

ONE WHAT'S BEHIND ANIMAL ADVOCACY?

IT'S IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND THE ABSTRACT ETHICAL theories that underpin any social movement because those theories form a foundation for the various directions a movement takes. The easiest way to see this is in retrospect with other social movements, movements that are perhaps more self-reflective about their foundations than animal rights is today. The women's movement, for example, spent many years debating different strategies for the eradication of sexism. Some feminists sought equality and worked for change within existing political and economic structures; other feminists sought ways to celebrate women's differences and focused on cultural changes to valorize women and the feminine aspects of many different spheres. Still others sought to correct economic hardships for women and children in poverty, while many found ways to build coalitions with different kinds of women across national and cultural boundaries. Forty years into the movement, feminists have become pretty adept at figuring out how these agendas differ and even sometimes conflict, and how we can all work together to build a better world for women. The same kinds of differences exist in all contemporary social movements from civil rights to gay rights to environmentalism to Latino liberation to union building; competing goals are

evident, such as assimilation versus separation, equality versus difference, extremism versus moderation. The animal rights movement is no exception, and a rudimentary understanding of the terrain of these strategies is essential.

The map that follows is in no way intended to offer an exhaustive discussion or review of the philosophical literature concerning ethics and animals. Rather, it is simply intended to show that most of the philosophies and strategies associated with animal advocacy pay very little attention to things like identity, affect, culture, emotion, or narrative. This map examines the principles that stand behind current animal advocacy, in part to see how competing principles lead to competing practices, and in part to show how a different orientation could add to and legitimate the movement as a whole.

Animal Rights

Although the term “animal rights” is often inaccurately used to refer to the whole movement of animal advocacy (in much the same way that “women’s rights” is sometimes used to mean everything feminist), for accuracy’s sake we should start by thinking more precisely about what a right is and what kinds of rights are being advocated for animals. Put as simply as possible, a right is a legal way of protecting a particular interest, even when that interest may conflict with the interests of either what is perceived as the common good or more powerful agents such as governments or corporations. Humans are born with a catalog of rights that, in the United States, stems from the basic commitments to life, liberty, and property. According to this view of rights, we are free to pursue our interests in these three realms as long as our engagements do not compromise the rights (i.e., the interests) of other humans. We are free, for example, to purchase medical care to extend our lives or to purchase property and goods that will make us happy. We are free from being owned as property by other human beings or other entities such as corporations or nations. In this approach, we are thought to be agents of our own creation, protected from undue interference or coercion, free to become whoever we want to be. Animals, of course, have no such protection.

One form of animal rights advocacy works to secure specific rights

for specific types of animals in specific conditions. Certain animals have a right not to suffer unduly, advocates claim; these animals have an interest in not being treated cruelly. Those who hold this position work to pass legislation that would prevent humans from, for example, keeping dogs on chains outside, keeping calves in veal crates, using pipes to force-feed ducks for the production of *pâté de foie gras*, selling pets for scientific experimentation, slaughtering horses for meat—the list goes on and on. Stated differently, in most existing laws pertaining to animals, the animal in question is protected only as a form of property. Although some states do currently have anticruelty laws in place, the vast majority of laws protecting animals do so under the rubric of property. If I beat my neighbor's dog, for example, I may be found guilty of damaging his property; it is the neighbor's interests that the law protects, not the dog's. Animal rights advocates in this first sense want to change that and argue that the animals themselves have an interest in not being beaten. In a sense, they want the animals themselves to have a certain agency in relation to their rights as living creatures. Even when those interests conflict with the interests of more powerful agents, rights (in this first sense) function as a protection that trumps everything else. So even though a farmer may have made a substantial portion of his income off veal, if confining young male calves to crates is outlawed, the calves' interests in not being treated cruelly trump the farmer's interests in making money. These types of protections are rights in the weak sense because each case and issue must be addressed in separate legislation. That is, animals have no blanket rights, only the particular ones stated in that specific law.¹

This is not to say that laws such as these are ineffectual or unimportant. For example, the passage of the 2008 Prevention of Farm Animal Cruelty Act in California (Proposition 2) prohibits the confinement of certain farm animals in a manner that does not allow them to turn around, lie down, stand up, or extend their limbs. Sponsored by the Humane Society of the United States, Prop 2 effectively wiped out veal crates, battery cages, and sow gestation crates in the entire state of California. This is clearly a great victory for animals. The Animal Legal Defense Fund (ALDF) similarly works to pass legislation in local communities to limit and close puppy mills and animal hoarders; the organization's recent victory in North Carolina against hoarder-breeder Barbara Woodley

marked a historic shift in the process for legal advocacy; prior to the Woodley case, only state prosecutors could bring forth animal cruelty cases in North Carolina. The ALDF win set a precedent for allowing private citizens to bring charges. The group People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) has also enjoyed many local legal victories, especially with regard to limiting the production of fur in many states. These are just a few examples. There are more than eighty registered animal advocacy groups in the United States, and the vast majority of them are or have been involved in some aspect of specific legislation of rights in this weak sense. These efforts, no matter how modest or local, are crucial in the ongoing protection of animals.

