

Five neo-vegan perspectives by Farangis G. Yegane and Gita Yegane Arani, revised version as of 1st July 2017.



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Neo-vegan perspectives – 1

Why Animal Rights can't be treated as secondary to Human Rights

Let's assume we can't overcome human conflicts, and let's assume we do not want to consider animal rights (as an equivalent to human rights) and environmental issues as ways in which we could also find fundamentally better approaches to conflict solution, because there doesn't really exist an openness in the viewpoints of the majority to allow new or different perspectives on what is to be considered as relevant and 'sense-possessing'.

Animal rights, even if not considered as touching a sphere of meaningful phenomena, is objectively not a secondary concern.

This is so, since the fact that human persons relegate animal individuals into "irrelevance", as a sector created for the nature-animal complex, doesn't hold any factual account for the leakage we can call an obvious one if we look at:

a) the grade of destruction aggravated by any forms of speciesism (and humancentrism respectively)

and

b) the essential bond of the human notion of an ideal justice in the moral practice lived by societies (idealism) with the natural and the animal world; and the unknown factors reciprocal of nature and animals overall as they display themselves back to human society (the other intelligence – designed by life basically).

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Animal Rights and Human Rights, your rights, as interconnected

How can animal rights and human rights be interlocked politically in a constructive way, instead of using human rights against animal rights?

We often tend to think that animal- and human rights would exclude each other, and the stereotypical „AR vs. HR” question, about whom you would save first if you had to: your dog or your child, is being asked as if one had to pass a witch-test which is going to decide your fate as a proper human- or animal rights advocate. A more reasonable view would let us come to the conclusion that narrowing things down to the extremes isn't really a useful approach upon which a rights debate can be lead.

The focus in such a question that seeks to radically separate two instances (two situative phenomena occurring in a wider context) from each other, is almost suggestive if not ignorant in its view towards the facets of reality that make up the complexity of life as living beings experience it.

Put in a situation where we had to decide between rescuing one living being and another, it is likely that we would not want to decide for one and against the other. We should consider the perspectival option that we'd want to save every being that's in despair. We could think for instance: in any situation where a being needs help, a being needs a helper!

As animal rights advocates we clearly want both: a full consideration of (reasonable) human interests and rights and a full consideration of what we can understand to be the rights of other animals as natural holders of such – by virtue of their self-autonomous existence in this world. And to take this a step further: we probably want to interlock animal- and human rights, so that both reaffirm and solidify each other. How can this be reached? And how can this, even more so, be reached in our current human societies, where the notion of animal rights is not regarded as positively relevant for the “own” – collective human concern”.

One aspect that builds an (euphemistically said) “automatic” way to bind animal- and human Rights together, is, as simple as it may sound the natural environment. Whereby ‘the (natural) environment’ can be a term for what the German poet-thinker Goethe more comprisingly

called “das AllLeben”, the all-live – a term that hints at the interconnectedness of all life forms on earth and beyond.

The environment, nature, is the habitat of nonhuman animals and humans alike. It’s the sphere of living existence where both humans and nonhuman animals meet in their natural state of being, and it’s the very political ground (that is: a sphere of life and thus of interests) that needs to be re-captured for the ethical side that is to it in regards to animal liberation and animal rights.

There are three core aspects that bind humans and animals together in their environmentalistic and nature-bound context:

- a.) existentially we got the shared ‘outer world’ on which life depends in its individual and collective existential value
 - b.) the conflict between the (major) life forms is produced by ‘the culture’ in which life finds its contextualization, ranging from predominantly destructive in current humancentric human societies and, environmentally seen, constructive in animal cultures and their form of relating to the natural
 - c.) the solution, the bridge, lays in the will for re-establishing a natural balance, that encompasses its participants, the living beings, as co-creant, co-existential “agents of an self-created contextualizing existence” – that can be understood as something that we emotionally would induce with “dignity”.
- Dignity is the felt and the realizable foundation of rights. Being co-existent in this world and acknowledging the agency of nonhuman animals in the environmental context, is a basis that should tie human- and animal rights constructively in a potentially fundamental way.

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Neoveganism as a way forward in our current day Western and other emerging democracies

It seems the more you realize the political scope of human action and human thought, the less you think of the absurd idea that there would be one single power (the establishment, the fiscal world, a people, a god) that runs everything in a totalitarian style: the big complexes of “might” stifle the individuals power to impact things, but individual action can’t be substituted in democracies.

What can I, as a seemingly powerless individual, do when I see an unfathomable disaster such as the BP oil spill, a disaster caused by the ‘ruling’ part of our civilization? Our civilization bases (in its majority) upon humancentrist ideals today, it doesn’t need to take the natural environment and its “wild” inhabitants into account. To deal responsibly as an individual means I have to be willing to see the bigger contexts of phenomena, and widen my view over the limits of any anthropocentric limit.

On the opposite side of the big context of things it's the individual that has an impact on the situation she lives in: by action (political action, in a basic sense) and by thought (any form of it). It's an ethical impact living beings 'live'.

When I make the sensible claim that ethics should be the factor upon which to decide what's wrong and what's right, I should also acknowledge that ethics means to behave respectfully towards life. What is respectful? And what type of life matters and can be treated with which forms of respect?

Every living being on this earth has its own place in the universe – practically. The world should not be seen anthropocentrically simply because we can't fathom the meaningfulness of other life in regards to those dimensions which we don't know much or even anything about. Other "dimensions" of meaning aren't restricted to physics and mathematical abstraction: ethics, and its substance (life!) too has dimensions beyond a narrow anthropocentric reach.

