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From Mute Objects to Militant Subjects: The Politics of Rebellious Animals

Aylon A. Cohen



Photo 13.1 Anonymous. Portland, OR, USA, August 2010

This essay is a revised and updated version of my earlier "'We Support Circus Animals Who Kill Their Captors': Nonhuman Resistance, Animal Subjectivity, and the Politics of Democracy', see Cohen (2015).

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Animal rights activists and advocates attempt to include nonhuman animals in the human community of subjects through reasoned philosophical tracts and by direct action. On the philosophical side, much of the debate over the last several decades concerning animals—inaugurated by Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* and Tom Regan's *The Case for Animal Rights*—has focused on the moral status or rights of animals in an attempt to show that dominant moral discourses cannot consistently maintain the species boundary excluding nonhuman animals from claims to equality. Animals ought not to be treated as objects, they argue, because they are sentient subjects (Singer) or subject-of-a-life (Regan). Activists, on the other hand, opt for direct confrontation against institutions that oppress animals in order to raise these similar questions in the public sphere. In so doing, both philosophers and activists aim to expand the boundaries of the human community to include the question of nonhuman livelihood as a viable political question of justice. However, dominant animal rights discourse fails to analyze the boundary of the political community as marked by a historical division between logical animals (humans) and phonic animals (nonhumans). In so doing, this discourse merely enables nonhumans to become mute political *objects* of representation rather than *subjects* of speech, and thus maintains the exclusion of animals from the political community of speaking subjects.

By turning to the work of radical democrats Jacques Rancière and Chantal Mouffe, I argue for a re-conceptualization of animal subjectivity and speech that promises a new framework for attending to the needs and standpoints of nonhuman animals. Radical democratic political theorizing understands politics as a zone of irreducible conflict marked by exclusion. By analyzing historical and ongoing modes of political exclusion from the democratic community, radical democracy promises a more historically grounded method of exploring the way in which animals are currently denied entry into the field of politics. By emphasizing the active historical borders of exclusion, radical democracy points to more pragmatic approaches for deconstructing the borders between nonhuman and human animals in the hope of keeping the political sphere perpetually open to contestation.

After providing this alternative methodology for thinking about animal oppression through the lens of radical democracy, I shift the discussion

from an analysis of border construction to investigate border contestation. I argue that attending to the concerns of animals through a lens of radical democracy requires humans to pay attention to events of nonhuman resistance whereby animals oppose their exclusion from the political community. To do so, the chapter uses Bruno Latour's work on 'speech prostheses' and argues for deploying multiple and potentially conflicting vehicles of speech to make audible nonhuman voices. Through the notion of 'speech prostheses', I show how nonhuman resistance makes the oppression of animals not only an *object* of political deliberation, but also more importantly, transforms the animals themselves into *subjects* of politics. Therefore, the concept of 'speech prostheses' illuminates both how animals contest their political exclusion and also how this contestation enables animals to become subjects of discourse. This combination of radical democratic approaches to borders and Latour's work on speech prostheses ultimately entails rethinking animal subjectivity, as events of border contestation illustrate that nonhuman animals are both *agents* of resistance and *subjects* of democracy.

Radical Democracy and Border Zones

Radical democrats illuminate the internal-exclusions central to the construction of any democratic body, whereby those excluded do not count as subjects (of the community) given their exclusion. Any community that professes inclusion, Mouffe argues, necessarily grounds itself on 'a disavowal of the particular and a refusal of specificity' (Mouffe, 2005, p. 13). The creation of a democratic union requires, she argues, a constitutive outside that forms the borders and limits of the community of subjects. Similarly, Rancière explains 'a count of community "parts"' will always be 'a false count, a double count, or a miscount' given the inevitability of a remainder, of the part of the community that is excluded and therefore has no part (Rancière, 1999, p. 6). Given that any community cannot 'establish a definite suture', Mouffe explains, 'what matters is the possibility of tracing a line of demarcation between those who belong to the demos [...] and those who, in the political domain, cannot have the same rights because they are not part of the demos' (Mouffe, 2000, p. 40,

2005, pp. 52–3). Rather than feign overlapping inclusivity, radical democrats argue that political theorizing should note the inevitable outside, the remaining miscount, of any political regime. This inevitable outside describes the excluded, those who lack recognition and thus status as *subjects* of the community.

Rancière and Mouffe illustrate that any decision within the political terrain will necessarily create and leave unaccounted an excluded group, thus ensuring the *inevitability of conflict*. For Mouffe, the decision to create any ‘forms of unity’ will result in ‘establishing a frontier to define the forces to be opposed, the “enemy”’ (Mouffe, 2005, p. 50). In separating off the excluded remains, the demos undergoes ‘a moment of closure which’, Mouffe argues, ‘is required by the very process of constituting the “people”’ (Mouffe, 2000, p. 43). This moment of temporary closure that constitutes a community orders the discourses, knowledges, bodies, and beings of the demos in opposition to the unaccounted outside. While Mouffe describes this process as the formation of a specific bloc of hegemony (Mouffe, 2000, p. 53), Rancière describes this event as the *logic of the police*, which ‘arranges that tangible reality in which bodies are distributed in community’ (Rancière, 1999, p. 28). Whether articulated as ‘the symbolic ordering of social relations’ (Mouffe, 2000, p. 18) or the ‘order of bodies that defines the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying’ (Rancière, 1999, p. 29), both Mouffe and Rancière point to the ultimate contingency and thus contestability of any and all political regimes given that any order or arrangement can be reordered and rearranged. While I do not wish to downplay the differences between Mouffe and Rancière, their shared critique of both the necessity of exclusion and of the porousness of community boundaries warns against the complacency of any community that believes itself to be fully inclusive. Their thought indicates that we must focus our attention to the ongoing struggles occurring on and through the peripheries of communities.

