CONCLUSION
BARRIERS AND FRONTIERS

Organized animal protection in the United States arose in the wake of dramatic changes associated with industrialization and urbanization, which increased the visibility and severity of animals' treatment in a variety of contexts. Concern for animals had important pre-Civil War antecedents in moral philosophy, religious thought, law, and pedagogy. In addition, the movements to abolish slavery and corporal punishment stigmatized physical violence, creating a framework in which cruelty to animals could be perceived as a social problem needing redress. Slavery's abolition also removed legal and conceptual barriers to the development of a movement to protect animals from cruelty. In the post-war years, reformers across the country took action, attempting to address animal suffering in transportation, recreation, fashion, food production, science, education, household management, conservation, labor, and commerce.

However, even as humane advocates launched their work, cruelty to animals manifested itself in unprecedented forms and unanticipated circumstances, reflecting a profound transformation and diversification of animal use. The humane movement, given the limitations on its resources and political influence, found it difficult to keep pace, and its progress slowed dramatically during the early decades of the twentieth century. Animal protectionists won widespread support for those elements of their program that targeted the elimination of private, individual acts of cruelty, and kindness to animals became a cherished attribute of the modern personality. But pressing their
standards in such areas as vivisection or animal agriculture, where the use of animals was escalating and taking new forms, was more difficult.

Although he advanced very few ideas about animals, Henry Ford’s impact was significant. Fordism’s focus on mass production and mass consumption had serious implications for animal usage, ushering in a series of technological and scientific developments that intensified and rationalized the use of animals in a range of areas, and cultivating and satisfying ever-greater demand for the products of the industrial slaughterhouse and the medical-scientific complex. Even as Fordism relieved equine misery, replacing the horse with the motor vehicle, it increased the burden of suffering that other species had to bear.

Against emerging powerful interests in meatpacking, agriculture, transportation, and industrial and medical research, organized animal protection proved no match. Other interests, like the growing fur and garment industry, could re-invest accumulated profits into advertising their products all the more. In many cases, whole categories of use were accorded explicit exemptions from coverage under statutes designed to prevent cruelty to animals. Some of animal protection’s failures were all but inevitable given the power and determination of its adversaries, and the many fronts on which it had to contend.¹

Despite the historically distinctive quality of its claim that animals mattered, animal protection in the United States was not a radical movement. Very few

¹ Overlooking these developments, James Turner suggests that, by the end of the nineteenth century, an adjustment in worldview had taken place, and that the humane movement, static in both thought and action, had simply advanced as far as it could. This assessment, itself static, overlooks the fact that nothing was settled, as an economy in transformation introduced novel and unfamiliar forms of exploitation. See James C. Turner, Reckoning with the Beast: Animals, Pain and Humanity in the Victorian Mind (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 122-23.
participants went as far as English socialists Henry Salt and Edward Carpenter in indicting capitalism itself as a threat to animals, nature, and people. Certainly, the humane movement failed to embrace or popularize a trenchant political economic critique of animal use in industrial America. With hardly any exceptions, humanitarians shied away from too direct a challenge to the core values and motivations that underpinned commercial, institutional, and industrial exploitation of animals.2

Nevertheless, the movement did make some progress. Even as the larger society rejected or resisted the more extreme strains of humanitarianism, like vegetarianism and anti-vivisection, by the middle decades of the twentieth century many had embraced the kindness-to-animals ethic as a general principle for the treatment of domestic animals. The ethic was absorbed, in varying degree, into the Boy Scouts, the nature-study movement, and the elementary school curriculum. The idea of treating certain animals—especially companion animals—humanely, gained broad cultural acceptance, even if this notion did not always result in practical benefits to animals in many areas of use. Americans celebrated acts of kindness to animals, and condemned wanton abuse, pitiless sadism, or uncaring neglect. In time, empathy with animals became an important index of healthy psychological development, and cruel treatment a signal of potential sociopathic behavior.3


3 On psychology’s recognition of cruelty to animals as a strong predictor of the antisocial or sociopathic personality, see Randall Lockwood and Frank R. Ascione, eds., Cruelty to Animals and Interpersonal Violence: Readings in Research and Application (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1998).
This said, the humane societies encountered significant resistance whenever their activities threatened commercial or entrepreneurial interests that depended upon animal usage. Industrial agriculture, medical, scientific, and product testing, and other institutionalized forms of animal exploitation were shielded from anti-cruelty prosecution by explicit statutory exemptions or common practice. The material imperatives of modern society, and the culture it produces, worked to constrain and moderate the expansion of humane sentiment.

