

WellBeing International
WBI Studies Repository

2015

Animal Rights is a Social Justice Issue

Robert C. Jones
California State University, Chico, rcjones@mail.csuchico.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://www.wellbeingintlstudiesrepository.org/anirmov>



Part of the [Animal Studies Commons](#), [Civic and Community Engagement Commons](#), and the [Politics and Social Change Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Jones, R. C. (2015). Animal rights is a social justice issue. *Contemporary Justice Review*, 18(4), 467-482.

This material is brought to you for free and open access by WellBeing International. It has been accepted for inclusion by an authorized administrator of the WBI Studies Repository. For more information, please contact wbisr-info@wellbeingintl.org.



Animal Rights is a Social Justice Issue

Robert C. Jones

California State University – Chico

KEYWORDS

animal rights, animal liberation, animal ethics, sentience, social justice, factory farming, industrialized agriculture

ABSTRACT

The literature on social justice, and social justice movements themselves, routinely ignore nonhuman animals as legitimate subjects of social justice. Yet, as with other social justice movements, the contemporary animal liberation movement has as its focus the elimination of institutional and systemic domination and oppression. In this paper, I explicate the philosophical and theoretical foundations of the contemporary animal rights movement, and situate it within the framework of social justice. I argue that those committed to social justice – to minimizing violence, exploitation, domination, objectification, and oppression – are equally obligated to consider the interests of all sentient beings, not only those of human beings.

Introduction

I start this essay with a discouraging observation: despite the fact that the modern animal¹ rights movement is now over 40 years old, the ubiquitous domination and oppression experienced by other-than-human animals has yet to gain robust inclusion in social justice theory or practice. The good news is that the conceptual tools needed to rectify this situation are ready at hand.

My goal in this essay is to persuade those committed to social justice to consider, both in their theory and practice, the interests of *all* sentient beings, not only those of human beings. To this end, I argue that the philosophical foundations for establishing robust moral status and moral entitlements for nonhuman animals are sound; that these moral entitlements make other-than-human animals proper and legitimate subjects of justice; and, from the fact that nonhuman animals suffer systemic and institutional domination and oppression, it follows that animal rights is a social justice issue. I conclude by urging those committed to social justice to consider equally the interests of *all* sentient beings.

Nonhuman animals, justice, and social justice

Before I unpack my argument, let me clarify four concepts central to it: *sentience*, *moral entitlement*, *justice*, and *social justice*. To say that a being is sentient is to say that there is something that it's like 'from the inside' to be that thing. That is, unlike objects like rocks or paintings, to be sentient is to be the subject of experience; to possess the capacity for joy, pleasure, pain, and suffering, capacities that make a moral difference.

To claim that nonhuman animals have *moral entitlements* is to say that they possess certain capacities that grant them significant interests or rights. Establishing moral entitlements for other-than-human animals does at least two things: (i) it obligates us to respect these interests or rights in that it creates for us duties to animals, and (ii) it connects the moral status of nonhuman animals to justice. As Garner (2013) argues, it does this because

[f]ocusing on justice in the context of the moral status of animals ... directs attention away from how we, as individuals, ought to regard the treatment of animals (whether, for instance, we ought to be vegetarians), and toward the way in which the *state* [emphasis added] ought to regard their treatment. (p. 48)

Justice is a complex, much-disputed notion; justice applied to animals is even more so. One focus of the project of increasing the moral status of nonhuman animals has been to point out how *unfairly* animals are treated. The notions of fairness and desert, of giving one her due, are integral to most notions of justice, most centrally in the work of Rawls (1971) but also in the more pluralist account of Miller (1999). For example, when we witness the atrocious confinement conditions that animals suffer in so-called 'livestock production' facilities (that is, factory farms), and think, "Those animals don't deserve to be treated like that," we are expressing this aspect of justice or, to be more precise, *injustice*. As Nussbaum (2004b, p. 302) notes:

[W]hat we most typically mean when we call a bad act unjust is that the creature injured by that act has an entitlement not to be treated in that way, and an entitlement of a particularly urgent or basic type. ... *The sphere of justice is the sphere of basic entitlements*. [emphasis added] When I say that the mistreatment of animals is unjust, I mean to say not only that it is wrong of us to treat them in that way, but also that they have a right, a moral entitlement, not to be treated in that way. It is unfair to them. I believe that thinking of animals as active beings who have a good and who are entitled to pursue it naturally leads us to see important damages done to them as unjust.

It's that notion of justice, the violation of a basic entitlement, that I have in mind.

Moreover, when I speak in this essay of social justice and claim that animal rights is a social justice issue, I am obviously not limiting the notion of social justice to human persons. The sense of *social* that I have in mind is a kind of revisionary notion about who, species-wise, may count as a legitimate member of society.² The sense of *social justice* that I have in mind concerns itself with (a) the protection of certain rights and opportunities, especially for the least-advantaged members of society (Rawls & Kelly, 2001), (b) the distribution not only of economic resources, but of the advantages and disadvantages in society (Miller, 1999), and (c) systemic domination and oppression (Young, 1990).

With regard to justice in general and social justice in particular, my intention here is to highlight the fact that mainstream theories of justice are impoverished because they ignore nonhuman animals. Fortunately, the work of Young (1990) provides a framework of social justice that can include other-than-human animals.

In light of these clarifications, I now turn to my argument:

- (1) If animals have robust moral status, then animals have significant moral entitlements of some kind.
- (2) If animals have moral entitlements, then animals are legitimate subjects of justice.
- (3) If animals are legitimate subjects of justice, and animals suffer systemic and institutional domination and oppression, then animal rights is a social justice issue.

