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## ***Animal Studies in the Key of Animal Rights***

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Dedication: To *Animalia* and its editors, contributors and readers—this inaugural article was drafted as a “Welcome” to all who are interested in this student-run journal in which articles by students and scholars alike will be featured.

**T**his paper has five parts. These parts seek to accomplish two tasks—first, address the expanding studies known variously as “Animal Studies,” “Anthrozoology” and a host of other names, and, second, explore how these fields stand in relation to the popular term “animal rights.”<sup>1</sup> Exploring these tasks pushes all of us to engage which dimensions of our human lives must be mobilized to engage the profoundly important fact that each and every human lives in a multispecies world that is well described as a “more-than-human world.”<sup>2</sup> Our citizenship in such a multispecies world not only suggests the possibility of non-anthropocentric worldviews—our awareness of this larger community also begs a broader, more inclusive perspective than the human-centered and exceptionalist approaches that dominate our education establishment, political realms, legal systems, businesses and many religious institutions. What further begs such breadth and inclusion is the fact that personally, ecologically and thus ethically each of us lives in a fascinating and distinctive series of nested communities replete with other-than-human neighbors. Our local lives and places are embedded in a world that is so clearly shared and more-than-human that our natural abilities to be curious and caring are sparked by the mere presence of nonhuman living beings. We are

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<sup>1</sup> I first developed these themes in a lecture delivered at a University of London conference in 2012.

<sup>2</sup> The term is borrowed from Abram, David 1996. *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in More-Than-Human World*. New York: Pantheon Books.

creatures that need to notice this spark, then protect and ignite it, in order to ground our own personal moral and cognitive development and that of our children.

Given this, if we but look around, each of us easily notices that our awareness of the more-than-human world in which we so obviously live is in tension with human-centered claims made implicitly and explicitly in our mainline institutions and public policy. Such claims, which stridently insist that humans alone are the living beings that really matter, take myriad forms. Their consequences structure our modern lives such that we live and work in environments where a prevailing human exceptionalism seems perfectly normal. The substance of these claims has often been described in terms comparable to the following:

humans are, merely by virtue of their species membership, so qualitatively different from any and all other forms of life that humans rightfully enjoy privileges over all of the earth's other life forms.<sup>3</sup>

The tension between human exceptionalism, on the one hand, and the obvious fact that we live in a multispecies world goads many humans today, resulting not only in a worldwide animal protection movement but also in the development of academically-based approaches called “anthrozoology,” “animal studies,” and other names. Such endeavors, especially under the virtues of a well-designed curriculum, push us to notice that our shared world relentlessly invites us to assess our ethical, intellectual and cultural resources, to use the widest possible array of critical thinking skills to assess our societies’ and institutions’ self-serving claims about humans being the most important, most intelligent, most X, most Y inhabitants of the Earth. In summary, two salient facts in our contemporary lives are that (i) even though each of us lives immersed in a more-than-human world, (ii) our contemporary societies and their institutions implicitly and even explicitly deny this in almost countless ways. The tension

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<sup>3</sup> Waldau 2013, *Animal Studies—An Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, at p. 8; the concept is defined at pp. 6-9 and then used throughout the book.

between these obvious realities prompts diverse responses. Some members of our species ignore all other-than-human animals, while others of us are fascinated beyond words by our nonhuman neighbors. Because it is not inclusivist views but, instead, failures to notice that today disproportionately shape our institutionalized education about other-than-human animals, there is presently a worldwide movement a-foot, a-wing, a-swim, represented well by the fields examined in this paper, to once again recognize that each human naturally has within herself or himself the potential for deep fascination with, and willingness to explore and care about, our nonhuman “neighbors.” Through such explorations, we come face-to-face with the possibilities and limits of our abilities to notice, care and co-exist; thereby, in T. S. Eliot’s words from “Little Gidding,” some realms of the modern world

arrive where we started

And know the place for the first time.

At the very least, students of such approaches take charge of their own views of this multispecies world. This achievement can be accomplished in a great variety of ways, some of which are focused on individuals locally, while other approaches notice populations and local communities or are driven by environmentally-framed sensitivity to the welfare of whole species. Other approaches still are decidedly religious, even theological, and still others overtly political. And while above all such attentiveness beyond the species line is characteristically personal and ethical, admittedly there remain circles where individuals continue to work overtime to deny that humans’ moral abilities should be concerned with any living beings beyond the species line.

