Zoopolis

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What might our social and political communities look like if we respected the moral rights of non-human animals? How would we relate to the non-human animals who live both within and outside of the borders of specific communities, and what political status might these animals have? The term 'zoopolis' has come to capture the idea of an interspecies community in which the moral status of non-humans animals is respected. This article explores recent contributions to the development of this idea, focusing in particular on the work by Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka.

The term 'zoopolis' was originally coined by geographer Jennifer Wolch. She criticises current practices of urbanisation and development for their anthropocentric assumptions and their disregard for non-human life. These practices not only fail to respect the moral status of non-human animals but also affect our thinking and our attitudes, and prevent us from understanding the perspectives of non-human animals. For Wolch, our alienation from non-human animals is caused by broader economic and social structures. These structures cannot be changed by the mere recognition of non-human animals' moral status but require broader action that addresses not only oppression based on species membership but also other forms of oppression, such as those based on race, class or gender.

Against this background, Wolch's goal is to develop a 'transspecies urban theory' (1996, p. 23), which takes non-human beings and their moral standing seriously and recognises them as subjects. She proposes the idea of a zoopolis as an alternative approach to urban life and development. Zoopolis, in her account, refers to the 'reintegration of people with animals and nature', which 'can provide urban dwellers with the local, situated everyday knowledge of animal life required to grasp animal standpoints or ways of being in the world, interact with them accordingly in particular contexts, and motivate political action necessary to protect their autonomy as subjects and their life spaces' (Wolch 1996, p. 29). The goal, then, is to 'renaturalise' our cities and to make non-human animals part of our understanding of urban life.

While coined by Wolch, the term 'zoopolis' is now arguably associated most closely with the work by Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka (2011). Their monograph of the same title develops

an account of a just, interspecies community. Theirs is one of a number of books that approach our relationship with non-human animals through the lens of political philosophy, forming part of a 'political turn' (Garner and Sullivan, 2016) in animals ethics (others include Garner, 2014, Cochrane, 2018, and Meijer, 2019).

While Donaldson and Kymlicka share certain assumptions with Wolch, their aim is to offer a more systematic account of what our relationships with different kinds of non-human animals might look like. They start from the assumption that non-human animals have certain basic moral rights – such as the right not to be enslaved – because they are beings with a subjective good. In addition to these universal rights, non-human animals also have *relational* rights, that is, rights that arise in the context of specific, morally relevant relationships, such as the family or – particularly relevant for Donaldson and Kymlicka – the political community. A comparison with the human context helps clarify this distinction: we typically think of human rights, such as the right to movement and the right not to be tortured, as universal rights that are tied to human beings' moral status. In addition, we often allow that individuals have citizenship rights in virtue of their membership to a particular political community, such as a right to shape the collective decisions of that community or to share in its resources. Those who are not members of that political community, such as temporary visitors, do not have such citizenship rights (though they may have such rights in their own communities).

Donaldson and Kymlicka use this basic idea to specify which rights non-human animals have. Crucial to their approach is that different non-human animals stand in very different relationships to existing political communities. The rights of different animals and our rights and obligations towards them depend on the relation in which we stand to them. Donaldson and Kymlicka offer a categorisation of non-human animals in three distinct groups, each of which stands in very different relations to human beings: domesticated animals, wild animals, and what they call 'liminal animals', who live in or in close proximity to human settlements but have not been domesticated. Importantly, it is not an animal's species that determines which group it belongs to but rather the relation in which the animal stands to human communities; a rabbit, for example, could fall into any of these three groups, depending on whether they lived in a human family as a companion animal, in the city but not part of a human community, or in the wild, outside of human settlement. An individual animal may also move between different groups over the course of their

lives, for example when a dog moves from living with a human family (domesticated) to living with a group of dogs (liminal).

Donaldson and Kymlicka use this framework to overcome what they regard as the most important impasse in our thinking about animal rights. The animal rights movement has focused on delineating non-human animals' negative rights, that is their rights not to be interfered with: their right not to be killed, used, exploited, etc. But there has been relatively less attention on what just interactions between human and non-human animals might look like. For Donaldson and Kymlicka, an account of animals' positive rights and entitlements is necessary to provide a vision of what a just, interspecies society might look like.

The idea of a 'zoopolis' is perhaps most clearly articulated in relation to Donaldson and Kymlicka's vision for domesticated animals, such as the companion animals who share our homes but also those animals who are currently exploited as part of the meat or dairy industries, or as part of scientific or entertainment industries. Like other animal rights theorists, Donaldson and Kymlicka regard the exploitation of animals as a gross violation of their basic rights. However, Donaldson and Kymlicka position themselves against extinctionist views, according to which domesticated animals, because of their dependence on humans, cannot relate to human beings on just terms. Extinctionists therefore argue that in a world that meets requirements of interspecies justice, currently existing domesticated animals would live out their lives but would be prevented from procreating so that over time, domesticated species become extinct (*see entry on abolitionism*). Donaldson and Kymlicka agree that domestication has wronged animals but reject the idea that it has made it impossible for domesticated animal to relate to human beings on just terms — in fact, they argue, bringing about the extinction of these animals would only compound the original injustice of domestication. Moreover, domesticated animals already are part of our families and communities; the question is how to make these already existing relations just. Donaldson and Kymlicka propose that such relations can be just if we think of those animals who are members of our communities as co-citizens and grant them the membership rights that come with this status.