- (4) There are sound philosophical foundations that establish that animals have robust moral status.
- (5) Animals suffer systemic and institutional domination and oppression.
- (6) Therefore, animal rights is a social justice issue (P1–P5).
- (7) Therefore, those committed to social justice must consider the interests of all sentient beings, not only those of human beings.

A close look reveals that the weight of this argument rests on the truth of (4) and (5). To that end, in the following section I will clarify just two of the sound philosophical foundations that establish robust moral status for nonhuman animals. Following that, I will say more about the ways that other-than-human animals are the proper and legitimate subjects of justice and discuss the ways that nonhuman animals suffer systemic and institutional domination and oppression. Subsequently, it follows that animal rights is a social justice issue and that those committed to social justice should expand social justice praxis to include the interests of all sentient beings.

Peter Singer: the equal consideration of interests

Understanding the relationship between animal liberation and social justice requires first understanding the philosophical framework of the most influential animal ethicist of the last forty years, Peter Singer. His three central works on the issue include the locus classicus of the contemporary animal liberation movement, *Animal Liberation* (1975), the essay 'All Animals are Equal' (1986), and the first three chapters of *Practical Ethics* (1993), particularly chapter 3, 'Equality for Animals?' Understanding Singer's argument for animal liberation requires understanding five notions central to Singer's view: (a) The Basic Principle of Equality, (b) sentience, (c) the Principle of Equal Consideration of Interests, (d) speciesism, and (e) the Relevance Principle.

Reflecting on recent social justice movements such as women's liberation, black liberation, LGBTQIA rights, disability rights, and others, we notice that one thing that underlies and connects these movements is a belief that, in an important and profound sense, all humans are equal. This belief, the *Basic Principle of Equality*, lies at the heart of Singer's view. But what does it mean to say that all humans are equal? Given that humans differ from each other so significantly in their physical, moral, emotional, and cognitive abilities and capacities, surely, as a descriptive empirical assertion, claims of human equality in this sense are clearly factually untrue. The Basic Principle of Equality is not intended as a fully factual but rather as a normative concept; 'equality is a moral idea a prescription of how we *should* [emphasis added] treat human beings' (Singer, 2002, pp. 4–5). The primary central descriptive claim grounding the Basic Principle of Equality is the fact that humans are experiential subjects. We are the kinds of beings whose experiences *matter to us*, and thus we possess morally relevant *interests* (e.g., interests in our own well-being), interests that things like rocks and paintings lack. In other words, humans are sentient.

The Basic Principle of Equality, coupled with sentience, and combined with the interests that the possession of sentience provide, lead to the central principle driving Singer's view: the Principle of Equal Consideration of Interests, the essence of which is 'that we give equal weight in our moral deliberations to the like interests of all those affected by our actions' (Singer, 2002, p. 8). When engaged in any decision-making procedure concerning how we ought to treat one another morally, the Principle of Equal Consideration of Interests requires that we consider the interests of all humans equally. But since sentience provides the basis for the equality of human beings, and since human beings are not the only sentient beings, to be consistent, we must extend the principle of equal consideration of interests to all sentient creatures. The Principle of Equal Consideration of Interests requires that we weight interests not on the basis of the species (or race or gender) of an individual, but on her own merits, independently of such morally irrelevant considerations. Importantly then, the Principle of Equal Consideration of Interests emphasizes the moral salience of our interests as individuals, *not as members of a particular species*.

Yet, equal consideration of interests is not synonymous with moral equality³ and equal treatment. The principle of equal consideration of interests 'commits us to treating like interests in a comparable fashion, a key principle of justice, but it does not tell us what interests particular individuals have' (Garner, 2013, p. 98). To privilege the interests of humans over nonhumans solely in virtue of species membership is a form of speciesism. Speciesism – akin to racism, sexism, and ableism – is a bias in favor of the interests of the members of one's own species and against the interests of members of other species based solely or primarily on species membership.⁴ Speciesism involves the belief that members of one's own species are more valuable than and morally superior to members of another species, a prejudice that often leads to discriminatory practices and institutional oppression. Just as the wrongness of racism consists in discrimination based on a morally irrelevant trait (namely, race), the wrongness of speciesism consists in discrimination based on a morally irrelevant trait, namely, *species membership*.

To reiterate, equality for nonhuman animals does not entail equality of treatment, but merely the equal consideration of interests. Adjudicating differences in treatment between competing interests requires the last notion key to Singer's view, the *Relevance Principle*. The Relevance Principle states that whether a difference between individuals justifies a difference in treatment depends on the kind of treatment in question:

The extension of the basic principle of equality from one group to another does not imply that we must treat both groups in exactly the same way, or grant exactly the same rights to both groups. Whether we should do so will depend on the nature of the members of the two groups. The basic principle of equality does not require equal or identical treatment; it requires equal consideration. Equal consideration for different beings may lead to different treatment and different rights. (Singer, 2002, p. 2)

Thus, equality for animals does not require, for example, that we grant pigs the right to vote, not because the interests of pigs are of less moral concern, but rather because pigs, unlike humans, have no interest in voting. On the other hand, since pigs, like humans, have an interest in not suffering, livestock production techniques that inflict suffering on pigs solely to satisfy the palates of consumers are impermissible. (Cochrane, 2012, p. 5). Singer's view, combined with his utilitarian stance, champions maximizing the overall welfare of *all* sentient beings and condemns practices, such as industrialized livestock production, as discriminatory, immoral, and clear cases of institutionalized violence and oppression.