The upshot is that today the variety of theoretical constructs about humans’ “proper relationship” with some or all of the living beings beyond the species line is bewildering—one needs cross-cultural approaches and interdisciplinary nimbleness to see the extraordinary

ferment around the world regarding how different humans now picture of our place relative to that of our nonhuman neighbors with whom we co-inhabit this one Earth.

## **Part I**

**The field(s)—what indeed is in a name?** Given that humans now number 7+ billions and dominate so much of our shared Earth, and given that nonhuman living beings come in great variety, it is not surprising that there are many approaches. Through careful scientific work, we have identified 2+ million species so far, but we are not yet certain if our estimates of the total number of species, which are often given as about 8 to 10 million, are within a factor of ten. In other words, we don't know if the number is 6 million additional species or 60 million.

Further, the diversity of human-nonhuman contacts, on the one hand, and the diversity of human cultures, on the other, combine in ways that make study of the human-nonhuman intersection very difficult to describe well. Finally, the science and educational worlds remain today sufficiently chaotic and still so very human-centered that our modern societies have not yet worked out a consensus on how to study fairly and well the living beings outside our own species.

In my 2013 book *Animal Studies—An Introduction*, I described the current situation as follows.

Work of the kind introduced in this book under the title *Animal Studies* goes under a variety of other names today, including human-animal studies, animal humanities, animality studies, the human-animal bond, companion animal studies, anthrozoology, posthumanism, critical animal studies, species critique, biopolitics, and more.

[Footnote omitted] While the diversity of names signals that the field is so new that it has not reached any consensus on either specific topics or its outer limits and borders of inquiry, in general ways all of these approaches share certain features. All reflect

the inevitability of interactions between humans and some nonhumans, just as each of these approaches in one way or another signals the impossibility of exploring all aspects of all nonhuman animals.<sup>4</sup>

While I think there are compelling arguments for the conclusion that not all of these names are equally valuable (my views are at pages 13 and 14 of *Animal Studies—An Introduction*), the diversity itself is fascinating. If one scans these fields, one finds that the nonhuman beings commanding attention typically are drawn from the 5400+ mammal species, the almost 10,000 bird species, some fish, and a few hundred non-mammal, non-bird, non-fish species. Amphibians and reptiles get some attention, true, and undeniably certain insects also interest a range of people—for example, the problems experienced by certain butterflies, such as Monarchs, or familiar honeybees exercise the imagination and ethical concern of a significant number of people. On the whole, however, the focus of the fields mentioned in this paper is not on insects or countless other less well-known forms of life but, rather, on something in the range of less than a thousand of the most familiar mammals and birds and some of the most endangered fish.

## **Part II**

**The Animal Rights Connection.** Only some who set themselves the task of discussing Animal Studies, Anthrozoology and their related fields mention the notoriously controversial but, I will argue, extremely important notion of “animal rights.” The issue of animal rights has often been linked with passionate support or opposition, yet upon dispassionate investigation “animal rights” can easily be seen to be a battery of issues described straightforwardly in a book-length discussion published in 2011.<sup>5</sup> Consider first how the phrase “animal rights” means different things to different people. To be sure, these

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<sup>4</sup> Waldau 2013, *Animal Studies—An Introduction*, at p. 13.

<sup>5</sup> Mentioned further below, this book is Waldau 2011. *Animal Rights—What Everyone Needs to Know*. Oxford University Press.

different meanings at times contend with one another, which tension can be understood easily enough when the different meanings are described as circling around two distinct poles. The far older pole is a set of meanings for “animal rights” anchored in our species’ morality-driven concerns to protect living beings generally. This set of meanings of “animal rights” comprises the majority of different meanings used around the world, such that one can rightfully say that “animal rights” still means to a large majority something like “moral rights for animals outside our species.” Such “moral rights” often seem general and even vague since they draw their meaning from any of the many different human claims we call “morals” or “ethics” or even “cultural values.” Though vague, formulations of this kind are rooted in our species’ millennias-old concerns to protect living beings from intentional cruelty and as fellow travellers in this Earth-bound life.

