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Abolitionist animal rights: critical comparisons and challenges within the animal rights movement

Corey Wrenn

Abstract

The abolitionist movement is an emergent and radical approach to nonhuman animal rights. Calling for a complete cessation in nonhuman animal use through the abolishing of property status for nonhuman animals and an adoption of veganism and nonviolence, this approach stands in stark contrast to mainstream approaches such as humane production and welfare reform. This paper describes the goals and stances of abolitionism; the basic debate between abolitionism and other nonhuman animal rights movements; and the current state, challenges, and future prospects for abolitionism. It is argued that abolitionism, as developed by Francione, is the only morally consistent approach for taking the interests of nonhuman animals seriously. Further, it is suggested that the newness of the abolitionist movement and the mainstream nonhuman animal welfare movement's dismissal of abolitionism has thus far prevented any substantial abolitionist success.

Introduction

The abolitionist nonhuman animal rights movement, a movement distinct in its explicit rejection of welfare reform and violent advocacy, established following the emergence of Gary Francione's Abolitionist Approach, an internet blog and information website (Yates 2008a, Yates 2009a). While nonhuman advocates have long called for a complete cessation of nonhuman use, the modern nonhuman movement, since its inception in the 19th century, has relied heavily on welfare reform (Beers, 2006). Thus, while the abolitionist goal is certainly not new, the tactics and repertoires utilized in the Francionian approach are distinctly so. Indeed, the abolitionist movement, comprised of grassroots and often localized individuals and small groups self-identifying according to Francione's theory, is less than a decade old.

Despite considerable productivity prior to the launch of *Abolitionist Approach*, Francione's work was largely unknown. Rather than advocating an incremental regulatory approach to reformed nonhuman animal use, Francione's abolitionist approach requires incremental cessation of use that culminates in the altogether elimination of nonhuman animal use. Though Francione had been arguing for an end to nonhuman animal use with ethical veganism as the moral baseline for

two decades, it was not until his entry into the internet community that his theory found a sizeable audience.

Francione's theory improves on that of Tom Regan's notion of inherent value. Here, Regan (1983, 2004) argues that beings that are subjects of life possess worth, regardless of their capacity for suffering. However, Regan's life-boat scenario (the thought experiment whereby a boat could only stay afloat if either a human or a nonhuman was thrown overboard) posits that regardless of inherent value, the interests of human animals can override that of nonhumans because of their greater potential for, and appreciation of, future satisfaction. Francione departs with Regan here and argues that any being that is sentient should not have their interests overridden and that both humans and nonhumans alike have an interest in continuing to live with an equal potential for future satisfaction (Francione and Garner, 2010). Regardless of Regan's problematic moral hierarchy, he does explicitly recognize the need to abolish use, rather than modify it. Thus, Regan's work stands as the foundation of abolitionist theory from which Francione and others build.

This paper will explore abolitionism as an emergent and critical concept in the nonhuman animal rights movement. The primary concepts and stances held by abolitionism will be explored followed by a comparison to the humane product trend and welfarism. Finally, a critical examination of the current state of the abolitionist movement and existing challenges will be presented. It is argued that taking our moral obligation to nonhuman animals seriously necessitates the adoption of an abolitionist vegan approach to animal rights. Furthermore, I see the humane product and welfarist movements as counterproductive in the struggle to support nonhuman animal rights. Finally, it is suggested that the relative newness of the abolitionist movement and strong countering from the mainstream nonhuman animal welfare movement has prevented abolitionism from obtaining a large presence within the nonhuman animal rights movement.

Because the literature on abolitionist nonhuman animal rights theory and the debate is relatively scant, there is a heavy reliance on the works of Gary Francione and Bob Torres. There is also a substantial use of unpublished works of influential abolitionist academics (namely Gary Francione) and those critical to the debates surrounding abolitionist theory. It is suggested that these sources provide an important insight into emerging discourse within the nonhuman animal rights movement. Furthermore, the terms "nonhuman animal" and "human animals" will be utilized in this writing as a rejection of speciesist language in recognizing the potential for language to demean, exclude, and reinforce normative values (Dunayer, 1990).

