
10. Nonhuman Animal rights

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INTRODUCTION

Nonhuman Animals¹ are the most vulnerable to environmental inequality, if only measured by the sheer number of individuals impacted. Climate change has decimated all variety of free-living² species. The World Wildlife Fund for Nature's Living Planet Index reports that, since 1970, the world's nonhuman populations have, on average, declined by about 70 percent (Almond et al., 2020). But free-living communities comprise only a fraction of Nonhuman Animals impacted by human activity. Many of the critical consequences of climate change can be credited to or have been aggravated by Nonhuman Animal agriculture (Shukla et al., 2019), and this industry is also responsible for dramatically increasing the numbers of chickens, cows, pigs, sheeps [*sic*],³ camels, rabbits, horses, and other animals classified as "livestock"⁴ who meet with terrible bodily and psychological injustices in the global production of "meat," eggs, breastmilk, skins, oils, feathers, and hair. The anthropocentrism of humanity's predominant relationship to the environment is so extreme that this gratuitous violence against other animals (both domesticated and free-living) goes largely unnoticed in everyday society. Meanwhile, environmental justice, the very field established to champion public awareness and policy in the service of marginalized groups, has also sidelined the nonhuman experience. And it does so in the face of some of the most astonishing injustices and large-scale suffering. This chapter will outline the potential reasons for this exclusion, while also providing a general introduction to Nonhuman Animal rights theory that would be of practical use to the uninitiated social justice scholar or environmentalist.

Theories of social justice revolve around issues of human rights, public health, or environmental sustainability, with the effect of excluding Nonhuman Animals as irrelevant or secondary players in the dialogue. Their historical emphasis on class and race inequalities likely accounts for this exclusion as well. Some environmental ethicists do account for the Nonhuman Animal experience, of course, but often in a paternalistic manner that abstracts them in the greater fabric of "nature." Otherwise, charismatic megafauna are commonly singled out for protection, given their superficial appeal to human aesthetics. The view that Nonhuman Animals are valuable merely as resources is also prevalent. Here, Nonhuman Animals are objectified as cog-like components in the service of thriving ecosystems, as Kheel (2007) documents in her historical analysis of environmental ethics. This perspective is certainly antiquated and is increasingly challenged in the contemporary environmental ethics literature, but outside of academic and activist discourses it remains a dominant theme. The commodification of Nonhuman Animals and their reduction to use-value for humans, even in wild spaces, is thought to reflect patriarchal and capitalistic ideological norms. In a capitalist society, vegan feminists argue, all persons, things, and social relations are subject to reification as potentially profitable commodities (Nibert, 2002). Furthermore, in many cultures (particularly that of the West), this perspective is bolstered by a persistent legacy of conservative religious ideology that naturalizes human primacy.

Although today's environmental discourse has challenged this entrenched, pro-capitalist anthropocentrism, few ethicists, scholars, or policymakers recognize members of nonhuman species as morally or politically relevant in their own right (Tovey, 2003; York, 2014). Sociologists have identified both cultural and economic explanations for this lapse. Notably, Cole and Stewart (2014) suggest that the acknowledgement of other animals depends on their geographic and symbolic closeness to humans. Dogs and cats are typically afforded special treatment, for instance; while food animals warrant little moral attention. Likewise, the economic value attributed to various species will also determine the degree of attention and moral standing they might receive (Nibert, 2002). Alienated from nature, geographically isolated from human living spaces, and categorized as economic commodities, "domesticated" food animals (those species which have been heavily controlled by humans for instrumental purposes including the genetic manipulation of their bodies) are often ignored altogether. Likewise, "invasive" species that have entered foreign ecosystems due to human economic activities are also vulnerable to environmentalist-condoned systematic violence to restore ecosystems to socially constructed (human-determined) ideals. Some scholars have critiqued this labeling and its often fatal consequences for those identified as "invasive," "food," or commodity (Clark, 2015; Moloney and Unnithan, 2019; Nibert, 2002), but hegemonic environmental thought is deeply anthropocentric.

