

Chapter 1

THE CHALLENGE OF ANIMAL RIGHTS AND ANIMAL LIBERATION PHILOSOPHY



INTRODUCTION

Some of the seminal work in what has come to be known as “animal rights” or “animal liberation” theory has involved extending to animals a moral status or a “respect” that has generally been accepted for human beings.¹ This extension is justified by the claim that refusing the extension is arbitrary and thus unreasonable. If human beings justifiably have a certain status, and there is no valid reason why only human beings should have this status, then we must extend this status until we have a valid reason to stop. Different thinkers stop at different places and for different reasons. This is what Holmes Rolston and before him Paul Shepard have criticized under the name “ethics by extension.”

I will approach this topic by exploring some different senses of the term “respect,” using hunting as a test case. After a very brief look at relevant aspects of animal liberation/rights theory I will focus on two uses of the term “respect” (there are of course many others), one concerning the respect due to human beings and one concerning the respect that some hunting cultures find due to wild animals. The first evokes a deep human experience of human beings while the second evokes a deep human experience of animals. My claim is that the term, as used by many animal rights/liberation thinkers, lacks any such relation to human experience and thus abstracts from both the reality of the animals and the reality of our experience of the animals. Ultimately, such thinking turns human beings themselves into abstractions. This raises the issue of the kind of respect properly owed to animals, specifically to wild animals.

Only against this background can we ask whether contemporary hunting in countries like the United States can be done with a proper respect for the animals hunted. This is not to say that I have found the high road to universal agreement. Far from it. But we—on each side of the issue—may come to understand both ourselves and our opponents better.

NOT AS “MEANS TO OUR ENDS”

Both Peter Singer and Tom Regan have worked out their positions in great detail, but for my purposes I can concentrate on what is of immediate relevance. For all their differences in philosophical principles, they share a line of thinking with many other animal rights, animal liberation, or animal welfare theorists, and I want to put this before us for discussion. Singer and Regan appear here only as examples of a much more widespread tendency, one which can be expressed in many different ways. While I will be focusing on discussions of what can be called “respect,” appearance of the word itself is not essential.

Peter Singer’s approach is utilitarian, but he went beyond mainstream utilitarian thinking in picking up and developing a neglected aspect of the work of Jeremy Bentham, who wrote that the question “is not, Can [animals] reason? Nor, Can they talk? But, Can they suffer?” (Bentham, ch. 18, sec. 1). Singer argued that since animals can suffer, they undeniably have an interest in the outcome of many if not most human actions, so their interests should be taken into account in moral reasoning. Singer thus attacks what has become known as “speciesism,” the view that only the members of one species, the human species, deserve direct moral consideration. If we are to avoid speciesism (just as morality requires that we avoid racism and sexism), the suffering of any sentient being must be given equal weight to the like suffering of any other sentient being. Treating nonhumans as “utilities,” as “means to our ends,” is therefore immoral (cf. Singer 1998, 100, 101).

Singer was soon challenged from within the ranks of those concerned with reforming our relations with animals. While Tom Regan was sympathetic with many of Singer’s practical conclusions, he disagreed sharply with Singer’s philosophical principle, with his utilitarianism. Regan argues that Singer’s utilitarian approach fails to value individuals properly, be they human or animal, since utilitarianism’s aggregative approach does not recognize individual rights. For Regan,

any being that has “inherent value” has rights. So which beings have inherent value? Regan, like Singer, argues that there is no reasonable way to limit recognition of inherent value to human beings alone. He argues that the only nonarbitrary position involves recognizing that any being that is “the subject-of-a-life” has interests that are to be respected (Regan 1983, 243–248), and that justice requires that “we are to treat those individuals who have inherent value in ways that respect their inherent value” (*Ibid*, 248–250). He joins Singer in arguing that “individuals who have inherent value must never be treated *merely as means*” (*Ibid*, 249), though Regan charges that any aggregative approach, such as Singer’s, will in fact violate this principle.²

Singer’s position has come to be known as “animal liberation” in contrast to Regan’s “animal rights” position. But in spite of their differences, Singer and Regan have importantly similar approaches with regard to broader environmental issues. Singer urges a “hands-off” approach to animal life, and to wild animals in particular: ecosystems should not be “managed,” even with the proclaimed goal of benefiting wildlife. Regan goes even farther than Singer, arguing that any attempt to protect species and/or ecosystems at the expense of individual animals is “*environmental fascism*” (*Ibid*, 362). Thus, for Regan, only the individual members of a species are worthy of direct moral concern, not the species itself, and the individual members of an endangered species, as individuals, are no more worthy of moral concern than are any other individual animals.

