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**REFORMING FOR ABOLITION:
INSIGHTS INTO NEW WELFARE ACTIVISM**

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Bachelor's thesis

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Declaration

I hereby declare that I have prepared the submitted dissertation myself and only used the cited sources and literature. Additionally, I hereby declare that I have not been awarded any other degree or diploma for this thesis or its substantial part.

Prague, January 5, 2024.

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Abstract

This bachelor's thesis explores a self-identified animal welfare organisation in the Czech Republic and the factors influencing its members' approach to animal advocacy in the context of the diverging perspectives within the movement. Current literature on animal advocacy extensively covers the philosophical views of the value of nonhuman animals and the efficacy of various advocacy methods. Yet, a significant gap exists in understanding activists' emic perspectives and how they define meaningful activism. This thesis addresses this gap presenting a qualitative research of a new welfare organisation in the Czech Republic. It examines the activists' approaches to advocacy, particularly in response to criticisms from organisations that employ different strategies. Employing participant observation and interviews with activists, the research shows that the activists do not perceive an imminent shift towards veganism – advocated by other groups – as a viable immediate objective. Instead, they focus on goals they perceive as politically feasible, finding meaning in the reduction of suffering of currently exploited animals.

Keywords:

activism, animal advocacy movement, animal rights, animal welfare, new welfare

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	6
CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	9
1.1. Human-Animal Relationships.....	9
1.1.1. Humanism and Anthropocentrism.....	10
1.1.2. Human-Animal Dualism.....	12
1.1.3. Speciesism and Carnism.....	13
1.1.4. Capitalism and Commodification.....	16
1.2. The Spectrum of Animal Advocacy.....	17
1.2.1. Animal Welfare.....	18
1.2.2. Animal Rights.....	20
1.2.3. Reconciling Rights and Welfare.....	22
CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY.....	26
2.1. Sample and Methods of Data Collection.....	26
2.1.1. Participant Observation.....	28
2.1.2. Semi-Structured Interviews.....	30
2.3. Methods of Data Analysis.....	33
2.4. Ethics and Researcher’s Positionality.....	33
CHAPTER 3: ANALYSIS.....	35
3.1. Approaches to Activism.....	35
3.2. Envisioning the Future.....	41
3.3. Mutual Construction of Animals, Humans, and Society.....	47
CONCLUSION.....	52
REFERENCES.....	54

INTRODUCTION

Despite the continuous struggle of an organised animal movement that was formed in the UK and subsequently in the US in the 19th century, the scale of animal exploitation in Western and post-socialist societies is arguably worse than it has ever been in the past. The number of animals slaughtered for meat worldwide has been steadily increasing since the 1960s and has surpassed 70 billion in 2017 (Ritchie, Rosado, and Roser 2017). This is primarily due to the rapid growth of the human population and the rise of income, which often leads to increased consumption of animal-derived products, as the agricultural industry seeks to expand production and increase profits. Gray and Weis (2021) refer to this phenomenon as the meatification of diets. The estimated number of laboratory animals (that includes all live non-human vertebrates and cephalopods) used in 179 countries for all types of experiments that may cause the animal a level of discomfort equivalent to or higher than a needle prick has also seen a significant increase, approaching nearly 200 million in 2015 (Taylor and Alvarez 2019). Animals are widely used in the fashion industry, in entertainment, such as zoos, marine parks, and films; they are killed for trophies (Casamitjana et al. 2016) and used in some traditional medicines (Alves and Alves 2011), to name just a few forms of contemporary animal exploitation.

In this context, it is especially important to draw attention to people who do not agree with this situation and are actively working to change it and improve the position of animals. But, as Munro (2012) notes, while the topic of animal advocacy is theoretically rich, it is “nonetheless empirically poor” (166). This is especially the case in Central and Eastern Europe. Existing literature on animal advocacy largely focuses on the metaphysical conceptualisation of nonhuman animals and their value, alongside the practical implications and effectiveness of different advocacy approaches. However, there is a notable gap in the literature concerning the emic perspectives of activists and the ways in which they construct meaningful activism. This is significant, as the animal advocacy movement consists of many different approaches. This includes animal welfare, animal rights, animal liberation, and new welfare, to name a few (Munro 2012; Francione 1996). Each of these approaches has its own objectives that define desirable interspecies relationships, as well as a set of actions to achieve these objectives. While the fact that many nonhuman animals are being exploited and

mistreated by humans is widely acknowledged across the whole spectrum of the animal advocacy movement, people who dedicate themselves to this cause, practically and/or academically, seem to be unable to find common ground on exactly how to improve the status and welfare of nonhuman animals in our society.

In this context, investigating the factors influencing activists' approaches to animal advocacy presents itself as an interesting academic inquiry. This thesis addresses this empirical gap in the field of animal advocacy and contributes to its mapping in the Czech Republic. It presents a qualitative study within a self-identified animal welfare organisation that focuses on the emic perspectives of its activists in relation to the diverging approaches within the movement. This focus emerged from my fieldwork within this organisation while I was planning to investigate the issue of de-commodification of animals. As my research on de-commodification progressed, I realised that it would have violated the agreement that I had made with the management of the organisation upon entering the field. The organisation's desire was to remain anonymous which limited my ability to analyse specific campaigns that it ran. This necessitated a reconsideration of my research method which had originally focused on the discourse analysis of the organisation's campaigns. At the same time, my immersion into the organisation allowed me to delve deeper into the topics that were relevant to the activists themselves. Upon entering the organisation, my attention was immediately drawn to the question of tension within the animal advocacy movement, as this topic was frequently raised by the activists across various formal and informal events I attended as a part of my fieldwork. Members of the researched organisation addressed criticisms from some vegan activists who employed arguments similar to Francione's (1996; 2010) denouncing the organisation's moderate approach. They viewed the organisation's efforts to appeal to mainstream non-vegan society as ineffective in attaining the goal of animal liberation. In certain instances, they even perceived these efforts as legitimising animal exploitation. It is important to note that vegan or animal rights activists are not a monolithic group; within them, varying attitudes toward welfare activism exist. However, the tension within the movement remains palpable, as observed among the activists within the researched organisation. Despite that criticism, members of the researched organisation continue to advocate for welfare activism and find meaning in it. That has led to a change of my research questions shifting away from de-commodification and redirecting my attention to the diverse approaches

prevalent within the animal advocacy movement (the research questions are presented in section 2.1.).

The thesis is organised as follows. Chapter 1, divided into two sections, provides the theoretical grounding for the research. The first section presents a comprehensive exploration of human-animal relationships in contemporary Western society, exploring the concepts of anthropocentrism, speciesism, carnism, human-animal dualism, and capitalism and the roles they play in the current mistreatment of animals. The second section offers an overview of the spectrum of animal advocacy and ideologies present in it. It introduces differing approaches to animal advocacy, such as animal welfare, animal rights, and new welfare/broader animal protectionism, discussing the philosophical and ethical foundations of these approaches, as well as their activist practices. Chapter 2 is dedicated to the methodology of the research presenting the sampling methods, methods of data collection, and ethical aspects of the research. Chapter 3 presents the analysis of the interviews and fieldwork contextualising the emic perspectives of activists within the theoretical framework.

CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. Human-Animal Relationships

The status of nonhuman animals in contemporary Western and post-socialist societies is shaped by different historical, philosophical, and institutional traditions that have been consistently reinforcing one another, enabling the exploitation and mistreatment of nonhuman, as well as certain groups of human, animals (Weitzenfeld and Joy 2014). It is important to note that some sections of this chapter deal with broad theoretical concepts that did not necessarily define the thinking and practices of ‘regular’ people at the time. For instance, while the conceptualisation of man as a rational animal that created a strict boundary between humans and nonhumans was a “common coin” (Renehan 1981, 241) among ancient Greek intellectuals of classical antiquity, Lawrence (1995) argues that in the common perception, the borders between all animal species (including humans) were much less rigid. Additionally, these concepts often stem from the views of societies’ powerholders, namely white upper-class men. Therefore, any discussion of the human-animal hierarchy must recognise that only select humans, often privileged, occupy the top tier, while others deemed less human are deprived of associated privileges. The grand narratives hence inevitably bear a level of generalisation that omits constitutive inequalities and power dynamics within the human species.

However, notwithstanding these limitations, it's imperative to acknowledge the impact of these narratives or things that we refer to as ‘anthropocentric thinking’ or ‘human-animal dualism’ in shaping colonialism, slavery, and capitalist exploitation of both human and nonhuman animals: “the enslavement of nature needs the enslavement of humans, social hierarchy and the division of labour, religious alienation and anthropocentrism so that everything tends to a more efficient control over nature and humans” (Maurizi 2021, 37). For this reason, the acknowledgement of these concepts remains essential despite their problematic aspects.

This chapter hence provides a discussion of some of the traditions prevailing in Western and post-socialist societies in order to establish the context of the situation to which the animal advocacy movement responds and which it seeks to transform.