Environmental justice emerged in the United States as a recognition of inequalities in exposure to environmental risks and harms; it also advances pre-emptive examinations of potential risks and harms in developmental planning, as well as retroactive amelioration for disproportionate harms done to minoritized communities (Mohai et al., 2009). Typically, this discourse refers to the human environment (either that which humans inhabit, or that which humans imagine). This anthropocentrism correspondingly marginalizes or dismisses the oppression of Nonhuman Animals. As this chapter will argue, the Nonhuman Animal rights discourse has much to offer environmental thought and action, if only by encouraging ethical consistency and a more equitable engagement with conflicts of interest that emerge between humans and other animals. Indeed, Nonhuman Animals must be recognized as valid stakeholders in environmental justice efforts, whether or not their wellbeing is correlated with the wellbeing of humans (although, in many cases, they are). To address this shortcoming, I conclude this chapter with a brief examination of emerging vegan feminist theory; a theory that I argue to be well positioned to negotiate the interests of all sentient beings and the environments upon which they rely. Vegan feminism's challenge to the problematic binaries between civilization and nature, humans and other animals, and dominant and oppressed groups, more broadly positions it as a theory of environmental justice. A hybrid of Nonhuman Animal ethics and ecofeminism, vegan feminism contends that a world that continues to normalize the exploitation of other animals in feedlots, slaughterhouses, and wild spaces will be a world guided by ideologies of hierarchy, oppression, and domination, and plagued with perpetual climate disaster. Vegan feminism campaigns instead for an ethic of inclusivity, community, and care that recognizes multispecies equality as consistent with environmental integrity (Kheel, 2007).

DEFINING ANIMAL RIGHTS

Nonhuman Animal law scholar Lee Hall notes of the Nonhuman Animal rights discourse: "One might understandably wonder if the definition of animal rights, like that of beauty, is

in the eye of the beholder” (Hall, 2010: 54). And rightfully so. All manner of interpretations of rights and how they might relate to other animals have been debated by scholars, activists, corporations, and policymakers. Do other animals have a right to be free of suffering? Do they have a right to liberation? Do they care about rights at all? Does the rights framework apply to other animals? Which species will be included? These are but a few of the many points of contention. The rights debate has already been well documented by other scholars (Brophy, 1965; Cohen and Regan, 2001; DeGrazia, 2002; Hall, 2010; Rollin, 2006; Singer, 2002), and I will not rehash that work here. Instead, it would be more fruitful to summarize practical and applied Nonhuman Animal rights in the context of collective action and social justice. When applied to other animals, rights are generally understood to reflect the interests of the species concerned. A dairy cow might not have an interest in marriage or voting, for instance, but one would expect that she would have an interest in living free of exploitative or oppressive behavior. She would have an interest in not being subject to sexual violence and forced impregnations, repeated separation from her babies (often within the first 24 hours), genetic manipulation to increase her breastmilk production (which leads to innumerable health problems including mastitis), unhealthy living conditions, uncomfortable transportation to slaughter (frequently without rest, food, or water, and sometimes across oceans in live export operations), and execution at an early age in a horrifying slaughterhouse to serve humanity’s penchant for her breastmilk, her children, and her flesh. At its most basic interpretation, then, the concept of rights for other animals entails a right to bodily integrity, autonomy, and life. This includes an application of rights to each individual animal. It also assumes that, in conflicts of interest between humans and other animals, humans will not be granted automatic precedence. “Animal rights” is a conceptual rejection of human supremacy as well as a framework for achieving species diversity and multispecies community.

Some might argue that these interests reflect anthropomorphism, a sentimental ascription of human characteristics to “lower beings” (Karlsson, 2012). From the standpoint of vegan feminism (and critical animal studies more broadly), it is instead a recognition of the scientifically established, evolutionarily acquired physical, cognitive, and emotional traits attributed to sentient beings, particularly more complex organisms such as our aforementioned cow. Tom Regan, a prominent Nonhuman Animal rights philosopher and leading activist in the second wave Nonhuman Animal rights movement, argues that Nonhuman Animals deserve rights as, like humans, they are “subjects-of-life.” He identifies the “subjects-of-life” concept as key to the debate given that it emphasizes our “moral sameness” and “moral equality” (Regan, 2004: 51). Recognizing Nonhuman Animal rights entails a respect for freedom and a complete abolition of Nonhuman Animal exploitation. As Regan explains: “we must empty the cages, not make them larger” (ibid.: 61). Furthermore, it is an action-oriented approach: “We have a duty to intervene, a duty to stand up and speak out in their defense. These victims are owed assistance from us; help is something they are due” (ibid.: 62). For Regan, rights entail equality, respect, protection, and justice. While finessed and popularized by Regan, this definition of Nonhuman Animal rights is as old as the human rights project itself. Some 100 years prior, famed activist and scholar Henry Salt penned *Animals’ Rights: Considered in Relation to Social Progress* (Salt, 1894). This seminal piece reimagined sociologist Herbert Spencer’s 19th century interpretation of rights as a matter of freedom and liberty, explicitly applying it to other animals. Writing at the height of British social reform and American progressiveness, Salt also pointed to *Paine’s Rights of Man* and Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication of the Rights of*

Women and queried, “if men [*sic*] have rights, have animals their rights also? ... a still wider extension of the theory of rights was thenceforth inevitable” (Salt, 1894: 2–3).