Because the notion of “moral rights” is often vague to the point of being ineffective,<sup>6</sup> a newer sense, or pole, of the term “animal rights” has become popular today in many precincts—this is the notion “animal rights” as requiring specific legal protections for other living beings or, said more succinctly, law-based protections. To be sure, these law-based protections come in many different forms (like different kinds of legislation), but the historically significant form is specific legal rights for specific individuals offered by an identifiable jurisdiction (often the paradigmatic example of such rights is the kind of specific, explicit protections found in the American “Bill of Rights”). When used in this law-based sense, “animal rights” clearly retains the moral dimension typical of the other pole already described, but the significant conceptual move—and the significant political aspect of this second and newer pole—is that such legal protections called “legal rights” are, unlike many moral rights, specific in two senses. First, they are offered by a specific legal system, and, second, they are tied directly to individuals of some species.

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<sup>6</sup> This is discussed in Chapter 3 of *Animal Rights—What Everyone Needs to Know*.

In recent centuries, animal protection has been pitched in the key of “animal rights” of both the moral and legal kind for important psychological and political reasons—invocation of rights discourse carries significant weight in policymaking circles. While this is important, there are reasons to think that “rights”-based discourse is, ultimately, limited for a number of reasons. It often remains essentially human-centered in its actualization and potential because this is a principal mechanism by which a large number of human societies have blunted human-on-human harms and thereby increased modern political protection for their citizens. Rights-based approaches are also tied to western, Enlightenment-vectored ideas that have important limits in both other cultures and for many other-than-human living beings.<sup>7</sup> The battery of diverse issues raised by “animal rights” is also helpfully seen if one uses the broad ideas developed to describe social movements. The worldwide movement known most generically as “the animal protection movement” has, like the fields discussed in this paper, additional names—one of these is “the animal rights movement.” Social movements are, to understate the matter significantly, complicated. Some of the most important complications are political, and certain political complexities can be conveyed through a comment made in the 1965 documentary by Gilles Pontecorvo entitled “The Battle of Algiers.” In this film, a philosopher named Larbi ben M’Hidi suggests the following to a young revolutionary.

It is hard to start a revolution

Harder still to sustain it

Hardest of all to win it.

And when you have won, it is then that the difficulties begin.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Kennedy, David 2004. *The Dark Sides of Virtue: Reassessing International Humanitarianism*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, where the discussion is about how the human rights movement can, because it is the product of our western cultural tradition, eclipse other culture’s dispute resolution mechanisms in a way that, sadly, “impoverishes local discourse” (p. 21).

<sup>8</sup> Said by Larbi Ben M’Hidi to Ali la Pointe in the 1966 documentary “The Battle of Algiers” directed by Gillo Pontecorvo. This influential film in the history of political cinema focused on the 1957 revolution in Algeria.

While the idea of revolution is at times applied to efforts to bring about animal rights, this is really a *minor* sense of the term “revolution.” True, the different notions we call “animal rights” in many cases open a door to important changes, so in terms of Larbi ben M’Hidi’s comment, the drive toward animal rights (no matter how one defines it) is clearly meant by advocates of animal protection to start a revolution and, hopefully, to sustain important change. *But there is another, far more significant revolution happening.* When seen as such, this more significant revolution leads to the conclusion that animal rights is not the major revolution at hand. I do not mean by this comment to deny or undermine the fact that animal rights has led to important advances and increases in awareness that have opened minds and hearts. These advances can be seen as having a tenor or “key” (as in the title of this paper) that is important, but not the whole story. *Why? “Animal rights” is, in fact, a derivative topic*—it draws its life blood from a deeper, wider and far more important revolution, namely, that reflected in the Animal Studies-Anthrozoology-Human-Animal Studies revolution now taking place.

What is this revolution? These fields can, collectively, be defined simply enough.