Tom Regan: the case for animal rights

In his influential book, *The Case for Animal Rights* (1983), Tom Regan rejects Singerian, utilitarian arguments for animal liberation and instead provides an account of liberation for animals that requires recognition that nonhuman animals possess moral rights. Though broadly Kantian, Regan's view rejects the notion that only rational beings possess intrinsic value. For Regan, what matters morally is not rationality per se, but the capacity to be the subject of experiences that matter to oneself. Possessing certain physiological, emotional, psychological, and cognitive capacities, over-and-above mere sentience, makes one a subject-of-a-life:

To be the subject of a life ... involves more than merely being alive and more than merely being conscious [I]ndividuals are subjects-of-a-life if they have beliefs and desires; perception memory, and a sense of the future, including their own future; an emotional life together with feelings of pleasure and pain; preference and welfare-interests; the ability to initiate action in pursuit of their desires and goals; a psychophysical identity over time; and an individual welfare in the sense that their experiential life fares well or ill for

them, logically independent of their being the object of anyone else's interests. (Regan, 1983, p. 243)

Since a great number of nonhumans are subjects-of-a-life whose value cannot be reduced to their utility to humans, it follows for Regan that animals possess what he calls *inherent value*, a value that is intrinsic, independent of how animals are valued by – or valuable to – humans. Possession of inherent value merits the respect due a subject-of-a-life, and, consequently, confers upon nonhuman animals strong *moral rights*, specifically, the right to respectful treatment, never to be used or treated solely instrumentally, merely as a means but only as ends-in-themselves.

For Regan, all who possess inherent value possess it *equally*. The possession of rights implies not merely an entitlement to equal consideration of interests, but categorical protection against being treated merely as a means to some human end. Unlike Singer's utilitarian view, which allows for the possibility that individual interests may be trumped in cases where appeals to the general welfare outweigh the interests of the individual, for Regan, rights are, for the most part, inviolable, even if trumping them, or harming the rights-bearer, would increase general welfare. I say 'for the most part' because even for Regan, such rights cannot be absolute. Often the rights of one rights-bearer come into conflict with the rights of another. In such instances, it may be the case that in order to respect one party's right not to be harmed, another party's right not to be harmed must be overridden.

Regan provides two principles to which we can appeal in such cases. The first he calls the *Minimize Overriding Principle* (or 'Miniride' Principle). The Miniride Principle states that in adjudicating between conflicting rights, if one course of action involves violating the rights of many rights-holders while the sole alternative involves violating the rights of fewer rights-holders-and if the rights to be violated, individually, involve the same magnitude and degree of harm-then the rights of the few should be overridden by the rights of the many. However, in cases where the rights to be violated are not comparable, then, according to Regan's second principle, the *Worse-Off Principle*, we should mitigate the condition of those who would be worse-off and violate the lesser rather than the greater right. In other words, it is preferable to harm many individuals slightly rather than harming one severely. For example, given the choice between torturing one person to death or causing a million people to suffer a mild headache, it's clear that we should choose the latter. With regard to animal rights, while it follows from Regan's view that the death of, say, one dog is of less harm than the death of a healthy, neurotypical human being, importantly, it also follows that the death of a healthy, neurotypical dog is of less harm than the death of a human who is, for example, irreversibly comatose.⁵ Among other things, Regan's two principles insulate his view from charges of speciesism since the metric and valence of harm is determined not by species membership but instead by factors such as the richness and complexity of consciousness, and the opportunities to satisfy basic as well as more complex preferences and desires, regardless of the species of the possessor of these capacities.

Though it follows from Singer's view that practices such as the confinement conditions found in 'livestock production' facilities, that is factory farms, are institutionally oppressive, immoral, and should be ameliorated (if not abolished), given that Singer's view is largely utilitarian, it allows for the possibility of the instrumental use of other-than-human animals in cases where their interests are considered equally and such use increases aggregate welfare. By contrast, Regan's theory condemns and calls for the total abolition of every form of nonhuman animal exploitation and any instrumental use of animals, even in cases where such use improves general welfare, advocating nothing less than the 'total dissolution of the animal industry as we know it' (Regan, 1983, p. 395). Specifically, the animal rights movement is 'committed to a number of goals, including: the total abolition of the use of animals in science; the total dissolution of commercial animal agriculture; the total elimination of commercial and sport hunting and trapping' (Regan, 1985, p. 13). For Regan and his adherents (e.g., Francione, 1996), true animal

liberation can be achieved only through a rights-based approach, since only a rights-based approach can properly ground calls for the abolition of all forms of animal use and exploitation at the hands of humans.

Though Singer and Regan's views are just two among many well-worked-out theories of nonhuman animal ethics,⁶ I hope I have made clear that there exist sound philosophical foundations to establish robust moral status for other-than-human animals. In the sections that follow, I explore the ways that nonhuman animals may be the proper subjects both of justice, in general, and social justice in particular. I then discuss industrialized food production practices that demonstrate clearly how nonhuman animals routinely suffer systemic and institutional domination and oppression. It will follow that animal rights is, in fact, a social justice issue.

Justice, domination, and oppression

In light of this scholarship, there seems good reason to apply the notion of justice to nonhuman animals. The focus of much of this work is grounded in a kind of similarity relation, namely, that we should treat 'like cases alike.' In this sense it is fair to say that, to a large extent, what animal ethicists are essentially doing is advising us not to act unjustly (Garner, 2013, p. 21).

However, tension arises for including other-than-human animals as subjects of justice when we recognize that justice, particularly social justice, is interpreted by most political philosophers not simply as fairness, but in its distributive sense. As Miller (1999) notes, '[i]n the writings of most contemporary political philosophers, social justice is regarded as an aspect of distributive justice, and indeed the two concepts are often used interchangeably' (p. 2). Framing justice primarily in terms of the distribution of resources seems to leave little if any room for nonhuman animals as legitimate recipients of justice, other than the role they play as property or commodities to be distributed among members of a *human* [emphasis added] society⁷ (Miller, 1999).