It should be no surprise that the application of human rights to other animals has met with some criticism (Schmahmann and Polacheck, 1995; Cohen and Regan, 2001) given deeply embedded societal speciesism and the economic importance of nonhuman commodification (Nibert, 2002). However, the utility of rights campaigning has also been critiqued. Ted Benton (1993), for instance, engages a socialist critique of the liberal rights project, noting that “dominant moral concepts and principles are expressions of the interests of the dominant group in society, so that morality as such has a conservative, order-maintaining, oppressive social function” (ibid.: 99–100). Benton also addresses a number of practical difficulties of assigning rights to other animals, including our inability to know their subjective experience and interpretation of what constitutes a violation, and the autonomy-countering need for humans to make decisions on behalf of other animals:

So central is the value of individual autonomy and the authority of the individual in the judgement of her or his interests to the liberal tradition, that the attribution of rights to beings who by their nature cannot make rights-claims on their own behalf must induce conceptual strain, to say the least. (ibid.: 165)

For that matter, liberal rights projects do not always address inequalities in the ability of individuals to attain the resources that are necessary for self-sufficiency. In the case of domesticated animals such as our dairy cow, protection from human interference may be insufficient, as her ability to thrive independent of humans is unlikely. Indeed, Cochrane (2009) has argued that freedom is not necessarily of interest to other animals (and, after all, complete liberty cannot take place in a rights system, as one’s right to freedom theoretically ends when it infringes upon the rights of others). In the most simplistic interpretation, Nonhuman Animal rights emphasize the right to be left alone, but in response to the constricting nature of the rights project many scholars have emphasized the communal and frequently symbiotic nature of life. Interdependence and mutual care, too, should be considered (Donaldson and Kymlicka, 2011).

Ecofeminists have especially criticized the rights-based approach in this regard, stressing the historical role that rights have played in upholding and enshrining white male privilege through the legitimating function of the law. Rights have generally been created for the most powerful groups in society, and working to extend rights to others threatens to further legitimize a divisive, hierarchical system. The rational emphasis of the rights project has also drawn criticism (Donovan, 1990; Gaard, 2017; Kheel, 1993). Feminists traditionally value care and interconnectedness through community over the individualistic (often alienating and self-serving) autonomy touted by liberal approaches. Ecofeminism further asserts that environmental destruction is couched in patriarchal social relations in a society that is conflict-based, hierarchical, and frequently domineering (Adams and Donovan, 2014). Male-led nation-states and industries have historically exploited nature, women, and other animals with unquestioning entitlement. That said, many ecofeminists (and feminists more generally) have failed to recognize this entitlement with regard to their own dietary practices (Adams, 1993). Mainstream feminism either dismisses veganism as an individual choice not at all tied to feminist praxis (Edell, 2016), or villainizes it as an affront to women’s bodily autonomy (George, 1994). Subsequently, a number of ecofeminists and feminists from the Nonhuman Animal rights movement began to mobilize in the late 20th century to spotlight the oppression shared

by women, Earth, and other animals, explicitly embedding anti-speciesism and vegetarianism or veganism in their activism and scholarship (Kheel, 2007). The most recent incarnation of this alliance has manifested as vegan feminism, delineated by its rejection of vegetarianism as speciesist, its explicit intersectional awareness (inclusive of food justice and Black feminism), and its tendency to mobilize via internet channels where women and other marginalized gender groups are better able to gain claims-making platforms (Wrenn, 2019a).