“RESPECT” IN ANIMAL LIBERATION/RIGHTS THEORY

A theme is emerging from this brief look at animal rights theory. Though the details, the language, and to some extent the practical upshots vary, Regan and many other theorists claim something like the following:

*If something has inherent value, it is to be treated with respect, where respect requires that we not treat that thing as a mere means to our ends.*³

This general position has been given a succinct formulation in a recent essay critical of catch and release fishing. A. Dionys de Leeuw, a professional biologist specializing in sport fisheries management,

sums up more than twenty years of thinking about animal rights when he gives the following definition of “respect”: “behavior with regard to an interest that shows consideration for the holder of the interest and avoids degradation of it, negative interference with it, or interruption of it” (de Leeuw, 379).⁴ Given this definition, which de Leeuw simply accepts without any discussion of the background in his discussion of the ethics of angling (this is an indication of just how deeply ingrained this approach has become), respect for an animal requires that (*ceteris paribus*) we avoid interfering with that animal as it pursues its interests.

“Respect” is of course a technical term in the moral theory developed by Immanuel Kant in the late-eighteenth century, and I think that the ghost of Kant haunts much recent thinking about animals. Kant requires that we treat “persons” with *respect*, which forbids us to use them merely as means to our own ends. Formulations such as “means to our ends” (Singer) or “merely as a means” (Regan) derive from Kant, and the reference is often made explicit (e.g., by Regan). But to demand that animals be treated with “respect” also requires that one reject some of Kant’s claims. After all, it was Kant who stated that we have no direct duties to animals, since he held that animals are properly only means to an end for human beings. “Our duties towards animals are merely indirect duties towards humanity” (Kant 1980, 239). Since animals are not “persons” in Kant’s sense, to require that we treat them with the respect proper to persons simply makes no sense.

Animal rights thinkers will quickly reply that this is no reason not to extend to animals a basic moral considerability, and I have no quarrel with them on this point. But I do want to suggest that if that recognition of moral considerability occurs by extending to animals the respect that Kant argued is due to persons, the results are counterintuitive. Curiously enough, the result of the work of Singer and Regan (and many who have followed in their footsteps) is that for the animal rights/liberation positions, the demands of respect are actually *more* rigorous (as opposed to being equally rigorous, which seemed to be the aim) regarding animals than regarding human beings. Kant allows, indeed insists, that persons may compete with one another as they pursue their individual visions of happiness. In so doing one’s actions may have a detrimental effect on, and in that sense may “negatively interfere” with, the projects of another human being as long as one does not treat that person “*merely* as a means.” In other words,

our interactions with other persons are limited by rules—moral laws and positive laws—but these are rules governing specifically human interactions. I may outcompete you in the economic arena, but I am not allowed to steal from you. This scenario is not possible when it comes to our relations with animals, since we cannot converse with them. So in the place of the rich rule-governed interaction of human beings, we have the “keep your distance” of a hands-off policy when it comes to animals.⁵ “Respect” in this sense requires nonparticipation (always under a *ceteris paribus* qualification). But I want to suggest that something has been lost here, with pernicious consequences. We can see these pernicious results more clearly by looking first at the precise role of “respect” in Kantian moral theory, and then contrasting it with a form of respect for animals that involves complex interrelationships between humans and animals—the very opposite of a “hands off” approach.

KANT

I have suggested that the strategy of extending the Kantian principle of respect to animals loses contact with the palpable reality of animals in human experience, thereby reducing them to abstractions. We can perhaps find a clue to what has gone wrong by looking at the Kantian principle of respect in the context in which it is developed in order to see why it is appropriate *to that context*. This may allow us to see why it is inappropriate when extended to a different context. The brief interpretation of Kant’s approach to ethics that follows differs from many currently accepted approaches to Kant. I think, however, that it is closer to what Kant is actually doing in his ethics than what is given in some of these other interpretations. More importantly in this context, since it does not lend itself to ethics by extension, it gives food for thought, even if one does not accept the Kantian position itself.

