it’s a bad decision, not only because it means potential alliances are lost, but also because it means that the green move-

ANGUS TAYLOR

ment is complicit in legitimating a meat diet that is not only animal-destroying but also earth-destroying.

So we need to address this fear that embracing veganism and animal rights is a recipe for marginalization. This fear is keeping many progressive movements from taking the animal issue on board. Animal-rights advocates have rightly been described as the “orphans of the left”—a progressive movement abandoned by other progressive movements, in order that they too do not become orphans of the left.

How do we change this? It will clearly require engaging in a lot of “difficult dialogue” across the left. As you note, the left has historically been wedded to goals of growth, resource exploitation, and production of cheap meat/dairy and other animal products, albeit in an economy controlled by workers, not capitalists. Both environmentalism and animal rights directly challenge the sustainability and justice of this “abundance through growth” vision. So the challenge is for us to show that conservation, zero growth, and green energy are compatible with full employment and social justice, and that “meat on the table” is not the antithesis of poverty. People need to understand what the alternative vision is, and how, in concrete terms, it will affect them and their families before they will let go of old allegiances to industrial growth. Many people on the left can see that building a society on animal exploitation is unsustainable, and unjust, but it still takes a lot of convincing to let go. And the symbolism of meat is a non-trivial problem in this context. Through centuries of human history, and across cultures, access to meat has been the key dividing line between rich and poor. Over the last century unprecedented numbers of people have moved out of poverty, and are understandably suspicious when told that just as meat has come within reach, it’s going to

ANGUS TAYLOR

be snatched away again because animals have rights. Animal advocates need to address this suspicion head on, demonstrate the good faith of our movement, and its solidarity with working people, minorities, and other oppressed groups.

BTS: *Zoopolis* has been awarded the 2013 Biennial Book Prize by the Canadian Philosophical Association. So it has not fallen “dead-born from the press,” as David Hume lamented about one of his works. Overall, are you encouraged by how its ideas have been received?

DONALDSON/KYMLICKA: We have been pleasantly surprised and encouraged. Since the book came out, we’ve been privileged to meet a lot of people in the animal movement who have been thinking and working along similar lines, trying to find new ways to get beyond the species apartheid/extinctionist model of animal liberation, while still being firmly committed to fundamental basic rights for animals. When writing the book, we felt a bit like we were out there on our own in this quest, but we’ve now encountered many people who have been working on related dimensions of this project, and who see links with our book. So we feel as though our ideas have landed on fertile ground, and we are very excited to be able to draw on these new contacts and influences to develop our ideas further. We are cautiously optimistic that advocates in the animal and environmental movements are recognizing how much common ground we share, and the response to the book has confirmed this. We have also been encouraged by responses from the political theory/political philosophy community. It seems there may be more closet animal advocates out there than we realized! Many political theorists have been wary of the predominance of utilitarian and post-humanist philosophy in theorizing about animals, and of the anti-liberal and deep-

ANGUS TAYLOR

ecology trends in environmental thought, all of which seem to ignore or trivialize the importance of fundamental liberal-democratic principles of individual rights, the rule of law, democratic citizenship, and distributive justice. Radical as our book is in its proposals, it is nonetheless firmly rooted in these basic liberal-democratic commitments. Our sense is that there are a fair number of people who share this general political orientation who are interested in the animal question, which has been nagging at the back of their minds for many years, but who have been reluctant to push the issue because they didn't see a way to combine their animal commitments with their liberal-democratic commitments. So we may be in luck with the right message at the right time.

BTS: Thank you.

Reference

Kymlicka, Will and Sue Donaldson. 2014. "Animal Rights, Multiculturalism, and the Left." *Journal of Social Philosophy* 45(1): 116-35.