What I want to emphasize in this narrative is not the violence that defines the repressed exclusion of the constitutive outside, but rather the manner in which the contestation of and entry into the political community entails a shift of subjectivity for both the included and the previously excluded. For Mouffe, the re-formation of the political community occurs when excluded groups dislocate the dominant hegemony

and (re)-articulate a new ‘political identity’ for those in the newly modified community: inclusion ‘is not a matter of establishing a mere alliance between given interests but of actually modifying the very identities of these forces’ (Mouffe, 2005, p. 70). Since politics requires decision-making in a foundationally contested domain, the formation of democratic subjects rather than the expression of their interests is the main logic of democracy. As with Mouffe, Rancière also identifies the re-formation of subjectivity as the logic of political struggles that contest and re-define the parties to the community: ‘parties do not exist prior to the conflict they name and in which they are counted as parties’ (Rancière, 1999, p. 27). For the included part of the community—those who are counted—politics does not exist with the excluded and uncounted elements: ‘there is no political stage *because* there are no parties [...] Politics is primarily conflict over the existence of a common stage and over the existence and status of those present on it’ (Rancière, 1999, pp. 26–7). The act of contestation is an act of *subjectivation* that ruptures the boundaries of the political field. Contesting the boundaries of the political community means challenging who counts as a *subject* of this community. Contestation is therefore a performative act, since it simultaneously creates the parties that engender the act of rupture. At stake then is not simply the inclusion of the excluded group, but rather the re-subjectivation and re-codification of the community itself. Both Mouffe and Rancière identify the break of community borders and inclusion of the excluded subjects with a process of subjectivation that not only makes marginalized groups political *subjects* of the community, but also re-fashions the *subjectivity* of the entire community.¹

One of the primary battles that defines the hegemonic formation of community borders is the question of who is to count as more than a mere animal. As Rancière argues, ‘one of the stakes of the very dispute that institutes politics’ is the question of animality, namely, the ‘opposition of logical animals and phonic animals’ (Rancière, 1999, p. 22). Who is to count as a political animal capable of speech and who is the animal of bare life that can only express suffering? As I will argue, ‘The

¹ That said, Mouffe seems to believe that this shift of subjectivity takes place over a relatively long period of time, whereas Rancière suggests that it occurs in a moment of rupture.

Animal' represents the constitutive outside of the community, whereby challenging one's place as excluded means confronting the association of one's subjectivity with animality. Having outlined the radical democratic understanding of politics, I turn my focus on those excluded phonic animals *par excellence*. Not animalized humans, from the slaves of antiquity to the so-called savages of America, but rather those animalized animals—real, fleshy, furry, scaly animals.² Using the radical democratic framework that emphasizes border exclusions, conflict, and how contestation of these borders creates political subjects, my goal in this chapter is to demonstrate how nonhuman animals are a part of the community that has no part and to identify the moments of rupture whereby they have attempted to include themselves.

Animal Voice and Animal Speech

According to the logic of democratic politics, every member of the community ought to be included in and able to influence decision-making that affects their lives. As the foundational theorist of liberal democracy John Stuart Mill argues, the 'ideally best form of government' locates 'sovereignty' in the 'community; every citizen [...] having a *voice* in the exercise of that ultimate sovereignty' (Mill, 1991a, p. 246). Here, the democratic ideal is oriented toward total inclusion: nothing about us without us. Yet, even in Mill's thinking about democracy there exists the traces of exclusion necessary for any construction of 'the people'. Not everyone in Mill's narrative can exercise self-governance and sovereignty. Mill figures savages and barbarians to live in a 'condition very little above the highest beasts' (Mill, 1991a, p. 231). The implication of this condition is their inability to exercise the appropriate agency necessary for freedom. In his *On Liberty*, Mill argues that indigenous peoples cannot exercise self-governance because they, like children, have not yet developed 'the maturity of their faculties', meaning the developed capacity for reason (Mill, 1991b, p. 14). As such, the principle of liberty does not apply to them, and 'despotism' remains the only 'legitimate mode of government in dealing with barbarians' (Mill, 1991b, p. 14). While the colonized do have a voice, albeit multiple and terrifying

² For a discussion of animalized animals, see Dechka (2008).

for Mill, they do not qualify as agents of governance, since they do not possess the capacity for *reasoned* speech necessary for liberty and self-governance (Mantena, 2007). At the foundation of Mill's exclusion, and as Rancière (1999) suggests, at the foundation of western politics as such, rests Aristotle's (in)famous explanation of the political nature of the human animal:

Nature, as we often say, does nothing without some purpose; and she has endowed man alone among the animals with the power of speech. Speech is something different from voice, which is possessed by other animals also and used by them to express pain or pleasure; for their nature does indeed enable them not only to feel pleasure and pain but to communicate these feelings to each other. Speech, on the other hand, serves to indicate what [...] is just and what is unjust (Aristotle, 1992: III, 1282 b21).

On the one side exist logical animals, who can speak about themselves and their condition in the language of justice. In speaking, they perform their political lives by governing themselves as governable objects. As Megan Foley explains, 'this performative constitution of self-representation is a prerequisite for the logic of self-governance [...] that establishes democratic citizenship' (Foley, 2010, p. 390). On the other side exist phonic animals, who cannot speak in the language of justice. These animals only have the capacity for voice, the ability to say in their own way 'this pleases me', rather than the capacity for speech, the ability to say 'this is unjust'. Animals, like Mill's savages and children, can scream and kick and shout and cry. Aristotle even grants that animals can communicate these feelings to one another. However, they lack the capacity to speak and it is only with speech, which bears the mark of reasoning subjects, that the subject can respond to questions of justice and thus self-govern. Unable to speak and thus to exercise *logos*, 'The Animal' cannot join and so remains excluded from the democratic community. Animality thus defines the constitutive outside of politics as the realm of speaking subjects.