As the movement working to advance Nonhuman Animal rights began to find footing in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, the meaning of “animal rights” would be further challenged by a coalescing countermovement manufactured by industry and state actors. The animal rights project is not simply a contested approach to acknowledging nonhuman stakeholders, but it is now a contested political pursuit as well. Indeed, animal rights mobilization is regularly reimagined as terrorist activity, primarily due to its interference with key economic industries and national agendas (Wright, 2015; Sorenson, 2016). Although the Nonhuman Animal rights countermovement primarily emerged in response to the movement’s success in upsetting consumer complacency with speciesism, some fringe tactics practiced by the movement certainly did not help matters. In the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, activists associated with groups such as the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) adopted tactics of economic sabotage and harassment in an effort to increase the risks and costs of animal-based industries. This frequently entailed breaking and entering into laboratories or agricultural facilities to liberate incarcerated nonhuman persons. These strategies also entailed the procurement of documentary materials to uncover conditions and practices largely invisible to the public, materials which were turned over to the media and larger professional organizations for dissemination and campaigning purposes (Wrenn, 2019b). Other direct-action activists took further steps to disrupt speciesist industries by creating property damage (destroying laboratory equipment or burning down facilities). Others also doxed industry elites or demonstrated outside their place of work or residence as a means of intimidation and public shaming. American⁵ politicians and industry lobbyists responded with the crafting of the Animal Enterprise Protection Act, effectively criminalizing any anti-speciesist protest that interfered with speciesist industries. In 2006, this Act was strengthened and renamed the Animal Enterprise Terrorist Act (Lovitz, 2010). The language of the Act is considerably vague, suggesting that anyone who interferes with Nonhuman Animal enterprise (including peaceful activists) can be deemed a threat to national security and punished with large fines or prison time. Thus, in the struggle to combat environmental inequality, animal rights also became a matter of human rights and democratic access, given the criminalization of anti-speciesists (Potter, 2020).

ANIMAL RIGHTS AS AN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUE

Activism of all kinds could be interpreted as an act of terrorism should it interfere with speciesist industries (and often it is defined this way by states, which increasingly define any environmental or nonhuman rights activism as terrorism), but it is primarily direct actions involving vandalism, property damage, and threats of violence that solicit repression. This type of activism, once relatively popular and supported by the movement, is now considerably less tolerated. Tactical divisions persist (Wrenn, 2019b), but campaigning rhetoric has remained relatively standard for the past few decades. The Nonhuman Animal rights movement has traditionally espoused a three-pronged frame in the promotion of veganism, vegetar-

ianism, and animal liberation: human health, Nonhuman Animal welfare, and environmental sustainability.

With regard to the third prong, it is important to note that environmental activists and anti-speciesist activists are often lumped together in the anti-terrorist nomenclature of the state; and, indeed, many activists straddle both movements (Pellow, 2014). Most research finds that concern for Nonhuman Animal wellbeing serves as the primary motivator for anti-speciesism and plant-based consumption (Wrenn, 2016), but concern for environmental wellbeing remains a leading call to action. The Vegan Society, for instance, was formed in 1944 in response to the limited reach of organized vegetarianism in regard to respecting Nonhuman Animal interests. Dairy, eggs, leather, fur, and so on, entail considerable harm and death to the nonhumans from whom these products are taken. The Vegan Society has subsequently espoused veganism as the more appropriate dietary practice and ideology for challenging speciesism. Since the turn of the 21st century, however, the organization has increasingly prioritized environmental issues. This could stem from its hope of capitalizing on the more popular, culturally established, and institutionalized environmental framework, but it might also reflect professionalization which is known to compromise organizational goals and claims-making (Wrenn, 2019b). Environmental claims-making, given popularizing sustainability politics and growing appreciation for the reality of climate change, could prove less threatening than the language of Nonhuman Animal liberation. The Vegan Society's Plate Up for the Planet campaign (which it identifies as its "biggest public education campaign to date"), for instance, emphasizes Nonhuman Animal agriculture's role in rainforest destruction and mentions veganism as a "lifestyle" and a "rising trend" (Vegan Society, 2017: 8). Nonhuman Animal rights claims-making is strikingly absent. Alternatively, this approach might be tapping into the more encompassing total liberation framework; a framework which acknowledges the interconnectedness of injustice. David Pellow's (2014) work in the environmental movement, for instance, concludes of activists: "They see an attack upon humans, nonhuman species, or ecosystems as an attack on us all" (ibid.: 246). Total liberationists, he argues, tend to adopt an anti-capitalist, anarchic approach to social change. It is unlikely that these activists would be drawn to the Vegan Society's shift in recent decades from liberationist claims-making to depoliticized consumerist claims-making.