1.1.1. Humanism and Anthropocentrism

Among these traditions, deeply interwoven with Western culture, are anthropocentrism and humanism. Anthropocentrism, broadly defined, is a belief that humans occupy a unique and central role in existence because of their distinctive qualities that set them apart from other life forms (Rae 2016). The roots of anthropocentrism can be traced to ancient Greek philosophy, as well as to Judeo-Christian tradition, though the elements of anthropocentric thinking were present even in earlier texts (Renehan 1981). Greek thinkers of that period described humans as distinct from other animals based on various criteria, including anatomical characteristics (such as the ability to use hands, to stand upright, or their unique hair structure) and more abstract attributes, most notably their capacity for rationality.

Similarly, Christianity held views that proclaimed man as the only being made in the image of God and gave him dominion over the rest of creation (Renehan 1981). Despite these ancient origins, anthropocentrism, in its most widespread form emerged with humanism – a belief system that identifies (certain) humans as the primary source of knowledge and value (Weitzenfeld and Joy 2014). The Enlightenment established anthropocentric humanism as a dominant thought standard, which legitimised the exploitation of both – human and nonhuman animals, marking the beginning of extensive European colonisation, land appropriation, and slavery. This standard constructs a hierarchical divide not only between humans and other animals, but inside human species as well, prioritising huMan consciousness and freedom as the core of all being. For instance, a prominent philosopher of the era, René Descartes, by proclaiming *cogito ergo sum*, elevated the role of human cognition as the foundation of all existence (Rae 2016). Man was proclaimed as the only being that possessed reason, a single bearer of an immortal soul, and unlike animals, He had agency beyond instincts.

Metaphysically, anthropocentrism defines humans as the only bearers of intrinsic value (Rae 2016). While it is evident how this view may have detrimental implications for animals, sanctioning their mistreatment, some argue that a nuanced understanding of anthropocentrism can be mutually beneficial for both humans and animals. Hayward (1997) argues that ‘anthropocentrism’ is a term that is often misused and criticised unfairly. To him, anthropocentrism includes both legitimate and illegitimate human interests, a distinction that critiques of anthropocentrism often fail to address. Anthropocentrism itself can be compared to self-love. Practising it and learning to treat other humans properly may by extension lead to a better treatment of the nonhuman world. On that note, Hayward points out that practices

showing a lack of concern for nonhuman species often co-occur with disregard for other humans. Moreover, people vary greatly in their environmental impact, so criticising humanity as a whole is unproductive, as well as unfair. Hayward concludes that instead of “overcoming anthropocentrism,” (50) which is virtually impossible, we should instead focus on eliminating speciesism and human chauvinism, which anthropocentrism is predisposed to, but not equal with (Hayward 1997). Norton (1984) suggests that the debate between anthropocentrism and non-anthropocentrism is pointless altogether. To him, a certain type of anthropocentrism, which he calls “weak” (165) anthropocentrism, is sufficient as a basis of environmental ethics that ensures sustainable treatment of the nonhuman world. He argues that non-anthropocentric and weakly anthropocentric views lead to the same actions (environmental protection), so instead of making “questionable ontological commitments involved in attributing intrinsic value to nature” (172), it is better to focus on implementing those actions (Norton 1984).

Both these approaches have faced criticism from various authors. Kopnina et al. (2018) dispute Hayward's ‘positive’ interpretation of anthropocentrism as its departure from common usage creates ambiguity and does not address human supremacy. Clarity on anthropocentrism as an ideology valuing humanity is essential, even if imprecise. They also argue that while it is true that humans vary in their environmental impact, separating humanity into ‘innocent’ and ‘guilty’ is unproductive. While innocence can exist on an individual level, every collectivity should be held responsible, as all humans to some degree participate in and benefit from the exploitation of the nonhuman world. Anthropocentrism as self-love also does not necessarily lead to respect for other species, as in consumer societies it can just be selfish. For these reasons Kopnina et al. (2018) advocate for ecocentric values, recognizing intrinsic value in the world beyond human preferences, as an alternative to anthropocentrism. Norton's view that anthropocentrism can underpin environmental protection has also been challenged by McShane (2007). She argues that ethics not only guide actions and policies but also influence emotions, attitudes, and things we care about. All these things are closely tied to value, shaping the way we act, as well as our perceptions of worth. While action norms between anthropocentrism and non-anthropocentrism align, emotional norms are different. According to anthropocentrism, feeling love, awe, or respect for ‘nature’ is a mistake, as it is impossible to feel these things towards objects that only have instrumental value. Therefore, it remains crucial to distinguish between anthropocentrism and non-anthropocentrism, contrary to

Norton's proposal (McShane 2007). It is necessary to note that while both these authors provide a critical conceptualisation of anthropocentrism, they still fail to challenge the concept of 'nature' as a separate entity prevailing in Western thinking, as well as the nature-culture divide that does not exist in many indigenous cultures. However, the discussion of these issues is beyond the scope of this thesis.

1.1.2. Human-Animal Dualism

Seeing animals as 'other' is a part of the Western anthropocentric culture that has a history of using knowledge and language to establish a kind of dualism, where human and nonhuman is situated in opposition to each other. Derrida (2008) traces the origins of this dualistic thinking to Descartes who drew sharp distinctions between body and mind, physical being and soul, observer and observed, and man and beast, defining animals as lacking consciousness, language, pain sensations and souls. Derrida points out that these cartesian dichotomies have influenced subsequent thinkers, including Kant, Heidegger, Levinas, and others who have all tackled the question of 'animal' in their works, without questioning the validity of the binary. Derrida specifically points to the use of the word 'animal' - a singular term that implies a homogeneous set and is used to talk about all animals, from snakes to chimpanzees. Derrida seeks to deconstruct this linguistic homogeneity, denouncing it as "one of the greatest and most symptomatic *asinanities* of those who call themselves human" (41). To him, it is exactly this type of thinking that has led to "the *unprecedented* proportions of the subjection of animal" (25) in the past two centuries, referring to all the ways in which contemporary Western society exploits animals. For this reason, he calls for the recognition of the multiplicity of animals and of animals within ourselves, challenging the established opposition and deconstructing the whole notion of 'humanity' (Derrida 2008).

Recognising the implications of dualistic thinking is crucial due to its profound impact on human attitudes and interactions with (other) animals. Weitzenfeld and Joy (2014) argue that the concept of 'the human' has been selectively defined by a particular group of elite men against others, reflecting their embodiment and culture. This definition has historically marginalised various groups, including animals, women, foreigners, and disabled people. So attributing value to someone based on their perceived similarity to humans can not only result in the mistreatment of animals but also risks the exclusion of certain human groups. Tom

Regan (1997), a theorist of animal rights, further contends that drawing a clear boundary between humans and animals based on which we can assign rights is impossible, because no matter what criteria we set, there will inevitably be an overlap between some humans and some animals. This poses a dilemma: either set high criteria for rights possession, like rationality or autonomy, depriving some humans of their rights or set lower criteria, including noncognitive capacities like sentience, thus encompassing many nonhuman animals. This argument challenges the assumption that a clear distinction can be made between humans and other animals (Regan 1997).

In the past fifty years, scientific studies have challenged the once-prevailing notion of human exceptionalism and the human-animal dichotomy. From insects to apes, nonhuman animals exhibit a range of capabilities and behaviours previously considered exclusive to humans, such as language use, toolmaking, social rituals, awareness of death, altruism, and others (Lawrence 1995). This wealth of evidence highlights the untenability and harm inherent in the dualistic perspective, which separates humans and animals. As a solution to this problem, Freeman (2010) proposes the concept of “humanimality,” (11) encouraging both a personal acknowledgement of oneself as an animal and a societal recognition of the human species as part of the Earth's animal collective. Freeman argues that failing to respect our own animality hinders the proper respect for other animals. Additionally, just like Derrida, she emphasises the importance of not treating animals as a homogenous collective but celebrating their diversity. Just as other species differ from humans, they are not failed or lesser versions; acknowledging and appreciating these differences is crucial (Freeman 2010).

1.1.3. Speciesism and Carnism

This hierarchical division of species ultimately leads to a type of discrimination referred to as speciesism. Coined in 1970 by Richard Ryder, the term highlights the lack of logical justification for making moral distinctions between different species (Ryder 2010). Singer significantly popularised this term through his 1975 book *Animal Liberation*. In it, he defines speciesism as a “prejudice or attitude of bias in favour of the interests of members of one’s own species and against those of members of other species” (Singer 1990, 6) comparing it to racial and gender-based discrimination. For Singer, moral consideration should be based on the capacity to suffer from pain or experience pleasure rather than species membership,

which he considers an arbitrary trait. These capacities determine an individual's interests, which lay in avoiding pain and multiplying pleasure. This is significant, as central to Singer's argument is a utilitarian concept of equal consideration of interests. Since human and nonhuman animals are equally interested in avoiding suffering, there is no reason to treat nonhuman interests as inferior. On this basis, Singer advocates for the ethical treatment of nonhuman animals across various domains, such as research and agriculture, where their interests are often disregarded. This, however, does not necessitate a view that all lives have equal worth. Singer argues that killing is not inherently wrong and its ethical dimension only emerges from ignoring an individual's preference for continued life. Singer separates between sentient beings capable of future-oriented preferences and those without such awareness, asserting that the latter are not affected by premature deaths, granted that another being of equal worth takes its place. This view sanctions killing nonhuman animals as long as it does not inflict physical suffering on them because inherently there is no value in their lives. Ultimately Singer maintains that the life of a self-aware being, exhibiting abstract thought, future planning, and intricate communication, holds greater value compared to beings lacking such cognitive capacities, thereby stressing the distinction between sentient beings with varying cognitive abilities (Singer 1990).