When considered solely under the distributive justice model, animals fair poorly. Though Benton's (1993) treatment of social justice goes a long way toward including other-than-human animals within a Marxist economic distribution model, the implications of social justice for nonhuman animals under such a picture remain relatively conservative, saying nothing about whether it would be just to continue to use other-than-human animals for food or as experimental subjects (Garner, 2013, p. 21). Indeed, when restricted to the economic-distributive sense, social justice for animals seems, at best, impoverished. Yet, as Garner (2013) argues, once we decouple social justice from the distribution of economic goods, we allow room for justice to include the distribution and assignment of other things, such as liberties, powers, opportunities, goods and bads, rights, experiences, etc. In this way, social justice can include nonhuman animals since there are sound arguments to support the claim that nonhuman animals have morally significant interests or rights, and moral entitlements.

Following Garner's suggestion, we can now turn to the work of Iris Marion Young who provides a conception of social justice not based solely on the distribution of (economic) resources, but 'on the social structures and processes that *produce* [emphasis added] distributions rather than on the distributions themselves' (Young, 1990, p. 18). Young (1990) proposes what she calls an enabling conception of social justice in which justice refers 'not only to distribution, but also to the institutional conditions necessary for the development and exercise of individual capacities and collective communication and cooperation' (p. 39). Thus, a robust picture of social justice for animals would include a critical examination both of patterns of distribution and their causes. Under this conception of justice, Young (1990) proposes that the aim of social justice should be to combat the two⁸ social conditions that define injustice: *domination* (the institutional constraint on self-determination), and *oppression*⁹ (the institutional constraint on self-development) (p. 37).

In the next section, I briefly explain Young's (1990) conceptions of domination and oppression, and clearly demonstrate that, by Young's (1990) or anyone's definition, nonhuman animals as a class are subjected to the most egregious forms of systemic and institutional domination and oppression imaginable.

Animal domination and the five faces of animal oppression

With very few exceptions,¹⁰ all book-length treatments of theories of justice have excluded animals. This exclusion renders animals invisible as a group to whom social justice is owed or under whose umbrella they are to be included. The conceptual framework of these works assumes human exceptionalism¹¹ and the texts of these works are rife with speciesist language. However, this fact does not render works such as Young's (1990) useless or unhelpful in projects that seek to expand the sphere of social justice to include other-than-human animals. On the contrary, the framework Young (1990) provides is quite useful for expanding the sphere of social justice to include nonhuman animals.

To my knowledge, only Gruen (2009) has thoroughly developed and applied Young's (1990) view to nonhuman animals.¹² Though Young (1990) unintentionally develops the notions of domination, oppression, and injustice through a speciesist lens, with little difficulty, we can quite easily appropriate and slightly reformulate these notions so that they are more inclusionary and less speciesist, while retaining the intended spirit of Young's (1990) view.

To that end, here is what a non-speciesist reformulation of Young's criteria of injustice might look like:

Domination is a structural, institutional, or systemic phenomenon that inhibits or prevents sentient individuals from participating in determining their actions or the conditions of their actions. Nonhuman animals are considered to be living within the structures of domination when humans can determine the conditions of their actions, either directly or by virtue of the structural consequences of their actions.

Oppression is a systematic institutional process that immobilizes or diminishes a particular species through the 'five faces of oppression' which include: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence.

Exploitation occurs through a steady process of the transfer of the labor and energy expenditure of animals to the benefit of humans, producing a relation of domination between them. Marginalization involves the deprivation of the conditions required for exercising capacities in a context of respect, recognition, and interaction.

Powerlessness involves inhibition in the development of an animal's autonomy and capacities, and an exposure to disrespectful treatment because of the subordinate status that the animal occupies.

Cultural imperialism involves the universalization of a dominant species' experience and culture, and its establishment as the norm, measuring and devaluing other species in relation to that norm, marking the perspective of the dominant species as invisible while marking out the non-dominant species as the Other.

Violence is a systematic injustice, made possible and even acceptable by and within a particular social context, existing as a social practice directed at members of a species simply because they are nonhuman.

In light of this reconceptualization and the role that domination and oppression play in injustice, I wish now to highlight some of the ways that other-than-human animals suffer systemic and institutional domination and oppression through Young's 'five faces.'

Some ways in which nonhuman animals suffer domination and oppression

By and large, it is permissible for humans to treat animals in ways that would be considered unjust and immoral were they perpetrated against even the most reviled of human beings. We eat animals often for no other reason than that it satisfies our palates. We hunt them for sport, wear their skins, perform painful experiments on them, cage them in zoos and circuses, and keep them as pets, practices codified at the cultural, systemic, and institutional levels. Gruen (2009) argues persuasively that other-than-human animals are routinely and systematically subjected to Youngian domination and oppression. It is not difficult to expand the concept of exploitation traditionally reserved exclusively for human laborers-to include nonhuman animals (Gruen, 2009, p. 162) Animals are exploited, commodified, and objectified in innumerable ways. They and their bodies are used for labor, as food, clothing, research subjects, and sources of entertainment.¹³

Marginalization and powerlessness take place in many industries involving the use of nonhuman animals, as they are routinely forced to live (and die) in conditions under which they are deprived the ability to express requisite species-typical behaviors and capacities, conditions under which they lack any autonomy or respectful treatment, conditions they are powerless to alter. Though it may seem odd, *prima facie*, to characterize nonhuman animals as suffering cultural imperialism at the hands of humans, some human practices involve the universalization of the dominant species' experience and culture, and its establishment as the norm, measuring and devaluing other species in relation to that norm, marking the perspective of the dominant species, or certain sub-cultures of the dominant species, as invisible while marking out the non-dominant species as the nonhuman animal Other.