There is regional diversity, of course. By way of an example, the vegan society of Australia, Vegan Australia, prioritizes the experiences of Nonhuman Animals. For those considering the transition to veganism, it suggests:

Even if you are not yet vegan, you already have the same basic beliefs that vegans have. You already believe that it is wrong to cause unnecessary suffering and death to animals ... As you change your diet and lifestyle to be consistent with this idea, you should take time to understand your relationship with animals and why animals matter ... By fully understanding the ethics behind why you are making changes to the way you live, it will make the process much easier and you will be less likely to move backwards. (Vegan Australia, n.d.)

Although Vegan Australia positions anti-speciesism as fundamental to vegan theory and practice, this approach is slightly out of touch with its constituency. Market research finds that Australians make vegan consumption choices primarily out of concern for the environment (48 percent), while concerns about other animals ranked third, behind healthy living, at just 36 percent (Vegan Australia, 2020). How to balance the effectiveness of environmental claims-making with the desire to center Nonhuman Animals is a particular conundrum for

anti-speciesists. Amy Fitzgerald (2019) argues that human-serving messages have been particularly successful for the environmental movement, suggesting that this anthropocentrism might equally serve the Nonhuman Animal rights movement. Citing Ulrich Beck's (2007) *Risk Society*, she summarizes:

We are all at risk ... just as the EM [environmental movement] has gained so much support because there is increasing evidence that harms against the environment also harm all people, the AAM [animal advocacy movement] is poised to gain growing support as it becomes increasingly apparent that many harms against animals are also associated with negative impacts on the environment and people. (ibid.: 16)

Although environmental claims-making of this kind may decenter other animals, it also draws on a sense of global community and responsibility. Such a collective logic might somewhat alleviate the worry that environmental claims-making produced by the anti-speciesist movement will be inherently self-centered or individualistic.

In any case, there are key distinctions between the two agendas that make collaboration difficult. Environmental ethicist J. Baird Callicott (1989) has emphasized that the persistence of so many inconsistencies between Nonhuman Animal rights and environmentalism is troublesome. In particular, there is the complicating variable of domesticity, which obscures the natural origin of many farmed species that Nonhuman Animal advocates traditionally prioritize (domesticity, recall, also complicates the goal of total liberation). Most confounding to the potential alliance between anti-speciesism and environmentalism, however, is Callicott's prioritization of the holistic system over the sacredness of the individual. In this perspective, the wellbeing of ecosystems or whole species might sometimes take precedence over the rights of an individual animal. The failure to consistently prioritize the interests of sentient beings over that of nonsentient ecosystem elements has been a major point of contention, with some ethicists claiming that Nonhuman Animal ethics and environmental ethics are logically incompatible (Faria and Paez, 2019), or that speciesist environmentalists are exhibiting system-level denial (Grušovnik et al., 2020). Fitzgerald (2019) has supposed that the androcentrism of the environmental sciences, and the feminization of concern for other animals, has been at least partially responsible for the lack of collaboration between environmental and anti-speciesist activism. Likewise, in male-dominated philosophical circles, Fraiman (2012) has argued that the feminization of anti-speciesism and vegetarianism has resulted in a "pussy panic," whereby concern for other animals is treated with less scholarly seriousness (if not outright derision).

The rights project itself, as previously discussed, has been critiqued as an anthropocentric value system, one which applies human-serving notions of freedom, liberty, and equality to the natural world. From this perspective, it could be argued that land, water, and other environmental spaces, as nonsentient bodies, have no use for rights. Recent developments in environmental law have further frustrated this potential alliance, with nonsentient entities gaining rights while sentient beings remain unprotected. Since Callicott's writing, social justice efforts and even rights have been ascribed to personified tracts of land and bodies of water. Nonhuman Animals, meanwhile, remain legal property. New Zealand's Whanganui River, for instance, was granted personhood in 2017 (at least partially on the grounds that it was traditionally understood to be an ancestor by Indigenous Maori). By comparison (as of this writing), only certain chimpanzees, dolphins, dogs, cats, and a few other select species in particular states or countries have managed to achieve some degree of legal personhood (Abate et al., 2016).