By 1930, the same course of modernization that helped to bring the animal protection movement into being rendered it largely irrelevant. Eventually, this process incorporated animals within vast systems of commodity production, removing them from public locations—where cruelty could be seen, deplored, and challenged—and into new settings where it was less visible and less amenable to redress. The layers of protection offered by institutions, bureaucracies, and explicit legal exemptions made it ever more difficult to reach and regulate inhumane practices. It was not so much a case of movement failure as of the growing invisibility of cruelty and the ironclad immunity of some of the contexts in which it could routinely occur.

**The Diminution of Animal Protection Reform**

While the forces of modernization reshaped the contexts of animal use, making it more difficult for the humane movement to accomplish its goals, they did not comprise the only impediment to the progress of organized animal protection. In the Progressive era, the strength of the movement’s connections to other reforms diminished. Animal
protection fell out of step with the general shift toward scientific and professional reform that characterized the period 1890-1920.

To some extent, the humane movement's cautious attitudes about modern science, and its strained relationships with members of the scientific, medical, and veterinary communities, lay behind this development. The cultural authority of science as an instrument of social progress surged during the Progressive era, gaining enthusiasts in almost every realm of reform. Other movements of the early twentieth century acted quickly to align themselves with scientific methods, and the goals of professionalization, rationalization, and administrative efficiency that characterized so many reform causes rested firmly on the assumption that all social problems could be resolved through the application of systematic, logical, and informed analysis.

Humane advocates had a more ambivalent feeling about science and its values, for they did not see it being deployed in the interests of animals' basic psychological and biological needs. Instead, they saw scientific knowledge being put to use to objectify and further exploit animals in agriculture, medical research, fur production, and other fields. For the most part, medical scientists and veterinarians worked to enhance animal productivity, not animal well-being. The rapprochement between animal protectionists and scientists that Nathaniel Shaler, Wesley Mills, and others hoped for never occurred.4

Critics of animal experimentation in particular objected to the troubling materialism of medical science, and viewed its ascendance in the gravest terms. The

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4 Shaler, Mills, and several other scientists who sympathized with the general goals of humane treatment thought anti-vivisection in particular an immoderate excess, an unreasonable extension of concern for animals. See my discussion in Chapters VIII, XV, and XVI; Nathaniel S. Shaler, Domesticated Animals: Their Relation to Man and To His Advancement in Civilization (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1895), 211-14; and Turner, Reckoning with the Beast, 100.
divisive effects of debates over vivisection, pound animal access, and related matters undoubtedly limited the potential for cooperation between the scientific and humane communities. In all likelihood, this helped to delay the development of the science of animal welfare—the qualitative and quantitative measurement of animals’ behavior, physiology, and psychological and physical well-being—that has become so pivotal to contemporary deliberations concerning their treatment.  

Advocates’ ambivalence about science probably contributed to the decline of its relationships to other reforms, some of which, while not viewing science unproblematically, were nevertheless powerfully shaped by its principles. Many women’s organizations in the early twentieth century, for example, relinquished what Nancy Cott describes as “the emphasis on womanhood, the proudly sex-defined sentiment that had powered so many earlier associations.” De-emphasizing the distinctive qualities of women as moral standard-bearers, and, in the words of Craig Buettinger, their “moral authority as Christians and mothers,” suffrage advocates embraced practical arguments based on social science and assumptions of rational efficiency for according women the vote. Proponents were especially wary of the anti-vivisection issue, in part because it sometimes surfaced as an argument against the

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5 During the period encompassed by this study, animal welfare science primarily consisted of sanitary and hygienic measures.

wisdom of granting women the vote. When it did occur, humanitarian hopes that
universal suffrage would secure the success of humane legislation went unrealized.7

Animal protection’s relationship with temperance waned during this period, too,
as prohibitionists squarely aligned themselves with the cult of efficiency. They
successfully identified alcohol with increased risk and lower productivity in the
workplace, serious health problems, family destabilization, widespread political
corruption, and the scourge of prostitution. Like suffragists, anti-alcohol campaigners
also threw themselves single-mindedly into political work in support of a constitutional
amendment. After 1913, national prohibition became their principal preoccupation.8

Even the survival of strong affinities or alliances with feminism or child
protection would not likely have helped animal protection during the post-1920 years, as
both of these movements faltered. Feminism fractured into competing camps, became an
important target for reactionary forces, and grew weaker during the interwar period. For
its part, temperance foundered on the shoals of the nation’s failed experiment with
Prohibition.