For Kant, what is distinctive about human beings is that they are rational: only rational beings have “the capacity of acting according to the *conception* of laws (i.e., according to principles)” (Kant 1990, 29).⁶ By the same token, only a rational being can respond to being questioned—by oneself or by another—by giving the *reason why* he or she acted in a certain way, by *justifying* the action. The reason offered can be satisfying in one of two different ways. First, we may see

that the action could reasonably be expected to produce some goal that the person acting actually has, ultimately by contributing to the person's happiness. Whether another person shares that goal—whether it would be in any sense satisfying to that person—is irrelevant. But there is a second way of considering the action. We may ask why it is *morally permissible* for a person to act in a certain manner even if doing so would undoubtedly contribute to that person's happiness. Here Kant in effect asks what constitutes a justification that can claim to satisfy any possible interlocutor, arguing that any morally permissible action must satisfy one condition: any action that is morally permissible for you in a certain situation must be morally permissible for me, indeed for any moral agent, in a relevantly similar situation. In short, moral reasons or justifications must be *universal*, applicable equally to you and me and to every moral agent. The rationally unacceptable alternative is that we ultimately have to say that it is morally permissible for me, e.g., to steal a car I desire, because I am me, while it is not morally permissible for you to steal the car (perhaps from me!) because you unfortunately are not me. This is not something that I or any one else can rationally accept as an adequate justification.

This consideration immediately leads to Kant's initial formulation of the moral law, the categorical imperative: "Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law" (*Ibid*, 38). This means that I must in principle be able to explain to any other person why my action is morally permissible: any action which results from following a maxim which can be willed to become a universal law is permissible. This is something that I can demonstrate, and as a rational being, I am responsible to other rational beings in this sense: I must be able to justify my actions.⁷

For Kant, this shows that those beings to whom I must justify my actions—to whom I am responsible in the sense specified—have a different status than that of beings with whom I cannot jointly consider moral justification. Rational beings thus have "absolute worth" in a very specific sense. To have absolute worth is to be a being to whom I am responsible, again in the specified sense, because that being is rational (a "person"), because that person can ask whether an action someone wants to do is morally acceptable. Each rational being is an "end in itself," having a right to demand acceptable moral justifications. Since rational beings have absolute worth, they are deserving of our "*respect*" in a precise technical sense: the moral law requires that

one “Act so that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of another, always as an end and never as a means only” (*Ibid*, 46).

Two things about the Kantian position as I have presented it are important when we think about the moral status of animals. First, it does not make sense to extend to animals the specific respect his theory shows to be due to persons.⁸ I cannot be responsible to, in the sense of being responsive to the legitimate demand for justification from, a creature that cannot itself act according to principles and therefore cannot engage in deliberation about justification. Kant’s principle of respect is rooted in my concrete, deliberative relations with other *rational* beings, beings with whom I can discuss moral questions, and it is ultimately their capacity to be rational that I, if I am rational, must respect. (Put more strongly: *if* I am truly rational then I *will* respect them.) Any attempt to extend *this* kind of respect to animals cuts the principle of respect off from such situations of moral discussion and justification without replacing them with other forms of interaction. This seems to confront us with an either/or concerning animals that are not persons. Either we follow Kant in considering them as mere things to be manipulated for our own benefit, or, if we do want to acknowledge their moral standing, the only permissible thing seems to be to extend a truncated sense of the respect due to persons to animals, with the result that we must leave the animals alone, literally to have nothing to do with them.⁹ If I must be responsible to an animal that is not itself responsive to reasoned discussion, all I can do is stay away, since there is no way of determining what an acceptable interaction would be. It is as if moral principle demands that we not be allowed to inhabit the same world with the animals, since we do not live in the same moral world.

But, second, it is important to note that Kant’s ethical theory, as I have presented it, is not necessarily committed to a traditional hierarchy that gives an absolute privilege to human beings. Nothing in Kant’s position as presented here implies that we have no direct duties to animals, that there is not a specific moral consideration due to animals. The only thing we can conclude is that the moral status of animals will have to be based on something other than the status of persons. The fact that Kant himself says that we have no direct duties to animals does not mean that his basic ethical theory implies it. In other words, Tom Regan is wrong when he states that Kant’s claim that we have only indirect duties to animals is “a direct consequence of his moral theory” (Regan 1983, 175)—wrong, that is, if we consider the core I

have presented to be the essence of this moral theory. (That it follows from other things Kant is committed to I certainly acknowledge.) Regan acknowledges that Kant's position (and that would include Kant's position as I interpret it, I think), is not a form of contractarianism, and thus not objectionable on those grounds. What I am arguing is that the arbitrariness Regan finds in Kant's ethics does not affect its theoretical core.