Major concepts and stances

Despite a brief allusion to the intersections between the human abolitionist movement and the nonhuman abolitionist movement in Boyd's 1987 essay *The New Abolitionists: Animal Rights and Human Liberation*, in its application to nonhuman animal rights, abolition is indeed new. However, nonhuman rights

abolitionism is based on the much older human abolitionist movement that preceded it. Francione (2010) highlights the parallel between the two movements in that the systems of human and nonhuman animal slavery both commodify sentient beings and respect their interests only insofar as they are economically beneficial. Yet, Kim (2011) notes that while the comparison between the two systems of oppression is morally defensible, it could prove politically problematic for nonhuman animal rights activists in ignoring white normativity and thus challenging the potential for creating cross-group alliances. The nonhuman animal rights appropriation of these concepts also conflicts with other understandings of abolition. Certainly, the abolition of human slavery did not necessitate the abolition of racism and discrimination. Abolitionist work continued after the American Civil War. Of note, DuBois critiqued the failure of the reconstruction period and recognized that true abolition relies on representation and integration (Lewis, 1995). Likewise, Davis (2005) highlights continued oppression of people of color in other structural systems of inequality, the prison system in particular (2005). Neither of these applications of abolitionist thought are directly relevant to the nonhuman animal issue as yet. As such, the nonhuman animal rights understanding of abolition harkens to human abolitionist activities that specifically challenged the property status of human slaves and discriminatory ideology. Indeed, a popular human and nonhuman abolitionist website, *Quotes on Slavery* (2012), juxtaposes excerpts from the human animal and the nonhuman animal abolitionist movements with no distinction between the two.

Drawing from the human animal abolitionist experience, abolitionist nonhuman animal rights is based on the premise that nonhuman animals are functionally and legally property in human animal society (DeCoux, 2009; Francione, 2000). So long as nonhuman animals are considered property, their interests can always be overridden by human animal interests in conflict situations (Francione, 1995). There is not a push for equal rights between nonhuman animals and human animals, as nonhuman animals have different natures than human animals (Francione, 2000; Rollin, 1993), but rather a push for equal consideration based on the specific requirements of nonhuman animals based on their telos. Central to these specific requirements, it is recognized that nonhuman animals have the right not to be treated as property. Recognition of this right necessarily entails an abolition of institutionalized nonhuman animal use and exploitation which perpetuates the property status of nonhuman animals. Likewise, abolition recognizes and rejects societal speciesism. Speciesism is the prejudice against nonhuman animals that arbitrarily assigns varying values and levels of moral worth (Ryder, 2000). Dunayer (2004) elaborates on Ryder's definition adding that it is, "a failure, in attitude or practice, to accord any nonhuman being equal consideration and respect" (5). Speciesism manifests in differential treatment and discrimination based on species, notably in the human practice of exploiting nonhumans for flesh and labor. It is understood that there are no meaningful differences between nonhuman and human animals which would justify unequal consideration: "The species of a sentient being is no more reason to deny the protection of this

basic right than race, sex, age, or sexual orientation is a reason to deny membership in the human moral community to other humans" (Francione, 2009e). Thus, the abolitionist nonhuman animal rights movement calls for a rejection of the property status held by nonhuman animals, a rejection of speciesism, and a need for equal consideration.

Abolitionism, as defined by Francione, also entails a strict adherence to nonviolence. Violence entails any action that causes harm physically or emotionally: this would include bodily harm, threats and intimidation, property damage (as it has the latent effect of instilling fear and creating the potential for unintended harm) (Francione, 2007; Francione, 2010b). The definition of violence certainly fluctuates significantly in the nonhuman movement, and many reject that certain tactics, particularly property damage, can constitute violence. However, any action that causes harm and, "[...] treats others as means to ends rather than as ends in themselves" (Francione, 2007), is considered antithetical to the peaceful society Francionian abolitionists hope to create.

Ahimsa, a rule of conduct borrowed from Jainism, Hinduism, and Buddhism, is often used to describe this notion within the Francionian abolitionist movement: "Ahimsa is the principle that we should not act violently toward others in our thoughts, speech, or action" (Francione, 2009b). A practicing Jain, Francione draws on the principle of ahimsa as the "highest religious duty" (Francione 2009a). Thus, the Francionian abolitionist plan of action dismisses violence as a useful or acceptable manner to work towards ending nonhuman animal use:

Violence is the problem; it is not any part of the solution. Those who advocate violence against institutional users of animals fail to recognize the simple fact that these users are only responding to a demand created by others. The real exploiters are those who create the demand. Therefore, violence against institutional users makes no sense. (Francione, 2009b)

Violence, which is often negatively associated with the nonhuman animal rights movement due to the activities of the Animal Liberation Front and the subsequent animal terrorist laws (Lovitz, 2010; Potter, 2011), is seen as both detrimental and counterproductive to abolition by many abolitionists (Hall, 2006). State reaction to violent activism increases costs of all nonhuman activism, even that which is peaceful. Further, according to Francione, embracing nonviolence and adhering to ahimsa is essential to challenging the violence towards nonhuman animals which advocates seek to end. As such, ahimsa and veganism are "inseparable and presuppose each other" as "All animal products—including dairy and wool—involve inflicting suffering and death on mobile, five-sensed-beings" (Francione, 2009a: 9). Other nonhuman animal rights theorists have eluded to the religious basis for respecting the rights of nonhumans as well (Linzey, 2009; Page, 1999; Schwartz, 2001). However, there are an increasing number of atheistic abolitionist activists who

recognize the parallel between nonhuman animal rights and moral rationalism and reject the spiritual element entirely (Johnson, 2012a). Indeed, many abolitionists adopt the notion of nonviolence without any reference to the principle of ahimsa.