Animals killed in the name of human culture

For example, some nonhuman animals are killed and hunted in the name of human culture. Contemporary American ranchers and sport hunters argue that their practices have cultural significance in preserving the rancher's or hunter's way of life. Or consider the month-long Hindu Gadhimai festival held every five years at the Gadhimai temple of Bariyarpur in southern Nepal. During just two days of the festival more than 250,000 animals, including water buffaloes, pigs, goats, chicken, mice, and pigeons, are slaughtered in sacrifice to Gadhimai, the Hindu goddess of power. In response to animal rights protesters in Nepal, the temple's high priest argued that the sacrifice should continue and that the world needs to respect the traditional culture (Boone, 2014). (Animal sacrifice was subsequently banned at the festival in July 2015). Even our companion animals are forced to conform to the human rituals and practices that exist in the homes of their human adopters. (Gruen, 2009, p. 164). In this light, we can see how some other-than-human animals suffer cultural imperialism as they are measured, devalued, and marked as the animal Other in relation to certain human norms.

The amount, variety, and degree of violence routinely perpetrated against animals is ubiquitous and unspeakable. Just one instance includes the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) who operate 'live tissue training' programs in which tens-of-thousands of animals are used in so-called combat trauma drills, medical training programs designed to simulate battlefield injuries. During the training, live goats and pigs are made to suffer gunshot wounds, stabbings, broken bones, dismemberment, burns, radiation, and poisoning, all without anesthesia. In a November 2006 *New York Times* piece, U.S. Navy corpsman and trauma medic Dustin Kirby describes one particular trauma training experience that included severely mutilating a pig in which '[t]hey shot [the pig] twice in the face with a 9-mm pistol, and then six times with

an AK-47 and then twice with a 12-gauge shotgun. And then he was set on fire,' after which the pig was kept alive another fifteen hours before dying (Chivers, 2006).

Though animals are routinely subjected to the most heinous forms of domination and oppression imaginable, let me detail just one: so-called 'animal agriculture.' This example will be more than enough to demonstrate the kinds of injustice that other-than-human animals endure systemically on a daily basis.

Animals raised for food

Currently, 1.02 billion cattle and 1.2 billion pigs worldwide are raised as 'livestock,' while the number of chickens raised for food worldwide approaches 40 billion¹⁴ (U.S. Department of Agriculture [USDA], 2013). Most of those animals are raised in Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs), or factory farms.¹⁵ CAFOs involve raising large numbers of animals in conditions of high-density confinement for the production of meat, eggs, and dairy products.

Cattle raised for beef are castrated, dehorned, and branded, all without anesthesia or analgesics. At slaughter, improper stunning techniques cause some cattle to be dismembered while fully conscious (Rollin, 1995). Sows live out most of their lives in cramped, individual gestation crates where they give birth to between four to eight litters. Male piglets have their testicles removed, their tails and ears docked, and their teeth clipped, all without anesthesia or analgesics. At slaughter, improper stunning techniques cause some pigs to reach the scalding water bath-intended to soften their skin and remove hair-while still conscious (Rollin, 1995). Laying hens live out their lives in small, restrictive battery cages. To prevent stress-induced behaviors caused by overcrowding, hens are kept in semi-darkness and the ends of their beaks are cut off with a hot blade, a process known as debeaking, without anesthesia or analgesics. Laying hens on CAFOs are 'spent' and unable to produce eggs after just two years, at which time they are slaughtered. At slaughter, chickens are hung upside-down, their legs are snapped into metal shackles, their throats are slit, and they are immersed in scalding hot water for feather removal, often fully conscious through the entire process¹⁶ (Rollin, 1995).

In light of our discussion regarding the sound philosophical foundations for the moral entitlements of nonhuman animals and their connections to (social) justice, it is important to note that recognizing these atrocious conditions as instances of oppression, rather than merely as situations in which individual rights are violated, facilitates a kind of paradigm shift wherein the very circumstances that make animal oppression invisible to us – namely, the ubiquity of domination, systemic violence, exploitation, and objectification of animals – act to make visible the injustice of such institutions (Gruen, 2009).

I trust that I have made clear some of the ways that other-than-human animals suffer systemic and institutional domination, oppression, and injustice, and how and why animal rights is a social justice issue. However, hidden beneath some of the more striking ways that speciesism manifests itself as a tool of domination and oppression, I want briefly to turn to some ways in which speciesism intersects with other oppressions in less perspicuous ways.

Speciesism: the foundational oppression

Intersecting oppressions of race, gender, sex, class, and disability are being expanded to include domination and oppression brought about by speciesism. Though a number of writers have written on interlocking oppressions and the intersections of speciesism and institutional oppression involving other-than-human animals,¹⁷ literature explicitly connecting Young's (1990) work to animal ethics and social justice remains underdeveloped.¹⁸ However, a number of thinkers have identified the invisibility and salience of speciesism as a core component of oppression.

For example, Cantor (1983) argues persuasively that '[n]owhere is patriarchy's iron fist as naked as in the oppression of animals, which serves as the model and training ground for all other forms of oppression' (p. 27). Jones (2013) calls speciesism a 'foundational' form of oppression, reminding us that '[a]nimals live, suffer, and die in circumstances shaped by human activities [which] are always entangled in social, historical, economic, and cultural processes that are patterned not only by speciesism but also by factors like racism and sexism.'

Wolfe (2003) notes that 'debates in the humanities and social sciences between well-intentioned critics of racism, (hetero)sexism, classism, and all other -isms that are the stock-in-trade of cultural studies almost always remain locked within an unexamined framework of speciesism' (p. 1). In what ways do the five faces of oppression, founded upon speciesism, manifest themselves as interlocking oppressions? Let me close by discussing, very briefly, just a few.