SUSTAINABILITY AND SPECIESISM

Environmental ethicist Dale Jamieson counters that the two projects have more in common than not, namely a shared story of origin:

For one thing, environmentalists and animal liberationists have many of the same enemies: those who dump poisons into the air and water, drive whales to extinction, or clear rainforests to create pastures for cattle, just to name a few. Moreover, however one traces the history of the environmental movement, it is clear that it comes out of a tradition that expresses strong concern for animal suffering and autonomy. (Jamieson, 1998: 42)

Both movements on the American front, he furthers, not coincidentally emerged together in the mid-20th century. The two were arguably products of the wave of new social movements coalescing in the freshly democratic post-citizenship era of mobilization (Jasper, 1997; Lowe and Ginsberg, 2015). Jamieson does concede that significant differences exist between these movements, but they are no more significant than the differences existing *within* each movement. Both movements are also based in value subjectivity and run the risk of attempting to “claim the moral high ground of the mind-independent value of nature” (Jamieson, 1998: 51). Perhaps, then, the Nonhuman Animal rights agenda may have some footing within environmental efforts.

As Jamieson concedes, a considerable bulk of work has transpired since Callicott’s perspective (first penned in 1980) that more firmly establishes the theoretical camaraderie between the two movements. Yet to some extent a gulf remains. Environmentalists, for instance, are less likely to take issue with “hunting” and zoos on such grounds that dominating other animals may be justified if it is believed to align with conservation efforts (Fitzgerald, 2019). Both “hunting” and zoo-going are essentially pleasurable pursuits and have become considerable (and profitable) industries. Of zoos, Fitzgerald observes: “Animal rightsists have been suspicious of the zoo community’s stated shift towards conservation. They wonder if zoos could just be aligning themselves with the growing popularity of environmental concerns in an attempt to make visitors and the public more comfortable with keeping animals in captivity” (Fitzgerald, 2019: 93). In addition to this greenwashing, the preference for charismatic megafauna (those who are more likely to draw visitors) is also suspect. By the 1990s, the World Zoo Conservation Strategy began urging zoos to key their entertainment facilities to global conservation goals. But many species are excluded, zoos offer minimal space, and captive breeding projects have low success rates. Even if it were conceded that zoos are significant actors in the protection of Nonhuman Animals in natural habitats, this does not address the unethical incarceration of individual Nonhuman Animals in the zoo institution. The routine culling of Nonhuman Animals who exceed the zoo’s carrying capacity, who do not meet species standards, or who simply age out of their “cute” or “majestic” stage, also presents a conflict for Nonhuman Animal advocates who might otherwise align with zoo aims. Regular exposure to human visitation and the limitations of the zoo facilities further complicate matters. Do these facilities increase values for Nonhuman Animal rights and environmentalism? Research is not convincing (Fitzgerald, 2019).

Ecotourism has been offered as an important compromise in this regard, facilitating the conservation of Nonhuman Animals while also respecting their autonomy. Yet ecotourism, too, has also come under fire as a human-centric enterprise that invites increased pressure on certain nonhuman communities. Ecotourism aligns with prevailing sustainability politics,

given that it seeks to maintain economic growth while simultaneously reducing environmental strain. Nonhuman Animals, however, frequently pay the price for this trade in the form of increased human intrusion and systematic stalking, as necessary to fulfill promised tourist amusement (Burns, 2017; Cohen, 2019). That said, environmentalists may be covering areas of need left unattended by anti-speciesists. Nonhuman Animal rights veteran Ronnie Lee has argued that too little attention is given to the wellbeing of free-living nonhumans. Today's Nonhuman Animal rights movement instead prioritizes injustices done to animals who are exploited in agricultural systems (Wrenn, 2019b). While the number of camels, chickens, cows, crustaceans, ducks, fishes [*sic*], goats, horses, pigs, rabbits, sheeps [*sic*], turkeys, and other animals intentionally bred, held captive, and killed for human consumption is so staggering that it cannot be accurately measured, the number of free-living individuals struggling to survive in the remaining spaces not poisoned or usurped by Nonhuman Animal agriculture surely exceeds it.