According to Mill, not only animals, but also colonized peoples—given their close association with beasts—are excluded from the democratic community. Today, however, those committed to decolonization would deny the exclusion of indigenous peoples from the political community. As such, could we not bring nonhuman animals into the political

community of speaking subjects on the same grounds that indigenous peoples have fought for their recognition? After all, it was partly the domination of the animal in the European colonial imaginary that helped justify the colonial project. The colonial encounter with indigenous peoples did not occur on neutral terrain but already included various histories of association used to 'fabricate the colonized subject' (Fanon, 1963, p. 2). Consider the white boy who shouted upon seeing Frantz Fanon, "'Maman, see the Negro; I'm scared! Scared! Scared!'" (Fanon, 2008, p. 91). As Fanon argues, the making of Fanon as an object of fear depends on histories of association over-determining the boy's and Fanon's encounter: 'The Negro is Animal, the Negro is bad, the Negro is wicked, the Negro is ugly' (Fanon, 2008, p. 93). As Abraham DeLeon (2010) demonstrates, the species hierarchy between human and nonhumans constructed during the Enlightenment provided the models by which colonizers could transfer practices of domination from nonhumans to animalized natives. The naturalization of the species hierarchy and its transposition onto indigenous peoples from Europe fashioned the discursive apparatuses necessary to justify and enact colonialism.

The colonial project did not just work on the symbolic level, but also required the eradication of the lived material bodies of nonhumans. Winona LaDuke explains that 'during the 1880s, buffalo killing was part of military policy, and land grabbing was part of America [...] These two policies were key to the colonization of the plains' (LaDuke, 1999, p. 141). Having killed the buffalo and destroyed the major food source for native people of the prairie, the government not only opened space for western cattle production, but also bound native people to the Indian Department by creating a market through which indigenous people had to purchase their food. Thus, many of the products purchased by the Indian Department and allocated to Indian families originate from livestock raised on stolen native lands. Therefore, the physical destruction of fifty million buffalo constituted a key nexus point in the colonization of indigenous people of the prairie.

From the symbolic to the material, the oppression of nonhuman animals played a necessary role in the colonization and thus exclusion of indigenous peoples from the democratic community. Thus, from the perspective of decolonization, it appears that we have an obvious point

from which to argue for the inclusion of nonhuman animals into the field of politics. However, it seems that we have moved too quickly. To seek the inclusion of animals into the demos by riding on the intersection between animals and the decolonizing project ensures that the animal becomes part of the political field of contestation only insofar as nonhumans can attach themselves to other movements. In other words, do we still have reason to care about the buffalo if we lack its reference to the Lakota people? Would we still struggle for decolonization in the absence of colonized *humans*? Finally, can we pose the question of the animal in animal liberation such that the animal remains not only *intersectional* with other struggles but also *irreducible* to them?

Animal liberation activists have attempted to do so by breaking the dominant hegemony that sees animals as outside of the field of politics. 'Everybody knows', Derrida says, 'what terrifying and intolerable pictures a realist painting could give to the industrial, mechanical, chemical, hormonal, and genetic violence to which man has been submitting animal life for the past two centuries' (Derrida, 2002, p. 395). Guided by these images, activists attempt to re-set the political agenda to include nonhumans by disrupting established patterns of thought through various means, from boycotts to bombings, to undermine the monetary and emotional advantages that accrue from the exclusion of nonhumans (Humphre/Stears, 2006; Young, 2001). Thus, when the Animal Liberation Front breaks the windows of fur stores or rescues animals from slaughterhouses and laboratories, they are demanding that the question of the animal be a political question. In Rancière's language, these activists enact a 'dispute over the object of dispute, the dispute over the existence of the dispute and the parties confronting each other in it' (Rancière, 1999, p. 55). When fur stores respond that their fur is merchandise garnered in a humane manner, the objects of dispute, namely animals as private property as fur, have consequently already become an object of dispute, worthy of political deliberation. These activists are attempting to re-articulate the hegemonic ordering of nonhumans in the status quo. Their actions constitute a 'political activity' that ruptures the policing of the community by 'shift[ing] a body from the place assigned to it'; in demanding that the dead animal be accounted for, they are making 'visible what had no business being seen' (Rancière, 1999, p. 30).

Shifting the objects of politics through the disruption of the status quo, activists engage in political action that challenges the borders of the democratic community and its policing of animal bodies. These animal liberationists contest the political designation of 'The Animal' as *object* for human use. That said, the political action undertaken for animals still begs the question of *who* is acting, which subjects are at play, and in what ways are those within the political community re-subjectivated as a result of these actions. As I argued above, subjectivation occurs when those 'who have no right to be counted as speaking beings make themselves of some account' (Rancière, 1999, p. 27). The result of a long history of animal liberation actions disrupting the dominant hegemony now entails that humans have the ability and right to speak about animals as an '*object of dispute*' (Rancière, 1999, p. 55, emphasis added). That said, the subjects of the political stage remain the same: where previously humans set the agenda for what counts as politically worthy, now they still do so. Of course, having nonhumans count as worthy objects of political dispute is advantageous over their exclusion. However, the danger of this type of political action—of any action that models itself as an act of solidarity done for another, in the name of another—is that the disruption of the policed objects do not necessitate a reconfiguration of who counts as agents of speech, as subjects of politics. Rancière explains, 'the problem is knowing whether the subjects who count in the interlocution "are" or "are not," whether they are speaking or just making noise' (Rancière, 1999, p. 50). Solidarity actions done on behalf of animals may create new objects of dispute, and they may even re-subjectivate other humans to start caring about nonhumans, but the animals themselves remain noisy objects of representation. The Aristotelian splitting of politics between objects of voice and noise and subjects of speech remains intact.