This point becomes crucially important if we agree with Singer and Regan that exclusion of animals from moral consideration is arbitrary—and I have no argument with them on this point. For Kant, animals are not eligible for the kind of respect due to persons, and Kant concludes that they are therefore mere things to be used by human beings as we see fit, *mere* means to our ends. If one rejects this conclusion, *and if one accepts the claim that this is an exhaustive either/or—respect OR use as mere means*—the only way out seems to be simply to extend his demand for respect for persons to animals. This is exactly what we saw Singer and, particularly, Regan do when they use phrases like “means to our end” and “simply as a means.”¹⁰ But this ignores the possibility that the *either/or* is not exhaustive.

Thus, we have to consider the possibility that there may be *other* forms of respect which are appropriate to our relations with animals. While I think that Kant's critics are right in rejecting his claim that we have no direct duties to animals, that they are just instruments for us to use in any way we see fit, I think that they move too quickly to the program of ethics by extension. What, then, might a concrete, nonarbitrary form of respect for animals look like?

RESPECT AND MYTHIC RECIPROCITY

In an essay entitled “Renegotiating the Contracts,” Barry Lopez argues that our relationships with wild animals have changed in the modern world. As he puts it, “. . . our relationships with wild animals were once contractual—principled agreements, established and maintained in a spirit of reciprocity and mythic in their pervasiveness. . . . these agreements derived from a sense of mutual obligation and courtesy” (Lopez 1991, 381). Lopez is not just using a weak or misleading metaphor. His talk of “contracts” is based on the idea that “We once thought of animals as not only sentient but as congruent with ourselves in a world beyond the world we can see, one struc-

tured by myth and moral obligation, and activated by spiritual power” (*Ibid*, 382). Many hunting cultures speak of a time when humans and animals spoke a common language, and in such cultures stories about encounters with animals are crucial to learning the art of living a successful life.

In *Arctic Dreams* Lopez writes, “The evidence is good that among all northern aboriginal hunting peoples, the hunter saw himself bound up in a sacred relationship with the larger animals he hunted. The relationship was full of responsibilities—to the animals, to himself, and to his family” (Lopez 1987, 199). Later Lopez writes, “Hunting in my experience—and by hunting I simply mean being out on the land—is a state of mind. All of one’s faculties are brought to bear in an effort to become fully incorporated into the landscape . . . To hunt means to have the land around you like clothing. To engage in a wordless dialogue with it, one so absorbing that you cease to talk with your human companions. It means to release yourself from rational images of what something ‘means’ and to be concerned only that it ‘is’ (*Ibid*, 199–200). It is this kind of intimacy that Lopez thinks we have lost. For Lopez, we have indeed come to view animals “merely as means,” as commerce views animals either as mere commodities (e.g., chickens in a chicken factory) or as hindrances to commerce (e.g., spotted owls to loggers and wolves to ranchers). And he considers this most fundamentally “a failure of imagination. We have largely lost our understanding of where in an adult life to fit the awe and mystery that animals excite” (Lopez 1991, 384), an awe Lopez finds alive in the hunting cultures in which he has lived. And against those who would say that this is to be welcomed as progress beyond the stage at which human life is necessarily dependent on the exploitation of wild animals, Lopez argues that “to set aside our relationships with wild animals as inconsequential is to undermine our regard for the other sex, other cultures, other universes” (*Ibid*, 383). In short, our relationship with wild animals is one of those nodal points at which our relationship with otherness as such is formed. (For an extended argument for the importance of wild animals in human experience see Paul Shepard, *The Others: How Animals Made Us Human*.)¹¹

But what is at stake here runs even deeper. Lopez writes:

No culture has yet solved the dilemma each has faced with the growth of a conscious mind: how to live a moral and compassionate existence when one is fully aware of the

blood, the horror inherent in all life, when one finds darkness not only in one's own culture but within oneself. If there is a stage at which an individual life becomes truly adult, it must be when one grasps the irony in its unfolding and accepts responsibility for a life lived in the midst of such paradox. One must live in the middle of contradiction because if all contradiction were eliminated at once life would collapse. There are simply no answers to some of the great pressing questions. You continue to live them out, making your life a worthy expression of a leaning into the light (Lopez 1987, 413).