Nor did animal protection forge a viable relationship with environmentalism, one
of the twentieth century’s most important reforms. As a Gilded Age movement
concerned with the pain and suffering of animals, and the harmful effects of cruelty,
animal protection had more in common with anti-slavery, child protection, and the

7 Buettinger, "Women and Anti-Vivisection," 868; Susan Lederer, Subjected to Science: Human
Experimentation Before the Second World War (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 36; “A
Call to the Women of America,” Starry Cross 32 (June 1923), 91; and Margaret Halvey, “Recording
Secretary’s Report,” Starry Cross 33 (Apr. 1924), 55.

8 Buettinger, “Women and Anti-Vivisection,” 868; and Arthur S. Link and Richard L.
movement to abolish corporal punishment than it did with the conservation of forests, land, and natural resources for human use. The dominant thread of environmentalism was Gifford Pinchot's scientific utilitarianism, not John Muir's romantic protectionism, and its lack of concern for the suffering of individual animals undermined any prospect for rapprochement with the humane movement.

Perhaps the most telling marker of the waning fortunes of animal protection was its divergence from child protection, which in its early years had relied heavily upon the organizational structures of animal protection. Child protection greatly eclipsed concern for animals in the Progressive era as the historic links between the two causes unraveled.9 With the emergence of professional altruism, a major split within child protection developed. This pitted "strict constructionists," faithful to the narrow mission of child rescue, against a more liberal faction committed to the principles of modern social work. Most of the strict constructionists remained within the orbit of the American Humane Association (AHA), whose president, William O. Stillman, was part of an older generation of child rescue advocates who believed that the societies should restrict their work to law enforcement.10 The New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NYSPCC), under the enduring influence of Elbridge T. Gerry, led the

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9 The child, as Robert Wiebe has noted, was at the center of the era's social reforms. Robert Wiebe, The Search for Order 1877-1920 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), 169.

organizations that embraced this view. Such groups laid emphasis on the swift removal of children from homes in which they were found to be suffering from cruelty.\textsuperscript{11}

Members of the other faction, led by Carl Carstens and the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (MSPCC), allied themselves with the broader environmentalist approach of modern social work, including a commitment to study all of the many social conditions affecting child welfare. Gradually, most of the child protection societies, including the societies for the prevention of cruelty to children, embraced this perspective.\textsuperscript{12} The new paradigm emphasized preventive and remedial measures that addressed the circumstances in which children were raised. The family and the home environment became subjects of study and the focus of treatment. The old approach—which involved removing children from their homes in order to spare them from cruelty—came into question. In the evolving debate over child welfare, the AHA and its member societies associated themselves with an archaic paradigm that eventually went out of favor.

Quite apart from changing trends in child welfare, the attempt to combine child and animal protection generated continuing tensions and problems of priority for those organizations that continued to pursue both objectives. Disagreement over how to allocate the Rochester Humane Society's limited resources resulted in the formation of separate organizations in 1897. After political trouble with socialist Mayor Victor

\textsuperscript{11} Gerry reviewed the NYSPCC's work in AHA, \textit{Ann. R.} 1911, 9-15.

Berger, the Wisconsin Humane Society abandoned its child protection function. In Chicago, the Illinois Humane Society's increasing preoccupation with the problems of children led to the formation in 1899 of the Anti-Cruelty Society, specifically devoted to animal protection. A few years later, a similar schism within the Ohio Humane Society sparked the formation of the Hamilton County Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.\footnote{13}

The unwieldy and undesirable character of dual-purpose work was very evident in the responses gathered by Columbia University's Roswell McCrea for his 1910 survey of humane organizations. A large number of respondents complained that it was no longer possible to combine the two objects. The humane society model, one SPCA official noted, was mainly useful in those smaller cities and towns "where the volume of business is small or the support not strong enough to operate two distinct societies successfully."