Racism

Speciesism and racism are linked in myriad ways.¹⁹ Historically, people of color and nonhuman animals have been subjected to similar methods of control and violence. The parallels between the Slave Trade and the systematic mistreatment of other-than-human animals is made clear by Spiegel (1996), while the tenets of scientific racism were founded upon the notion that people of color were a sub-species of human, closer to the 'brutes' than to 'civilized man.'

jones (2014a) notes how:

[a]nimal subordination lays the groundwork for racism Indeed, it was specifically among the keepers of 'livestock' (living beings treated like objects) that the practice of human slavery began. The very idea of 'race' among people grew out of the idea of 'breed' as conceived by keepers of nonhuman 'livestock.' Their obsessive concern with reproduction and its control helps to account for the perversely sexualized nature of racist stereotypes and practices.

Contemporary similarities abound in the way that people of color and the poor are caged and treated in the American system of mass incarceration in which people of color, who make up about 30% of the population, account for 60% of those imprisoned (Sayers, 2014).

Sexism

Feminists point out how the very same ideology that legitimates oppression based on sex and gender is the same ideology that acts to oppress animals. As Jones (2014b) notes, '[w]omen and animals, along with land and children, have historically been seen as the property of male heads of households. Patriarchy and pastoralism are justified and perpetuated by the same ideologies and practices.' Both women and nonhuman animals are objectified as things to be possessed. The language of meat, slaughter, and trophy hunting often link speciesism with sexism in the sexualization of animals, women, and even weapons (Adams, 1990; Luke, 2007).

Speciesism, racism, classism, and ecocide

Modern industrialized animal agriculture provides a clear case of the intersection between speciesism, racism, classism, and environmental justice. For instance, the intersection of speciesism and classism can be made visible when we recognize that the consumption of meat and the wearing of certain animal pelts (e.g., mink, ermine, etc.) are class markers.

Bacon (2013) describes how U.S. immigration and economic policies, in concert with Smithfield Foods, the largest pork producer in the U.S., created both an ecological disaster and worker displacement in the Perote Valley near Vera Cruz, Mexico, where massive pig excrement 'lagoons' polluted local water supplies and drove local farmers from their lands. Further, animal agriculture is the top cause of water pollution worldwide and uses more water than all other human purposes combined (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency [EPA], 2000). Clearly, the intersectional instances of domination, oppression, and injustice, involving speciesism, are ubiquitous.

Conclusion

I have explicated some of the sound philosophical foundations, constructed within the last 40 years, intended to expand the boundaries of the moral community to include of nonhuman animals. I have clarified the importance of these theoretical foundations in grounding social justice for animals. As with most other social justice movements, progress within the animal liberation movement moves slowly but steadily. I hope further to have persuaded those committed to social justice, to minimizing violence, exploitation, domination, objectification, and oppression, to consider equally the interests of all sentient beings, not only those of human beings, both in our theoretical work as well as in our activist practice.

Acknowledgments

Thanks to my friend and colleague Michael J. Coyle both for forwarding me the call for papers for this special issue of Contemporary Justice Review, and for providing extensive, invaluable comments on an early draft of this paper. Thanks also to Sara Trechter for helpful editorial comments. Thanks also to Sue C. Escobar for allowing me time to complete this manuscript after the death of my father, Bill Jones. I dedicate this essay to him.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes

1. The term 'animal' is politically fraught and troublesome, primarily because its use acts only to reinforce human exceptionalism, a paradigm of division and oppression that perpetuates the dangerous and misguided notion that those sentient beings commonly referred to as 'human beings,' who are normatively and operationally interpreted as metaphysically distinct from and morally superior to so-called 'animals,' are outside and above membership in the 'animal kingdom,' a distinction that has served the interests of the dominant species at the expense those oppressed species. In this paper, I will instead use the terms 'animal(s),' 'nonhuman animal(s),' and 'other-than-human animal(s)' to refer to so-called nonhuman 'animals.' Secondly, throughout the essay, I use the terms 'animal rights' and 'animal liberation' interchangeably in an effort to include all theories and movements that advocate greater moral status for animals, and not just strict 'rights' views, such as that of Tom Regan, for example.
2. Recent work advocating greater inclusion can be found in Cochrane (2013); Donaldson and Kymlicka (2011); and Garner (2005).
3. Singer (2009) argues against the equal value of all human life and for a kind of graduated view, a view that applies both to human and nonhuman animals. The moral valence of a particular entity is actually a function of what is called *moral significance* distinguished from *moral considerability*, that is, the question of whether an entity has any moral value at all. This distinction, though central in other contexts, is not crucial to my discussion here. For details, see Gruen (2012) and Jones (2014).