This, of course, requires that we move beyond our current understanding of citizenship, which ties citizenship to cognitive capacities and therefore excludes not only non-human animals but also many humans, such as children and those with cognitive disabilities. Domesticated animals, Donaldson and Kymlicka argue, have the capacity for dependent agency: they can express

their preferences through those humans with whom they live in close proximity. While communication across species boundaries is not straightforward, those of us who live with companion animals typically become sensitive to how these animals express preferences and desires. Importantly, the possibility for agency extends also to the political realm. The presence of domesticated animals in the public sphere can shape political processes and collective deliberation, which gives domesticated a kind of political agency.

The main component of citizenship, Donaldson and Kymlicka argue, is that one's interests should count in determining the public good. Once we regard the animals who are part of our communities as co-citizens, we must grant them the specific rights that come with this status. This includes a right to be protected from harm, a right to health care and rights to political representation so that their preferences can shape collective decision-making. But citizenship also implies certain obligations for domesticated animals. In particular, animals must be socialised to be members of an inter-species community and to abide by certain requirements, such as not to be aggressive towards others.

In more recent work, Donaldson and Kymlicka (2015) have argued that sanctuaries for domesticated animals rescued from the food and dairy industries can offer important insights into what a just, interspecies communities might look like (*also see entry on sanctuaries*). These spaces can be used to create 'intentional communities' (Donaldson and Kymlicka, 2015, p. 63), in which residents of the sanctuary are given the opportunity to live self-determined lives. This requires that sanctuary residents be able to explore different ways of living and to make choices based on their own needs and preferences, for example when it comes to their level of interaction with other animals, including those of other species.

Donaldson and Kymlicka propose a very different model for the second group of animals whose relational rights they investigate: animals in the wild. These animals, they argue, form their own communities. They can navigate the risks of living in the wild; indeed, their flourishing requires that they be able to maintain their modes of social organisation. (This, Donaldson and Kymlicka argue, is despite the existence of predation in the wild; *see also entry on predation*.) While a limited range of interventions may be consistent with sovereignty (e.g. providing vaccination for wild animals to protect from certain diseases), humans' main obligation here is to respect the sovereignty of these communities. This requires that we restrict human activities that affect wild animals, such as extending human settlements into wild animals' territory or

contributing to pollution. When we cannot avoid interaction with wild animals, we must ensure a fair distribution of the risks and benefits of such interaction: for example, if we must build roads through wild animal territory, we must reduce the risk for wild animals by building bridges that allow them to safely cross those roads.

The third group of animals Donaldson and Kymlicka consider is that of liminal animals. These animals are neither wild nor domesticated. They live in or near human communities and depend on human settlements for their survival, but they are not domesticated and therefore cannot be full members of these communities. Familiar examples include raccoons, rats and pigeons. For these animals, Donaldson and Kymlicka envisage a set of rights and responsibilities that is less extensive than that of citizenship; they refer to this as denizenship, linking it to the rights that, in the human case, are typically granted to non-citizen residents. Donaldson and Kymlicka argue that we do not have an obligation to allow these animals to enter our territory (for example, we can erect barriers or disincentives for entry), but once they have entered, they acquire a right to secure residence in that territory and must not be removed. Their interests must be taken into account in our collective decisions but by the same token, we may also impose certain restrictions on them.

Donaldson and Kymlicka's proposal has, of course, not been without critics. Some commentators have challenged aspects of the rights and responsibilities Donaldson and Kymlicka attribute to specific animals, such as the ascription of political agency to domesticated animals (Hinchcliffe, 2015) or their view that predation is consistent with the sovereignty of wild animal communities (Horta, 2013). Others have expressed a broader concern about the relational approach at the heart of Donaldson and Kymlicka's framework, which could result in an unattractive distinction between different groups of animals, all of whom do after all have the same moral standing (Cochrane, 2013).

Critical responses notwithstanding, the vision of a zoopolis, as envisaged by Wolch and, in particular, Donaldson and Kymlicka, has been influential not only within academic debate but also beyond. For example, it has shaped the inquiry into non-anthropocentric urban development that would allow for human and non-human beings to share urban spaces (Kleszcz, 2018) and artistic depictions of 'animal utopia' (Kiewert, 2018). The notion of a 'zoopolis' has enriched our thinking about animal rights by challenging us to develop a positive vision of an interspecies community in which human and non-human animals live together on terms that meets requirements of justice.

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