If I take the ethical vastness and comprehensiveness into account, I am able to see that every action I can do, and every wrong I don't do, wherever I am, has an impact on the life around me. Taking the interest of all life into a wide ethical (in a sense of setting oneself in a creative relation) consideration makes the action of the individual meaningful.

When I see that human progress is built mostly on a destructive relationship towards life - that we use and degrade to "resources" - I should be able to realize that the step I have to do, is to take up a plant-based ethical (radical antispeciesist and vegan) lifestyle and go further from that point on.

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Neoveganism, pluralism and antispeciesism

It should be normal for animal rights advocates (with that I mean people primarily or partially interested or active in the global animal rights and liberation, etc. movement) to accept different positions, without assuming that divergence would harm the cause. No need to say that exempt from such a form of mutual tolerance would be people who claim to be AR but practically advocate theories and practices harmful to nonhuman animals (euthanasia of "stray" feral animals, "humane" slaughter, hidden forms of speciesism, mild speciesism ...).

I often notice that there exists a self-prescribed narrowness in parts of the AR/AL movement which hinders the necessary plurality of expressed opinions for the cause. Naturally people hold different opinions about issues, especially when it comes to the details of something that could be described as a newly established consciousness as we have and develop it in the human-nonhuman animal relation today.

Why should animal rights be exempt from a highly diversified discussion such as we normally expect and have practically on every other big ethical, political and rights issue? Finding the truth (the acceptable truths of many insights) upon which to build a reasonable common grounds that reflects the needs of reality, finding a suitable and fruitful political and also legal language, and a language of liberation needs a full discourse made up of all our individual opinions. When we take our individuality away from our political agency (speech, thought and action) in our daily lives, we lose exactly that which enables us to make progress. Progress is plurality – the exchange of many powers and how they can synergize.

It's understandable when you take a look at the animal rights movement at its single place in history - possessing a newly understood form of an extended "beyond-social" interspecies context - that people are likely to assume that they would need to follow a school of thought or political opinion. In reality though animal rights is a phenomenon as fundamental as human rights, so basic and immediate to the individual existence that every person can become clear about her own understanding of basic rights terms in a valid way and that every person can figure out herself how she weighs out what's right and what's wrong in her own "common sense" rights-terms.

The relation towards nonhuman animals is ultimately an immediate one, it's a social connection in a new, antispeciesist way. And I think we should take it as such, if we truly are for human and animal liberation.

On a basis of accepting the presupposition that

- a.) we can relate to nonhuman animals in a reasonable way obviously, and
- b.) that the relation to nonhuman animals can thus be handled from the individual human in a similar way in which an individual human can assess human rights issues by applying her own common sense,

we can take our position of defence when we are addressing the "speciesist lobby", which usually argues that there exist decisive barriers between the "values" of human and nonhuman animal life, a notion established on the premise that humans have the right to simply give the nonhuman animal world their definitions - in all detail (the result of which is mass murder on the biological argument).

We as animal rights/liberation/autonomy activists can constructively and positively relate to nonhuman animals, and we side with their interests from our position as fellow (human) animal beings. Practiced anti-speciesism to its best level is an ongoing learning process which makes us mature and responsible as human beings or better as basic individuals. Our engagement and fight for the legal and earth-political rights to live, to possess habitat, to be a rights holder under nonhumancentric terms, will re-establish the integrity of an ongoing existential relationship we have with nonhuman animals. And this amounts to an entire paradigm-shift.

The face of an animal rights revolution, call it total liberation ... it is about making these paradigm shifts

The uncountable deaths each day, every second, are the factual individual nonhuman animal victims that a human humancentrically driven full destructive force are directed against. We have to phrase clearly that speciesism is not just an accidental heritage of our human past which supposedly took place as “hunters and gatherers”, though the question remains open if in fact all human cultures have been hunters at some stage. Speciesism means, in the past inasmuch as in the present, a war by means of denial of rights, namely the right to live and exist freely, that is being waged against nonhuman animals and their world.

The majority of the ‘human group’ determines how this world is to be explained and understood. We, as humans (in a collective sense), don’t accept that concepts which are not born out of a human logic (again, in a collective sense) and which are not shaped by our human perceptions and rationalizations can in fact exist. The revolution for animal rights, animal liberation or a acknowledgement of animal autonomy means to set forth that nonhuman animals have their very ways in which they shape this world. Their ways – their integrity in the natural sphere – need to be protected by rights that we as humans will have to enforce within the scope exclusively of human destructivity. That would at least take the burden of human oppression from the nonhuman animal ‘realm’.

On the ethical side we can state that: in whichever context nonhuman animals are forced to live and to die in right now, their integrity can’t be stripped away from them – since in a fundamental and important sense nothing can negate their independent meaning.

What happens when our speciesist societies confine, torture and kill nonhuman animals is that Humans collectively claim a total might over the physical life of nonhuman animals, in the final consequence.

Animal rights means to continuously work on the paths towards an anti-humancentrist human society in which the integrity of all animal life and the integrity of the entire natural world are being protected against so called “human interests”; which are in reality profane collective enmities towards “everything” and everyone who is not a human but a nonhuman animal and their natural living contexts.

And finally animal liberation should also mean the deconstruction of speciesist theories: Before the final consequence of physical harm and destruction we need to address the reasons and causes of the collective humancentric enmities and desires to subject animal-others and ‘nature’.