A rejection of violence, however, remains a commonality among abolitionists. It is a continuation of nonviolent collective action drawn from the human abolition movement as well as contemporary social movements. Nonviolent resistance is thought to impose less risk and thus increases movement participation. Abolitionist activists believe that it increases participation, which in turn, increases resources and movement power (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011). What's more, the adherence to nonviolence is believed to increase credibility and is thought to be congruent with the nonviolent society abolitionists hope to create (Hall 2006).

Subsequently, abolitionism adopts veganism as a necessary baseline. Veganism both challenges the property status of nonhuman animals and is consistent with nonviolence (Francione, 2009b):

As a direct protest against the commodity form and property relations that animals are subject to, it is a great refusal of the system itself, a no-compromise position that does not seek reform, but which seeks abolition. For anyone who wants to end animal exploitation, living as a vegan is living the end that we wish to see—no one will exploit animals for mere choices of taste and convenience (Torres, 2007, p. 131)

Abolitionism requires a complete rejection of nonhuman animal consumption and production both directly (as food or fashion) and indirectly (as entertainment, research subjects, or companion and "pet" animals). It is understood that it is logically inconsistent to strive for an end to nonhuman animal use while continuing to consume them. Recognizing that there are no defensible grounds for excluding nonhuman animals from moral concern (Rollin, 2006), human animals must extend equal consideration to nonhuman animals (Francione, 2000). The principle of equal consideration means taking nonhuman animal interests seriously. It recognizes that nonhuman animals, like human animals, have morally significant interests in not suffering and in not being used as resources (Francione, 2000). It follows, then, that respecting a moral obligation to nonhuman animals as objects of moral concern with interest in not suffering could not reasonably include consumption: "Veganism is the only way forward that does not trade off the interests of animals today in the vast hope of some bright future right down the road" (Torres, 2007, p. 136). The assumption here is that consumption necessarily entails harm. The use of nonhuman animals as resources, fatally or not, constitutes harm to the nonhuman animal whose interest lies in not experiencing use or suffering. Adherents to the abolitionist movement are expected to both adopt veganism and promote the growth of veganism necessary for effectiveness through education (Francione, 2009b).

Critical comparisons with humane products and welfarism

The trend towards humane products and welfare reform are dominant approaches within the nonhuman animal rights movement. Abolitionists believe that neither of these approaches fully address the necessity of abolishing entirely the use of nonhuman animals. Rather, they focus on modifying use (Francione 1996). The argument could be made that the humane product trend and welfare reform are at times one and the same. However, a distinction can be based on the economic focus of humane products as opposed to the welfarist movement's addressing of a wide array of nonhuman animal issues beyond food. Importantly, the humane product trend is comprised of nonhuman animal exploiters while the welfare movement is largely comprised of nonhuman animal advocates. The argument for these approaches will be explained, followed by an abolitionist critique that will be argued that both the humane products and welfare reform movements seriously fail to satisfy our moral obligations to nonhuman animals.

The Humane Products Trend

The humane product trend, representing the recent growth in humane product availability and discourse, is an approach to nonhuman animal use that does not challenge the property status of nonhuman animals, but does address the ways in which those animals are treated (Nirenberg, 2005; Singer and Mason, 2006). Largely commercially driven, this approach recognizes a consumer concern with the humaneness of the nonhuman animal products and attempts to improve the welfare for the nonhuman animals involved. Labeling is used to highlight process and quality (Barham 2002). Labels such as "free-range," "grass-fed," "organic," "humanely-raised," "cage-free," and so forth all contend with consumer concerns with the treatment of nonhuman animals. The humane product trend purports to respect the telos of nonhuman animals, adhering to what "nature intended" (American Grassfed Association, 2009) and farming in "harmony with nature" working with "animals' natural behaviors" (Organic Valley, 2009). They are also less likely to see death as a harm, as the actual killing of nonhuman animals is not considered in defining humaneness of production. If use of the nonhuman animals can be understood as in accordance with the telos of those nonhumans and the nonhuman animals are not harmed by death, the humane products approach is not likely to see any contradiction in the human moral obligation to nonhuman animals.

The humane product approach exists in opposition to abolitionism because it is not concerned with the possibility that human animal society will ever be willing to abolish nonhuman animal flesh and excretions from the diet. Here, there is recognition of continued demand for these products coupled with a growing conscious consumption (Whole Foods Market, 2009). The humane trend is, at its heart, an economic enterprise which intends to profit from nonhuman animals. Tellingly, grocery stores such as Whole Foods are adopting labeling

schemes to promote nonhuman animal products of higher welfare practices as beneficial to their business (Whole Foods Market, 2009).