But there is another sense of animal rights that makes a much stronger claim. Animal rights in the strong, abolitionist sense is not invested in protecting specific interests (such as the right not to be confined to a veal crate or perpetually chained outside), but argues instead that all animal interests can best be addressed if we extend to them the primary human rights of life and freedom. Philosophers and political theorists have different ways of describing what these rights look like and why they are warranted. Philosopher Tom Regan, the first to extend the tradition of rights into the realm of animals, speaks of animals as “subjects of a life” who have an overriding interest in the continuation of their own lives.² Legal theorist Gary Francione states, quite simply, that the right not to be the property of others serves animals’ best interests.³ For animal rights in this strong sense, the interests of animals stem from the fact that they are conscious, sentient beings, that is, beings capable of perceiving the surrounding world and having feelings about that world. This strong version of animal rights, especially in the United States, relies on our common American sensibility that slavery (i.e., owning another human being) is morally repugnant.⁴ While many people in the wider public find this comparison of animals to dark-skinned humans troubling, animal rights advocates want to capitalize on that discomfort to get us to reevaluate our practices toward animals. From this perspective, many white Americans once believed that slaves and dark-skinned humans were similar to animals, but thinking about these humans changed, progressed, developed; our thinking about animals should follow the same path, according to animal rights advocates. For animal rights in this strong sense,

it's not enough that we just call ourselves "guardians" rather than "owners"; we really shouldn't own them or inhibit them or use them or contain them in any sense at all. For these rights advocates, animals need to be set free much the same way slaves were set free. According to this strong rights view, animals are not ours to use for any purpose whatsoever.

Animal rights in the strong sense presumes a kind of self-determined nonhuman subject that can operate in the world uncoerced by culture, the state, needs, desires, identity, commitment, or the necessities of everyday life. One of the biggest gaps between theory and practice rests right here; those of us who live with animals (and many others as well) often do not ourselves enjoy the kind of freedom this theory prescribes for nonhumans. We make "deals" that inhibit our liberty; we need to eat, we work for money, we pay taxes, we live in houses with locks, and so on. The structures of our lives produce necessary compromises to these absolute freedoms. The "deal" that domesticated animals have made over time with humans is that some of their freedoms would be curtailed in return for food, shelter, belonging, and love. I am not suggesting that every dog deliberates on her specific arrangement, but rather that dogs over thousands of years found it evolutionarily beneficial to live near and with humans. The same is true for cows and horses and any other species that live close to humans. An exchange is going on between two or more species, and to renege on that deal would surely mean the extinction of those animals that could not return to the wild.

Stated differently, the most devastating long-term implication of the strong animal rights claim is that, other than wildlife, we would not have animals in our lives or in our worlds. The philosophers who advocate animal rights in the strong sense suggest that we should care for the animals we have here now, but that we stop breeding all domestic animals into existence for our use. No dogs, no cats, no horses, no pigs. No birds, no cows, no chickens, no fish. We wouldn't eat them or make them work for us or cuddle them or walk them or ride them or wear them. We couldn't use them to assist the blind or in search and rescue or to add joy to our lives. Hundreds of thousands of years of developing relationships with domesticated animals would cease. This position is taken up by many animal rights philosophers, including Tom Regan, Gary Francione, Lee Hall, and Steve Wise. They share a view of the world where

animals would never suffer at the hands of humans, where the human experience of animals would be limited to wildlife observation.

I think about all the people in the world like me who find their identities intertwined with nonhuman animals. A world without their companionship seems very dark and uninhabitable. I look at my pack of pets, six dogs and three cats, watch them play with each other, comfort each other, learn to live together, and know in my heart that the world is a better place for having them in it. They represent for me all that is good about the world, all the grace and hope that make life worth living. Finally for me, it's a question of joy—mine *and* theirs—that demands we think through these animal issues from different and expanded positions. Advocating a future free of animals in order to save them from the suffering we may put them through seems unnecessary. Surely we can do better than that. Surely we can think more lovingly about our ethics and craft a moral world teeming with all kinds of life that is treated fairly and well.

While I know these strong rights theorists only want to end animal suffering at any cost, the very real connections we have with actual animals make this path problematic. To produce alternatives, we need to see the animal issue from other perspectives, particularly those in which humans and animals are living together happily and successfully. We need to add to the legal and philosophical discourses about rights the sense of urgency we feel about the necessity of sharing our lives with real animals. Another way to articulate this criticism is that in some ways “animal rights” are just not privileges that can be distributed by the courts. Rather, they are also interpretations of relationships, the outward symbol of recognition, respect, and acceptance that one animal does or does not have for another. In this way, I suggest, animal rights are not something we give, they are something we do. “Women’s rights,” “gay rights,” and “civil rights” aren’t simply legal artifacts handed down by the government; rather these terms represent shifts in culture as well, shifts whereby large numbers of people came to see these identities and oppressions in a different light. The same needs to happen for animals. In addition to philosophy and the law, we need a shift that better negotiates their best interests with our own.

There's nothing inherently wrong with animal rights in the weak

sense, of course. Using the law to better the lives of certain animals in certain conditions is important and necessary work. Indeed, even in the frame of the wider affective shift I call for in this book, one might see this strategic use of rights as analogous to civil rights activists' using affirmative action as a temporary measure to ensure immediate fairness, while in the long run working for a world where things like affirmative action will be unnecessary. We should work now to legally abolish things like gestation crates and debeaking and sport killing, while at the same time working to shift the world so that—in the long run—people will not *want* to participate in such activities. Due to the urgency of many situations of extreme suffering or endangerment, this dual strategy is key.

In addition to this, we need a new way of seeing ourselves—and the earth and animals—as one collective entity wherein the health of “others” directly influences the quality of our own existence. In concrete ways, it is true that the well-being of future generations directly depends on whether or not we can learn to care for the planet and its creatures—soon. I argue in this book that we can learn to see the world with new eyes and change the world of animals through focusing on affect. We don't need to live without animals; we need to learn how to value them differently.