Animal Studies engages the many ways that human individuals and cultures are now interacting with and exploring other-than-human animals, in the past have engaged the living beings beyond our own species, and in the future might develop ways of living in a world shared with other animals.<sup>9</sup>

Definitions are often, of course, inadequate for those who really want to understand a subject well. One of the reasons this is particularly true for those involved with Animal Studies/Anthrozoology is that this work is so personal as to go beyond definition. This is, in part, due to the fact that there is characteristically a truly positive side to this work—students are more than deeply interested in the nonhuman animals that fascinate them—they are, in

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<sup>9</sup> Waldau 2013, 10



fact, committed to protecting specific kinds of other-than-human animals. This commitment is surely found among advocates of animal rights, but in Animal Studies/Anthrozoology one finds a broader version of this personal commitment. Thus, while in a very real way, advocates of “animal rights” (whether of the moral or legal kinds) set an important tone because they pitch their work in the key of meaningful animal protection, this same phenomenon exists in a fuller, more robust form throughout Animal Studies/Anthrozoology. This more complete approach is what makes Animal Studies, relative to “animal rights,” the true revolution.

Corresponding to the positive aspiration of offering fundamental protections to certain other living beings, such animal protection work has a negative side as well. Students want to change something fundamental, namely, the radical dismissal of any and all nonhuman animals that is a defining feature of modern industrialized societies. This dismissal is not only harsh on the nonhuman animals that it harms and otherwise erases. Multifaceted because of its pervasiveness in one major institution after another in the industrialized and industrializing worlds (law, education, politics, religion), human exceptionalism impoverishes humans as well. These multiple harms for humans, which are described throughout *Animal Studies—An Introduction*, are not at first easily discerned. They can be summed up by two quotes from famous 20th century figures. The first is from Viktor Frankl as he addressed the issue of each human realizing her or his own possibilities: “self-actualization is possible only as a side-effect of self-transcendence.”<sup>10</sup> While Frankl’s focus was individuals, the point is equally true of our species as a whole—our species cannot self-understand and assess its own realities and possibilities well in isolation. Our modern lives make it abundantly clear that we are citizens of more-than-human communities—just ask

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<sup>10</sup> Frankl, Viktor E. *Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy*. 4th ed. Boston: Beacon Press, 1992, 115.

your dog or cat or horse or bird if this is true. This insight has many 21st century and 20th century versions, but equally common were 19th, 18th, 17th, etc., century versions in whatever culture you examine, just as it is true of whatever culture you think of as your birth culture. In other words, both the important realm of individual self-actualization and that of our species-level actualization have often been recognized, which is one reason that nurturing individual-level awareness is integrally tied to species-level challenges.

On the issue of animal protection no matter how one decides to name it, then, our species (not just individuals) needs to make community with the more-than-human world. A moving statement of this key insight often mentioned in the environmental movement is Aldo Leopold's mid-twentieth century exhortation for humans to evolve "from conqueror of the land-community to a plain member and citizen of it."<sup>11</sup> Humans can achieve this only with a suitably large dose of concern to study other animals' realities apart from us—this is yet another reason why Anthrozoology and Animal Studies, not animal rights, are the larger, more real revolution.

### **Part III**

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**Keeping One's Balance.** An exhortation about balance—or (you choose the word or phrase) fairness, poise, equanimity, open-mindedness, generosity of spirit—is needed whenever the important concept of animal rights is in play in the academic world. Why? Because for some academics, religious leaders and educators, the mere mention of the alchemical phrase "animal rights" causes them to ignore the lines of argument made about why this term has traction around the world today. In addition, such people need virtues associated with words in the series "fairness, poise, equanimity, open-mindedness, generosity of spirit" to understand how and why so many students coming into these fields today arrive

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<sup>11</sup> Leopold, Aldo 1948/1991. "The Land Ethic", A Sand County Almanac, with Essays on Conservation from Round River. New York: Ballantine, 1991, 240.

with nothing less than truly deep personal commitments to somehow blunt or even stop altogether the truly serious harms now being done to certain nonhuman animals.

Such balance will likely not be seen as desirable by those who are scandalized by the mere mention of “animal rights.” But a fair-minded, evidence-based approach to the significance of “animal rights” should be eminently at home in any truly academic and educational environment. Plain language and ideas of the kind presented in *Animal Rights—What Everyone Needs to Know* can be developed to help people discuss any challenging topic. Critical thinking skills can be nurtured through such discussions, as can cross-cultural and interdisciplinary sensibilities. And of course a liberal dose of science helps immensely.