Unfortunately, it appears that this approach is not improving welfare for nonhuman animals as consistent with popular belief. Values-based labeling can often be misleading (Abrams, Meyers, and Irani, 2010; Merchant, 2008). Investigations initiated by mainstream nonhuman animal welfare organizations are uncovering evidence that humane products vary dramatically in levels of suffering imposed on nonhuman animals and are often substantively minimal in improvements (Farm Sanctuary, 2009). Regardless of any improvements, nonhuman animals raised for flesh will unavoidably lose their lives. Additionally, direct death or indirect death following over-expenditure in egg, dairy, etc. production is inevitable. Furthermore, the move to humane products continues to support institutional exploiters with no goal of ever abolishing the exploitation. This is problematic if we wish to enact equal consideration: "The moment we use another being instrumentally, we have denied that being its right to exist on its own terms [...]" (Torres, 2007, p. 27). Here, the use of nonhuman animals is not a relevant issue. Instead, supposedly more humane use becomes commodified. Consumers can pay extra for peace of mind and nonhuman animal agriculture, as a business, is happy to oblige: "Though some producers will be slow to come along, the industry operates on thin enough margins that it will recognize a market opportunity when it sees it, and happily provide alternatives for people of conscience, provided it can reasonably profit from those alternatives" (Torres, 2007, p. 100). The industry of humane products, then, fails to challenge nonhuman animal use, and instead exploits public concern with nonhuman animal suffering and death. There is no expectation that use will decrease or cease. Certainly, as those involved with this movement profit from nonhuman animal use and have no desire to see it end, not much in the way of abolition is to be expected here. It remains problematic, however, in that much of the public and many major nonhuman animal rights organizations believe that this movement towards higher welfare could lead to abolition (Francione, 1996).

Another concern with this approach is the inherent contradiction created by managing values-based labeling of products within a capitalist framework (Johnston, 2008). The genuineness of the producers' commitment to nonhuman animal welfare will necessarily come into question when profits are involved. Likewise, as the niche market for more responsible products increases, adherence to the initial moral vision will necessarily be challenged (Raynolds, Murray, and Wilkinson, 2007). Furthermore, the use of the term "humane" is questionable. It is difficult to argue that exploitation and death could ever be defined as humane. Based on this misleading terminology and minimal improvements in rearing nonhuman animals, it is probable that consumers would be left with a confused understanding of the reality behind the products. Likewise, it can be questioned as to what psychological impact the humane products trend is having on a public concerned with the use of nonhuman animals. Humane labels must certainly assure consumers that the interests of nonhuman animals are being adequately addressed and create a

social comfort with nonhuman animal use (Francione, 2008; Francione and Garner, 2010). With labeling and governmental reform, consumers can unquestioningly assume necessary changes have been made (Raynolds, 2009). This can create complacency with concern over moral obligation and even increase consumption: "Such promotion [of humane nonhuman animal products] may actually increase consumption by people who had stopped eating animal products because of concerns about treatment and will certainly provide as a general matter an incentive for continued consumption of animal products" (Francione, 2008, p. 16). Ultimately, the reality of humane products remains contrary to the perpetuated popular myth.

Equally unsettling, the humane product approach and the welfarist movement often overlap. Several welfarist organizations work directly with the labeling of humane products. The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) and the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), for example, are partners of Humane Farm Animal Care, an organization which certifies humane treatment (Humane Farm Animal Care, 2009). Compassion Over Killing operates a long-standing campaign for the reformation of Animal Care Certified labeling (Compassion Over Killing, 2009). This partnership proves contradictory and problematic and will be discussed below.

The Welfarist Movement

Welfarism will be treated as a distinct movement from the humane products trend as it does, for the most part, seriously consider our moral obligations to nonhuman animals and is more expansive in its involvement with nonhuman animal use. Furthermore, the humane product trend is generally run by institutional exploitative producers, whereas welfarism is generally not-for-profit. Welfarism is the dominant ideology within the animal rights movement and is distinguished from abolition in its strategy of regulation and reform (Francione, 1996): "[...] the ethic which has emerged in mainstream society does not say we should not use animals or animal products. It does say that the animals we use should live happy lives where they can meet the fundamental set of needs dictated by their natures and where they do not suffer at our hands" (Rollin, 1993, p. 11). That is, welfarism focuses on suffering, not use (DeCoux, 2009).