Let me give a concrete example of the kind of approach I'm talking about, and how it operates in a different register than rights discourse. One way to think of the significant work of early primatologists like Jane Goodall and Dian Fossey is not that their contributions changed science (although their work has revolutionized our understanding of primate behavior).⁵ Rather, because Goodall and Fossey were not scientifically trained before entering the field, the methods they used to study their chimps and gorillas actually altered human relationship with these animals. They named them. They saw them as subjects with distinct personalities. They cared about their well-being. The field of primatology became more like anthropology as great apes emerged as fellow beings. Animal rights in the strong sense advocates the freeing of nonhuman subjects from the constraints of enslavement. I'm advocating, instead, a shift much more along the lines of what happened between Jane and Gremlin, between Dian and Digit. It wasn't the case that the wild apes were “owned” property before Goodall and Fossey started their studies

and now are “free” subjects. The revolution that happened with their studies was about something else. Before Goodall and Fossey entered the field, the chimps and gorillas were in some ways unseen, invisible. We knew they were there, of course, and we had captured countless numbers of them to bring back to zoos and labs. Indeed, at least in Rwanda a few researchers had spent time there before these women, trying to understand the mountain gorilla in its native habitat, but with little success. It took the fresh eyes of two young women to tell stories about these creatures, and their love for them, in such a way that the rest of the world could learn to value them differently. Goodall and Fossey made us see them in the frame of love. It wasn't the fact that the gorillas and chimps were free that brought them into our grid of consciousness, it was the fact that they were loved. This, for me, is what all animal advocacy ought to be about.

Most domesticated nonhuman animals could not live in this extremely developed world without human assistance, and the number of species requiring human assistance is growing in our increasingly stressed environment. While I am not in favor of assigning animals the status of “property,” if the only options available to us are “property” and “not property,” it is only the status of property that can marshal for animals the kind of protection they require for continued existence. What I really believe, though, is that our language and categories are wrong. Why do animals have to be either “property” or “not property”? Why must we abolish them from our world in order to protect them? Our world, the human world, is increasingly the only world; soon there will be little “wild” left. Animals have been good friends to us throughout the millennia. Can't we find a place for them now? Can't we develop another way of thinking that embraces them and allows them to flourish? “Freeing” them is not like freeing human slaves; “freeing” these animals means their certain end. In this respect, it isn't just deforestation and factory farms that destroy our animals; our language and our categories kill them as well. Language has carved up our reality in a way that leaves no space for them, no reality for them to inhabit. Language now only leaves us two options: to own them as property and therefore have the right to abuse them however we want, or to set them free and watch them die out. I say we need to change the categories and create a better option—and a better world.

Animal Welfare

If animal rights in the strong sense wants to elevate nonhuman animals to the level of human rights, animal welfare as an ideology desires to leave everything in place, and simply appeals to humans to be kinder to animals. Much older, deeper, and generally better funded, an animal welfare approach asks humans to be more virtuous toward animals without changing the moral status of nonhuman animals or the categories that carve up the world. In general, animal welfarists oppose unnecessary cruelty toward animals, but they do not believe that using animals for human purposes, such as pets, food, clothing, or entertainment, is necessarily wrong. From their perspective, improving the lot of animals may improve conditions for humans as well.⁶ The problem with this perspective is that humans truly do remain at the center of analysis: human exceptionalism reigns. If the strong animal rights project hopes to dislodge humans from their centered seat of power by extending the human construction of rights to other living creatures, welfare simply pleads with us to do a little better. Animal welfare means humans still hold all the power. This is not surprising because the animal welfare movement has gained legitimacy by aligning itself with certain modes of organizing and styles of corporate leadership. As it has functioned in the United States to date, middle- and upper-middle-class white people largely promulgate animal welfare, with little attention to other social movements or struggles. For good reason, it sometimes feels like an elitist enterprise. It's about reform, not revolution. Some theorists see a link between animal welfare and utilitarianism (discussed later in this chapter). My understanding of ethical paradigms differs from these interpretations. While utilitarianism is a method that *can* lead to a welfarelike outcome, by my lights animal welfare is informed much more fully by historical and often religious appeals to "charity." That is, self-identified welfarists do not often use the utilitarian formula "the greatest good for the greatest number"; rather they talk about and are driven by concepts such as charity, kindness, compassion, empathy, aid, mercy, and sympathy.⁷

Advocates of animal welfare are involved with animals because they simply feel bad for them. Whether it was horses beaten in nineteenth-century city streets, or fully conscious dogs cut open by experimenters

in twentieth-century science labs, welfarists sympathize with the animals' pain. In some ways they don't have a grand theory about rights or value motivating their actions. Their campaign is much simpler: they care, and because they care they want the suffering to stop.

While I agree with welfarists that compassion and empathy are important, the kind of change I'm interested in is much more imbricated in affect. Think back to the Jane Goodall, Dian Fossey example; by falling in love with their apes, these women brought the plight of the great ape into focus for the rest of the globe. Something bigger than sympathy was operating in their projects, something that was centered in transformative love, rather than pity. Goodall and Fossey brought fresh, undisciplined eyes to the question of apes in the wild, as well as a sense of courage and adventure that pushed their connections into a new register. With *National Geographic* there to tell their story, we all were transformed. It wasn't just a fleeting emotion that made such an impact; with their courage, endurance, compassion, and sense of adventure, they taught us to think outside a box that had previously contained us. They produced an affective intervention that changed reality. It's this kind of process that this book advocates.

Transformation does not accept the world as it is, but looks around for ways to address root causes of animal oppression. In doing so, it helps us make links with other social movements to bring those members into the world of animal advocacy as well. That feeling of being transformed will take us much further in examining the structures of culture and language that oppress animals. For example, I think about people living at or below the poverty line, who have no extra income to spend on vet care for their pets, or on higher-priced free-range food products. A welfarist approach might see solutions to poverty in the realm of charity and education: offering low-cost spaying and neutering, for example, or teaching people about the health hazards of cheap meat. Transformation based on love can lead us down a different path. It can expand our concerns to oppressive institutions like capitalism and racism, and cause us to work to eradicate those problems, all because we love animals.