The parallels and differences between Lopez and animal rights advocates can be conveniently and dramatically pointed out by means of a comparison with Peter Singer. Singer himself is very upfront in admitting that he is neither particularly fond of nor even interested in animals. His concern is focused on a matter of principle, on “ending oppression and exploitation wherever they occur, and in seeing that the basic moral principle of equal consideration of interests is not arbitrarily restricted to members of our own species” (Singer 1990, ii). But while Lopez is critical of our overwhelmingly commercial relationship with animals, and thus joins Singer and Regan in opposing factory farming and animal research, he can have little sympathy with the animal liberation/rights positions we have discussed, since they require that our loss of contact with wild animals, which Lopez diagnoses and mourns, be intensified as a matter of principle. The lack of genuine contact with animals found on the factory farm finds an ironic counterpart in the lack of contact of the “hands-off” position. And while Lopez himself is clearly uncomfortable with killing, I think he would argue that this is not the central issue in our disturbed relationship with wild animals. More important is the fact that, as he puts it,

[W]e [as opposed to Eskimo culture] have irrevocably separated ourselves from the world that animals occupy. We have turned all animals and elements of the natural world into objects. We manipulate them to serve the complicated ends of our destiny. Eskimos do not grasp this separation easily, and have difficulty imagining themselves entirely removed from the world of animals (Lopez 1987, 200).

So Singer's lack of interest in animals as such is for Lopez precisely part of the problem, and the alternative for him is anything but a "hands-off" policy.

Lopez would not, I think, admit that he sanctions treating animals merely as means, since that would be precisely to deny the spiritual dimension he thinks we need to recover. Against Kant he would hold that it is wrong to divide the world into *persons* (rational beings, moral agents) worthy of respect and *things* (including animals) which merely have a price, since their value consists in their usefulness to humans. There is an enormous middle ground of beings worthy of an appropriate respect that is, however, different in kind from the respect appropriate to a moral agent. These beings are to be respected for what they are, and what they are puts them into a complex set of relations with the rest of the world, and thus with us. Among these relations we find those of hunter and hunted, the eater and the eaten.

From this point of view, the mistake in animal rights theory is to attempt to correct Kant by simply extending the rights—the "respect"—due to persons to the animals Kant neglected, as if that were the only sense in which we can recognize their moral status. The hunting cultures Lopez has studied recognize both our kinship with the animals we hunt as well as the differences between us. From this perspective, that animal rights and animal liberation positions erase the differences between animals and humans in an overreaction to Kant's claim that we have no direct duties to animals, that they are not themselves worthy of moral consideration. Their mistake is, as it were, a mirror image of Kant's. And it is only when we reduce the rich reality of the animals, who exist in a complex natural environment that includes complex human beings, to an abstract bundle of interests or to an equally abstract "experiencing subject of a life," that this simplistic extension of rights seems plausible.

RESPECT AS CONGRUENCE

But how does Lopez's account help us think about issues like contemporary hunting? The "contractual" relationships with wild animals he describes are part of a myth-pervaded experience of the world that is not available to those of us not born into it. Even someone like anthropologist Richard Nelson, who lived with and studied Eskimo and Koyukon hunting people for long periods of time (cf.

Nelson, 1969, 1983), recognizes that he does not live in their world (Nelson 1997, 286). (And Nelson did not just study these people as a scientist—the elders whose words repeatedly come back to him are clearly his mentors.) We may accept Lopez’s critique of our commercial relationship with animals, but how can he help us regain a positive relationship with wild animals?

What is ultimately at stake is our relationship to the life of which we are part. An integral aspect of this life is something that at first seems to be its antithesis, death. Life itself, when viewed as a process, is inextricably bound up with death, as one being dies in order that another may live, and not even the most radical veganism can change this fact. Failure to see *and affirm* this reciprocal relationship of life and death, of self and organic other, leads to the kind of dissociation from life in the name of morality we have seen in Singer and Regan, a dissociation which reaches its paradoxical extreme in Cleveland Amory’s famous statement that if he ruled the world, not only would hunting be prohibited, “Prey will be separated from predator, and there will be no overpopulation or starvation because all will be controlled by sterilization or implant” (Amory, 136; cf. also Sapontzis). Note that in such an approach, intervention and control are pervasive. But more importantly, the fact that such isolation would rob wild animals of their wildness, effectively putting a stop to natural evolution and immediately leading to a genetic decline in animal populations, is enough to show that the fundamental attitude at work here is one of enmity or at least opposition to the very process of life itself. As J. Baird Callicott has argued, “the value commitments of the humane movement seem at bottom to betray a world-denying or rather a life-loathing philosophy. The natural world as actually constituted is one in which one being lives at the expense of others” (Callicott 1992a, 55). This is an ironic result: what started out as “respect” for sentient beings ends up rejecting on moral grounds the conditions on which the cycle of life, which includes moral agents, is possible in the first place.