Through the first two decades of the twentieth century, the two concerns remained unified in communities and rural areas where support for two independent agencies was insufficient or impractical. Similar considerations governed the state board model, employed in Colorado, Minnesota, Montana, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.\footnote{14}

\footnote{13}{On Rochester, where the decision to separate into two organizations virtually coincided with the move of the animal protection division into municipal animal control, see Barnes, "Friend of Every Friendless Beast," 10, 18. On the Wisconsin situation, see Raelene R. Freitag, "The Peril and Promise of Nineteenth Century Child Protection: The Wisconsin Humane Society, 1879-1920," (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1997). On Illinois, see Louis Covotsos, The Illinois Humane Society, 44. Concerning Ohio, see Shultz, Humane Movement, 185; and B. H. Trager to Roswell McCrea, 25 October 1908, in "Miscellaneous Correspondence," Samuel Lindsay Papers, Box 36, Nicholas Murray Butler Library, Columbia University, New York, NY [Lindsay Papers].}

\footnote{14}{See William Love (Connecticut Humane Society) to McCrea, 24 October 1908, M. J. White, California Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children to McCrea, 27 October 1908, and Matthew McCurrie (San Francisco Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) to McCrea, 26 October 1908. in}
Unwilling or slow to adapt, the anti-cruelty organizations steadily diverged from the mainstream of social welfare. It is especially revealing that the humane movement was not closely involved in the campaign for the establishment of the United States Children's Bureau, an idea that emerged from the settlement house community. First taken up as a platform by the National Child Labor Committee in 1906, by 1912 the Children's Bureau was a reality. William O. Stillman of the AHA, John D. Lindsay of the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and other humane movement leaders opposed the Bureau. They were suspicious of what they perceived to be its focus on research, its diversion of attention from the practical problems of the neglected and abused child, and the potential threat of a centralized federal agency that might one day come to dominate and control the nation's child welfare work.

Very few of the child welfare organizations that formed after 1910 joined the AHA; most opted instead to affiliate with the National Conference of Social Work, which had a division devoted to children. After 1912, the Children's Bureau itself became the center of child welfare work. These developments curtailed relationships between humane societies that incorporated both child and animal welfare and the preponderance of child-centered organizations. Ultimately, child welfare was incorporated into

"Miscellaneous Correspondence," Lindsay Papers, Box 36. McCrea discussed the question in The Humane Movement: A Descriptive Survey (New York: Columbia University Press, 1910), 136-38. For a survey of the work of state boards, see Shultz, Humane Movement, 76-84.

professional social work, and into the bureaucratic structures of the state. The divergence between the two movements was complete.\footnote{Shultz, Human Movements, 192, 196-97, 223-24; and Muncy, Creating a Female Dominion, passim. By 1954, the AHA’s child protection division had badly atrophied. See “Vincent De Francis,” American Humane (Apr. 1977), 8.}

The relationship of animal protection to the Progressive era’s most ambitious attempt to rationalize charitable giving is also revealing. Humane societies did not gain from the advent of the Community Chest, a precursor to the United Way that sought to coordinate philanthropic support through federated solicitation and allocations of funds in the interests of efficiency. The drive to make social philanthropy less wasteful and thus more attractive to corporate constituents led to the coordinated intensive, centralized fundraising approach of the Community Chest. But this consolidation did not benefit societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals. In some cases, they made no attempt to gain inclusion, believing they could garner more support through independent appeals. In other instances, however, animal organizations were specifically excluded from participation on the grounds that societies providing aid to people were superordinate.\footnote{“A Community Chest Fiasco,” NHR 9 (Dec. 1921), 235; “Community Chests are Injurious,” NHR 10 (Apr. 1922), 75; T. J. Gillespie, “Objections to the Community Chest,” NHR 11 (Jan. 1923), idem, “Objections to the Community Chest,” NHR 11 (Feb. 1923), 27; “Humane Societies and the Community Fund,” NHR 11 (Apr. 1923), 67; “Community Chest Disapproved,” NHR 11 (Aug. 1923), 186; “The Community Chest Disapproved,” NHR 11 (Oct. 1923), 186; “The Humane Society and the Community Chest,” Our Dumb Animals 56 (Feb. 1924), 131; and Juliet Cooke to Minnie Maddern Fiske, 12 February 1926, Box 2, General Correspondence “C,” Minnie Maddern Fiske Papers, Library of Congress. On the advent of the Community Chest, see Roy Lubove, The Professional Altruist: The Emergence of Social Work as a Career 1880-1930 (New York: Atheneum, 1972), 172-219.}

The Middle Decades

Except in fulfilling municipal animal control functions at the community level, the humane movement was not a vital enterprise after 1930. There was a lapse of activity
and vitality between 1920 and the mid-1950s, after which a range of new organizations and opportunities reinvigorated animal protection, and the modern animal welfare, animal rights, and animal liberation ideologies emerged. Nevertheless, there were a few threads of continuity that linked the two eras.  