Whereas the discourse of animal rights in the strong sense is about humans' absolute obligation to liberate all animals, animal welfare is, in the final moment, quite optional. It's often not really about what we owe

to animals but about helping ourselves become better people in relation to them. Indeed, due to the corporate structure of many kinds of animal welfare organizations, significant social change of the kind that would address, say, poverty is probably not an option; it may even be discouraged. Animal welfare leaves too much of the current power structure in place. It doesn't challenge the oppressive structures of the world itself, the very structures that lie at the core of animal suffering.

It's important to understand that most animal advocacy organizations deploy many different (and sometimes competing) kinds of ethical principles in their campaigns. In other words, sometimes PETA practices animal rights in the weak sense (discussed earlier), often advocates for animal rights in the strong sense of abolition, and sometimes marshals tactics that reflect a welfare-based approach. The same is true for most animal advocacy organizations. Traditionally, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, along with its state-based organizations such as the Massachusetts SPCA, have been thought to be more welfare oriented than rights oriented. However, due to the inherent limitations of a welfare-based approach, even ASPCA and MSPCA have moved into legislative realms. Put simply, the abstract theories behind animal advocacy don't line up perfectly with the organizations involved in social change, as these groups strategize and campaign using whatever resources they think will make change. Virtually all animal advocacy organizations draw from a mixed and uneven tool kit of theories to advance animal interests.

Advocates of animal rights in the strong sense are critical of animal welfarists and, in some ways, for good reason. Theorists like Gary Francione claim that welfarists are essentially only invested in justifying their own use of animals, in convincing the public that something is being done about those animals living in horrid conditions.⁸ Rightists deride welfarists for constructing a roadblock to progress. Treating some animal a little bit better is not an acceptable solution for them. What echoes in my mind when I think about this disagreement are early-twentieth-century conflicts between socialist union organizers who wanted the unions to overthrow capitalism and private ownership of the means of production, and union organizers who sought very small changes—like the right to go to the bathroom or to call in sick—in the grueling workday

of the manual laborer. These two factions had to meet in the middle and form viable labor unions. In some ways, I am promoting a similar middle ground in this book, a way that does not promote animals as property or as nonproperty, a way that challenges us to think beyond the borders of our current reality and use the tools of affect and narrative to better the world for all animals. I want a union that works outside the debate about legal standing and pushes us humans to think about the best interest of animals. Where welfare promotes animal advocacy without calling for significant human change, I want us to recognize that significant change is necessary. The affective love that connects us to particular animals, and shifts in our stories about them, can help motivate us to transform the world for animals, not just give them our charity.

Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism is a concept that doesn't fit easily on this list. Although the "father" of the animal rights movement, Peter Singer, is in fact a utilitarian, and although I believe utilitarianism does to a large degree inform many aspects of the animal rights movement, few animal activists or advocates actually self-identify as utilitarians. Indeed, the debate between rights and welfare so dominates the world of animal advocacy that few scholars or activists seem to take utilitarianism seriously, which could be a mistake.

Utilitarianism was founded by Jeremy Bentham in the late eighteenth century and modified by John Stuart Mill in the early nineteenth century. Instead of focusing on rights and obligations, it centers on the consequences of an action as the site of moral judgment. In utilitarianism, actions are not wrong in and of themselves, but should only be evaluated in terms of their results, results that are expressed in a kind of cost-benefit analysis of good and bad (sometimes referred to as pleasure and pain). This calculation is most often expressed as *the greatest good for the greatest number*, and utilitarianism as a method attempts to maximize the good by giving "equal consideration" to all parties involved, regardless of rights. That is, where rights language grants immutable protections to individuals for life, liberty, property, and so on, utilitarianism weighs the good produced by different actions to solve moral dilemmas. If someone

owns a bag of groceries and is surrounded by starving people, for example, a rightist would argue that the owner of the food has the right to do anything he wants with it; a utilitarian, conversely, would try to measure the value of allowing the owner to hoard the food (does he have an endless amount, for example, or is he saving the one bag to feed his own large family?) against sharing it with others in order to discern the most moral outcome. If it can be demonstrated that the food owner will not suffer for sharing his food, and that others around him will benefit from eating, utilitarianism would demand such distribution. It's not that all parties are granted equality, then, but rather that they are given consideration equal to their interests in avoiding pain and seeking pleasure; the starving person thus has a greater claim on the food than a man who has recently eaten. "Equal consideration" is not "equality"; it is an attempt to give attention to disparate levels of need when making choices. There are many different types of utilitarianism, some adhering more strictly to the concepts of pleasure and pain or suffering (sentience), some emphasizing the value of rules within the moral calculation, others highlighting outcomes only, while still others placing more weight on issues of freedom and choice; all types of utilitarianism, however, seem to provide a very simple way of measuring the morality of any action. In general, if the action produces more pleasure than pain, it is deemed morally right; if it produces more pain and suffering than happiness or pleasure, it should be considered wrong.

Peter Singer was the first to extend this apparatus into the realm of animals, and as such, he names the movement "animal liberation" (also the title of his first book) rather than "animal rights." Singer argues that the interests of all beings capable of pain and suffering ought to be taken into consideration when calculating the greatest good for the greatest number. For him, giving lesser consideration to beings based on their having wings or fur is no more justified than discrimination based on skin color. All animals should be valued in proportion to their ability to feel pain; an animal's capacity to suffer is what should guarantee its "equal consideration." According to Singer, we should make moral decisions that maximize the pleasure and minimize the pain of all animals, not just humans. Thus, animal rights in the strong sense wants to protect individual animals from harm by extending them the rights of life and liberty;

utilitarianism wants to protect animals in a different way, that is, by weighting social goodness in a way that includes nonhuman animals on a sliding scale. Thus, if the suffering and death of, say, ten scallops (an example Singer has used to illustrate his argument) would save the life of perhaps one chimp, utilitarianism would advocate the sacrifice of the scallops. However, if the suffering and death of, say, ten cows, only brings about the rather fleeting pleasure of one hundred human hamburger eaters, utilitarianism would here deem this killing immoral. Utilitarianism believes that not all animals have equal value, but that all animals do have some value, and that value can be calibrated by their ability to feel pain and pleasure, by their sentience.