The magnitude of this speciesist exploitation and its deep-seated embeddedness in the global economic system has created serious concerns about the practicality of total liberation. The aforementioned sustainable approaches have proved a popular compromise between the cultural desire for economic growth and the reality of environmental limitations. Yet, the efficacy of sustainability is a major point for debate in environmental discourses, and this tension certainly extends to the case of Nonhuman Animals. What does it mean to be sustainable? Who is this sustainability serving? Indeed, with humanity doing the defining, it is often the case that Nonhuman Animal interests become secondary (if considered at all) in managing sustainability. Anthropocentric sustainability projects too often result in extreme suffering and loss for many Nonhuman Animals. Vegan studies scholars have roundly criticized the expansion of local, "organic" and "humane" flesh production, for instance, as it essentially entrenches human supremacy while simultaneously capitalizing on the belief that human supremacy can be undermined with good welfare practices. Vasile Stanescu (2019) has argued that locavorism and "humane meat" enterprises merely illustrate the rise of post-commodity fetishism, one that upholds the speciesist notion of a natural order: "Local animal products are not only a commodity one buys into [in] order to critique capitalism; it is a human engineered product one consumes in order to 'return' to nature" (ibid.: 1128). He continues: "The local animal farm, owned and managed exclusively for profit, presents itself as not representing a product at all, as simply a return to 'nature's logic.' And therefore, the violence inherent in producing, maintaining, and refining these manufactured and marketed views of nature must remain hidden" (ibid.: 1130). For that matter, they are not shown to be notably better for the environment than factory farming. Some of these alternative systems are even worse than standard practice (Stanescu, 2019).

SPECIES-INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

I have argued that the Nonhuman Animal rights discourse troubles the verity of sustainability politics and their applicability to anti-speciesism. It could be the case that the Nonhuman Animal rights project might find better allegiance with environmental justice efforts given the legal framework utilized by both. Animal law scholars tend to emphasize the importance of legal mobilization with regard to the property status imposed on Nonhuman Animals, the need to expand rights to include Nonhuman Animals, and any litigation aimed at reforming (or

eliminating) industries and practices that cause harm to Nonhuman Animals. In line with this tradition, multispecies justice, as advanced by Celermajer et al. (2021), explicitly challenges anthropocentrism in environmental justice discourse and practice; what the authors describe as a “fictitious idea of human beings as individual, isolated, unattached and unencumbered, and the correlative presumption that more-than-human nature is mere passive background” (ibid.: 120). This incorporation of Nonhuman Animals as stakeholders represents a very recent turn in the environmental justice conversation (Russell and Spanning, 2019), and it is not yet a widely accepted notion. To date, the environmental justice movement has noticeably underserved other animals in both research and campaigning. The reasons for this are likely many. The theoretical distinctions between environmentalism and anti-speciesism outlined earlier may be partly to blame, but there are external structural factors to consider, notably the heavy industry control over political discourse and the agendas of nongovernmental organizations. By way of an example, one content analysis of several decades of reports published by environmental think tanks has uncovered that exceedingly few reports in the sample even mention the environmental consequences of animal-based food production and consumption. Of those that did, even fewer identified the connection to climate change (Almiron et al., 2021). As think tanks have considerable influence over activist campaigning and policymaking decisions, these results are telling. Likewise, the state is also concerned with shaping the “common sense” of environmentalism and public awareness. Research has documented the routine celebration of Nonhuman Animal products and active marginalization of plant-based consumption in state-produced documents, reports, and recommendations across various departments (Almiron et al., 2016). Although state departments are generally believed to act independently of industry influence, this is not the case in practice. Considerable lobbying from the “big meat, dairy, and eggs” industry has ensured that most food subsidies are reserved for the promotion and expansion of Nonhuman Animal agriculture (including grain destined for animal feed), while fruits, nuts, vegetables, mushrooms, and more planet-friendly foods remain desperately underfunded (Nibert, 2002; Simon, 2013). Lastly, the nonprofit system must also be called into question. As one of the most powerful global institutions, it is responsible for identifying social problems as well as solutions. With so many nonprofits reliant on private donors and corporate funding for survival, the environmental movement has been hesitant to target Nonhuman Animal issues beyond charismatic wildlife (Wrenn, 2019b). Considerable wealth accumulated by foundations and elites derives from speciesist exploitation, and it would not be unreasonable to assume that funding will be strategically awarded or withheld to manipulate nonprofit goals and activities.

Activists continue to struggle with the usefulness of individualist solutions in light of these structural barriers. Abate (2021) points to the historic failure of collaboration between environmentalist and anti-speciesist campaigners, suggesting that litigation highlighting the collaborative nature of energy and food systems would be more effective in problematizing government subsidies and regulatory failure. The redirection of said subsidies could theoretically fund a just transition toward a plant-based, more sustainable society. Yet, the rights-based approach is only one measure of addressing environmental inequalities facing other animals. Donaldson and Kymlicka (2011) have applied a multicultural framework to expand the concept of rights with a theory of “bonded citizenship.” Hall (2010) has argued that the most fundamental right owed to other animals is the right to leave them alone, and allow them to exist on their own terms; but Donaldson and Kymlicka (2011) counter that humans and other animals enjoy a number of symbiotic relationships and can (and should) coexist in