For a time, in the early 1920s, the AHA made an attempt at rationalization and professionalization, employing a “Humane Revivalist” to assist in the formation and reinvigoration of humane societies throughout the country. However, the AHA’s revitalization efforts did not blossom as William Stillman had hoped. Moreover, Stillman’s greatest priority—the creation of a training school for the professionalization of shelter and humane society work—went unrealized.

In November 1924, after Stillman’s death, representatives of the AHA met with a few prominent independent advocates to chart a course for animal protection. Together, they decided, in Minnie Maddern Fiske’s words, “to take up one by one the reform of long-persisting ‘super-cruelties,’ ... the unnecessary atrocities in our methods of slaughter, the starving to death of four million range cattle yearly, and the prehistoric

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18 Both Lisa Mighetto and Susan Lederer discuss the post-World War I evolution of the animal protection movement. Mighetto is more persuasive in her argument about the gains made in wildlife protection during the 1930s and 1940s than Lederer in her claims about the vitality of anti-vivisection during the same period. See Lisa Mighetto, Wild Animals and American Environmental Ethics (Tucson: Arizona State University Press, 1991); and Lederer, Subjected to Science, 103.

19 Richard Craven, who went on to a long career with the AHA, held this position for a time. See “Building Up the Movement,” NHR 8 (Jan. 1920), 20; “A Demand for the Humane Revivalist,” NHR 8 (Mar. 1920), 51; and “Organizer Tours the Pacific Coast,” NHR 8 (June 1920), 114-15. Some societies recruited trained workers from the ranks of the police and fire departments. For instance, Thomas Freel, superintendent of the ASPCA between 1907 and 1917, had retired from the New York Fire Department after twenty-five years. See “The Late Thomas Freel,” NHR 2 (May 1914), 132.
antiquated methods involved in the capture of fur bearing animals." As it turned out, the movement made progress in only one of these areas during the decade, gaining some publicity with its attacks on the steel leghold trap. Even on this front, animal protectionists did not come close to suppression of the trap or the fur trade. Moreover, the other "super-cruelties" thrived, revealing the movement's inability to deal with them. The 1920s campaigns to mobilize the movement around such diverse issues as humane slaughter, anti-trapping, and the abolition of animal use in entertainment foundered, and the influence of anti-cruelty reform in American life waned until the time of its post-World War II revival.

The movement's contraction did not mean the total extinction of a broad-gauge vision of justice for non-human animals, however. Elements of that approach survived here and there, albeit in attenuated and diminished form. Even during the movement's most quiescent decades—the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s—a few individuals and organizations kept the broader strains of concern for animals alive, continuing to raise the topics of inhumane slaughter, vivisection, trapping and wearing fur, entertainment abuse, and hunting. Animal protectionists also promoted "alternatives" to animal exploitation in research, food production, fashion, hunting, trapping, and other pursuits. In this respect,

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21 In his Columbia University study, William Shultz expressed his view that the humane movement was in its infancy outside of a half dozen metropolitan urban areas. In the rest of the country, moreover, it rested on very fragile foundations. To the contemporary reader, however, both Shultz's The Humane Movement in the United States, and Sydney Coleman's Humane Society Leaders, published the same year, leave the impression of a movement steadily losing vitality. See Sydney H. Coleman, Humane Society Leaders in America (Albany: AHA, 1924); and William J. Shultz, The Humane Movement in the United States (New York: Columbia University Press, 1924), 28, 53-53.
too, the work of mid-twentieth century advocates constituted a seedbed for animal protection reform in the post-World War II period.\textsuperscript{22}

Thus, for example, humane slaughter legislation, usually cast as a signal achievement for post-World War II animal protection, drew on significant continuities with the past. When the rejuvenated movement of the late 1950s secured passage of the federal Humane Slaughter Act (1958), it was in fact consummating an effort that had begun in the period 1910-1930 under the leadership of Francis Rowley and the Humane Slaughter Committee of the AHA. The issue remained on the agenda of both the AHA and the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in the interceding years, and, while the movement had not gained much ground, it had never entirely relinquished its concern.

The cause of wildlife protection actually witnessed significant gains in the middle decades of the century even as the plight of domestic animals worsened. Enlightened attitudes toward predators, along with the emergent science of ecology, transformed wildlife protection in the United States. For the most part, this development owed more to the work of a handful of naturalists than to the activities of the humane movement. At the same time, animal advocates' steady opposition to gunning, slaughter, and painful

\textsuperscript{22} The AHA, the AHES, the Anti-Steel Trap League, the Emergency Conservation Committee, the Millenium Guild, hundreds of humane societies, a few vegetarian organizations, and half a dozen antivivisection societies all remained active during the period under discussion. In England, the League Against Cruel Sports served a similar function as a repository and incubator for more progressive convictions about the treatment of animals. See Hilda Kean, \textit{Animal Rights: Political and Social Change in Britain Since 1800} (London: Reaktion Books, 1998), 185-87.
traps did exert some influence on the evolution of mid-twentieth century environmentalism.  