Singer's influential perspectives have not been without criticism, particularly concerning his utilitarian framework and the principle of equal consideration. Regan (1983) challenges Singer's views, emphasising the significance of the animal industry for numerous individuals whose livelihoods depend on it. The people involved in the industry have legitimate interests, such as employment, family sustenance, and financial security for their children's education or their own retirement. Regan questions if it is possible to assert whose interests have greater value in this case – the interests of humans or nonhumans involved in the industry, as the stakes are high for both groups. Francione (1996) echoes these concerns, suggesting that Singer's pro-vegetarian argument does not hold because of the potentially devastating repercussions of the collapse of factory farming which would hurt the interests of a great number of people. Subsequently, both Regan and Francione diverge from utilitarianism proposing an argument based on inherent value that justifies moral rights for animals. Regan emphasises the significance of animals with complex cognitive abilities, attributing equal moral rights based on the inherent worth of their inner lives. Francione takes this a step

further, asserting that sentience itself holds moral value, rendering the complexity of an animal's cognition inconsequential (Regan 1983; Francione 1996). However, neither of these authors further tackles the question of speciesism, its definition and its role (for an in-depth discussion of their ethical stances, see section 1.2.2.).

Critical animal scholars, on the other hand, have more to say about speciesism. They argue that speciesism, unlike in Singer's definition, transcends individual prejudices, and is a complex of material institutions, daily practices, and historical contexts. Italian philosopher and critical scholar Marco Maurizi (2021) argues that "By reducing 'speciesism' to a logical mechanism for the analysis of ethical propositions, Singer *emptied the concept of any historical, social, and political complexity*" (p. 40-41). To Maurizi, speciesism is a *praxis* that has a material, as well as an ideological side. The material aspect involves the utilitarian use of animals to serve human needs, reducing them to mere commodities, while the ideal aspect provides ideological justifications for it. Maurizi posits that the advent of speciesism coincided with humanity's dominion over nature, particularly through the domestication of plants and animals, which enabled humans' alterations to the environment to suit their own needs. This constituted the material side of speciesism. However, the ideological side could only come into existence after the advent of a Western classification of species that distinguishes 'humans' from all other living beings, termed 'animals.' So speciesism is not a result of the ideology of human superiority, but a result of different practices of animal use. This discriminatory ideological aspect of speciesism, Maurizi argues, intensified with the advent of hierarchical societies and institutionalised religions. As hierarchical structures emerged within society, control over humans extended to control over animals, engendering a hierarchical relationship between humans and animals: "*humans control humans who control animals*" (53). Ultimately, in Maurizi's view, the quest for animal liberation is inherently political and intricately linked to human liberation from oppression. His critical approach advocates an understanding of and opposition to prevailing political-economic structures perpetuating oppression, along with challenging the discourses and narratives that legitimize these systems (Maurizi 2021).

Weitzenfeld and Joy (2014) introduce the concept of carnism as an example of structural speciesism. They define it as a subset of speciesism that categorises non-human animals into 'edible' and 'inedible,' legitimising their exploitation and consumption. To

Weitzenfeld and Joy, carnism contradicts fundamental human values like compassion and justice, so it relies on defence mechanisms that are crucial to its existence. These defences function on institutional and internalised levels, reinforcing each other. Carnistic mechanisms include denial of oppression, keeping victims out of sight, justifying consumption as normal, natural, and necessary, discrediting veganism as biased, and employing objectification, de-individualisation, and dichotomisation of animals. Carnism and speciesism as ideologies thrive by remaining unnoticed. This is why, to dismantle these systems, vegan advocates need to expose and challenge normalized practices and sentiments ingrained in these ideologies. Only by making these practices visible can they be confronted and transformed (Weitzenfeld and Joy 2014).

1.1.4. Capitalism and Commodification

Capitalism, a structure ingrained in perpetuating animal oppression, marks a significant transition in the historical treatment of animals. Despite animal suffering being part of history, the advent of capitalism brought forth a transformative change, severing the ties with nature and accelerating the scale and intensity of animal exploitation. Clark and Wilson (2020) argue that Marx's analysis of capitalism in the mid-nineteenth century illuminated the profound shift in human-animal relations. Capitalism commodified animals, treating them as machines and resources for production, fostering an alienation between humans and other species (Clark and Wilson 2020). However, this commodification of animals within capitalism extends beyond nonhuman animals. Nibert (2002) emphasises the entanglements of human and nonhuman oppression under the capitalist system. He highlights how capitalism's inherent tendency for growth and expansion combined with the motivation to maximise personal profit facilitates the exploitation of both humans and animals. For instance, the use of assembly-line production aimed at minimising skilled labour made workers easily replaceable and subjected them to increased exploitation, a practice that was pioneered in slaughterhouses (Nibert 2002).

Similarly to Maurizi (2021), Nibert also asserts that the mistreatment of animals was not fuelled by prejudice but rather by the pursuit of profit within business ventures. The primary driver behind the establishment and normalization of oppressive practices was material gain, not discriminatory attitudes. Prejudice and speciesism emerged as products of social systems designed to serve elite interests, fostering a framework that promoted the

subjugation and exploitation of marginalized groups. This inclination toward subjugation is further propelled by the animal industry itself. Nibert provides an example of how meat producers manipulated consumers by enhancing the fat content in beef, driving them to pay more for higher-value cuts. Following World War II, conspicuous consumption surged in the United States. Animal-derived commodities were among the ones consumed to enhance personal status, including fur and leather goods, purebred dogs, and the activity of trophy hunting, amongst others. This trend was perpetuated by advertising, leading to a general increase in consumption, often driven by unnecessary and artificial demand generated by marketing campaigns (Nibert 2002).

In sum, millions of humans and billions of other animals have been cruelly treated and killed because their existence somehow hindered, or their exploitation furthered, the accumulation of private profit – particularly for the affluent and powerful. The level of this mistreatment has grown for other animals under capitalism. The expansionist imperative inherent in capitalism has led to the appropriation of the homelands of other animals, and an anthropocentric and environmentally unsound transportation system has left hundreds of millions as roadside ‘debris.’ Countless other animals are fodder for the entertainment, biomedical, and hunting and gun industries. (Nibert 2002, 94)

1.2. The Spectrum of Animal Advocacy

In the quest to combat the oppression and exploitation outlined in the previous section, animal activists are raising their voices to break the cycle of abuse and establish interspecies relations based on mutual respect and understanding among all animals. Given the extensive scope of the issue and the deeply ingrained nature of speciesism in Western social systems, it is unsurprising that the animal advocacy movement is composed of various approaches, each with distinct aims, strategies, and philosophical perspectives. Different authors have proposed differing classifications, such as animal welfare, new welfare, and animal rights (Francione 1996). Conversely, Munro (2012) categorises the advocacy approaches into animal welfare, animal liberation, and animal rights, positioning the radical animal liberation movement outside the mainstream. Regardless of the typology, the primary source of contention within the animal advocacy movement arises from differences between the welfarist approach and the

animal rights approach, which can essentially be framed as a debate between abolition and regulation (Bertuzzi 2018; Francione and Garner 2010). In this section, I will delve into the distinctions between these two approaches, as well as explore a possible point of reconciliation between them. This discussion will establish the context for the position of the researched organisation on the animal advocacy spectrum concerning its ideology and tactics, allowing for a clear distinction from other forms of activism.

1.2.1. Animal Welfare

Animal welfare is a traditional position that has prevailed since the formal establishment of the animal advocacy movement in the early 19th century, in the form of organisations such as The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) in the UK and American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) in the USA (Munro 2012). The founding of these organisations was inspired by the utilitarian moral philosophy of J. Bentham and J.S. Mill which introduced a new ethical outlook toward animals (Francione 2010). Before the 19th century, animals were typically perceived as non-sentient objects either devoid of interests or with interests that could be ignored – a viewpoint commonly linked to Descartes. This view absolved humans from any ethical responsibilities toward animals. However, the 19th century witnessed a shift in this perception. Bentham and Mill introduced a new question that determined the moral status of beings – a question that was not based upon rationality or the ability to communicate, but rather on the ability to suffer (Singer 1990 later adopted this principle as the foundation for his argument against speciesism, see section 1.1.3.). And for the first time in modern Western philosophy, this ability was granted to animals. Despite this acknowledgement of animal sentience, Bentham and Mill continued to perceive nonhumans as irrational beings whose utilisation for human purposes was seen as normal. However, the unnecessary suffering imposed on these animals was now deemed unacceptable. Moreover, the cumulative nature of utilitarian philosophy that considers the overall happiness or pleasure over individual ones allowed for a rationale where if the cumulative pleasure derived from animal exploitation outweighed the collective suffering of these animals, it was viewed as a desirable outcome. So despite the fact that this philosophy did not advocate the abolition of animal use and exploitation, the recognition of

the moral significance of sentience laid the foundation for the concept of animal welfare (Francione 2010).