Singer is most often criticized when addressing the relationship between higher-functioning nonhuman animals and orphaned infants and intellectually disabled humans. In particular, he argues that some nonhuman animals may show an increased capacity to experience pleasure and pain when measured against some severely impaired humans and most orphaned infant humans (the orphaned infant has no parents who will suffer if she is killed). Therefore, with the ability to experience pleasure and pain as the sole criterion of calculation, Singer argues that it would be morally appropriate to sacrifice orphaned and unwanted human infants and humans with intellectual and other disabilities over some animals such as the higher-functioning primates, if such a sacrifice would serve the greatest good. Of course, Singer is not actually advocating that we kill human babies or the intellectually disabled; rather he is provoking us to be more thorough in our moral orientation toward animals. However, if the rightist comparison of animals to human slaves draws a great deal of public criticism, this kind of calculation that blurs the boundary between higher functioning animals and lower functioning humans has led to public outcry.⁹ Although I believe it was intended to help us think more clearly about animals and the harms we cause them, in some ways, especially when it's misrepresented in the media, these kinds of interventions ultimately serve to discredit efforts on behalf of animal advocacy.

Even more troubling to me, however, is the way this simple formulation of *the greatest good for the greatest number* misrepresents itself as objective when it actually relies on highly subjective evaluations. While

it may on the surface look as if we're performing a simple mathematical calculation, how can we judge the personal experiences of pleasure and pain between any given group of individuals? While I completely agree with Singer and others who suggest we don't need to rely on language to witness such things as pleasure and pain (i.e., that joy, delight, fear, injury, aches, and so on can be discerned from indicators such as body language and eye contact), how can we know precisely how another experiences pain or pleasure? I have a friend who has had several injuries and subsequent surgeries in the past few years, and they don't slow her down in the least; she is up and working days earlier than her doctor recommends. Other folks (me included) need lots of time to rest and recuperate after pain and injury. Some people are on pain meds their whole lives, while others who have similar disabilities never touch the stuff. My point here is that pain is subjective, and so in fact is pleasure. It's not simply that what gives one person pleasure and happiness is different from what delights another; it's also true that how we experience these things varies widely. Some types of bliss are momentary, and other types provide grounding for years or even lifetimes. It all depends on who you are. As we'll see, the concept of affect attends to such difference.

Trying to calculate pleasure and pain on an objective scale overlooks the importance of affect and character in evaluating morality.¹⁰ To judge the value of something like pain and pleasure, we need to hear or imagine something about what it feels like to the creature who experiences it. We can't measure these things with numbers, but need to flesh them out with stories. To take a somewhat silly example, let's look at three of my dogs and evaluate how much they like their walks. I could tell you that based on visible excitement, the time it takes them to get to the door, and their unwillingness to head back home, Duncan values his walks at an 8 (on a scale of 1–10, 10 being highest), Hattie at a 7, and Jerome at a 5. On this scale, according to utilitarianism, if I had a limited amount of time and can only walk one, it would be best spent walking Duncan, right? Unpacking the story more, though, might (or might not) lead us to different conclusions. Duncan is my alpha male, the big yellow lab whose only impulse in life is to protect his pack. He loves to walk more than anybody because he thinks his job in life is to guard us from all the evils of the world. On our walks, everything we meet, from squirrels to

people to mailboxes (he's not very bright), is first perceived as a threat. Given time, he can get used to something, but the joy in his walks comes from barking and lunging at anything new. Hattie, a bloodhound mix, enjoys her walks for only one reason as well: smells. Her nose is to the ground every step of the way, as she fully inhabits a world I can only imagine in my wildest dreams. She bays loudly when (to my eyes and nose, at least) there's nothing there. She is very happy. The only reason I give her walks a 7 is because her other favorite activity in life is sleeping on my bed, so she is often a little reluctant to get up, even for the walk she knows she will love. Jerome is my pit bull, and he is the most contained member of my household. As the only bully breed dog in the house for years, I believe he senses his difference and looks to me for guidance on everything. It's not quite that he is unsure of himself (as dogs that are unsure of themselves tend to be anxious and fearful, and that does not describe Jerome), it's more that he never wants to do anything wrong and so holds back and waits for a clear command. He's devoted but not in the way a golden retriever is devoted (as in, please let me please you, please). Jerome is more reserved in his devotion, more staid with his emotions. I give his walks a 5 because I think he likes them, but only if I tell him he can. He is the only dog of the three that walks off leash soundly and that greets all other dogs and humans with perfect equanimity. As such, he is the easiest of the three to walk by far. However, if my gate were to be inadvertently left open, Jerome would *never* go for a walk on his own, but Hattie and Duncan would be gone before you knew it.

My point here is that the numbers I assigned to their walks obscured who they really are. Although the numbers were as accurate as I could make them, they didn't show you why the walks mattered or how they differed for each of these dogs. The assigned numerical values sort of missed the point. The same is true for my dogs' pain. Duncan will go outside in the middle of a raging storm to accompany any member of his pack that needs to pee; he would stand in the way of any perceived threat and defend any of us to his death. But when it comes to having his teeth or ears cleaned or his nails trimmed, he is a nightmare. Hattie, although she rarely gets off the bed, will jump at the chance to get cleaned because she perceives that as a sign of affection. And Jerome, although

it's clear from his body language that he hates it, will endure anything at the hands of a human; last year he cut himself badly, and my vet was able to stitch him up without anesthetic because he is so calm and steady. So even if utilitarianism is not wrong in its intent to place animals on a continuum, it's incomplete at capturing the world as they live in it. We need something more.