To a great extent, their voluntary assumption of responsibility for municipal animal control consumed the energy, time, and resources that humane advocates might have devoted to other issues. The challenge of dealing with companion animal overpopulation in the major urban areas thrust humane organizations into a municipal housekeeping function that overwhelmed them. The costs of maintaining shelters, clinics, dispensaries, and hospitals, and the attending responsibilities of educating the public about companion animal care, precluded serious investment in combating the cruelties animals suffered in the production of food, fur, medicine, consumer goods, and other products.

Even the AHA became inexorably bound to the work of municipal animal control. In May 1930, Stillman's successor, Sidney Coleman, came to New York to manage the...
ASPCA, while retaining his presidential and administrative responsibilities with the AHA. Coleman arrived just in time to oversee an expanded Depression-era workload that saw the ASPCA handling thousands of abandoned animals every month. The situation in New York was not unique. The collapse of the nation's economy swelled the stray population during the 1930s as individuals and families in distress either relinquished animals or turned them out into the streets.24

The decentralized character of the movement probably hurt its chances for maintaining vitality during a period of waning interest and opportunity. The close relationship that emerged between humane society shelters and the municipalities in which they operated reinforced a localism that curtailed a broader vision and range of activity to promote animal protection—both nationally and beyond the realm of dogs and cats. Centralization, whatever its deficits, favors organizational stability, coordination, and expertise, all of which might have helped to sustain both the broader humane ideology and a higher level of activity during the middle decades. Centralization might also have resulted in a single-minded focus on one key goal or strategy for a national movement.25

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The humane movement certainly survived the middle decades of the century, but it did not do so in any robust condition. The mid-century crises of depression and war, and the massive expansion of animal use in agriculture, garment production, scientific medicine, and industry, were among the factors that limited the movement's social and political opportunities. The larger humane societies gradually relinquished their broad-based vision, and many elements of the work atrophied in the 1930s and 1940s. Only in the 1950s did new social, political, demographic, cultural, and economic conditions, growing ecological awareness, and the "rights revolution" wrought by the African-American freedom struggle provide a fertile ground for the renaissance of animal protection and the resurrection of its broad agenda.26

The Challenge to Anthropocentrism

To some modern observers, nineteenth- and early twentieth-century animal protection—like early conservation—appears highly utilitarian and anthropocentric. In part, this perception stems from humane advocates' occasional reliance on rhetoric emphasizing the practical benefits of prudent and judicious use of animals. Their support for the view that cruelty was a debasement of human character worth challenging even when expressed against mere animals, with the potential to escalate toward human interpersonal violence, presented yet another anthropocentric rationale.

For many citizens, the movement's appeal undoubtedly did lay with one or another of these views. Yet undue focus on such arguments hinders a full appreciation of animal protection's legacy. In emphasizing a greater harmony between human beings and non-human animals, humane advocates played a key role in the erosion of anthropocentrism even as very few of them fully transcended it. They argued that individual animals mattered, and that their mistreatment was a matter of grave moral significance. They valued animals as something other than property, and promoted a sympathetic identification with animals' capacity to suffer, which, they argued, was the vital criterion for moral and legal consideration. They attempted to apply animal protection laws regardless of an animal's ownership or commercial value, and to use them to prevent the infliction of pain, suffering, neglect, and abandonment. And frequently, they framed their claims for moral responsibility toward animals in terms of animals' rights against humans.27

Literary scholar Marian Scholtmeijer has suggested that sympathetic concern for animals may itself smack of anthropocentrism. "What if humanity in fact serves its own feelings of superiority by taking pity on animals? What if gentleness to nonhuman creatures is the ultimate expression of humankind's pretensions to moral dominance over nature?" Because we humans cannot help but frame issues from our human perspective--the only one we really know--Scholtmeijer's is an essentially inescapable charge. But it can be noted in reply that even those advocates who explicitly contested

anthropocentrism—like J. Howard Moore or Henry Salt—viewed the question (at least in part) as an issue of human improvement. There is no necessary opposition between the proposition that preventing cruelty to animals is good for them and the one that holds that it is good for us as well.\(^{28}\)