Animal welfare, as a branch of the animal advocacy movement, often addresses concerns related to the treatment of animals in various contexts such as farming, entertainment, research, and companion animals (Munro 2012). Organisations advocating for animal welfare predominantly engage in institutional politics, lobbying for incremental reforms within existing legislative frameworks. Their approach largely centres around minimising cruelty and promoting ethical treatment without advocating for the abolition of animal use itself (Munro 2012). Francione (1996) is highly critical of animal welfare, claiming that despite its efforts to address animal mistreatment, traditional animal welfare does not fundamentally challenge the utilisation of animals for human needs. This ethical standpoint views animals as morally inferior to humans, emphasising the mitigation of their suffering while still permitting their exploitation for human purposes. Garner (2010) similarly voiced criticism against the animal welfare ethic due to its failure to renounce speciesism, however, he defends its political strategy of incremental reforms, claiming that “it is important to distinguish between what is prescribed by ethics and what is achievable politically or strategically” (Garner 2010, 105).

Historically, welfare organisations, such as the RSPCA, have played a pivotal role in championing the topic of animal mistreatment. The RSPCA contributed significantly to landmark legislative changes, including the passage of the Protection of Animals Act in 1911 and the abolition of bear and bull baiting in 1935 (Beers 2006). Following in RSPCA's footsteps, animal advocacy organisations started appearing on the other side of the Atlantic. The first animal advocacy organisation in the US, ASPCA, was established after the Civil War, taking inspiration from its abolitionist ideology that has opened the possibilities to extend natural rights to those traditionally perceived as inferior. Contrary to the prevailing portrayal in the academic literature that presents the welfarist approach as non-confrontational (Francione 1996; Munro 2012), Beers describes the ASPCA strategies as including disruptive practices employed to achieve the objectives of their campaigns. For instance, their campaign for improved treatment of workhorses utilised physical interventions, prosecution cases, economic boycotts, civil disobedience, as well as legislative efforts traditional to welfare approach. By the break of the 19th century, the ASPCA had significantly increased awareness

of the US public regarding the treatment of animals in the agricultural industry and research institutions, publishing articles, photos, and billboards that exposed the harsh treatment these animals endured (Beers 2006).

The internal conflicts between the moderate reformist and radical abolitionist approaches were present within the animal advocacy movement from its early stages (Beers 2006). The post-World War I era marked the integration of the moderate faction represented by welfare into the mainstream public discourse, while simultaneously alienating the more radical activists. This acceptance granted the movement more cultural, political, and economic influence; however, this power was constrained by societal expectations of moderation and compromise. The post-World War II period witnessed numerous legislative triumphs for the animal movement, notably the enactment of the Humane Slaughter Act (1958) and the Laboratory Animal Welfare Act (1966/1970), and others. Despite these achievements, this period was characterised by further divisions within the movement. While moderate activists secured victories and bolstered the movement's societal standing, 'radicals' found the achieved reforms inadequate, fuelling a call for more assertive forms of activism. Paradoxically, the successes of conservative activists sowed the seeds for an internal rebellion against them that drew inspiration from the radical movements of the 1960s (Beers 2006).

1.2.2. Animal Rights

The late 1970s witnessed the emergence of a new distinct cohort of animal advocates, symbolised by figures like Henry Spira (Francione 1996). Their campaigns, such as the crusade against inhumane cat experiments by the National Institute of Health, embraced a radical abolitionist ideology. Unlike the welfare paradigm aiming for reforms and regulation, these advocates clamoured for the complete abolition of animal experimentation. They fought not for larger cages, but for empty ones. In the early 1980s, further organisations were established, including People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and Animal Liberation Front (ALF). These new organisations not only had a different ideological ethos but also diverged in their operational strategies, inclining towards more militant, disruptive, and occasionally illegal actions such as break-ins, occupations, and the retrieval of information from research facilities (although they never resorted to violence). They also rejected hierarchical organisational structures of traditional welfare and embraced a grassroots

orientation. The overarching goal of these new organisations was the abolition of practices involving the use of animals by humans in all spheres, extending even to pet-keeping. A core tenet within this movement often involved embracing veganism or vegetarianism as a foundational principle of membership, as a practice that symbolised the change they wanted to see in the world (Francione 1996; Munro 2012).

Francione (1996) notes that the emergence of this new wave in animal advocacy was profoundly shaped by philosophers, particularly Singer's *Animal Liberation*, championing a non-rights approach, and Regan's *The Case for Animal Rights*, advocating a rights-based approach (briefly mentioned in section 1.1.3.). Although philosophically distinct, both marked a significant departure from traditional welfare approaches, embracing more radical perspectives. To Regan (1983), nonhuman animals possess certain basic moral rights, and their recognition requires fundamental changes in our treatment of these animals. Philosophically, his theory of rights is based on the concept of the inherent value of individuals, a concept to which Singer is radically opposed. This inherent value belongs to all beings who can be characterised as the "subject-of-a-life" (243) – conscious individuals with complex awareness and a sustained psychophysical identity over time. While this definition does not include all nonhuman living beings, it significantly broadens the collectivity of the rightsholders. The inherent value of an individual is distinct from the value derived from their experiences, such as pleasure or pain. It belongs to all subjects-of-a-life equally, cannot be gained or taken away, and does not depend on its utility to others. From this foundational concept of inherent value, Regan formulated the respect principle: we are obliged to treat individuals who possess inherent value in a way that respects that value. From this is derived a further principle of harm: the prima facie right of the subject-of-a-life not to be harmed. The harm can be caused by infliction, when something is forced upon an individual against their will, or deprivation, when an individual has something taken away from them, which includes freedom. On this basis, Regan advocates for the abolition of all practices that exploit animals, such as using them for food, hunting, trapping, educational purposes, testing, and research, as they break both these principles. It is crucial to note, however, that Regan's argument is not against the utilitarian use of animals in a general sense. He acknowledges how individuals may benefit from others' skills and talents, even in human interactions, which is acceptable as long as it does not harm the individual in question. His critique focuses instead on

institutionalised exploitation that commodifies animals, treating them merely as a means to a human end rather than recognising their inherent worth and rights (Regan 1983).

Francione's (1996) perspective on animal rights extends beyond Regan's conceptualisation. For him, the primary morally relevant attribute for a living being to be eligible for right possession is their sentience, or perceptual awareness, as it is the only quality that is necessary for it to have interests. This criterion of right eligibility arguably includes many more creatures than Regan's subject-of-a-life criteria. In Francione's view, differences between humans and nonhumans, as well as variations in the minds of different species, are unimportant for the question of moral consideration and using these differences as an argument in favour of different treatment or disregard for animals' interests constitutes speciesism. He opposes the idea, held for instance by Singer (Cavaliere and Singer 1994), that certain nonhuman animals, like great apes, deserve more moral status or legal protection due to their cognitive abilities. He also rejects Regan's distinction between human and animal death, according to which death brings more harm to a human than to an animal. Francione argues that all sentient beings have an equal desire to stay alive and death hence causes equal harm to all of them. When Francione discusses animal rights, he centres on a single right: the right not to be treated as human property or, in other words, the right not to be treated as merely a means to human ends. This right serves as the foundation for all other rights, as the interests of a property will always be subordinate to the interests of the property owners, which excludes equal consideration of interests. Acknowledging this fundamental right leads to several practical applications: the end of institutionalised exploitation of nonhuman animals, the end of breeding of domesticated animals, and the end of killing of wild animals and the destruction of their habitats. Ultimately, Francione advocates for ethical veganism as the moral baseline for society, positioning it as an essential step in recognising and respecting animals' inherent rights (Francione 1996).