Nonetheless, there will continue to be those who assail users of the term “animal rights,” and it is likely that some will refuse to listen to speakers who use the term “animal rights” any longer. In education, this amounts to an attempt to impose political correctness of a kind, that is, to bully in an attempt to force people into using only those terms and ideas that the bully approves. By asking for balance, I ask that we leave political correctness and bullying aside. There is another, mirror form of political correctness that must be attended to as well. Some readers who insist that “animal rights” is the leading edge of humans’ connection to nonhuman animals will also need to keep their balance when reading what follows.<sup>12</sup>

#### **Part IV**

**Doing Animal Studies in the Key of Animal Rights.** What does it mean to suggest that Animal Studies or Anthrozoology or Human-Animal Studies (or fill in the blank with your choice of name for this mega-field) needs to be done in the key of “animal rights”? The argument here is cumulative, that is, it stands on multiple lines of argument—here are four points to help you grasp what I mean.

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<sup>12</sup> Here again, one can get a richer sense of why I say this by reading *Animal Studies—An Introduction*.

Point 1. Travel the world and you will readily see that in different societies, cultures and circles of discussion the two words “animal rights” mean different things to different people. Amid the diversity of uses, though, the phrase in virtually any of its uses does two things. Use of “animal rights” reflects a re-awakening of time-honored ideas of animal protection that have appeared in countless cultures. In an altogether different way, use of “animal rights” also constitutes an appeal to fundamental features found in the daily life of humans around the world. These features are humans’ remarkably fecund abilities to be concerned about “others” and our capacious human imagination by which we assess who “the others” might be.

Point 2. This reawakening of (i) time-honored ideas and (ii) an appeal to humans’ foundational abilities to care about “others” comes in many other forms besides “animal rights.” Our human cultures have, in fact, achieved animal protection with a great variety of approaches. Some cultures have long respected other animals—think, for example, of some of the religious traditions and small-scale, indigenous societies known for views of other animals as true neighbors and fellow citizens. In the Qur’an, for example, Surah 6:38 admonishes, “There is not a thing that moves on the earth, no bird that flies on its wings, but has a community of its own like yours.”<sup>13</sup>

A similar affirmation of human/nonhuman similarity appears in this famous biblical passage:

For the fate of the sons of men and the fate of beasts is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts; for all is vanity. All go to one place; all are from the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes down to the earth?<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Al-Qur'an, translation by Ahmed Ali, 1984, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, page 117.

<sup>14</sup> Ecclesiastes 3:19-21 (the translation is from the Revised Standard Version).

Such affirmations of the connection of humans with nonhumans are, cross-cultural studies have long shown, very evident across time and place. This is yet another reason that Animal Studies, which foregrounds cross-cultural and interdisciplinary approaches, is a remarkable revolution of which “animal rights” is a key but only limited part. Animal Studies and Anthrozoology both represent and advance the reawakening evident in animal rights claims, just as both appeal to our foundational ethical abilities. In summary, reawakenings and an affirmation of the central place that ethical caring plays in our human lives are realized in much richer ways by Animal Studies than by today’s animal rights discourse. “Animal rights” has been a force and is likely to remain a valued approach by some. Animal law is by a number of measures among the most advanced element of modern Animal Studies, and this subfield’s use of legal rights and other fundamental, effective protections for nonhuman animals will continue to be a cutting edge and truly valuable way to make the point that the realities of nonhuman animals, and especially individual nonhumans’ interests and point of view, count. This is so because animal rights takes its cue from the ideas and discourse that dominate our legal systems—for this reason, it is “a player” in the modern animal protection movement. But it relies on one form of discourse (the legal way of framing issues), and in that it is circumscribed relative to the multiple discourses which are found across the many disciplines that today are contributing to Animal Studies.

Point 3. Because the reawakening evident when Animal Studies is surveyed can be seen as broader than that of animal rights alone, Animal Studies can be seen as the principal engine of the evolving revolution through which modern societies can again come into appreciation of the obvious fact that humans are one animal among others as we all share life in a more-than-human world.

Said another way, starting, sustaining, winning the real revolution requires Animal Studies. Only then, that is, only with a broad approach in which humans use far more than

legal systems to protect our nonhuman neighbors, will the social movement that today's animal protection movement represents really have a chance to win.