Welfarism may or may not expect an eventual end in nonhuman animal use based on ideological differences. Francione (1996) distinguishes between traditional welfarism and new welfarism. Traditional welfarism adopts instrumentalism and is concerned with humane treatment and prevention of unnecessary suffering. There is no long term goal of reduction in use: "[...] animal welfare is seen as important enough, so long as it does not interfere too much with farming and economic concerns" (Sankoff, 2005). New welfarism differs in that it recognizes a goal of abolition, but utilizes welfarist tactics in an effort to achieve that goal (Garner, 2006). Abolitionist tactics are assumed to be ineffective in the immediate future (Garner, 2006). In the meantime, the short-

term tactic of welfare reform is adopted (Francione, 1996): “[...] it represents a realistic appraisal of what can be achieved now and in the short term, given the present vulnerable and arrogant state of the human condition” (Garner, 2006). Therefore, while those in the new welfarist movement espouse an abolitionist end, welfarist reform is assumed to be efficacious (Garner, 2002) and morally acceptable as a means to achieve that end (Francione, 1996).

Welfarists criticize abolitionism on two major points: we must work to reduce suffering in the here and now (Garner, 2006) and total abolition of nonhuman animal use is an unachievable goal (Rollin, 2006). Those arguing that total abolitionism will never be attained maintain that resources spent towards an unrealistic goal of abolition are wasted (Francione and Marcus, 2007). That is, if abolitionism is wasting resources, the suffering of presently exploited nonhuman animals remains unaddressed. Alternatively, it is sometimes suggested that the uncontrolled suffering of nonhuman animals is somehow beneficial to the abolitionist cause (Ball, ~2009; Francione and Garner, 2010). Here, it is presumed that abolitionists advocate extreme suffering under the assumption that the public will become so disgusted that an eventual backlash will develop in favor of abolition.

Importantly, these critiques do not give much weight to veganism as direct and immediate action. Abolitionism, which endorses veganism as a necessary baseline, can be argued as reducing suffering in the here and now by reducing consumer demand through a consistent promotion of and adherence to veganism:

[...] Abolitionists identify the promotion of veganism as the one essential tool for bringing an end to the exploitation of animals. Instead of pursuing legislation or litigation intended to reduce the suffering of animals, Abolitionists educate people about veganism in order to make veganism more prevalent and thereby eventually eliminate the exploitation of animals. (DeCoux, 2009, p.14)

Furthermore, according to abolitionists, welfarism itself is not reducing suffering in any significant way (DeCoux, 2009). While the modification of confinement, for example, might make life for nonhuman animals slightly less sufferable, the suffering reduced is generally trivial in relation to the immense anguish and eventual death that remains unaddressed by reform. Furthermore, regulation of nonhuman animal use might have the psychological effect of making human animal consumers more comfortable with the exploitation (DeCoux, 2009; Francione, 2008a; Francione and Garner, 2010). Thereby, the actual use of the nonhuman animal is not addressed and use will invariably continue: “[...] we cannot hope to produce a world that is free of animal suffering and exploitation by promoting gentler forms of suffering” (Torres, 2007, p. 135). Lastly, it has been the case that most regulation has been imposed only when economically beneficial to the institutional exploiters (Francione, 1996).

Francione points to the Humane Slaughter Act and the campaign to adopt controlled atmosphere killing of chickens as to key examples of the marriage of nonhuman animal welfare reform and increased profitability and efficiency of exploitative institutions (Francione, 1996; Francione 2008b). The passage of the Humane Slaughter Act of 1958 (amended in 1978) proceeded with the support of producers, as it improved efficiency by reducing carcass damage and worker injury (Francione 1996, U.S. Congress 1978b, U.S. Congress 1978c). The vice president of the American Meat Institute reported that his organization was urging the approval of this legislation: "The experience of our members has been that humane slaughter methods are efficient methods. They result in improved productivity [...]" (U.S. Congress, 1978, p. 6). Likewise, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and HSUS have promoted the controlled atmosphere killing of chickens as profitable to producers through increased production capacity, affordability of gases, improved working conditions, improved food quality, shelf-life, safety, and reduced carcass damage and labor costs (Francione, 2008b; HSUS, ~2008; HSUS, 2009; PETA, 2007). The push to end castration, too, is marketed as a profitable move for ranchers. It is argued that failing to castrate will result in faster growth, shaving approximately three months from the raising process at an increased profit to ranchers (Rollin, 2009). How could the increased efficiency of exploitative institutions be much good to the nonhuman animals whose continued suffering remains unchallenged? Here then, the concern of welfarists with our moral obligation to nonhuman animals becomes enmeshed with the desires of profit-driven institutional exploiters:

While we may be able to make that commodification "nicer" through "compassionate" or "happy" meat, or measures like eliminating gestation crates, commodification will never simply fade away on its own, as it is the foundational logic of the system itself. Provided it can continue to commodify animals as property, the system will adapt, even to the most stringent regulations. What's more, if those regulations become too onerous domestically, it seems likely that the industry will simply increase the already substantial offshore production taking place to skirt around these domestic regulations. For these reasons, our activism must fight the system at its roots, targeting property and the imposition of the commodity form on animals, rather than hoping that an ethically bankrupt system will do the impossible task of reforming itself given demands to do so. (Torres, 2007, p. 104)

The insistence of mainstream nonhuman animal organizations to continue to support such reforms is resulting in questionable alliances and counterproductive results. The abolitionist nonhuman animal rights movement is largely defined by its rejection of this aspect of welfarism: "We recognize that we will not abolish overnight the property status of nonhumans, but we will support only those campaigns and positions that explicitly promote the abolitionist agenda. We will not support positions that call for supposedly "improved" regulation of animal exploitation" (Francione, 2009e).

The abolitionist agenda and subsequent challenges

Abolitionism seeks to reach its goal of ending nonhuman animal use through consumer-based resistance. Consumption-based resistance is a political strategy adopted by many social movements in response to injustices involved with product content and preparation (Goodman and DuPuis, 2002; Micheletti and Follesdal, 2007). Consumers are seen as active holders of responsibility with the ability to change both market capitalism and society (Dickinson and Hollander, 1991; Micheletti and Follesdal, 2007; Piven, 2007). Personal consumption, in other words, can become a political action (Parker, 1999). Abolitionism seeks to reduce and eventually eliminate consumer demand for nonhuman animal use as consistent with a serious consideration of our moral obligations: "Essentially the demand is the demand of speciesism: the view that human beings can legitimately use and override the rights of nonhuman animals for a whole variety of purposes" (Yates, 2009c). Central to consumption-based resistance is abolitionism's vegan baseline. It is presumed that through the implementation of vegan education programs, a critical mass of vegans will materialize. With this critical mass should come political power and social influence. However, resistance that continues to function within capitalism might not be sufficient in adequately challenging the problems with an economic system that is built on consumption and exploitation (Johnston, 2008). What's more, capitalist-based resistance could potentially delude social responsibility and obligations in reducing participation to purchases in the checkout lane (Johnston, 2008; Wrenn, 2011). It might also run into problems of access with minorities and lower income individuals as fresh and whole food products can often be more expensive or difficult to find (Harper, 2010; Johnston, 2008). In addition to these potential problems, abolitionism is a relatively new movement (DeCoux, 2009) and is subsequently quite small with limited power. DeCoux (2009) suggests that abolitionism's overreliance on the property status of nonhuman animals and its failure to adopt depictions of suffering has stunted its success.

Furthermore, abolitionism has been heavily criticized as utopian, as depicted in welfarist critiques that find goals of ending nonhuman animal use to be unobtainable (Ball, ~2009; Francione and Marcus, 2007). However, it is important to recognize the newness of the abolitionist movement as it pertains to nonhuman animal rights. And, given DeCoux's (2009, 2010) critiques, abolition may still have room to grow so far as putting theory into practice. Further, many mainstream groups that are decidedly not rights based, such as PETA, lay claim to the term "rights," further confusing our moral obligation to nonhuman animals: "People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), with more than 2 million members and supporters, is the largest animal rights organization in the world" (DeCoux, 2009). Yet, PETA does not explicitly campaign for veganism or the end of nonhuman animal use, but rather the modification of use (promotion of controlled atmosphere killing, vegetarianism and single issue campaigns such as fur bans). Nonetheless, the organization has become the face of "animal rights." This misuse of the term "rights" can only further complicate the sluggish path to abolition.

Importantly, abolitionism has been effectively shut out of mainstream nonhuman animal welfare organizational claims-making. Ending use entirely is downplayed in the mainstream agenda. Veganism, too, is only weakly supported, if at all: "Unfortunately, the current groups making up the mainstream animal rights movement have a rather spotty record promoting veganism as a viable alternative, and very few groups have made it a primary focus of their outreach and activism (Torres, 2007, p. 137). Furthermore, the momentum of abolitionism is quickly slowed as countermovements are constructed by institutional exploiters of nonhuman animals and welfarist organizations alike (Yates, 2009b). As Francione notes, "Abolition has not taken center stage because the welfarist organizations do not want it as center stage. It is easier to fundraise when you promote welfare reforms and do not seek to persuade people to make changes in their lives" (Francione and Garner, 2010: 227-228). Indeed, abolitionists are often labeled as extremist or fanatical. Building on Francione's observations, two reasons might be given for this exclusion. One, it might be assumed that the radical nature of such an absolute goal might deter participants and potential participants in the nonhuman animal movement. Secondly, as previously noted, the abolitionist goal is often seen as utopian.