1.2.3. Reconciling Rights and Welfare

The space existing between the welfare and rights ends of the animal advocacy spectrum is a subject of theoretical disagreement among scholars. Different scholars suggest labels such as animal liberation (Munro 2012), new welfarism (Francione 1996), and broader animal protectionism (Garner 2010), among others. Animal liberation described by Munro is a

pragmatic movement that took inspiration from Singer's utilitarian philosophy. The proponents of animal liberation remain disinterested in engaging in the broader philosophical debates between the welfare and rights approaches. They prioritise enhancing animals' lives through regulatory improvements, sharing a similar standpoint with Garner (2010) in emphasising the importance of achieving at least some progress, even if it falls short of the ideal. Munro further emphasises the coalition-building potential of animal liberationists with other progressive social movements, such as feminism and environmentalism. This potential is attributed to their definition of speciesism as a social problem similar to other forms of discrimination, suggesting a broader social resonance beyond the realm of animal advocacy (Munro 2012). Given the preceding discussion on Singer's utilitarian philosophy, the focus of this section shifts to the comprehensive debate between the approaches of Garner and Francione presented in their monograph *The Animal Rights Debate: Abolition or Regulation?*

Both, Garner and Francione (2010), discuss a particular position that combines the abolitionist goals of animal rights with reformist methods of animal welfare, even though their conceptions differ. Garner (2010) refers to this position as “broader animal protectionism” or simply “welfare” (104). Despite criticising traditional welfare ethics, he underscores the need to differentiate between ethical prescriptions and practical, politically feasible strategies. He posits that the current animal rights movement's objectives are unattainable due to the societal lack of acceptance regarding the principle that nonhuman animals should possess similar moral status to humans. Accepting this principle would necessitate a major reconfiguration of our relationships with nonhumans since it renders almost all current treatment of animals morally illegitimate. Hence, achieving the abolitionist goal advocated by the animal rights movement presents a great challenge. It is further complicated by the fact that unlike in other movements focused on gender or race, animal advocates have to advocate for those who cannot advocate for themselves. This, Garner states, requires a high degree of altruism (Garner 2010).

For these reasons, Garner proposes employing incremental welfarist reforms as a means of ultimately achieving animal rights. Contrary to Francione's suggestion of animals not being treated as property, Garner contends that the right that should be granted to all sentient beings is the right to not suffer. He emphasises the strategic utility of focusing on addressing “unnecessary suffering,” (122) as it garners broader public and movement support,

exemplified in campaigns such as the ban on live animal export and fox hunting in Great Britain. He further notes that the concept of ‘unnecessary’ is dynamic in nature which allows for the implementation of stricter reforms in the future. Critically, Garner highlights that the animal advocacy movement is a promotional group, devoid of direct economic interests, which renders them comparatively weaker in the political sphere. He argues that campaigns for animal welfare reforms, beneficial to both animals and humans, are more likely to succeed by associating animal protection with human interests within the current political opportunity structure. He critiques the animal rights movement's emphasis on vegan campaigns, contending that they lack efficacy without concurrent legislative efforts. To him, focusing solely on individual lifestyle changes implies that the treatment of animals is merely a matter of personal preference rather than a moral obligation imposed by justice. In this context, he emphasises the role of the state in enforcing justice as an argument in favour of legislative campaigns to improve animal rights. Finally, Garner argues that the rights theorists have failed to provide any guidelines for achieving abolition incrementally, apart from the aforementioned vegan education that he finds insufficient (Garner 2010).

Francione is a vocal critic of welfare measures and “broader animal protectionism,” an approach that Francione himself calls “new welfarism” (1996, 3). To him, these measures, despite being promoted under the guise of animal rights, are functionally indistinguishable from practices endorsed by advocates of animal exploitation, as well as old welfare activists, whose ethics he condemns as ethically insufficient. A crucial point in Francione's critique lies in the ethical discrepancy between recognizing animals' moral rights and compromising these rights in favour of incremental changes: “If we believe that animals have moral rights *today*, it is wrong to compromise the rights of animals *now*, [...] in the hope that the changes will lead to rights for *other* animals *sometime in the future*” (4). This contrasts with Garner's (2010) view that regards welfare reforms as ethically desirable and preferable to nonaction, provided they diminish animal suffering. However, Francione (2010) dismisses welfare measures not only on ethical grounds but also due to their apparent ineffectiveness and counterproductivity. He asserts that there is no evidence to suggest that welfare reforms can lead to the abolition of exploitative practices. Francione contends that animal exploiters accept and support animal welfare measures under the guise of being against “unnecessary suffering,” yet they reject animal rights, perceiving it as a radical ideology threatening human interests. Moreover, he

asserts that the implementation of welfare reforms often results in the public feeling better about consuming animal products produced ‘humanely,’ diverting them from accepting veganism. Companies, Francione claims, accept welfare reforms without any intention of abolishing their exploitative practices, exploiting these reforms merely for public perception (Francione 2010).

Central to Francione's criticism is the assertion that welfare campaigns reinforce the notion of animals as inferior to humans. He points out that animal welfare laws predominantly focus on how animals are used rather than questioning the necessity of their use. This results in the fact that “the level of protection for animal interests is linked to what is required to exploit animals in an economically efficient way” (Francione 2010, 29). To support that statement, Francione provides examples of several campaigns in which animal advocacy groups used arguments about the economic efficiency of implementing welfare measures to persuade companies that exploit animals to accept them, e.g. a campaign in favour of adopting a slaughter method called ‘controlled-atmosphere killing’ run by PETA and other welfarist groups. In it, they used arguments such as economic efficiency for both, the producer and consumer, as well as claiming that it benefits animals providing a more ‘humane’ death. To Francione, this type of argumentation reinforces the status of animals as resources for humans. Garner (2010), however, views it as pragmatic and enhancing the chances of achieving success in campaigns. Another thing that in Francione's view runs the risk of perpetuating the legitimacy of animal exploitation is ‘single-issue’ campaigns believed to be the most effective by welfarists. Francione questions their effectiveness while also claiming that they risk conveying the impression that certain forms of exploitation are worse than others. He argues that distinctions between using animals for various purposes, like fur, wool, or leather, are artificial, and that the public is aware of this artificiality and hence will not be deceived by it. Ultimately Francione proclaims that any time dedicated to promoting welfare issues is the time not dedicated to vegan education, which he deems more impactful (Francione 2010).

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

This thesis examines the activities and perspectives of individuals who participate in the animal advocacy movement, specifically, the members of an organisation that positions itself as welfarist. I am interested in subjective meanings, that is, how the actors themselves perceive and understand their activities within the context of a movement that is heterogeneous in its approaches. More specifically, I am interested in exploring the recurring patterns, as well as differences in activists' perceptions, and relating these differences to the contexts in which they emerge.

The thesis is focused on the following research questions:

- How do new welfare activists construct the vision of meaningful activism while facing criticism from other organisations?
- How do the animal activists in the researched organisation perceive and construct the status of animals in contemporary Czech society?
- How do they perceive desirable interspecies relationships? How and when are boundaries between human and nonhuman animals constructed?

Exploring these research questions requires a qualitative research strategy (Novotná, Špaček, and Št'ovíčková Jantulová 2019).

2.1. Sample and Methods of Data Collection

To select an organisation for the study, I conducted preliminary research using Google, Facebook, and academic sources (Malasková 2020) to identify animal advocacy organisations operating in the Czech Republic. The focus was on organisations dedicated primarily to public campaigning, so shelters or charitable foundations were not included. The result was a list of 12 organisations that was subsequently divided into two categories based on the focus of their activism: six organisations focused primarily on vegan activism and six organisations were dedicated to a broader spectrum of animal-related issues. This aligns with the spectrum of animal advocacy described in section 1.2. where vegan-focused organisations fall under the definition of animal rights, while the rest can be defined as welfare or broader animal

protectionism. In terms of choosing an organisation for further research, I hesitated to approach strictly vegan organisations. As someone who does not adhere to a vegan diet, I feared being perceived as an outsider and not being able to gain the trust of the participants necessary to conduct research. With this in mind, I directed my focus toward organisations that engaged in broad animal protectionism. My concern regarding vegan organisations was subsequently validated in the process of my fieldwork in the organisation in which I eventually conducted my research. During an informal conversation with one of the research participants, while we were crafting banners for an upcoming protest, he mentioned that most organisations that I identified as animal rights indeed require their members to be vegan and are quite strict about it (field notes, 20.3.2023).

Out of the six organisations identified, I contacted three via email, focusing on the ones that were most active, meaning they had running campaigns and were actively present on social media. In the email I introduced myself and the research, expressing my intent to engage as an activist within the organisation, participating in their events, meetings, and activities, like any other member. Additionally, I shared my desire to conduct interviews with some of the activists. Out of the three, only one organisation granted permission for me to conduct research among its activists. One organisation did not respond, while another declined research requests among activists altogether due to a high volume of previous inquiries, aiming not to burden the activists with additional research.

While the choice of the organisation was hence occasioned, it was also an interesting one. The organisation engages in a wide range of activities: from running big national campaigns aiming at legislative change to participating in prosecution cases related to animal abuse to addressing smaller issues on a local level (to respect the organisation's anonymity, I will not be providing specific examples). Some of their campaigns can be defined as single-issue abolitionist campaigns as they aim at the complete eradication of certain practices of animal exploitation, while others fall under the definition of welfare aiming at improving the conditions of animals used primarily for agriculture. Some of the organisation's projects are also dedicated to vegan education and increasing the accessibility of vegan products. The organisation's repertoire of actions includes political lobbying, direct work with animal exploiters (e.g. convincing entertainment suppliers to not use animals as a part of services they provide), street educational campaigns, protests, legal prosecution, collaborations with

influencers, petitions, letter-writing marathons, social media promotion and others. They also have cases of successful national campaigns, both welfarist and abolitionist. Despite that, the organisation faces criticism from the activists at the other end of the animal advocacy spectrum. This provided an interesting problem for my thesis, hence rendering the research field as rich.