To be a part of the democratic community, subjects, in order to become subjects, must make it known that they exercise the capacity for speech. Subjects must challenge the regime of violence that denies them subjectivity in order to enter the political field as subjects. As objects of representation, animals remain not just silent but *silenced*. Ironically, it is those who claim to be allies of animals who further intensify this silencing. As evidence one can turn to the common slogan heard throughout the animal rights movement: 'we speak for those who cannot'; 'we are

a voice for the voiceless'. With nonhuman animals, the project of radical democracy seems to come up against its limit. The commitment to an inclusive political community wavers when faced with the prospect of confronting those who cannot speak, and who remain simply noise. With animals, then, it seems that all we can hope for is representation for the voice that cannot represent itself.

Is the Rebel Yell a Rebel Speech?

In November 1995, Emily the cow had just arrived at a slaughter-facility in Hopkinton, Massachusetts. Having reached the end of her employment as a dairy worker, her last task was to be grounded into beef and bone-meal. However, Emily decided otherwise. She leapt over a five-foot fence and dashed for the forest. Evading the staff's attempts to trap her with caches of hay, Emily roamed the rural community for forty days. With news reports circulating about her escape, the overwhelming popularity she received from local residents eventually compelled the slaughterhouse to allow her to live out the rest of her days on a large pasture at a local peace abbey when she finally re-emerged from the woods. Emily's story is not unusual, and is but one of the many in a history of escapes from farms, slaughterhouse, and laboratories (Hribal, 2007). Consider also the case of Tatiana, a Siberian tiger confined for years in a small enclosure in the San Francisco Zoo. On 25 December 2007, Tatiana cleared the twelve-foot high wall of her enclosure after three teenage boys persistently tormented her. She snatched one the boys and mauled him to death. Singular in her purpose, she stalked the zoo grounds for the next half-hour, ignoring zoo visitors, park employees, and emergency responders, until she tracked down the two other boys and mauled them before being gunned down by police (Hribal, 2010, pp. 21–31).

How do we explain these episodes of escape, rebellion, and revenge? Are these animals not provoking the wrong of their absence from the common community, bringing into question their place as the part of the community that has no part? According to Rancière, the disruption of the logic of the police 'creates [subjects] by transforming identities defined in the natural order of the allocation of functions and places into

instances of experience of a dispute' (Rancière, 1999, p. 36). In challenging their place in slaughterhouses and zoos, these nonhumans bring to light the assumed naturalness of their oppression and so, I will argue, become political subjects. By forcing questions of the right of slaughterhouses to kill cows like Emily, which the residents of Hopkinton challenged through their support, or of the justice of the torment that Tatiana endures, these nonhumans bring their experiences into the heart of the community and make them objects of dispute. In reordering the bodies of the community into founding new alliances to be cheered or new enemies to be gunned down, these nonhumans appear to rupture the hegemonic modes of thinking and relating and in so doing become political subjects.

It may not be clear to what extent these episodes in fact did rearrange, affect, and rupture the policed order of the political communities and so allow these nonhumans to assume the position of subjects. To give a more concrete example of the manner in which nonhumans can instigate a re-organization of ways of being and living that challenges the dominant hegemony, consider Tyke the elephant (Hribal, 2010, pp. 55–61). Having endured years of bad working conditions, poor food, beatings, untreated injuries, constant travel, and the need to entertain humans, on three different occasions Tyke escaped from the circus, attacked a tiger trainer, and harmed her handlers, groomers, and trainers. Her last instance of rebellion would be on 20 August 1994. During a performance at Circus International in Honolulu, Hawaii Tyke trampled her groomer, tossed and killed her trainer, and then ran out of the arena. After a half-hour chase through the city, police fired eighty-six shots and killed her. Jason Hribal (2007) describes the aftermath:

[H]undreds of lawsuits were filed against the city, state, and Hawthorn Corporation [her employer]. Public discussions intensified. Private individuals, who beforehand never thought about circus performers, were engaged and moved into activism [...] Protests and boycotts were staged [...] In 1994, the federal government confiscated sixteen circus elephants from John Cuneo Jr. the owner of Hawthorn.

Tyke's actions certainly disrupted and re-organized the distribution of bodies within the political community, from legislative and moneymaking

to the activists holding signs. Rancière explains that actions become political and rupture the police order by putting into motion a new 'configuration of *occupations* and the properties of these spaces where these occupations are distributed' (Rancière, 1999, p. 29). Tyke's actions called into question her occupation as a circus performer and launched her experiences into the political field of experience such that they now emerged as objects of dispute. 'It changed my outlook for entertainment', said one witness of Tyke's revenge (Bernardo, 2004). But beyond a mere disruption, Tyke's actions, alongside Emily's and Tatiana's, demonstrate the lack of agreement about the number of parties that are to be counted as parties of the community. The action of workers is political, Rancière says, 'when it reconfigures the relationships that determine the workplace and its relation to the community' (1999, p. 32). These nonhumans are putting into question their roles as laborers, whether in zoos, circuses, or slaughterhouses. Their actions create a 'connection' 'between having part and having no part' in the community (Rancière, 1999, p. 36). In so doing, they announce to their spectators, now sharing a common political stage, the fact of their absence from the official count. In addition, they also re-subjectivate these spectators into the position of activists charged with the duty to address the wrong of the animal miscount from the parties to dispute when disputing the place of animal bodies in slaughterhouses, zoos, and circuses. These animal rebellions designate these nonhumans as political subjects who initiate a re-organization of the whole community by 'build[ing] a relationship between these things that have none, in causing the relationship and the nonrelationship to be seen together as the object of dispute' (Rancière, 1999, p. 40).