If and when this happens, all of us need to keep in mind what Larbi ben M'Hidi suggested will follow winning the social movement for animal protection—*it is then, of course, that the real difficulties will begin.*

## **Part V**

**Education and Other Animals.** Animal Studies is a revolution for another reason—it answers the question, “What does it take to produce good education?” The students in the Anthrozoology graduate program at Canisius College are systematically exposed to a number of core skills—five of these amount to core competencies and/or literacies needed to explore well and honestly the human/nonhuman intersection that is the focus of the fields discussed in this paper. These five are critical thinking, cross-cultural comparisons, interdisciplinary approaches, ethics, and science literacy.

Critical thinking is a set of abilities developed by constant hard work—it is not a set group of ideas, but rather a suite of skills that is regularly adjusted, honed and complemented by new insights. This process of constantly working on our thinking is mandated because human thinking, though at times impressive and capable of achievements over time, has very often been wrong, subject to bias, wishful thinking, self-importance, self-inflicted ignorance, racism, sexism, classism, and so many other dead ends and weaknesses. We need, thus, a series of processes that help us avoid the worst in our thinking—hence the definition used in *Animal Studies—An Introduction*.

“Critical thinking” is a series of processes and tasks that many educators and others have advocated as a way of investing our mental processes with responsibility and humility—thereby increasing the breadth and depth of human reflection. Critical thinking prompts abundant questions in order to increase the chance that our encounters with and reasoning

about the realities surrounding us will reflect both features of the real world and our awareness that human thinking has limits even as it is wonderfully powerful at times. Such careful, reflective thinking is particularly important regarding nonhuman animal issues because we are but one animal among others, and while obviously very powerful today nonetheless characterized by limited abilities. Careful approaches to humans' thinking increase prospects of both accuracy and humility; as importantly, they can help us honestly and communally search out all animals' realities (both human and nonhuman). Let me also underscore how important it is us for us to do this work together, for these risks and this overall task belong to us all.

Cross-cultural comparisons are important because humans have developed thousands of cultures in which our species has thought about and impacted other living beings—what it means to be in relationship to other living beings has thus been developed over millennia. The great diversity of humans combines with the even greater diversity of nonhumans to make our species' interactions with these nonhuman “others” very diverse. It can be no surprise, then, that we need multiple disciplines and multifaceted approaches to these diversities as they have manifested (and no doubt will continue to evolve) in different places and times.

Ethics is, as suggested above, about our abilities to (i) notice both human and nonhuman others, (ii) take them seriously within our abilities to do so, and (iii) even choose to care in ways that humans' ethical genius has created over millennia. Finally, “science literacy” is a shorthand way of saying we must take full advantage of our capacity to learn about the cosmos we inhabit in ways that leave aside our capacity to delude ourselves through prejudice, bias, fantasy and wishful thinking.

The emergence of Animal Studies can be a powerful topic in our established education circles today precisely because Animal Studies needs these five competencies or

literacies to achieve its goals. If done in the key of animal rights, this kind of work has the added prospect of allowing us to live as Leopold imagined, that is, as “plain member and citizen” of “the land community.” We can do this with the aid of Animals Studies because of its deep commitment to the important task of developing rigorous, critical thinking-oriented forms of reflection as we engage the nonhuman neighbors in our local worlds.

Historically, to be sure, we have been both cavalier and naïve about such possibilities. The prevailing human-exceptionalism in our modern societies reveals that we have accorded ourselves privileges at the expense of our larger Earth community. As individuals have been selfish, so have we as a species been both selfish and short-sighted. The inclination one finds in religious, educational and political leaders to walk away from our own animality by constantly repeating phrases such as “humans and animals” has dumbed our species down, as it were. Today this practice converts the famous suggestion of the 18th Century thinker Helvetius into a self-fulfilling prophecy—humans are born ignorant, not stupid—they are made stupid by education.<sup>15</sup>

We need not do this to ourselves, of course, but we must not do this to our children. We can use our remarkable language and thinking skills to affirm that we are, in fact, animals. This is an important honesty, and yet others will suggest that it is an insult to humans to frankly avow our animality. But this is both practical and scientific certainty, for we are now, have always been, and will always be animals. It profits us little to deny such an obvious truth, for we are evidence that animality can be (as it obviously is in us) a remarkable mode of being. It is ironic, then, that those who continue in the face of such certainties to deny our own animality reveal thereby that they despise what we truly are.