It is also clear that the notion of “protection” that animal advocates advanced was notably less utilitarian and anthropocentric than that which prevailed within the veterinary profession, one that generally emphasized the economic costs of animal disease, and equated animal health and well being with maximum productivity and rates of reproduction. This approach to animal welfare, adopted by most users of animals, continues to undercut contemporary discussions of animals’ treatment in agriculture, fur farming, the laboratory setting, captive situations, and the wild.\(^{29}\)

With few exceptions, the leading figures in American animal protection were pioneers of action rather than philosophy. Humane advocates challenged abuse and cruelty in an astonishing variety of contexts—public and private, and acted inventively and energetically to prevent and reduce animal pain and suffering. In addition, they were notably insistent upon extending consideration to all species, not just dogs and cats. The early societies prosecuted cases of cruelty to rats, pigeons, elephants, pigs, monkeys,

\(^{28}\) Marian Scholtmeijer, *Animal Victims in Modern Fiction* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 85. I think it undeniable that animal protectionists’ human-centeredness was considerably more positive in its implications for non-human animals than conventionally anthropocentric attitudes and conduct had been in the years before the humane movement emerged.

\(^{29}\) Pierre Fish, “Animal Protection and the Veterinarian,” *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* 48 4 n. s. 1 (Jan. 1916), 389-93; and W. Horace Hoskins, “Some Aspects of a Larger Humaneness,” *AHA, Ann. R.* 1919, 10. Veterinary medicine has been very slow to move away from this position.
turtles, and a number of other species. Their actions show them as the architects and advocates of an important revision in human-animal relations, active champions of the proposition that animals had interests which humans were bound to respect.

Historian Roderick Nash suggests that early humane advocates were to today’s environmentalists as the abolitionists were to the civil rights activists of the 1960s. He applauds nineteenth- and early twentieth-century animal protectionists for their challenges to anthropocentrism. While their approach was inadequate in certain respects, Nash notes, they nevertheless “took the pioneering steps,” by “widening the ethical circle beyond its conventional fixation on humans.” For his part, Nash situates the development of concern for non-human animals and the natural environment in the context of an unfolding and ever more inclusive tradition of Anglo-American liberalism. However, by casting its course as one of inexorable and unrelenting progress, Nash repeats the errors of some hagiographic studies of animal protection. The liberalism he celebrates has generally operated under the view that enlightened sensitivity and meliorist optimism can be marshaled toward the elimination of injustice. Yet, as the example of racism makes clear, such an approach cannot easily succeed in the case of systemic and

30 ASPCA, Ann. R. 1892, 5; and ASPCA, Ann. R. 1898, 37. The historical evidence clearly contradicts the claims of Keith Tester that the animal protection movement has only sought to extend rights to “nice, cuddly mammals.” See Keith Tester, Animals and Society: The Humanity of Animal Rights (London: Routledge, 1991), 16.

deeply rooted beliefs and practices that are continually reproduced and sustained throughout a given culture.\textsuperscript{32}

If anything, the ideological and practical structures of animal exploitation are so universally enculturated that it might easily be said to surpass racism in its trenchancy. Pressures toward objectification have always been (and they remain) high. Human dependence upon animals has not subsided during the past one hundred years; rather, it has intensified and evolved to encompass a highly variegated range of uses. New forms of animal exploitation continue to emerge, and should certainly qualify any simple narrative of progress in the work of animal protection.

\textbf{Conclusion}

In 1897, historian William Lecky, attempting to define cruelty, suggested that there were two types, “the cruelty which springs from callousness and brutality, and . . . the cruelty of vindictiveness.” One hundred years later, Keith Thomas restated Lecky’s position, not quite precisely, describing “the cruelty which comes from carelessness or indifference; and the cruelty which comes from vindictiveness.” Contemporary specialists in animal welfare would more likely describe the first form as one that stems from thoughtlessness, lack of refinement, or actual ignorance of an animal’s needs, and the second as a form of malice.\textsuperscript{33}


In the modern era, however, a third type of cruelty has emerged, systemic or institutional in form, which cannot be readily explained by carelessness, ignorance, indifference, or malice. Instead, it is the result of industrial-scale usage of animals and an accompanying level of objectification that reduces them entirely to their utility to humans, with little or no regard for their most basic interests. Such cruelty goes beyond prior understanding and definition of the term.