An objection arises: in order to become a subject, one must pose the question regarding one's capacity for speech and the possibility of communication; however, there is no speech, no communication, occurring here, only interpretation of animal reactions. Perhaps this objection is correct and my illustration of these accounts injected too much agency, intentionality, motivation, and reflection to the animals. Maybe there is no communication occurring in these accounts, and instead we should assume the posture of Cartesians, who view the screams of animals as only 'the noise of breaking machinery' (Mahaffy, 1880, p. 181). This is the path that Rancière appears to take by defining wrong as the unequal

treatment of beings equally in possession of the power of human speech. As Jane Bennett argues, Rancière 'both demeans the non-linguistic elements of human expression and excludes nonhumans from political participation' (Bennett, 2005, p. 141). He maintains an 'anthropocentric prejudice' that posits participation 'on the basis of a model of linguistic competence. And this when language-use is but one of the many modes of *human* communication' (Bennett, 2005, p. 142). Rancière's emphasis on *linguistic* speech seems odd, as the radical democratic project of which he is a part does not seem to center politics on this capacity. When groups excluded from the political community strike back and engage in conflict in order to make their exclusion known, the question of speech does not seem to enter. Politics is inherent in the act of conflict, regardless of whether the actors themselves acknowledge or speak this conflict:

Any distinction that can serve as a marker of collective identity and difference will acquire political quality if it has the power, in a concrete situation, to sort people into two opposing groups that are willing, if necessary, to fight against each other. (Schmitt, 2007, pp. 37–8)

The reality of exploitation and oppression pits nonhumans against their masters, which ostensibly does not beg the question of speech in order for one to consider this situation politically significant.

However, for Rancière *naming* is crucial: 'parties do not exist prior to the conflict they *name* and in which they are counted as parties' (Rancière, 1999, p. 27, emphasis added). Herein enters what Bennett calls Rancière's 'anthropocentric prejudice' (Bennett, 2005, p. 142). Rancière conflates speech with language and thus assumes that the *naming* of a conflict can only occur linguistically. Consider the fight of autistic people, who flap their hands as a mode of communication and describe the silencing of their hands as the silencing of their speech: 'Let me be extremely fucking clear: if you grab my hands, if you grab the hands of a developmentally disabled person, if you teach quiet hands, if you work on eliminating "autistic symptoms" and "self-stimulatory behaviors", if you take away our voice [...]' (Bascom, 2011).³ As Julia Bascom indicates, the

³ See also the essays in The Autistic Self-Advocacy Network (2012).

body is a medium of speech, not just for autistic people—who rely on this medium more than others—but for all people. The objection above argued that in order to become a subject, one must pose the question regarding one's capacity for speech and the possibility of communication. Having expanded the realm of communication beyond simple linguistic expressions, we now can understand that the body can speak and can pose questions regarding its capacities. From Emily's body jumping over a slaughterhouse fence to Tatiana's mouth mauling her tormentors and Tyke's legs trampling her trainers, each bodily display of rebellion and refusal should be read and interpreted as a moment of speech, of nonhuman animals saying *something* about the place and arrangement of their bodies in slaughterhouses, zoos, and circuses.

Even if we argue that the bodies of both humans and nonhumans can speak, we still have yet to answer the second part of the objection, namely, the claim that there is no speech, no communication, occurring in these episodes, only interpretation of animal reactions. There are two parts to this objection: (1) it may be the case that bodies sometime speak, but bodies also *react* instinctively. The difference between reaction and response is the difference, marked out above through Aristotle, between voice and speech (Derrida, 2002, p. 400). As argued above, this is the primary difference through which animals remain excluded from the political community of speech. (2) Even if it is the case that Emily, Tatiana, and Tyke are saying something, how can we be sure that what they say is something political? After all, Aristotle believes that nonhumans can *communicate*; they simply do not *speak*. Related to (1) then, we can ask, how do we know that the utterance is a political one about justice (speech) and not simply a non-political articulation, such as 'this hurts!' (voice)?

In response to (1), the distinction between reaction and response collapses given the context under discussion. In a heightened political conflict, where terror and oppression are the norm, the political tension ensures that every reaction is also a response. Consider the situation in the colonies: 'Confronted with a world ruled by the settler, the native is always presumed guilty [... and] the native's muscles are always tensed' (Fanon, 1963, p. 52). Beaten by settlers, the colonized may *react* to the violence by striking back in self-defense. However, given the encompassing context of colonialism, striking back against the colonizer is also a *response* to the

colonial situation. Concerning nonhuman animals, slaughterhouses, laboratories, and circuses are also situations of political tension, where violence and exploitation pervade the daily lives of nonhuman animals, and therefore any *reactive* release of aggression or fear is thus also a *response* to the situation in its entirety. That moments of political confrontation dissolve the lines between reaction and response depends on understanding the event in question as permeated with political conflict and struggle. In other words, the *context* of the reaction/response is essential to knowing whether an action is a reaction, response, or both. With this in mind, we can now turn to the second claim: how can we be sure that the response/reaction of nonhumans to their oppression is indeed political?

Compared to expressions of the body, linguistic utterances are perhaps less open to errors of interpretation. However, all modes of communication—whether linguistic or non-linguistic—require *interpretation*. Pure and unmediated communication, Derrida argues, incorrectly privileges ‘the absolute proximity of voice and being, of voice and the meaning of being, of voice and the ideality of meaning’ (Derrida, 1997, p. 12). In other words, spoken words are not ontological guarantees; they do not assure the outward expression of a being’s, whether human or non-human, inner impressions. This disjuncture demands that the work of interpretation will always take place. Just as all speech requires interpretation, interpretative communication extends beyond the narrow confines of linguistic utterances to include other forms of communication such as bodily gestures and non-linguistic sounds. As Gayatri Spivak argues regarding the subaltern who can/not speak, ‘[t]he problem is that the subject’s itinerary has not been traced so as to offer an object of seduction to the representing intellectual’ (Spivak, 1988, p. 285). This is to say that we *cannot* be completely sure that the bodily expressions under consideration are instances of political resistance and rebellion. Likewise, we *cannot* be completely sure that these events are *not* events of resistance.