2.1.1. Participant Observation

Participant observation within the organisation was undertaken from March to November 2023. Over these nine months, I actively engaged in organisation-held events such as meetings, street campaigns, protests, festivals, and informal gatherings, striving for extensive participation. It is necessary to add that the organisation under research is a big one, counting more than 200 members (based on the number of people on Slack, a communication platform used by the organisation). This includes people who work there, as well as activists and volunteers. During my research, I naturally did not get to meet all people. The work of the organisation is structurally divided into branches that do not necessarily intersect. Sometimes this became a cause of communication issues and frustration among activists, as it sometimes becomes difficult to obtain certain information that is necessary, for instance, for a campaign, but this information gets stuck in the communication channels (field notes, 15.5.2023). During my research, I mostly engaged with two branches: the local Prague team (consisting of activists and an activist coordinator who works at the organisation) and the street campaigning team (consisting again of activists and a coordinator from the organisation). The Prague team consists of 40+ people (according to the amount of people on Slack). It holds monthly meetings, mostly in person, but occasionally online with an average attendance of around 12 people, of which I attended 6. Its main activity is running campaigns on a smaller level focusing mostly on single issues (e.g. specific cases of animals in entertainment). For each campaign, they chose methods of action that were perceived to have the biggest impact, which also determined the types of events I could participate in. Often time their activism revolved around communication with local politicians and stakeholders which was mostly held online or via phone calls, but occasionally it also took the form of protests or street campaigns, in which cases I could participate in these events (during my research, I attended one protest that took place in the period of my engagement with the organisation). They are also in charge of representing the organisation at different festivals, be it vegan festivals or cultural festivals

(e.g. music or film festivals). I attended two vegan festivals and two cultural festivals as a part of my research. Another regular activity of the Prague team includes going to volunteer at animal shelters and sanctuaries, however during the period of my engagement with the organisation, this event did not take place because of various reasons interfering with its organisation process.

Another branch of the organisation that I actively engaged with was the street campaigning team consisting of about 10 regular members. Its main activity is weekly street campaigning that takes the form of an information stand that happens in the central part of Prague where there are a lot of people. The activists at the stand present the currently running campaigns to the public, talking to people, providing informational leaflets, and gathering contacts of the people who would like to get involved. The stand normally includes a television screen running videos related to current campaigns. Sometimes there are also thematical installations that aim to draw people's attention. In this type of activity, I participated a total of 9 times.

My fieldwork started after gaining permission from the activist recruiter – who was simultaneously one of the leaders of the organisation – via a video call. I initiated contact with activists through Slack. I introduced myself via a message, detailed the research's nature, and emphasised the voluntary nature of participation. I also notified them that I would be taking notes. Apart from gathering data and familiarising myself with activists, I also tried to reciprocate the kindness and openness of research participants who dedicated their time and energy to participating in my research by actively engaging in their events and providing help where needed. Yet, as a researcher, I remained cautious, preserving a critical distance for analytical purposes. In certain discussions that occurred at the organisation's meetings, especially regarding the strategies for campaigns, I assumed the position of a mere observer, not interfering with my own arguments and opinions.

In terms of foci of attention, I allowed myself to be 'led by the field,' meaning I responded to specific situations in the field and decided how to conduct research accordingly. Shifting the research focus from the de-commodification of animals to diverse perspectives within the animal advocacy movement led me to redirect my attention from campaigning

strategies to activists' perspectives on inter-organisational relationships, focusing on the construction of meanings of activism and tensions within the movement.

2.1.2. Semi-Structured Interviews

In order to learn about things that could not be directly observed, I conducted five semi-structured interviews towards the end of the fieldwork in November 2023, in public spaces chosen by the participants themselves, which primarily constituted restaurants and cafés. Interviews, as well as all my interactions within the organisation, were conducted in the Czech language. An interview topic guide consisted of four thematic areas that I wished to discuss, as well as a set of guiding questions for each of the areas. These included the activists' construction of the current position of nonhuman animals in Czech society; the construction of the envisioned 'ideal' interspecies relationships; meaningful activism; and tensions within the animal advocacy movement.

During the interviews, the participants had space to express themselves freely and were not interrupted if they diverted from the interview questions. I attempted to generate an open conversation, maintain the natural conversational continuity, and create a space in which the participants felt relaxed and comfortable sharing their thoughts and experiences. This was facilitated by my prolonged involvement in the organisation, making me a familiar figure to the interviewees. However, interviews also included areas of discomfort and concern. After one interview, one of the participants expressed concern about having said something that could negatively affect the organisation. While transcribing his interview, I noticed the cautious choice of words that he used to answer my questions. This points to the ethical sensitivity of the research, indicating the necessity of acknowledging the power asymmetries inherently present in the relationship between a researcher and the actors (Novotná, Špaček, and Šťovíčková Jantulová 2019). So during the analysis, I kept in mind this dynamic, and while remaining critical in my interpretations where it was necessary, I provided alternative visions that could serve as a source of inspiration and reflection for activists. This can be regarded as an implication of the principle of a scholar-activist collaboration advocated by Munro (2012) where combining the practical knowledge of activists and the theoretic background of scholars has the potential to positively contribute to the movement's cause.

Given the research's goal to present diverse perspectives within the animal welfare approach, I aimed for diversity in age and gender among my interviewees. This was relatively

easy to achieve as the organisation's membership was considerably heterogeneous. The interviewees spanned a wide age range, from the youngest participant at 16 to the oldest at 57. Among the five interviewees, three identified as women and two as men. Here I provide a table that details the interviewees' identities and their positions within the organisation, as well as the broader animal advocacy movement:

<p>Bára</p> <p>Interview date: 20.11.2023</p> <p>Interview place: tea shop</p>	<p>Age: 25</p> <p>Gender: female</p> <p>Education: higher education (master's)</p> <p>Occupation: urbanist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - First became an activist in the researched organisation in 2018. Her choice of organisation was determined by the accessibility factor (as a person from a smaller town she did not have other organisations to choose from); - Subsequently, she established a 'chapter' of the organisation Anonymous for the Voiceless in her hometown, a prominent animal rights organisation focused on promoting veganism via a form of public happening called 'Cube of Truth;' - After moving to Prague, started engaging in the local Prague and the street campaigning teams of the researched organisation, while also expressing the desire to start engaging in Anonymous for the Voiceless again; - Vegetarian since 2014, vegan since 2018 (prior to becoming an activist).
<p>Eva</p> <p>Interview date: 7.11.2023</p> <p>Interview place: pub</p>	<p>Age: 41</p> <p>Gender: female</p> <p>Education: higher professional school (VOŠ)</p> <p>Occupation: dubbing producer</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Got engaged with the researched organisation in 2020-2021 after seeing a Facebook ad, though had been interested in the topic of animal issues prior to that; - Is a member of the local Prague and the street campaigning teams, engages actively in the currently running local campaigns; - Vegetarian since the age of 11, became vegan upon entering the researched organisation.
<p>Martin</p> <p>Interview date: 30.11.2023</p> <p>Interview place: interviewee's home</p>	<p>Age: 57</p> <p>Gender: male</p> <p>Education: higher education</p> <p>Occupation: psychologist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engages in the researched organisation since 2019; - Was interested in animal advocacy before, but did not want to engage with organisations that required their members to be vegan; - Is an active member of the local Prague team and occasionally participates in the street campaigning team; - Identifies as vegetarian eating mostly plant-based (though not strictly), started reducing his consumption of animal products in 2017.
<p>Petra</p> <p>Interview date: 24.11.2023</p> <p>Interview place: vegan restaurant</p>	<p>Age: 16</p> <p>Gender: female</p> <p>Education: primary</p> <p>Occupation: student</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Got involved with animal advocacy after encountering several vegan organisations on social media and subsequently becoming active in them;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Currently keeps being an active member in different organisations with varying approaches, including the researched one; - Is a member of the local Prague and the street campaigning teams, participates mainly in the regular monthly meetings due to time constraints; - Became vegan upon getting involved with vegan organisations.
<p>Tomáš</p> <p>Interview date: 22.11.2023</p> <p>Interview place: vegan restaurant</p>	<p>Age: 39</p> <p>Gender: male</p> <p>Education: not stated</p> <p>Occupation: employee in culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Became an animal advocate after being an environmental activist for several years; - Is a very active member of the local Prague and the street campaigning teams; - Has been vegan for about 10 years.

2.3. Methods of Data Analysis

Fieldnotes and interviews were transcribed and coded using the methods described in Novotná, Špaček, and Šťovíčková Jantulová (2019). I first identified the topics directly related to the research questions of the thesis, segmenting and coding them, after that, I proceeded to further analyse the data identifying other common themes that emerged from it. The key codes included “human identity,” “animal identity,” “meaningful activism,” “desirable interspecies relationships,” “veganism,” and “tensions within the movement.” Simultaneously, I was writing down comments and notes relating segments to each other and to theory.