Abolitionism, unlike the approaches previously discussed, is asking human animals to completely reconfigure their understanding of nonhuman animals to one that recognizes nonhumans as persons requiring moral obligations. This is a much larger task than simply asking human animals to modify use, as this does not touch deeply rooted speciesism. Thus, the abolitionist movement will necessarily be slow moving, as it must undertake an enormous societal shift in the gestalt: "Social change is happening, but social change is slow" (Yates, 2009a). Unlike any other nonhuman animal social movement, the abolitionist movement is addressing rampant inequalities that invade nearly every aspect of human animal existence. Human animals have been effectively exploiting nonhuman animals for thousands of years. Furthermore, nonhuman animals are largely voiceless and lack the capacity to effectively communicate in the human animal arena. While Hribal (2010) documents a rich history of nonhuman animals engaging in individual resistance to their oppression (retaliations, escapes, etc.), it remains the case that nonhuman animals will likely never be able to become a class for itself in the Marxian sense and be able to collectively act on their own behalf. Hence, the movement to end speciesism and nonhuman animal use is facing unique and difficult challenges.

Furthermore, the nonhuman animal welfare movement dominates nonhuman animal rights discourse and is consequently able to influence nonhuman animal rights ideology. Control over ideology is maintained through framing and the active construction of meaning (Snow and Benford, 1988). Within a paradigm dominated by welfarism, abolitionism must struggle for recognition (DeCoux, 2009). Further, abolitionism is often framed negatively (Ball, ~2009; Fastenberg, 2009; Francione, 2010a) and what it means to recognize our moral obligation to nonhuman animals is constructed according to the dominant ideology. Abolitionism faces the challenge of channeling enough power and

resources to adequately challenge this ideology, reframe the abolitionist representation, and begin reshaping societal understandings of our moral obligation to nonhuman animals.

In changing deeply held societal views, the end goal of abolition may appear distant. It should be recognized that the abolitionist movement, as a distinct movement in nonhuman animal rights advocacy, is a comparatively new development: "I suggest the a [sic] useful mindset to adopt is one that recognizes that we are pioneers of a recent idea, an idea that is just making its first impacts on 'the social': in other words, the vegan-based animal rights movement is new" (Yates, 2009a). Abolitionism is still in the process of gaining momentum and is still establishing itself as a viable movement. On the contrary, welfarist reform has been operating for several centuries and nonhuman animal use has been increasing exponentially (DeCoux, 2009; Francione, 1996). Abolitionism remains locked out of mainstream advocacy: "The problem [...] is that the mainstream animal rights movement has never really tried such activism in earnest. Instead, it relies on a weak system of reforms, with the hope that these gradual changes will someday, in some way, in some distant and far-off future, lead to the complete abolition of animal exploitation" (Torres, 2007, p. 93). Furthermore, criticisms that label abolitionism as utopian, may be representative of fizzling motivation: "This kind of pessimism -- dressed up as realism -- reveals a poverty of ambition and probably indicates a degree of 'burn-out' that many social movement participants experience" (Yates, 2008b). Because abolitionism as a clear and distinct movement is quite new, it is too early, Yates argues, to become pessimistic. Only with increased acceptance and adherence will real social change emerge (Torres, 2007).

DeCoux (2009) suggests that abolitionist success has stagnated because the movement fails to create a critical mass of vegans because of its reluctance to utilize descriptions of suffering. The welfarist movement, she argues, has been able to tap into the empathy and concern that is resultant from descriptions of suffering. Welfarists have thus been able to dominate mainstream nonhuman animal rights and channel those emotional reactions into ineffectual tactics. Jasper and Poulsen (1995) also point to the importance of incorporating this strategy to increase recruitment. Others, however, question effectiveness. Moral shocks can be off-putting rather than engaging or entirely ineffectual for peripheral groups such as vegetarians (Mika, 2006). Regardless, the context of social movement tactics can influence their effectiveness (Einwohner, 1999). The abolitionist movement might find it difficult to direct emotional reactions towards abolishing use in a society heavily influenced by welfarism where reactions are generally directed towards reform. So long as welfarism remains the dominant paradigm, there is a strong potential that moral shocks might pull recruits towards a desire to reform use, rather than abolish it.

Conclusion

The abolitionist movement has been criticized for adopting a time-consuming approach that allows nonhuman animals who currently suffer to continue suffering. Further, critics argue that a world entirely free of nonhuman animal use appears utopian and unreachable. However, the abolitionist movement as a functioning and coherent movement in the nonhuman animal rights arena is still in its infancy. Furthermore, a move towards abolition through the promotion of veganism is certainly beneficial for nonhuman animals suffering now and for those who would otherwise suffer in the future. The recent expansion in availability of vegan foods might be explored both to demonstrate the efficacy of consumer-based resistance and as a possible motivation for veganism through increasing visibility and consumer options. Further, while species inequality may never fully be eradicated from human animal society in the foreseeable future, we can realistically strive for the social condemnation of such institutions and a steady progression to the ultimate goal of equal consideration. Abolitionism does not naively predict an overnight revolution: that is not the nature of social change. However, further investigation into the efficacy of tactics, specifically vegan outreach and moral shocks, would prove immensely useful to the movement.