To overcome this impasse, we need to focus on the particular and specific event at hand and use our critical capacities to analyze the nature of the actions. To dismiss these actions *a priori* as non-political means to take a position without honestly reflecting and thinking about the given situation. In so doing, we take on the a-politicizing guise of party leaders and union heads that describe protesters using militant street tactics, such

as property destruction, as vandals, thugs, or criminals intent on *senseless* and *random* acts of violence (Depuis-Déri, 2013, pp. 14–20, p. 63). In so doing, they uniformly disavow the *political* nature of these tactics by refusing to analyze the target of their attacks. Throwing a brick at a bank window in the age of austerity articulates a political critique against capitalism that throwing a brick at a residential home under threat of eviction would not. Likewise, Emily escaped from a slaughterhouse, not the local peace abbey where she later lived; Tatiana attacked the three teenage boys who tormented her, but she ignored the other zoo visitors; Tyke mauled her groomer and trampled her trainer, but fled from the other circus goers. Singular in their purpose, these animals attack particular targets. To understand the political conflict that these animals engender entails using our critical capacities to analyze and interpret the rebellion that these animals articulate. To do so means *not* to deny *a priori* the capacity for resistance and rebellion that nonhumans may express, but remain open to these capacities by analyzing and critically thinking about their potentiality in particular moments and events.⁴ Reframed differently, we must be cautious of falling into a type of Cartesian dualism, where the analyst sits perplexed searching for the inaccessible animal mind hidden somewhere inside the animal body. As Richie Nimmo (2012, p. 188) reminds us:

The search for the animal’s point of view [...] is ultimately a chimera; an unwitting regress into Cartesian skepticism. Knowing others—human or nonhuman—is inescapably an iterative process of interpretation in mediated and embodied interaction, rather than a matter of somehow gaining objective knowledge of what is inside the mind of the other.

In this political framework of openness and uncertainty, where critical interpretation and analysis regain their significance, human and nonhuman animals can express agency and purpose in moments of resistance. I have focused on highly tense episodes—a moment before slaughter, an event of torment at a zoo, and a situation of abuse in a circus. However, the implication is that if these animals expressed themselves as subjects of

⁴For an analogous openness to the capacity for resistance, see Spivak’s analysis of Bhuvanewari Bhaduri’s suicide (Spivak, 1988, pp. 307–8).

politics during these episodes, then surely they are also subjects of politics when these episodes end. In the framework I have been drawing, to qualify as a political agent, one's actions must make 'a difference to collective life and [...] be *irreducible* to a knee-jerk reaction or instinctual response' (Bennett, 2005, p. 134). Accordingly, nonhumans perform actions, produce effects, and alter situations in collective life alongside humans, 'even if the degrees and forms of agency vary among the participants' (Bennett, 2005, p. 145; Latour, 2004, p. 80). Humans do not need to extend subjectivity to animals, since, as the analysis above makes clear, nonhumans demand their recognition by breaking the logic of subjectivity and re-constituting it such that they now count as political subjects. Nonhuman political subjectivation 'decomposes and recomposes the relationships between ways of *doing*, of *being*, and of *saying* that define the perceptible organization of the community' (Rancière, 1999, p. 40). These nonhumans certainly are 'troublemakers', re-constituting the community that identifies them as the part that has no part (Latour, 2004, p. 81).

To be clear, it is not the case that these animals have simply produced *effects* and thus qualify as subjects. This position is more aligned with Actor Network Theorists such as Jane Bennett and Bruno Latour, who attribute agency to anything that has an effect, whether animate or inanimate (e.g. rocks and thunderstorms). Under this framework, agency is spread too thin, 'with agency being seen as simply the ability to act, or to have an effect on, or influence over, an outcome or another "actant" in the network' (Carter/Charles, 2013, p. 325). As a result, everything is an agent and one becomes hard pressed to find anything that lacks agency. Carter and Charles put forward a more helpful conception of agency: 'agency indicates a capacity for action defined as the ability to choose between options (however limited they may be) and to act on the choices made'; 'These capacities or constraints cannot be "read off" from the individual's structural location because their realisation depends partly on the reflexive deliberations of the person, their choices and the roles available to them' (2013, p. 328, p. 331). This is to say that particular and specific beings act, not just, for instance, tigers in general, but Tatiana in particular. To understand her agency means understanding the *targeted* nature of her attacks. Choice among who to strike and the intention to carry out these attacks plays a significant and, more importantly

for our purposes, *understandable* role in her actions. This is to say that when nonhumans attack and their rebellion can be understood within the political context in which it unfolds, we can witness the choices they made and the agency they express.

The argument put forward here is not *just* that animals express agency. Even scholars who claim that nonhumans have agency still attempt to deny them political subjectivity. For instance, in her study of Moon Bears, Kersty Hobson (2007, p. 262), inspired by Actor Network Theory, argues that 'animals are already part of the heterogeneous networks that constitute political life', but they 'cannot take part in institutional decision-making processes or verbally express a preference that we can interpret at such'. Even as animals have *effects* on political life, politics proper is reserved for the verbal. While denying the conception of agency prevalent in Actor Network Theory, Carter and Charles also argue that animals 'cannot have political influence on the social order' because they lack 'human languages, with their grammatical properties [...] A grammar frees symbolic communication from its indexical limits: its limitless combination allow humans to generate new forms of imaginings using non-referential sequences'. (Carter/Charles, 2013, pp. 333–4). Yet, once we do away with the notion that communication must be either verbal or linguistic, it becomes that much more difficult to deny political subjectivity to these nonhuman actors. Tyke, Tatiana, and Emily always had agency, but it was in the moment of rebellion that they became subjects, that they self-subjectivated, that they used their bodies to articulate their absence from the democratic community that claims inclusion and justice.