In this book, I offer for your consideration a method that is distantly related to utilitarianism, but instead of basing its moral calculus on abstract sentience, it focuses on personal knowledge, expanded stories, individual experience, identification, love, and affect. Utilitarianism strives toward a kind of objectivity or public agreement on animals' value; the version I am suggesting argues that animal value cannot be formulated objectively. It is based on love and stories about that love. The stories told in everyday life render connection with animals legible and can serve as a new foundation for animal advocacy. While some philosophers and political theorists will reject this kind of approach as being too subjective, I suggest that if we begin our moral deliberations with those animals that we connect with and move out from there, a large cultural shift can follow. In other words, rather than shy away from affect, my strategy depends on it.

Returning to Singer, there is something of an internal conflict within his utilitarianism concerning the question of proximity. In most ways, Singer wants to maintain an objective consistency regarding the idea that all life-forms need to be measured on the same scale of pleasure and pain and given equal consideration in relation to their places on that scale. As he puts it, "If we make a distinction between animals and humans, how can we do it, other than on the basis of a morally indefensible preference for members of our own species?"¹¹ At the same time, however, he regards it as somewhat natural (if problematic) that in making our moral calculations, it is hard to give as much consideration to the stranger as we give to those close to us. He asks, "Can any of us really give equal consideration to the welfare of our family and the welfare of strangers?"¹² In other words, he wants us to examine all sentience from a distance, but he also understands that we can't help seeing those who are close to us as somehow more valuable than the distant, abstract stranger.

I suggest that we capitalize on the principle of proximity and use it

to leverage more compassion for those animals that are closest to us, closest to our hearts. And I mean closest in every way possible from the great apes, who share high percentages of our DNA, to the dogs and cats who share our beds. We start with what we know, or what we think we know, and move out from there. In agreement with Singer, I think we should break open the moral boundary between humans and animals, but I suggest instead that we begin this process with the kinds of animals we know—and love—best. Starting with fuller accounts of the animals with whom we share our lives, we teach each other how to value animals differently, how to appreciate them and have compassion for them. Put differently, where Singer theorizes all animals—human and nonhuman—on an objective continuum according to sentience, I propose that all animals be placed on a subjective continuum based on our connection with them. This affective connection is constituted by the stories we tell about them, by our affection for them and theirs for us, and by the various ways their characters inspire us.

Think for a moment about the ways we treat other humans. Given the choice to save a close friend or a total stranger from drowning, most of us would instinctively save the friend. Those who are closest to us, with whom we have the most connection, demand our greatest respect. This is part of what it means to be a human animal rather than a machine, I think; the particular people around us matter. We can't treat others as universal or interchangeable, even if we subscribe to a moral theory that might want us to try. We struggle with notions of human rights and many of us would like to see all humans provided with conditions that will allow them to flourish, but for the most part we learn to care in a world where what is closest to us matters most.

I simply propose to start our thinking about animals by extending this principle of proximity to their realm. We start by disseminating the stories about how those that are closest to us matter. Through these stories, through helping other people understand how the particular animals matter, we produce a wider and wider web of connection and identification. Slowly, a new kind of movement builds in which our thinking is shifted, incrementally, almost beyond the realm of our perception, but concretely, person by person. I tell you a story about my dog, you tell me a story about your cow. Tomorrow, I pass on the hamburger because I

love my dog and understand what it means for you to love your cow. Again, this is not a strategy that will necessarily lead to objective policy changes to benefit animals. While lawyers and philosophers are busy trying to accomplish those shifts, this book calls the rest of us to take up the affective work of social transformation. This book recognizes that it's a long, hard, and uneven road to change the hearts and minds of people on the subject of animals. But it is possible.

Animal Studies

Over the past twenty years, many academic disciplines have engaged in rigorous interrogations of heretofore "natural" sites of difference. Formations such as gender, race, sexual preference, ethnicity once thought to be hardwired in the body are now being theorized as culturally constructed. The most recent addition to this scholarship questions the distinction between human and nonhuman and has come to be known as "animal studies." What, exactly, these scholars ask, separates human beings from other animals? While earlier ideas located that difference between human and nonhuman animals in conventions such as language, tool use, or emotion, new evidence from a number of fields challenges the certainty of these boundaries and hints at the possibility that humans and other animals may not be as different as we once believed. As pioneering theorist Donna Haraway expresses it, "leaky boundaries" exist between the two entities.¹³

Indeed, Haraway's foundational work in the field, *Primate Visions*, traces the various ways humans have used real and figurative primates to actually produce themselves as different, to shore up the category of human as natural and self-evident. Two hundred years ago, for example, the category of "human" described a very different group of people than it does today; slaves weren't considered human then (they were "savages"), nor were women, according to certain definitions. Our sense of humanness developed, and it did so, she argues, on the figure of the primate. During the apex of civil rights activism, for example, when American racial categories were very troubled, both the space program and modern medicine united us in a common quest to explore the world of outer space and to advance scientific knowledge of biology; we did so by putting

chimps in rockets and cutting them open in laboratories. They are not human, the message resounded, but the rest of us are. We all—black and white—belong in the same category, and they are outside this boundary. Thus, a unified sense of humanity emerged as nonhumans were subjected to a lesser code of treatment. As theorist Cary Wolfe articulates, much of our scholarship rests on “what looks more and more like a fundamental repression that underlies most ethical and political discourse; repressing the question of nonhuman subjectivity, taking it for granted that the subject is always already human.”¹⁴ Animal studies points out that the animal is the thing we cannot think about or care about if we’re going to preserve the primacy of human rights, human culture, human interest, human diversity, human welfare, human being, and so on. At their most provocative moments, these kinds of theories help us understand how and why the suffering of many animals is invisible to many humans.