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<sup>15</sup> Helvetius’ comments are made at the beginning of *A Treatise on Man; His Intellectual Faculties and His Education* at pages 5-6, the beginning of Section I, Chapter III, and then again at 49-50. The version used in the text relies upon Bertrand Russell’s summary of Helvetius’ views, which are included in his witty but caricature-prone *History of Western Philosophy*—the relevant passage is cited in Russell, Bertrand. *The Basic Writings of Bertrand Russell: 1903-1959*. Edited by Robert E. Egner, and Lester E. Denonn. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1961, at page 294.



It is time to come home, to mature, to make peace with our real selves, for we do this through honesty, humility and a sense of commitment to our larger community. We are mammals; we are primates; and we are, it is less well known, great apes. These are all animal categories. Our differences from other living beings should be acknowledged fully, but such acknowledgement makes us no less “animal” than, say, orcas or turtles. We reveal how remarkable an animal can be, just as do some of the other animals with whom we share the Earth.

If we take the scientific revolution seriously, not as a new fundamentalism that excludes our spiritual and imaginative sides, but as an essential partner in exploring the world, then we can recognize our plain animality and citizenship in a more-than-human world. Such work will require humble, honest, communal work, truly interdisciplinary approaches and multiple ways of talking (“forms of discourse”) that transport us past the extreme limits of human-exceptionalism and into forms of education, public policy, law, ethics, wisdom that honor life’s values-centeredness just as they acknowledge our world’s mysteries, complications and beauties. It is only by being honest about our realities and limits, that is, our own animality, that we become all that we can be.

Doing this will problematize human-exceptionalism. And, yes, changing this fiction will be a major reason why when the revolution is won, then the real difficulties will begin—we must build an image of a multi-species world to be able to learn how to be responsible members who nurture and protect such a community. Human animals are up to this challenge but only if we will notice it and take it seriously—that is the revolution of Animal Studies and Anthrozoology.

## **Conclusion**

Notice what is at stake in the above account about Anthrozoology and Animal Studies.

- Growth in our ideas about animality (our own as well as the realities of nonhuman animals)
- Maturation of humans as a species
- Development of truly robust education
- Acknowledgment of our many nested communities

These are integral parts of a change that make Animal Studies and Anthrozoology a fundamental sort of revolution that goes far beyond what is contemplated by advocates of legal rights for certain nonhuman animals—the latter is a step up a stairway that leads to a much richer world and “our larger community” as described by the inclusivist “geologist” Thomas Berry.

*Indeed we cannot be truly ourselves in any adequate manner without all our companion beings throughout the earth. The larger community constitutes our greater self.*<sup>16</sup>

This is why I have suggested that studying the more-than-human world and its other-than-human citizens is well understood as part of the tradition of humans prompting “revolutions” to get beyond the limits we have imposed on each other and the rest of the world we share with so many other living beings. This “revolution” has possibilities, vistas, opportunities, humilities and more that can take us much further than “animal rights” alone can. These possibilities, vistas, etc., are also what give Animal Studies and Anthrozoology the prospect of providing deeper, better, more-scientifically-attuned and ethically-sensitive forms of education about science, law, religion, literature, ethics, and on and on.

From the vantage point of nonhumans, of course, this change has great prospects. Further, when considering the human side of the ledger, such education reveals to both educator and

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<sup>16</sup> Berry, Thomas 2006. “Loneliness and Presence”, in Waldau, Paul and Patton, Kimberley (eds) 2006. *A Communion of Subjects: Animals in Religion, Science, and Ethics*. New York: Columbia University Press, 5-10, at 5

student alike that self-actualization for each human, and for our species as a whole, comes only through self-transcendence, not human exceptionalism. Finally, such education also reveals something altogether personal and relevant to our daily lives and local places, namely, that our world is not well understood as a collection of objects<sup>17</sup> —rather, we are truer to ourselves, nonhuman animals, and our shared Earth when we respect this trio as a communion of subjects in a far-more-than-human community.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, vii. An earlier version of this quote ("Indeed we must say that the universe is a communion of subjects rather than a collection of objects.") was part of a paper entitled "Ethics and Ecology" that Berry delivered April 9, 1996, at Harvard University to the Harvard Seminar on Environmental Values.