For Lopez, respect for wild animals is not the kind of respect for animals or for animals’ interests that leads to a hands-off ethic. Nor is respect rooted simply in the sentience of animals. Rather, respect has to do with the way we as a species fit into the broader world in which we are inextricably interwoven. “If we could establish an atmosphere

of respect in our relationships, simple awe for the complexities of animals' lives, I think we would feel revived as a species" (Lopez 1991, 386). And this respect and awe are a crucial part of what it means to live a truly successful life—successful in human terms which are not dissociated from the world of which we are a part.

The aspiration of aboriginal people throughout the world has been to achieve a congruent relationship with the land, to fit well in it. To achieve occasionally a state of high harmony or reverberation. To dream of this transcendent congruency included the evolution of a hunting and gathering relationship with the earth, in which a mutual regard was understood to prevail . . . (Lopez 1987, 297).

This is not the congruency we feel between Woody Allen and New York City, the congruency between human beings and an increasingly artificial environment, where food, be it meat or vegetable, comes from the store in the mall. In our urban society, this goal of transcendent congruency does not even make sense to many people, since in their experience it falls between the stools of the artificial environment we produce and live in and the transcendence of God. But it is also felt by many—perhaps as nostalgia, sometimes as one of the overriding goals of living one's life. And there are many kinds of activities in which we can have a heightened sense of such congruency. Hunting is only one such possibility. (*Being hunted*—by an animal—is another, terrifying, such possibility.)

But what about the "mutual regard" Lopez speaks of? Not only do we not live in the kind of myth-pervaded world of indigenous hunting cultures, only a very few of us can claim that our hunting is anything close to the subsistence hunting of those cultures. Lopez is surely correct when he writes, "The hunting contracts of our ancestors are no longer appropriate . . ." (Lopez 1991, 387). So how are we to think about hunting—the forms of hunting possible for us? Is it even possible to find a proper form of respect for animals in contemporary hunting? Is a new hunting contract possible?

I do not want to pretend to answer this question here, but an initial survey of some of the terrain to be explored may be in order. In what follows I will use a few texts from hunting (and antihunting)

literature in an attempt to mark out some of the essential possibilities we encounter here.

THINKING ABOUT HUNTING

To think about hunting in our culture today is to think about what is called sport hunting. The term itself seems to demonstrate that the problem of a new contract is insoluble, that all we are left with is idle amusement . . . at the expense of the lives of animals. Some hunters seem to admit as much. For example, E. Donnell Thomas seems to think that the fact that hunting is fun is all the justification it needs, and he reduces all objections to hunting to a puritanical rejection of any enjoyment of life. “In short, we have become a society of secular Puritans, reading evil into just about anything that anyone could possibly do just for the hell of it” (Thomas, 6).¹²

Vance Bourjaily takes a similar line, and his argument is unintentionally telling:

Now there is no honest defense of any pleasure except to say: I do it because I enjoy it. When criticized we are likely to take peripheral benefits (exercise, identification with tradition, relaxing of tensions) and try to make them stand up as central justification. This seems to me a mistake. All we ought really to say to those spoilers who would suppress pleasures they do not share is this: disapprove of me as you will but to try to give your disapproval the force of law is a crime against freedom (Bourjaily, 76–77).

The invocation of liberal values of individual freedom is impressive, of course, but perhaps this is to move too quickly, to miss the complexity of the phenomenon, the problems it engenders, and the justifications which amount to more than “I like to do it.”

A more neutral definition has the virtue of leaving open a field for inquiry. Brian Luke defines “sport hunting” as “hunting done for its own sake, in contrast to subsistence hunting (done as a means of survival) and market hunting (done to sell parts of the animals’ bodies)” (Luke 1997, 25). There is room for complexity in the “for its own sake,” leaving open the possibility of more complex interpretations of the “sport” in sport hunting. Stephen Bodio writes:

... consider those often-misunderstood concepts "hunting" and "play." Sport hunting is not (despite an animal-rights brochure I read recently that blandly asserted it was, "of course," sublimated sexual sadism) some sort of aggression against creation. It is a series of rituals that have grown up around the most basic activities: acquiring food—capturing energy to keep us alive. Some of the rituals have come about because of their beauty, grace, and difficulty; others (like the German custom of giving the fallen animal a sprig of its favorite food), because of the sadness and mystery that accompany taking a life.