It is not sufficient to merely acknowledge this new paradigm of animal subjectivity and then say our work is done. Every story of animal rebellion that ruptures the hegemonic police order risks either disavowal or appropriation into that order. A disruption can be recuperated, such that the event may not leave its trace. As Latour warns, the danger of fetishizing the moment of rupture leaves us few tools to 'decide, on the spot, in real time, what to do next' (Latour, 1999, p. 227). 'Despite the impossibility of finding a *final* grounding', politics, Mouffe reminds us, still 'calls for [a] *decision*' to be made (2005, p. 152). As is clear, the (contested) truth of nonhumans as subjects in these episodes represents an '*immanent break*'

with the dominant order; “Immanent” because a truth proceeds *in* the situation, and nowhere else [...] “Break” because what enables the truth-process—the event—meant nothing according to the prevailing language and established knowledge of the situation’ (Badiou, 2012, pp. 42–3). Given the dangers of either disavowal or recuperation, how do we thus retain, in Alain Badiou’s words, a ‘fidelity’ to the truth of the event, such that we ‘move within the situation that this event has supplemented, by *thinking* [...] the situation “according to” the event’ (Badiou, 2012, p. 41). In what ways can we retain the event as rupture and the lessons learned, such that the police order does not immediately reconfigure and hide the resistance already witnessed? Once we recognize that these moments *are* rebellions to the hegemonic order, the question becomes, how do we maintain the communication with these nonhuman subjects beyond their breaks? How do we, to use Badiou’s maxim, ‘Keep Going!’ with the truths that these events have forced (Badiou, 2012, p. 79)? Simply put, how are we to make decisions with nonhuman animals if ‘Animals don’t know about any practice of public practical deliberation’ (Stoecker, 2009, p. 268)?

Politics with Audible Animals

At stake here is not the problem of how to give animals speech, but rather of how to make their communications audible to our human ears. It is not just a question of opening up our ears to animals, but also of recognizing that many ears are already attuned to animals, listening to them. In the new framework I have articulated, politics describes not only the world of humans but also the world of nonhumans and of nature. In this world, all speaking subjects suffer from what Latour calls ‘speech impedimenta’ (Latour, 2004, p. 63). Like Derrida, Latour understands that all speech requires interpretation. For subaltern humans and nonhumans, unable to speak on their own terms and in their own languages, *spokespersons* conduct the interpretation of their actions in order to make their speech intelligible and visible:

We are designating not the transparency of speech in question, but the *entire gamut* running from complete doubt (I may be a spokesperson, but

I am speaking in my own name and not in the name of those I represent) to total confidence (when I speak, it is really those I represent who speak through my mouth. (Latour, 2004, p. 64)

The subaltern enters official and intellectual discourse rarely and usually through the mediating commentary of one already versed in these already-established discourses. In the context of Latour’s analysis of nature, he points to scientists as these mediating spokespersons. Regardless of who the spokesperson is, spokespersons attempt to make audible the speech of the subaltern. By doing so, spokespersons function as mediators to ensure the continued flow of communication—however staggered and incomplete—among different subjects.

Whether Spivak’s responsible intellectuals with postcolonial knowledge or Latour’s scientists, spokespersons interpret the actions and make audible the speech of silenced subalterns. I earlier lauded critical thinking and analysis as a tool of interpretation, but unfortunately the term ‘critical thinking’ suffers from being unhelpfully abstract and vague. Critical thinking is a form of reading, but like reading, it requires a material text from which to read. Spokespersons, who need to learn the art of critical interpretation, thus need a material text/base from which to interpret. This material base Latour calls a speech prosthesis:

The lab coats are not so deranged as to believe that particles, fossils, economies, or black holes speak on their own, without intermediaries, without any investigation, and without instruments, in short, without a fabulously complex and extremely fragile *speech prosthesis* [...] that allow nonhumans to participate in the discussions of humans. (Latour, 2004, p. 67)

Speech prostheses enable us to make audible and perceive the communication of nonhumans. In other words, they translate types of communication that we otherwise cannot hear. Consider the pain, dizziness, and fatigue that someone suffering from a heart arrhythmia endures. Unable to explain the reason for this suffering, this person turns to a doctor. The doctor then picks her speech prosthesis, that is, a stethoscope, and makes audible the irregular rhythms of a heart. Given that the doctor is skilled in the art of interpreting (critical thinking) stethoscopes (speech prosthesis), the doctor can understand the communication of

a heart with arrhythmia. Similarly, biologist Marc Bekoff uses various instruments to explain that dopamine levels increase when rats anticipate the opportunity to play (Bekoff, 2003, p. 929). Does any difference exist between the speech prosthesis used to measure rat dopamine levels necessary for the regulation of happiness and the stethoscope that translates my body's pain? 'No being, not even humans, speak on their own, but *always through something or someone else*' (Latour, 2004, p. 68). Whether in the domain of the laboratory, the doctor's office, or in parliament, speech prostheses make audible the speech of humans and nonhumans.

Spokespersons use their skills of critical thinking to interpret speech prostheses. In so doing, they make audible the speech of nonhuman animals and acquire the label 'spokesperson'. As these instruments translate and make audible speech, there looms the eternal danger of speaking for others. A cat shakes a certain way or a rat's dopamine levels increase and an animal anthropologist illuminates the meaning of this wiggle or a biobehavioralist explains the meaning of the laboratory results to non-scientists uneducated in their art of interpretation. Worse, a cow escapes, a tiger bites back, and an elephant tramples, and a vegan scholar outlines their meaning as rebellion. All the same, these explanations remain interpretations. As 'is the case with all spokespersons', Latour clarifies, '*we have to entertain serious doubt but not definitive doubts about their capacity to speak in the name of those they represent*' (2004, p. 65).