4. The term *speciesism* was coined by Richard Ryder in a pamphlet in 1970 (Godlovitch, Godlovitch, & Harris, 1972). The term has come to have various meanings. For example, Nibert (2002) sees speciesism as an *ideology* rooted in and supporting oppressive social arrangements. Wolfe (2003) characterizes speciesism as a set of *institutional practices* that 'Other' and objectify beings based on species membership. Here and throughout this essay, I use the term in the sense that Singer and Ryder do.
5. Disability rights scholars highlight the ableism implicit in views such as Singer's and Regan's, particularly the centrality that neurotypicalism plays in the conferral of moral status (Salomon, 2010).
6. See Adams (1990); Gruen (2015); McMahan (2002); Nussbaum (2006); Rachels (1990); and Rollin (1992), for a few stellar examples.
7. Tellingly, nowhere in the 214 pages of John Rawls' and Erin Kelly's *Justice as Fairness* (2001) or the 337 pages of David Miller's *Principles of Social Justice* (1999), two of the most prominent works on social justice, are nonhuman animals mentioned.
8. Young (1990, p. 38) acknowledges that domination and oppression are not always distinct but are often overlapping forms of injustice.
9. Young (1990) points out that, though '[m]any people in the United States would not choose the term "oppression" to name injustice in our society ... [f]or contemporary emancipatory social movements ... socialists, radical feminists, American Indian activists, Black activists, gay and lesbian activists-oppression is a central category of political discourse' (p. 39).
10. See, for example, Garner (2013); Cochrane (2012); Donaldson and Kymlicka (2011); and significant portions of (Nussbaum, 2004a, 2006); and even (Bekoff & Pierce, 2009).
11. The view – found in almost all western philosophical and political theory, which assumes that all and only humans are the legitimate and *primary* subjects of moral, political, and ethical concern because only humans occupy a moral sphere separate from and superior to that of the nonhuman animals – is known as *human exceptionalism*. See Gruen (2011, chapter 1) for a nice analysis of human exceptionalism.
12. Andrzejewski, Pedersen, and Wicklund (2009) integrates Young's (1990) five faces into their work on animals, though they do not develop it as fully as Gruen (2009).
13. Animal products are found in countless consumer items including auto upholstery, beer, candles, chewing gum, cosmetics, cranberry juice, deodorants, fertilizers, Jell-O, hairspray, house paint, lipstick, marshmallows, nail polish, plywood, perfume, photographic film, pillows, red lollipops, rubber, sauerkraut, shaving brushes, shaving cream, soap, soy cheese, sugar, surgical sutures, tennis rackets, transmission fluid, vitamin supplements, and wine (PETA, 2012). In other words, it's virtually impossible for those living in affluent Western societies to avoid their consumption on a daily basis.
14. The focus of this section will be on cattle, pigs, and chicken. Other land animals produced in mass numbers for food and clothing include, but are not limited to sheep, horses, rabbits, turkeys, and fur mammals.
15. For details on CAFOs see (Eisnitz, 1997), (Imhoff, 2010), and (Hawthorne, 2013).
16. Surprisingly, there exist no federal laws covering the (mis)treatment of animals in the U.S. The U.S. Humane Slaughter Act mandates only that 'livestock animals' be made unconscious prior to slaughter. However, the Act does not cover the slaughter of rabbits, poultry, fish, or other animals slaughtered for food. The U.S. Animal Welfare Act of 1966 provides protections for some nonhuman animals in some circumstances, yet farm animals are excluded from its protections. See Jones (2013) for a discussion animal welfare legislation globally.
17. See for example, Gruen and Adams (2014); Kim (2014); Jones (2013); Gaard (2012); Kemmerer (2011); Gaarder (2011); Kheel (2008); Jones (2007); Luke (2007); Wolfe (2003); Adams (2003); Dunayer (2001); Spiegel (1996); Adams and Donovan (1995); Gruen (1993, 1996); Gaard (1993); Adams (1990); and Cantor (1983).

18. As I noted earlier, of the few who have (e.g., Andrzejewski et al., 2009; Garner, 2013; Nibert, 2002), only Gruen (2009) develops the relationship of Young's work to animal ethics with any degree of thoroughness.
19. For a stellar and original book-length analysis of the connections between racism and speciesism, see Kim (2014).

References

- Adams, C. J. (1990). *The sexual politics of meat: A feminist-vegetarian critical theory*. New York, NY: Continuum.
- Adams, C. J. (2003). *The pornography of meat*. New York, NY: Continuum.
- Adams, C. J., & Donovan, J. (1995). *Animals and women: Feminist theoretical explorations*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Andrzejewski, J., Pedersen, H., & Wicklund, F. (2009). Interspecies education for humans, animals, and the earth. In J. Andrzejewski, M. Baltodano, & L. Symcox (Eds.), *Social justice, peace, and environmental education: Transformative standards* (pp. 136–154). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Bacon, D. (2013). *The right to stay home: How us policy drives Mexican migration*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Bekoff, M., & Pierce, J. (2009). *Wild justice: The moral lives of animals*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Benton, T. (1993). *Natural relations: Ecology, animal rights, and social justice*. London: Verso.
- Boone, J. (2014, November 26). Animal rights protesters in Nepal seek to stop Gadhimai festival sacrifice. *The Guardian*. Retrieved October 18, 2015, from <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/nov/26/animal-rights-protesters-nepal-livestock-sacrifice-hindu-gadhimai-bariyapur>
- Cantor, A. (1983). The club, the yoke, and the leash. *Ms.*, 12, 27–30.
- Chivers, C. J. (2006, November 2). Tending a fallen Marine, with skill, prayer and fury. *New York Times*.
- Cochrane, A. (2012). *Animal rights without liberation: Applied ethics and human obligations*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Cochrane, A. (2013). From human rights to sentient rights. *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 16, 655–675.
- Donaldson, S., & Kymlicka, W. (2011). *Zoopolis: a political theory of animal rights*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dunayer, J. (2001). *Animal equality: Language and liberation*. Derwood, MD: Ryce Pub.
- Eisnitz, G. A. (1997). *Slaughterhouse: The shocking story of greed, neglect, and inhumane treatment inside the U.S. meat industry*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books.
- Francione, G. L. (1996). *Rain without thunder: The ideology of the animal rights movement*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