a respectful manner. Nonhuman Animals, they suggest, may be categorized in one of three ways: sovereign (free-living animals who are vulnerable to human activities), migrants (those who resist borders and are transitory), and citizens (who live in human communities due to dependency, such as that caused by domestication). Rather than focusing on the “negative” human-nonhuman relations with an emphasis on protective rights, Donaldson and Kymlicka encourage a more positive approach which reflects contemporary trends in international relations. This might entail conscious developments that respect the interests of nonhuman communities and offer care for animals unintentionally harmed by human activities. Ecofeminism has also advocated for an “ethic of care” (Donovan and Adams, 2007), emphasizing relations and community over the individualistic and often antagonistic project of rights. Such a turn from “negative” rights has raised some criticism, however, as Nonhuman Animals are still facing monumental levels of displacement, confinement, exploitation, and extermination. Surely, citizenship for Nonhuman Animals currently used for food, scientific experimentation, and entertainment will necessitate legal protection in a system that ultimately remains liberal in design. It could be argued that relational approaches fail to adequately challenge the reality of human supremacy, and the power differentials that ultimately remain in relationships between the carer and those who are cared for (Wrenn, 2016).

CONCLUSION

Historical theoretical divergences, industry pressure, state complacency, nonprofit dependencies, and persistent human supremacist values have complicated intramovement cooperation and the expansion of environmental justice efforts. As ecofeminists have identified, the androcentrism that undergirds social institutions, academic and cultural ideologies, and movement campaigning, also serves as a significant, if overlooked, barrier. To facilitate cooperation and meaningfully challenge the root causes of environmental destruction and species discrimination, I have proposed the utility of vegan feminism as a guiding theory for activists, academics, and policymakers. As previously explained, vegan feminism emerged from a branch of ecofeminist thought that had begun to seriously challenge the persistent speciesism that remained in theory and practice. Anti-speciesist ecofeminists were particularly critical of the human supremacy that remained only partially challenged by ecofeminism, as well as its failure to problematize the consumption of Nonhuman Animal bodies and excrements. Hierarchies perpetuated by patriarchal social norms are positioned as foundational to environmental destruction, but nonvegan ecofeminists had largely failed to address one of the most basic (and devastating) inequalities in the “natural world”: humanity’s exploitation of other animals. By the late 20th century, these divergent ecofeminists had made vegetarianism foundational to their work. It would not be until the 2010s, however, that veganism was explicitly identified by most anti-speciesists as most consistent with ecofeminist (and Nonhuman Animal liberation) interests.

Although the Nonhuman Animal rights project, in some ways, has been divorced from environmental justice efforts, it is clear that anti-speciesism and environmentalism overlap with regard to protest emergence, grievances, and goals. Vegan feminism, I have suggested, is one avenue for overcoming the disjuncture. In any case, environmental justice efforts stand to benefit from a serious accommodation of Nonhuman Animal rights theory and praxis. Violence against other animals is reflected in many environmental issues, ranging from

wildlife destruction to Nonhuman Animal agriculture as a primary pollutant. The Nonhuman Animal rights project, furthermore, encourages a reckoning between environmentalism's emphasis on holism and the liberal celebration of the individual. It also necessitates an engagement with the blurred boundaries between domesticated and natural spaces, and the obfuscation of nonhuman communities who resist easy categorization. Fundamentally, green discourse would be most significantly advanced by the recognition of Nonhuman Animals of all species (not just the charismatic and free-living ones) as both persons and stakeholders in the environmental crisis. This is not simply a theoretical matter, but a practical one given the importance of cross-campaign collaboration in the face of incredible patriarchal, human-supremacist, capitalist forces institutionalized to protect the status quo.

NOTES

1. I capitalize this term as a political measure intended to both highlight and resist the marginalized status of nonhuman species in anthropocentric societies; capitalized to emphasize the group status of other animals.
2. The term "wild" is omitted here given its otherizing and speciesist connotations.
3. Mass terms (such as "sheep" or "fish") are altered to linguistically recognize the personhood and individuality of these animals.
4. Euphemisms for speciesism are put in quotations to denote their contested use.
5. Although the United States leads the way in criminalizing animal advocacy, other countries such as the United Kingdom and Canada follow a similar pattern (Potter, 2020).

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