Hunters who hunt out of physical need still appreciate these rituals; ones who do so out of "play" or out of a civilized desire to personally touch the roots of the flow of energy may elevate the ritual to the end result. The finest kinds of hunting—fly fishing, falconry, upland shooting with pointing dogs—are, and should be, elaborate ways of playing with your food and with the universe, ways that also give you windows into the lives of things as alien as insects (in fly fishing) or into the minds of canine and avian partners. Ideally, you leave the human behind for a few moments and become predator, prey, nonhuman ally (Bodio 1997, 230).

The depth of the shift from Thomas's "fun" and Bourjaily's "my pleasure" to Bodio's almost cosmic concept of "play" can hardly be overemphasized. More importantly, continuity between some forms of contemporary "sport" hunting and the myth-pervaded, "respectful" hunting of some indigenous peoples becomes visible here.

But the notion of "playing" with the very lives of other creatures will be repugnant to many who have no trouble embracing the fundamental intertwining of life and death. And there is indeed a one-sided emphasis on a shallow meaning of "sport" in much of contemporary hunting (and hunting literature). Here I think that we must listen carefully to Joseph Wood Krutch when he writes:

Killing "for sport" is the perfect type of that pure evil for which metaphysicians have sometimes sought. Most wicked deeds are done because the doer proposes some good to himself. . . . The killer for sport has no such comprehensible motive. He prefers death to life, darkness to light. He gets nothing except the satisfaction of saying, "Something which wanted to live is dead" (Krutch, 148).

This is powerful stuff, and we should listen carefully. But we must also retain our ability to make essential distinctions. When does our play become nihilistic? Here we are on an edge, and many paths will part at this point. What is perhaps most important is getting clear on why, so I want to approach the edge slowly.

Compare Krutch's words to the following passage from Stephen Bodio's memoir, *Querencia*:

One evening we were relaxing with drinks after dinner at the house of some good, very civilized friends, watching a PBS nature film. The usual cheetah began the usual slow-motion chase after the usual gazelle. The music swelled to a crescendo then stopped dead as the action blurred into real-life speed, dust, and stillness. Betsy and I raised our glasses and clinked them. Our hostess had left the room and her husband looked at us, puzzled. "You know," he said, "You're the only people I've ever seen who cheer the bad guys in the animal shows" (Bodio 1990, 28).

Is this the expression of the nihilism Krutch finds intrinsic to sport hunting? Are the satisfactions of hunting essentially different from the pleasure taken in the beauty of the cheetah's kill and the deep love of the life—which includes death—of which both cheetah and gazelle are a part? This is a serious question, and Louis Owens, for one, rejects turning "the uncomplicated reality of this thing [a coyote killing a fawn as the doe tries to protect it] into a dreadful aesthetic" (Owens, 184). And yet is there not the possibility of watching such a scene unfold in awe, perhaps tinged with horror, but not with disgust? After reflecting on the experience of discovering that a mountain lion had been stalking him as he fished for trout, Owens writes, "It is in the end the awful beauty of the dance of deer and coyote that I remember best from that summer day" (*Ibid*, 187). I say that we should listen carefully to Krutch not because I agree with his general claim, but because our attention perhaps becomes properly focused on human hunting when we experience Krutch's words as a slap in the face. The kind of nihilism Krutch is describing is a permanent and constant possibility for hunting in our culture—a pure pleasure in domination and destruction. But this should not keep us from asking whether there are other possibilities here as well, since much antihunting thought

(like the brochure Bodio cites) insists that there are no essentially different possibilities. To shift the focus back to human hunting, compare Krutch's lines with the following two passages written by Thomas McGuane. The first passage is a reflection on the occasion of killing a pronghorn.

Nobody who loves to hunt feels absolutely hunky-dory when the quarry goes down. The remorse spins out almost before anything and the balancing act ends on one declination or another. I decided that unless I become a vegetarian, I'll get my meat by hunting for it . . .

A world in which a sacramental portion of food can be taken in an old way—hunting, fishing, farming, and gathering—has as much to do with societal sanity as a day's work for a day's pay (McGuane 1982, 230, 236).

Here the whiff of nihilism—the pure preference for death over life—that filled Krutch's nostrils dissipates, is replaced by a deep and (to some) satisfying odor of life itself, which includes death. This is precisely the odor Cleveland Amory could not stand. As James Swan notes, "There is a lightness to the word *sport* that I think does a disservice to hunting. Like his predecessors, the modern hunter hunts for meaning, to express himself as a member of the human race" (Swan, 144; cf. also Stange).