- Gaard, G. C. (1993). *Ecofeminism: Women, animals, nature*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Gaard, G. (2012). Speaking of animal bodies. *Hypatia*, 27, 520–526.
- Gaarder, E. (2011). *Women and the animal rights movement*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Garner, R. (2005). *The political theory of animal rights*. Manchester, NH: Manchester University Press.
- Garner, R. (2013). *A theory of justice for animals: Animal rights in a nonideal world*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Godlovitch, S., Godlovitch, R., & Harris, J. (1972). *Animals, men, and morals: An enquiry into the maltreatment of non-humans*. New York, NY: Taplinger Publishing Company.
- Gruen, L. (1993). Dismantling oppression: An analysis of the connection between women and animals. In G. C. Gaard (Ed.), *Ecofeminism: Women, animals, nature* (pp. 60–90). Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Gruen, L. (1996). On the oppression of women and animals. *Environmental Ethics*, 18, 441–444.
- Gruen, L. (2009). The faces of animal oppression. In A. Ferguson & M. Nagel (Eds.), *Dancing with Iris: The philosophy of Iris Marion Young* (pp. 225–237). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gruen, L. (2011). *Ethics and animals: An introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gruen, L. (2012). The moral status of animals. In E. N. Zalta (Ed.), *The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy* (Winter ed.). Retrieved October 18, 2015, from <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2012/entries/moral-animal>
- Gruen, L. (2015). *Entangled empathy: An alternative ethic for our relationships with animals*. New York, NY: Lantern Press.
- Gruen, L., & Adams, C. J. (Eds.). (2014). *Ecofeminism: Feminist intersections with other animals and the earth*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic Press.
- Hawthorne, M. (2013). *Bleating hearts: The hidden world of animal suffering*. Alresford: U.K. Changemakers Books.
- Imhoff, D. (Ed.). (2010). *The CAFO reader: The tragedy of industrial animal factories*. Healdsburg, CA: Watershed Media.
- jones, p. (2007). *Aftershock: Confronting trauma in a violent world: A guide for activists and their allies*. New York, NY: Lantern Books.
- jones, p. (2013). Intersectionality and animals. Retrieved October 18, 2015, from <http://www.blog.bravebirds.org/archives/1553>
- Jones, R. C. (2013). Science, sentience, and animal welfare. *Biology & Philosophy*, 28(1), 1–30.
- jones, p. (2014a). Racism. Retrieved October 18, 2015, from <http://www.vine.bravebirds.org/connections/racismj>

jones, p. (2014b). Sexism. Retrieved October 18, 2015, from <http://www.vine.bravebirds.org/connections/sexismj>

Jones, R. C. (2014). The lobster considered. In R. K. Bolger & S. Korb (Eds.), *Gesturing toward reality* (pp. 87–106). New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic Press.

Kemmerer, L. (2011). *Sister species: Women, animals and social justice*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Kheel, M. (2008). *Nature ethics: An ecofeminist perspective*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

Kim, C. J. (2014). *Race, species and nature in a multicultural age*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Luke, B. (2007). *Brutal: Manhood and the exploitation of animals*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

McMahan, J. (2002). *The ethics of killing: Problems at the margins of life*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Miller, D. (1999). *Principles of social justice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Nibert, D. A. (2002). *Animal rights/human rights: Entanglements of oppression and liberation*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Nussbaum, M. (2004a). Beyond the social contract: Toward global justice. *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, 24.

Nussbaum, M. C. (2004b). Beyond “compassion and humanity”. In C. R. Sunstein & M. C. Nussbaum (Eds.), *Animal rights* (pp. 299–320). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Nussbaum, M. C. (2006). *Frontiers of justice: Disability, nationality, species membership*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press.

PETA. (2012, June). Animal ingredients list. Retrieved October 18, 2015, from <http://www.peta.org/living/beauty/animal-ingredients-list/>

Rachels, J. (1990). *Created from animals: The moral implications of Darwinism*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Rawls, J. (1971). *A theory of justice*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press.

Rawls, J., & Kelly, E. (2001). *Justice as fairness: A restatement*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Regan, T. (1983). *The case for animal rights*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Regan, T. (1985). The case for animal rights. In P. Singer (Ed.), *In defense of animals* (pp. 13–26). New York, NY: Perennial Library.

Rollin, B. E. (1992). *Animal rights and human morality*. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books.

Rollin, B. E. (1995). *Farm animal welfare: Social, bioethical, and research issues*. Ames: Iowa State University Press.

- Salomon, D. (2010). From marginal cases to linked oppressions: Reframing the conflict between the autistic pride and animal rights movements. *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*, 8, 47–72.
- Sayers, S. (2014, April). Mass incarceration & people of color. Retrieved October 18, 2015, from <http://www.southerncoalition.org/mass-incarceration-people-color/>
- Singer, P. (1975). *Animal liberation: A new ethics for our treatment of animals*. New York: New York Review.
- Singer, P. (1986). All animals are equal. In P. Singer (Ed.), *Applied ethics* (pp. 226–228). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Singer, P. (1993). *Practical ethics* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Singer, P. (2002). *Animal liberation* (1st Ecco paperback ed.). New York, NY: Ecco/Harper Collins.
- Singer, P. (2009). Speciesism and moral status. *Metaphilosophy*, 40, 567–581.
- Spiegel, M. (1996). *The dreaded comparison: Human and animal slavery* (Rev. and expanded ed.). New York, NY: Mirror Books.
- U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2013, November). *Livestock and poultry: World markets and trade*. Retrieved October 18, 2015, from http://www.fas.usda.gov/psdonline/circulars/livestock_poultry.pdf
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. (2000). National water quality inventory report to Congress (305(b) report). Retrieved October 18, 2015, from http://water.epa.gov/lawsregs/guidance/cwa/305b/2000report_index.cfm
- Wolfe, C. (2003). *Animal rites: American culture, the discourse of species, and posthumanist theory*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Young, I. M. (1990). *Justice and the politics of difference*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.