Much of the work in animal studies suggests that in doing cultural criticism, greater attention should be paid to the construction of the “animal” and “human.” In the same way that we believe we “are” black or white, male or female, gay or straight only because those are the only categories available to us for self-expression, human and animal are identities that similarly carve up the world into binary structures. Through many generations of cultural production, we learn to put everything we now identify as human on one side of a line, and all other beings on the other side, and we perform the identity we associate with ourselves. The identity “human” captures us, then, because language and culture have carved up the world on this axis rather than another. These works help us see how the world could be different.

Animal studies, however, exhibits several problems that have made it difficult for many animal advocates to use these works in their own scholarship and activism. First, following much work in cultural studies, there is a propensity in some of these projects toward opaque writing. In the tradition of folks like Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, some of this jargon and difficulty of prose is necessary; these theorists are trying to use (old) language to build a new reality, and that’s a really hard thing to do. New words, new connections of words, the word as an art form, all these things come into play in this new worldmaking project.

However, there is a lot of valuable work out there that is not being taken up by animal advocates because of the language-jargon problem.

More disturbing than the jargon problem, though, is the reluctance of many animal studies scholars to extend their work to ethics, politics, or activism; many of these works shy away from making prescriptions about real animals or real animal advocacy. This phenomenon is puzzling given that so many projects arising from related fields like cultural studies were and are eager to take on political agendas. Indeed, the field of cultural studies was founded in part on the claim that no scholarship is without politics, that no identity is beyond questioning; the goal of most cultural studies projects, then, is to expose the politics up front—and mostly in support of progressive agendas. Indeed, many patently political projects like queer theory, the intersex movement, transgender politics, critical race studies, postmodern feminism, and other formulations that challenge traditional renderings of identity can be directly traced to cultural studies work in the academy. Providing people outside the academy with new ways to formulate their own desires in relation to identity seems part of the mandate of the field. The libratory politics embedded in cultural studies, to me, makes the field one of the most exciting sites within the university, as it is effectively offering people new models by which to live their lives.

The absence of this commitment when it comes to animals, then, is troubling. The avoidance of normative descriptions in this work renders it somewhat useless to the world of animal activism. The only explanation I have for this refusal is that perhaps these scholars see the step into animal advocacy as too synonymous with a step into existing iterations of animal rights; these scholars see themselves as calling for a new way of orienting liberation around an axis not based on the concept of rights. They are trying to dream their way into a new reality and don't think they can get there if they carry with them commitments to human-centered philosophical formations. In other words, the movement that would naturally align itself with animal studies has yet to be born.

While many of these theories are resistant to drawing moral conclusions from this claim, I think the moment is upon us to move this work toward an examination of our practices toward nonhuman animals. Embedded with many animal studies projects, I believe, are answers that

could help us reconfigure our entire worldview with regard to animals. If we follow the animal studies logic that resists unchanging identities into the realm of advocacy, we see new alternatives. From an animal studies perspective, animal advocacy could come not in the form of extending human constructions such as rights or welfare into the realm of animals; rather it could come through new theorizations and reformulations of the shared affective worlds we all already inhabit. Put differently, if animal studies suggests that humanness is not something we “are,” but something we perform, with animal advocacy in mind, couldn’t it be performed differently?

Work in animal studies gives us glimpses of other ways of configuring “animal advocacy” than rights or welfare. They can help us see that constructing a political theory that will apply to all animals immediately is really an impossible task because we’re working in an uneven world. Some people can see and hear and love some animals all of the time, where other people see and hear and love nothing. It’s not really that different with people; although we have a public discourse called “human rights,” people fall off the map of visibility all the time. Think here about the social isolation of elderly in America, mass unmarked graves of victims of genocide in Rwanda, and the devastating earthquake in Haiti, people whose names are forgotten, lost lives that are never mourned. The map of rights is complicated and all humans are not equal—yet. Indeed, Rwanda is a wonderful example of the jaggedness of love and rights and stories, for not many miles from the lost human graves exists the marked and remembered grave of Dian Fossey’s companion Digit, a gorilla mourned the world over when the story of his death at the hands of poachers was told in the book and film *Gorillas in the Mist*. One does not need to be human to be remembered. And one does not need to be non-human to be forgotten. The concept of affect gives us ways to discuss these realities.

We must move forward in this imperfect world. Our ethical theories try to straighten things out, to iron out the kinks and wrinkles, but many animal studies scholars sit off to the side reminding us that such straightening is ultimately impossible; they call our attention away to some other, different picture as part and parcel of the problem we think we’re trying to work on. In the chapters that follow, I am called into new territories

over and over by such thinkers. I think I'm working on the pet overpopulation problem, but my eyes roam to the construction of human masculinity as intrinsic to the reasons pets are not altered. I think I'm working on the question of whether it's wrong to eat meat, but what appears on my mental screen is whether or not transnational corporations can ever be trusted to care for animals. I think I'm thinking about whether zoos and circuses are morally acceptable but fixate instead on the cages constructed for humans through the limitations of language and the reality that our worlds are so morally jagged. I think I'm trying to figure out whether it's ever acceptable to perform invasive scientific experiments on nonhuman animals when my thoughts are pulled toward a different kind of violence science performs when it silences animals by making claims of objectivity. Following the work of animal studies into the realm of politics, then, is like inserting ourselves into projects and processes already in motion.