When cruel conduct toward animals first came within the ambit of human law, it typically involved acts of a public character that were shielded by an argument of private privilege. General concern for the mistreatment of animals was judged to override proprietary interest like that asserted by animal fighters, teamsters, dairymen, pigeon shooters, butchers, or shopkeepers found to have neglected or abused animals in their care. Over the years, that standard has even been applied to acts of a private character, i.e. those taking place outside the public's view.

We continue to operate under largely the same legal framework. However, while it has been possible to apply anti-cruelty laws to both the public and private mistreatment of companion animals, and to acts of public cruelty that violate presumed standards of good treatment, it has been almost impossible to uphold the principle of kindness in relation to those pursuits seen as important to human interests, and in those large-scale industries beyond the reach of individual conduct and control. Today, the major forms of cruelty involve concealed practices that are shielded by assertions of necessity or

purported public consent. In many instances, the perceived imperatives of human social, material, and scientific progress have overwhelmed any concern for the corollary suffering of non-human animals. Moreover, animal users have made very determined efforts to gain exemption from anti-cruelty statutes, insulating themselves from serious attempts to regulate or limit abuse, neglect, and other forms of mistreatment.  

Today, as a post-industrial society takes shape, humans continue to exploit nonhuman animals in a range of old contexts and a number of new ones. As always, declared human interests—some grotesquely trivial and others seemingly essential—drive this process. Over the course of the past century, human reliance on animals has involved ever-greater levels of diversification, exploitation, dependency, disease, and risk, and an accompanying intensification of scientific and veterinary practices that help to mediate these various uses and their consequences. In many areas, there are no signs of abatement. We are caught in a dynamic process in which the impulse to protect animals clashes with our massive material reliance upon them. Technocratic and utilitarian assumptions and practices remain locked in oppositional tension with

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34 Philip Jamieson has described the same situation in terms of sentiment as opposed to political economy. "The differential protection of animals embodied in legislation appears to be directly proportionate to the strength of the human/companion animal bond. Those animals that perform a companion role as human pets and with which we form our closest emotional attachments are those which have received the most extensive protection under animal cruelty legislation. Specific exemptions have operated in relation to our activities with respect to food and research animals, our relations with these animals not being characterized by the same personal and familial ties that characterize the human/companion animal bond and for whom no clearly defined public sentiment analogous to that arising from that bond exists." Philip Jamieson, "Animal Welfare Law: Foundations for Reform," *Between the Species* 8 (Winter 1992), 7.

compassionate feelings and inclinations in the early twenty-first century, and, together, they continue to drive the debate over animals’ status and treatment.

Many contemporary philosophical approaches to the question—like animal rights, animal liberation, animal welfare, and the feminist ethic of care—depart from the philosophy of humane treatment called for by nineteenth- and early twentieth-century campaigners. These modern philosophies call for dramatic reassessment of our relations with non-human animals, and do not typically rest upon arguments invoking scripture or the likelihood that cruelty to animals has the potential to escalate into interpersonal violence. Instead, they emphasize rational analyses of the basis for animals’ claims against humans, utilitarian calculus of the competing interests of humans and animals, and/or sympathetic identification with animals as members of an oppressed group.36

On the other hand, many people, and especially some of those whose practices have come under fire in recent years, adhere to a static view of humaneness—that animals are ours to use so long as we do so humanely, not causing them any undue suffering, and that even painful usage is permissible in the interests of a compelling human benefit. This leaves a lot of room for the justification of harsh uses of animals, and allows people of good and ill will alike to cast themselves as faithful to the humane ethic.37 However, humaneness, even as a reformist notion, seeking to mitigate the worst excesses of animal use but leaving the essential domination over animals intact, always contained seeds with


37 David Sztybel has described this and other variants of “animal welfare” in his contribution to the section, “Animal Rights,” in Bekoff and Meaney, Encyclopedia of Animal Rights and Animal Welfare, 44.
greater potential, and its adherents pushed for its furthest extension when and where they
could. Sometimes, this entailed advocating the avoidance of products that involved the
worst forms of animal suffering. At other times, it comprised proposals for sweeping
reform of cruel and clumsy methods of slaughtering animals for food. So long as we do
use animals, animal advocates argued, we should do so humanely. But we should also
not be complacent about that use. We should actively seek to reduce, mitigate, and
eliminate their suffering and, when possible, their deaths. Animal protectionists' 
approach to humaneness was more dynamic than many contemporary claimants to the
humane ethic would allow. The animal protection impulse, like the notion of human
liberty, was restless, migratory, and expansive, moving across issues and the boundary of
species over time. It is still on the move.