2.4. Ethics and Researcher’s Positionality

To maintain the ethical integrity of the study, the data collection process strictly adhered to ethical standards of informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. The identity of each informant is kept confidential to preserve the participants' anonymity. The

information obtained from the interviews was securely stored and used solely for the purposes of this thesis. Based on my initial agreement with the leadership of the researched organisation, the name of the organisation was also kept confidential. Moreover, no data was used that could reveal the identity of the organisation. The name of the organisation used throughout the analysis (People for Animals) was made up, as well as all the names of research participants.

The qualitative research strategy understands the researcher's position and identity as part of the social reality being studied. Given the topic of animal exploitation, my personal position on this issue is non-neutral. As a vegetarian aiming to transition to veganism, I wholeheartedly align with animal advocates striving to counteract the oppression of nonhuman animals. For me, the cessation of this oppression is ethically imperative. That is, while I value the discussion about the envisioned society devoid of animal exploitation and a broader societal reflection of the underlying ideologies and material structures perpetuating these oppressive practices for such a long time, the imperative of re-evaluating our current interactions and practices concerning the non-human realm, for me, remains unquestionable. Nevertheless, concerning the primary focus of this research – the different perspectives within the animal advocacy movement – I retain an open standpoint on how societal change might be achieved. I find myself not endorsing either end of the spectrum of animal advocacy. Whether we should solely pursue abolitionist vegan campaigns or advocate for any reform aiming to improve animal lives to some extent remains a question the thesis addresses but does not resolve.

CHAPTER 3: ANALYSIS

3.1. Approaches to Activism

This Monday evening, a group of Prague activists gathered together in People for Animal's office to make banners for an event that will take place at the beginning of the next month. It is a protest against [a specific case of using animals in entertainment]. When I arrived at the office, three other activists were already there. Tomáš, Eva and Eliška were sitting at the tables in a not-so-large room, brainstorming ideas for slogans to put on banners. After a quick introduction and briefing on what was happening, they continued brainstorming. Eva had a large piece of paper in front of her, where she was jotting down their ideas.

“Something like ‘I’m an animal, not an object’ or a phrase ‘I don’t have enough food’ coming from its mouth.”

“But we don’t know if they have enough food or not. Can we use this as an argument? Let's only use what we are sure about.”

This is how the communication went. Activists trying to come up with good slogans that are simultaneously factually correct and do not come across as aggressive. As they brainstorm, they look at the photos of animals that show the conditions in which they are being kept. Not a pleasing view. (field notes, spring 2023)

This vignette shows my first encounter of the activists of People for Animals. The protest for which we were preparing banners that evening resulted in success: the owner of the business offering this animal entertainment has publicly promised to stop using animals as a part of his services instead focusing on other things his company provides. This case set a precedent in which one of the biggest operators of this type of entertainment agreed to abolish a practice that was harmful to animals, providing an argument that People for Animal's activists kept on using to persuade similar businesses to end this practice. However, in Francione's (2010) view this type of 'single-issue' campaigns has a risk of perpetuating animal exploitation by claiming that some types of exploitation are worse than others. It is true that while I was participating in this protest, one of the arguments that I heard the activists use was that using these animals in a similar manner, but in different conditions and given that their welfare is ensured and they are not being harmed, is acceptable in a way similar to pet-

keeping (field notes, spring 2023). To Francione (2010) this would have still constituted exploitation and ineffective activism.

In the context of the diverging approaches that exist within the animal advocacy movement that seemingly have similar goals, but despite that seem to be unable to cooperate, the question of what constitutes meaningful advocacy for the people involved in it was one of the key focuses of this research, as well as activists perceptions of the multiplicity of approaches.

The activists that I spoke with perceived the animal advocacy movement as a diverse spectrum characterised by a variety of approaches and philosophies. They regarded this multiplicity of approaches as a beneficial tool for engaging with a wider audience and effecting more substantial change. This is reminiscent of Garner's (2010) view that change cannot be accomplished by only employing one strategy (for instance, vegan education), but it has to be accompanied by other actions:

“Each organisation has a slightly different style of events and activities that they engage in. Some film documentaries to show people the truth and educate them about it. [...] Some rescue animals directly from farms. [...] Some hold degustations to show people that plant-based foods taste just as good as animal-based ones so they won't need to sacrifice the flavourfulness. [...] And finally, there are organisations trying to end animal suffering via legislation, proposing new laws to reduce and eventually stop animal abuse. There's indeed a vast range of ways to engage in activism. Different things suit different people. And different approaches also persuade different people” (Petra).

Bára similarly acknowledges the advantages of diverse methodologies, while also recognising their potential pitfall: “I understand the argument that the message that we transmit to public gets diluted because we are divided and don't have a unified opinion. But at the same time people are different. They have different opinions, and maybe this will allow us to reach more people” (Bára).

In discussions on the role of activism in achieving social change, numerous activists underscored the importance of unveiling the practices of animal exploitation, educating the public about animal rights issues, and advocating for the adoption of a vegan lifestyle. This

resonates with activists' personal journeys towards veganism and advocacy that often involved being faced with reality. Regarding this matter, Weitzenfeld and Joy (2014) emphasise the role of hiding the truth as one of the major mechanisms of carnistic ideology and the importance of unveiling it in order to achieve social change:

“Activism is there to show people the reality because if we vegans just eat our plant-based meals at home, we won't change anything. Of course, we will not be contributing to animal suffering, but that won't help the animals. To help them, we need to show people the compassionate way. Show them why we eat plant-based and why it's the right thing to do” (Petra).

For many, education primarily revolves around propagating vegan ideals. Bára regards education as a means to address various societal inequalities and finds street campaigns that engage with the general public crucial for this purpose:

“I'd like to start attending the Prague Cube [of Truth] regularly again because I really feel like it's meaningful to stand on the street and engage with people and talk about veganism to the ones who stop and show interest. I also find it incredibly well-structured that these conversations with people are conducted using the Socratic method that involves asking them guiding questions so that they come to the conclusions themselves. So you're not just lecturing them, but really trying to learn their opinion and engage with it” (Bára).

Although vegan education is often not the main focus of People for Animal's campaigns, activists of this organisation still perceive it as crucial for their mission. Unlike Francione (2010) they do not perceive vegan and welfarist campaigns as contradicting each other. They regard veganism as an ultimate goal for the future, while deeming welfarist reforms essential to alleviate the suffering of animals exploited in the present, echoing sentiments akin to Garner's (2010) perspective that regards welfare reforms that elevate animal suffering as ethically desirable. Eva acknowledges the importance this type of reforms:

“[Other organisations] criticised us a lot for one of our campaigns because they felt like we were telling people that it's okay to consume animal products as long as animals are treated more humanely. I also want a world full of vegans, I also don't

want people to eat animal products. But I think it's entirely fine to make those few moments on this planet a bit better for these animals” (Eva).

Additionally, her quote also outlines a divergence that exists between People for Animals and other organisations, a concern that multiple other activists have addressed. It reflects the consensus among activists that the collaboration of different approaches is the most effective path to success. Similar to Garner’s perception, it perceives vegan goals as being inefficient without concurrent welfarist campaigns targeting legislation. It also defines the role of ‘radical’ activism as conceptualising an ideal vision, albeit currently unattainable, while the welfarist approach is presented as having more achievable goals:

“We can't do without radical activism because it sets the vision. That utopian ideal that we definitely need to aim for. But if we did nothing else, if there wasn't that welfare approach that deals with often very partial and seemingly cosmetic changes to the system, we could be waiting for another hundred years. Whereas the role of welfare is to bring about partial improvements in these conditions within a visible and relatively close time frame of several years. Of course, that progress is far from the ideal, but I believe I won't be mistaken if I summarise it in a sentence: some partial change is better than none” (Tomáš).

A topic that has also emerged within my conversations with activists is the lack of readiness in society to transition to veganism. This perception has led some activists to consider welfare-oriented approaches as a starting point to make people contemplate animal rights issues while at the same time achieving tangible outcomes for animals. This is reminiscent of Garner’s (2010) argument that emphasises the importance of political opportunity and taking into the account the state of the broader society and discourses prevailing in it:

“I'm afraid that the current progress is much slower than what those of us striving for a better world for animals would hope for. I believe that's also why many vegans and animal rights activists call for more radical solutions than the welfare approach. I completely understand their frustration and their efforts for faster progress, but personally, I take the position that too rapid progress might lead to a backlash and

could even further hinder the ethical development of humanity. Unfortunately, at the moment, I can't think of anything better than patiently engaging in education, offering plant-based alternatives to the public, and education, education, education” (Tomáš).

Martin echoes a similar sentiment by highlighting the effectiveness of welfarist campaigns, often perceived as rational and hence more acceptable by the broader audience: “I think when you talk to people about People for Animals campaigns and explain it to them, most people understand. [...] Because it's really reasonable. So, I think that the so-called welfare is the way. Because it can really change a lot for animals. People will understand and support it, and that's how it will change” (Martin).