Not all interpretations carry equal weight. The language used in interpretation presupposes, Mouffe argues, the 'acceptance of certain values' and can only work if 'supported by a specific form of ethos', which remains rooted within relations of power worthy of critique (Mouffe, 2000, pp. 68–9). For instance, we have reason to call into question the profit-motives behind a slaughterhouse owner's interpretation of certain speech prostheses that point out how cows voluntarily submit to and even enjoy their self-sacrifice. Herein enters again the importance of critically thinking about the contexts and situations under consideration. In addition, given the exclusions necessary for the formation of communities of discussion, we have reason to expand the list of spokespersons beyond Latour's scientists. Animal Sanctuary workers spend vast amounts of time with nonhumans and demonstrate an intimate knowledge of their emotional lives (The Emotional World of Farm Animals). The Kluane

First Nation maintains that animals regularly speak to them about how they wish to be treated (Nadasdy, 2007). Indeed, scientists, rooted in a particular enlightenment worldview, can only make use of certain types of knowledges; indigenous knowledges would multiply the number of speech prostheses we have available to listen to nonhumans (Nadasdy, 2007, p. 37). Conflicts will remain about interpretation, as 'indisputable speech' does not exist (Latour, 2004, p. 78). Previously denied to the realm of political conflict, nonhuman animals force their entry into political subjectivity and the democratic community. Spokespersons ensure that they can stay there.

Conclusion

I started this investigation by clarifying a particular lens with which to understand politics. Radical democrats Mouffe and Rancière argue that every democratic community necessitates a constitutive outside, a remainder excluded from the 'we' of the community. As such, political thinking and theorizing should focus on the border zones of communities, where conflict, repression, and struggle define the nature of exclusion. In addition, I argued that radical democrats enable us to understand that once the borders of a community break and the excluded manage to fight for their inclusion, the excluded necessitate a shift of subjectivity: not only do the excluded, previously denied political subjectivity, become political *subjects* in the field of politics, but the whole identity and ethos of the community changes as a result of the rearrangement of the meaning, domain, and objects of politics. Following this framework, I argued that the primary mode of exclusion occurs through the division of (political) speech and (non-political) voice by exploring the case of colonialism, where colonizers *animalized* indigenous peoples and thus excluded them from the democratic community of self-governance. Nonhuman animals, being the ultimate example of animalization, remain outside of the political community due to their condition of animality, that is, having only the capacity for voice.

Animal liberation activists and philosophers attempt to break this dominant hegemony that excludes animals by making them worthy

objects of dispute. The danger, I argued, of this type of political thinking and acting is that the disruption of the policed objects does not necessitate a reconfiguration of who counts as agents of speech, as subjects of politics. As such, nonhumans remain silenced and humans become 'the voice for the voiceless'. To overcome this exclusion, I outlined three stories of rebellion: Emily escaping from a slaughterhouse, Tatiana mauling her tormentors, and Tyke trampling her trainers. I argued that in each episode these animals represent the constitutive outside of the political community in question. However, their rebellion contests the borders of exclusion, eventually raising new questions of dispute previously considered unworthy of debate. They all raised the question of the supposed naturalness of the arrangement of their bodies as workers in slaughterhouses, zoos, and circuses—a question that the human community responded to through support (Emily), adversarial combat (Tatiana), and solidarity (Tyke). In each episode, these animals expressed their capacity for agency. Moreover, they re-subjectivated and re-organized the community of which they were a part of but were considered not have a part in. According to the framework set out at the start, to have rebelled against their exclusion and to have raised the question of the justice of their exclusion means that we ought to understand these nonhumans not just as *agents* of resistance but also as *subjects* of democracy.

An objection was put forward suggesting that no speech was present in these episodes. I argued for expanding the domain of speech beyond simple linguistic utterances and to include the body as a veritable domain of communication. Next, I put forward another objection that even if the body sometimes speaks, we cannot be sure that the body *spoke* of justice rather than non-politically *voiced* its suffering. I argued that in moments of tense political conflict the borders between reaction/instinct/voice and response/consciousness/speech dissolve. The question of speech requires critical thinking about the specificity and particularity of the situation at hand. Rather than deny the capacity for agency/response/speech to nonhumans *a priori*, I put forward a political framework of openness and uncertainty, where critical interpretation and analysis regain their significance, and human and nonhuman animals can express agency and purpose in moments of resistance. This framework attempts to manifest

radical democracy's promise to listen to the excluded other by providing the analytical disposition logically necessary for being open to listening to the speech of nonhumans.

Having put forward this framework, I asked, how could we maintain a community of subjects with humans and nonhumans beyond these moments of tension and rupture? Using Latour's analysis on speech prostheses, I argued for including nonhuman spokespersons as the mediators and intermediaries of nonhuman communication when engaging in discussions that concern them. Thus, nonhumans now join us at the table discussing the ethics and politics of their continuing exclusion through spokespersons. Always incomplete and partial, speech prostheses remain contestable and open to various interpretations. Similarly open to challenge and critique, spokespersons enable nonhumans to remain part of newly formed spaces they have created through rebellion and resistance. '[I]n seeking to learn to speak to (rather than listen to or speak for) the historically muted subject', the anti-specieist 'systematically "unlearns" [human] privilege' (Spivak, 1988, p. 295). In this view of politics, animal liberation is no longer about being 'a voice for the voiceless' but about solidarity with the militants already fighting their oppression in laboratories, slaughterhouses, zoos, and circuses.

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