Rather than focusing on concepts such as "pleasure," "fun," or "recreation," I think that it is more productive to begin with the concept of "satisfaction" as it appears in the following passage from an interview with Richard Nelson. In speaking of his experience hunting while living with Inupiaq Eskimo, Nelson says the following:

Another thing about hunting that struck me was a personal thing. For the first time in my life, I found myself engaged in the entire process of keeping myself alive, and it was a tremendous breakthrough in my understanding of where my life comes from. I remember wondering why this hunting life was so satisfying. Part of it was that I was involved with the whole process of keeping myself alive, from the often laborious and lengthy process of finding an animal to killing it, taking it apart, and then learning how it becomes food. I had never done any of that before. Food had always come out of

the store. The deep sense of satisfaction I discovered in that process has never changed (Nelson 1994, 82).

This need not be anthropocentric in any narrow sense (i.e., in the sense of using animals as “mere resources”); something of the “transcendent congruency” Lopez speaks of becomes apparent here. In other words, hunting just might be a proper way for a moral agent that understands him or herself as being part of the world to relate to wild animals *as such*. This suggests that, *contra* animal rights/liberationist theory and much of the thinking that emphasizes “respect for nature” and biocentric egalitarianism (cf. Part III), a proper respect for wild animals and for ourselves *requires* that we relate to them—in a manner that is respectful of their wildness, of course. But this is a long way from the abstract and isolationist “respect” for animals that dominates much of the literature. Indeed, from this perspective one way of respecting precisely their (and our) wildness might be to hunt them.¹³

But the possibility Krutch points to remains. Some hunters do hunt simply in order to kill (cf. Fontova, 54–55), but most hunters who reflect on their hunting deny this. The classic statement is found in Ortega y Gasset’s *Meditations on Hunting*: “one does not hunt in order to kill; on the contrary, one kills in order to have hunted” (Ortega 105; cf. Part IV below). This leaves the question of why one hunts to begin with, and the answers that have been given to this question are many and varied (cf. Wood, 16–38). As the quote above from McGuane shows, hunting, for many reflective hunters, is an activity that takes place on the edge, indeed on many edges.¹⁴ And this is one of them: either hunting is or can be an expression of our sense of ourselves as a respectful and responsible (and playful!) part of the world we inhabit, or it should be consigned to an earlier stage of culture, one which, for better or worse, we have left behind. In other words, the issue is not just whether hunting can be ethically justified. A morally sound relationship to wild animals is threatened not only by development that destroys habitat, but also by “preserving” habitat in the form of closed game ranches. So the question remains whether hunters can rise to the challenge. Hunting, far from being intrinsically an expression of human domination, makes demands on us, and we have to ask whether we today can still rise to these demands. Without responding to those demands, without an appropriate respect, no “new contract” is possible.

CONCLUSION

It is important to be clear as to what I have and what I have not attempted to do in this discussion. I have not tried to give a refutation of animal rights and animal liberation thought. I have also not tried to give a refutation of the general program of ethics by extension. What I have tried to do is to sketch an alternative way of approaching the issue of the human relationship to animals, particularly wild animals. The first goal in developing this alternative is to remove the sense of inevitability that is an important aspect of the rhetoric and argument of ethics by extension. If one takes this alternative seriously, extensionist arguments will, I think, be less compelling. This will not shake the convinced defender of animal rights or animal liberation, but it may give someone considering these positions pause. What is ultimately at issue is who we are. Answering this question requires not only that we inquire into the ways in which our sense of ourselves determines our sense of the world we relate to in all of our actions, but also the ways in which our sense of the world of which we are a part determines our sense of who we are.

If one does follow my alternative, however tentatively, one finds oneself in a different world of both experience and thought about the relationship between human beings and the rest of the animate world. But one could equally argue that the idea of a “new contract” that would be different from the recognition of either animal rights or equal consideration of interests, is romantic nonsense. I shall argue that just the opposite is the case. To do this, in Parts II and III I discuss two approaches, Albert Schweitzer’s principle of reverence for life and Paul Taylor’s ethics of respect for nature, that are not extensionist in their arguments, but which arrive at positions that are in many ways similar to those of animal rights and animal liberation thought. My goal in these parts will be to develop internal critiques demonstrating that neither position is philosophically and morally adequate. In short, my aim will be refutation in a philosophically rigorous sense. In addition, I shall argue that the *ways* in which they turn out to be in need of correction point in very different directions than animal rights or animal liberation theory. If I succeed in this project, I will have laid a better foundation for developing a concept of “respect” for animals and for nature in general, one that is neither an extension of nor modeled on the Kantian concept of “respect for persons.”