Conclusion

This book clears a path for a new kind of approach to animal advocacy, one that advocates the use of affect in the service of transformation. While I understand that it takes all kinds of approaches to make change happen and do believe that a variety of tactics and theories (including rights, welfare, and utilitarianism) are needed to go about challenging power structures in today's world, I also believe that the kind of approach I call for resonates with many people actually in the movement already. Over the past ten years, I've attended many animal rights conferences and participated in countless meetings, e-mail lists, and websites of the movement. In virtually every setting, I've encountered newcomers who initially show up because they love animals. Some have a fondness for a particular cat or dog; others are moved by the plight of abused Premarin horses or zoo elephants. Some rescue pit bull mixes on chains or feed feral cat colonies; others do agility with purebred AKC dogs. Some use horses or dolphins for human therapy; others volunteer at animal shelters. They come because they love animals, and they are shocked once they get there to find that the world of animal rights does not reflect this experience of animal love. They are told the only way to be an animal

advocate is to buy high-priced vegan products or participate in an action to free animals from confinement. They learn we shouldn't be fighting for bigger cages and better conditions, but rather for "empty cages" and complete liberation of all animals from the human community.¹⁵ They want to join a movement that shares their passion, but instead are disappointed to find that there is little room for loving animals there; indeed, if they share their lives with "purpose bred" or so-called wild animals, they realize they had better keep that fact quiet. I believe that if we can pay closer attention to the ways these real people love real animals, we can build a stronger movement for all animals. In those connections lie the seeds of transformation.

Put a little differently, this book is not a blueprint for a new political platform or philosophical theory around animals. It's not an argument that translates immediately into the law or widespread policy changes. Rather, I begin with the conviction that affective attachments sometimes lead and set the pace for policy change. If that is true (and I believe it is), it simply makes sense to attend to the possibility that cultural shifts in our attitudes toward animals—many of them already under way, as I detail in the chapters of this book—form a foundation for seeing the possibility of change from a different angle. By focusing on affect in our quest for a better world for animals, along with concrete stories of connection, we may be able to offer people a bigger menu of involvement. If we can effectively convey the moments when we get our relationships with animals right, and adequately portray the transformation that accompanies those relationships, we may be able to build a stronger, more viable, more wide-reaching social movement.

This book argues that animal advocacy must become more accepted and more effective, and it can only do so through the process of transformation, by getting more and more people to care about animals. The animal rights movement is now made up of theorists and grassroots activists who have all been persuaded to some degree or another that some, most, or all nonhuman animals matter. While they disagree on how they matter and how justice might be achieved, there exists some general agreement on the value of nonhuman life. I am interested in animal studies because it gives us the tools to see how affect and stories

help construct our relationship to animals, and perhaps how some of those relationships could be constructed differently. I believe we've made some wrong turns in our thinking and we need to go back and retrace our steps, figure out where we went wrong, and try again with something different. Animal rights, utilitarianism, and animal welfare are simply not up to that task of changing the world for animals; they take too much of reality for granted. They are very important, yes, but they do not offer a complete picture. Something has to change in the way the questions are framed. Progress does not always mean going forward. If we're on a dead-end road, progress actually entails going backward, finding our mistakes, and correcting them. In the case of animals, I believe, progress will only come by retracing our steps and altering some of the things we take for granted. Animal studies can help us achieve this if we push its insights about affect into the realm of advocacy.

Loving Animals applies the concept of affect to the language of ethics, activism, and advocacy. Throughout the book, I will suggest that because who we love is always a question of politics, the greatest resource we have in the struggle for animal advocacy is the deep connections many of us form with other animals. We need to value animals more because their radical otherness contextualizes our lives. We see our place on earth more clearly, because we see our own limitations and fragilities through them. We are all part of one another. Beginning with processes like identification and love creates space for us to tell stories so that others can see the value of animals more profoundly. Our ability to tell a love story about an animal allows others to see that animal—and other animals—differently. We can only add species to race, class, gender, sexuality as an equivalent identity category if we can make the beings on the other side of the human-animal divide seem more real.

I have briefly summarized these four methods and theories (animal rights, animal welfare, utilitarianism, and animal studies) for a number of reasons. Having a map of where different stakeholders come from can help us if not to overcome then at least to appreciate and understand differing perspectives. In almost all other social movements and the numerous theories that informed each of them, a wider, more legible movement was formed only when people could speak across differences and see

something like a common goal of liberation. Certainly this commonality is present in some sense in animal rights today, but we need to expand it. The philosophical elements of the discourse are outlined here, but something bigger needs to draw them together. Understanding animals in various affective frames allows us to see that institutions and practices like capitalism, consumption, religion, scientific objectivity, environmental commitments to categories like “wild” and “domestic,” legal theory and practice, language itself, and the rationality associated in Western philosophy all carve up our world to be one way rather than another. I will argue that a discourse on affect can help us dig underneath all these conventions and offer a sustained critique of their limitations. In the end, I will suggest that the concept of affect can also help us imagine better ways of sharing the planet with animals.

In the structure of this book, I will also suggest that affect is best displayed through stories. Although ethical methodologies are critical in setting certain kinds of agendas, moral living can best be displayed through narrative. What stories capture goes far beyond principles in detailing the nature of our relationships with animals. Indeed, narrative can display not simply the value of emotion and connection but the necessity of including affect in the quest for a moral life. In the next four chapters, then, I tell stories that show how things could be different, how living well with animals is contingent upon love and connection. It is not until the final chapter that I offer a theory about the stories I've told. Using the metaphor of clothing, I explicate affect more fully and show there how stories are the best vehicle we have to accomplish social transformation concerning animals. Theory follows stories in this book because stories can display passion, emotion, sacrifice, and love in ways that theories often cannot. We need stories to hold our theories together, to widen the animal advocacy movement, and to help it become more widely accessible and accepted.

Animal advocates need to take up the work of fighting injustice on many different levels. We must work in coalition with lots of different kinds of groups and methods. The chapters that follow expand the frame of the conversation and illustrate how factors such as gender construction, capitalist profit, religious ideology, physical ability, and scientific objectivity all play a part in the ways we think about animals. Many things

in the world need to change in order to create a new reality for animals. It's not a question of leaving everything in place and providing more charity, or extending some human rights to the realm of animals. It's a question of asking how we got here, asking what went wrong on that journey, then—slowly and unevenly—remaking the world to reflect a more palpable love for animals.