Fundamentally, abolitionism is critical in that it represents ethical consistency with the human animal moral obligation to nonhuman animals. Humane products and welfare reform fail to address the property status of nonhuman animals and the perpetuation of violence. Furthermore, neither of these approaches significantly address veganism, and within the abolitionist framework, it is impossible to seriously challenge the exploitation of nonhuman animals while continuing to consume them. It is also impossible to seriously address exploitation while reinforcing the ideologies of domination through regulation. Abolitionist rejection of the property status of nonhuman animals and adherence to nonviolence marks a unique consistency with the human animal moral obligation to nonhuman animals. This consistency contrasts with the counter-productivity and moral tension so characteristic of other nonhuman animal factions. This dichotomy highlights abolitionism as a viable movement with great potential for affecting change.

Currently, the abolitionist movement is primarily active within internet-based social networks and academic scholarship. Indeed, the dominance of online advocacy in this movement provides an excellent resource for exploring social movement mobilization on the internet. The internet has reduced the costs of mobilization and has allowed activists to communicate and network outside of the welfarist movement's dominant discourse (Francione and Garner, 2010). Several internet radio series and podcasts operate with sizeable followings. Abolitionism is also creeping into dozens of internet blogs and news editorials. Social networking sites and discussion forums proliferate as well. For a movement that has only been functionally present for less than a decade, these developments are promising.

Yet, while online mobilization is highly useful for a movement with limited resources, limited participation, and a heavily dispersed membership, the risk of cyberbalkanization is certainly real. Cyberbalkanization occurs when interest groups use the internet to exclude contradictory views and information (Alstynne and Brynjolfsson, 2005). This phenomenon can impede communication with other groups and stagnate movement progress. Although it is true that the abolitionist movement can appear rather exclusionary, because the movement is so heavily built on the criticism of mainstream nonhuman animal advocacy, there is a great deal of watchdog monitoring of welfarist and humane movement activity. Indeed, abolitionism also facilitates quite a bit of debate between the groups. For example, Francione's 2010 release, *The Animal Rights Debate: Abolition or Regulation?*, takes on co-author Robert Garner, a champion of the welfarist movement. The Animal Rights Zone forum, blogs, and podcast (moderated by Yates) also makes a point to incorporate the wide variety of perspectives in the nonhuman animal rights movement with abolition receiving no more prominence than other positions. However, it should be noted that this organization's new welfarist framework has been criticized in failing to present the abolitionist message clearly (Johnson, 2011).

In addition to its heavy reliance on internet mobilization, the abolitionist movement is unique in that it materializes as a collective of individuals and there are no large, professionalized organizations in its leadership (PETA and HSUS for example). Though, local small-scale abolitionist organizations such as the Boston Vegan Society, VeganUK, and Peaceful Prairie Sanctuary are expanding. Indeed, abolitionism is distinctly grassroots. And, while much of the abolitionist movement has traditionally operated under the leadership of Francione, many abolitionists have begun to detach themselves from his "Abolitionist Approach." Of note, VeganUK promotes a moral rationalist perspective of abolitionist advocacy that challenges the increasingly theistic connotations of Francione's theory (Johnson, 2012b). Still others have reabsorbed into the mainstream nonhuman animal rights movement and work side-by-side with welfarist advocates to reach a larger audience. Yates, in particular, criticizes Francione's "Abolitionist Approach" as failing to resonate with audiences. Reasons cited include a lack of reflexivity and the increasingly "dogmatic," "shrill," and "hysterical" tone the approach has utilized (Yates 2012). However, many abolitionists reject the ability to coherently advocate for abolition within a welfarist context as Yates has promoted (Johnson, 2011).

Despite substantial criticism, abolitionism offers a unique and valuable approach to nonhuman animal advocacy that esteems nonviolence, maintains veganism as a moral necessity, and offers nonhumans the possibility of equal consideration. These qualities differentiate abolitionism from mainstream trends in humane products and welfare reform and thus offer an important foundation for radical social change. As the abolitionist movement grows in numbers, resources, and strength, adoption of veganism is likely to increase. Increasing diversity within the movement is also likely to strengthen abolitionism's reach. In the meantime, the movement is vastly understudied and shows many gaps in need of research, particularly within the frameworks of

social movement theory. Specifically, how potential recruits may or may not be convinced to forgo a deeply engrained dependency on nonhuman animals would be especially beneficial. Further research into the impact of online advocacy on movement success would also be fruitful.

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