Furthermore, considerations have been made regarding the potential ineffectiveness and counterproductive nature of certain activist strategies (Garner 2010). Martin observes the potential counterproductivity of pushing veganism excessively, drawing from his personal experience as a non-vegan within the movement. This yet again emphasises the importance of adopting multiple approaches that take into account the different circumstances in people's lives:

“I myself have an experience from Vienna when I got into a conversation with a Serbian guy living in Austria. He was there with other activists showing videos of the male chicks being ground up. And during this conversation, I felt quite pressured to become vegan. [...] And I think this is actually harmful to our cause. I think when you start pushing someone too much into something, especially when those are things that are at some distant horizon. Things that some people from a village wouldn't even think about. I think it just creates resistance” (Martin).

Similarly, Bára discusses the potential drawbacks of overly stringent activism, citing instances where it could transcend sustainability and pose harm not only to the cause but also to the well-being of activists attempting to maintain a vegan lifestyle within a predominantly non-vegan society:

“I don't like saying it myself [that some activists are ‘too radical’], but when I do I mean exactly that: ‘You must be 100% vegan and nothing else is possible.’ Just that type of people who would lynch you for having a piece of bread with cheese when

that's all there is around and you're hungry... Yeah, my philosophy is that you should do things in a way that's sustainable and practically feasible for you” (Bára).

The focal point of discussions concerning challenges within the movement primarily centers around the internal conflicts present within it, as extensively demonstrated in Garner’s and Francione’s (2010) debate. As members associated with a welfarist organisation, the activists frequently encounter criticisms that cite their approach as being too slow and conciliatory, echoing Francione’s arguments: “Part of [the criticism] came from those, let's say, more hurried activists, whom I completely understand. For some of the more radical advocates for animal rights, the entire welfare approach is just too soft and too slow in bringing about change” (Tomáš). Reflecting on his participation in vegan events, Martin recalled instances where individuals declined to participate in People for Animals campaigns, perceiving them as supporting the animal industry: “I remember to this day when I was at (a vegan festival) gathering signatures or convincing people to write letters. And many people refused because they saw it as supporting the animal industry” (Martin).

In contrast to Francione's perspective, activists don't perceive welfarist campaigns as endorsing or legitimising the animal industry. Furthermore, they pay close attention to their communication strategies when communicating their welfarist message to the public, evident in an activist's statement during a street campaign: “When you’re talking to people, it’s important to pay attention to the words that you use. You don’t want to make it sound like eating some meat is better than eating another because eating meat is never good” (field notes, 10.9.2023).

Ultimately, consensus prevails among activists regarding the potential benefits of collaboration between various approaches within the movement:

“In my opinion, this rivalry between organisations makes no sense and should end because each organisation is doing its own thing that ultimately complements each other. So, it's entirely unnecessary and only complicates our work” (Petra). Discussing prospects for collaboration within the movement, Bára underscores the importance of sharing knowledge and experiences: “Definitely sharing our knowledge and experiences.. To share what type of arguments work for people and for politicians. Or

when it comes to politicians to share who has what approach to this thing. To exchange information like ‘Yeah, this one is open to these ideas,’ and so on” (Bára).

To conclude, while being faced with criticisms regarding their approach, the new welfare activists in the researched organisation found the meaning of their activism in their ability to account for the different opinions existing in the broader society. They acknowledge the political and cultural situation, choosing goals that are perceived as feasible and having more chances in achieving success. Similar to Garner and in opposition to Francione (2010) they perceive the potential benefits of combining different approaches and express regret at the rivalry present within the movement. While many of them acknowledge the importance of all approaches, including more ‘radical’ than theirs, they express regret that activists at the other end of the spectrum do not recognise their efforts as meaningful and effective. Apart from having a long term goal of abolishing animal exploitation, activists also perceive welfare reforms that reduce animal suffering as intrinsically valuable as they address the issues that animals are facing at the present moment.

3.2. Envisioning the Future

Animal advocates are individuals dedicated to effecting change in the treatment of animals at a societal level, dissatisfied with the present state and aspiring towards an alternative. Within the animal advocacy movement, much discourse revolves around the notion of acceptable interspecies relationships. The dispute centres around the questions of whether the instrumental use of animals is ever permissible, the sufficiency of ‘humane’ treatment, and the need for abolition of certain practices. This section aims to explore the activists' perspectives on these issues.

In response to a broad question about an ideal society, most activists predominantly directed their attention towards concerns related to animals in agriculture and veganism, perceiving these domains as crucial and pressing. Tomáš, for instance, initially engaged in animal advocacy through environmental activism after realising that the matter of animal exploitation in agriculture was more crucial to him: “I was a member of wolf and lynx patrols, where nature conservation began to merge with animal rights, albeit for a very limited number of animals. Yet, these animals are incredibly important for the ecosystem. But later I arrived to

the conclusion that the issue of farm animals is much more urgent, or rather, the limited amount of time and energy I have is desperately needed by farm animals” (Tomáš).

Surprisingly, not all interviewed activists had a definitive vision of a future that they perceived as desirable. Their responses were categorised into two main groups: the pragmatic, lacking a crystallised vision due to perceived remoteness of their goals; and the idealist, those with a clear vision of a desirable future.

Amongst those adopting a pragmatic stance, a propensity towards veganism and abolition of animal agriculture persisted, albeit coupled with scepticism regarding the feasibility of attaining a vegan society. Notably, Martin was the sole non-vegan among the interviewees, citing personal reasons for his dietary choices: “I wouldn't mind becoming a vegan one day. But I just have... how should I put it... other issues. [...] So I don't really have the capacity to go vegan at this point” (Martin). His pragmatic outlook regarding the future did not negate veganism due to personal opposition but rather stemmed from a disbelief in its societal attainability: “I can imagine myself going vegan, but I don't believe it will become a widespread phenomenon. [...] Maybe sometime in the future when humanity will be completely different... but I think rather than that, we will have lab-grown meat. I think that's more realistic than the whole of humanity shifting to veganism. I just... I don't believe in that” (Martin). Consequently, he directed his focus towards what he perceived as more realistic objectives: “I don't think I'm a visionary in that sense. Or maybe I am in the sense that, of course, I'd like those large-scale operations, which someone in the Council of Europe called modern concentration camps, to end. If we keep raising the so-called livestock for milk or food purposes, we have to ensure that they have a good life” (Martin). Martin frequently recounted childhood memories of his grandmother's farm, where animals roamed freely, highlighting these instances to demonstrate what he viewed as a "good life" for these animals:

“I remember how at my grandmother's the chickens were running around a huge yard. Different animals like sheep, geese, ducks, and so on were running around this massive piece of land. And then, when my grandmother caught one chicken and slaughtered it and made food out of it, I don't find this to be... they had a good life there, right? So, it doesn't seem tragic to me or like something I should oppose” (Martin).

In a scenario where the achievement of widespread veganism appears implausible, Martin perceives the traditional welfarist approach—emphasising humane treatment while not precluding the instrumental use of animals—as a viable and ethical alternative.

Eva also lacked a specific vision of an ideal future for animals, expressing the importance of raising awareness: “I think people just need to be aware. I don’t really have a vision of any utopia, I don’t think I can imagine it. I think that people should simply gain that awareness. To be mindful. Perhaps utopia or some perfect world will never happen, but trying as best you can to reduce those bad things... When there’s an awareness that something’s happening, it makes you behave completely differently. That’s the foundation.” (Eva). She also voiced apprehensions about the potential unforeseen consequences of widespread adoption of veganism within society: “Well, if it started spreading on a large scale, I don’t really know what kind of industrial impact it would have. I don’t know it. Of course, it would be great if everyone went vegan. But I don’t really know if it would have any negative impact” (Eva).

Conversely, among the activists expressing an ‘idealist’ perspective, those envisioning a future where species coexist peacefully, veganism emerged as a prevailing component. They all shared a belief in the attainability of a vegan society.. For Bára, the cornerstone of her ideal world revolved around the concept of respecting all life, echoing biocentric values (Kopnina et al. 2018):

“I think the main thing that needs to change is how people perceive those animals. It has to shift from ‘they are here for us’ to ‘they are here with us.’ And to me, this society is really utopian because I think... it requires a great deal of interdisciplinary work. It must stem from the fact that a large... overwhelming majority of people on Earth will think that life itself has value simply because it's life. And it doesn't matter if it's a white person, a black person, a cow, or a sponge. Everything must be treated with basic respect” (Bára).

In this context, veganism represents a means of honoring the intrinsic value of life, aiming to minimise harm inflicted upon other beings:

“When we evaluate what we can and can't live without, we need to try to get back to that foundation. Which is essentially what veganism is all about. It’s about reducing

the suffering that we cause to other animals on this planet as much as it's practically possible. That means that to the best of one's ability, a person should try to limit the suffering caused to other creatures on this planet. Sometimes it seems like veganism turns into some terrible stereotype where everyone's dealing with these small details, like whether a person has old leather shoes. But the foundation is about trying to do things as practically as you can, meaning sustainably for yourself so that it doesn't lead to exhaustion because you're being too harsh on yourself. But at the same time, making a real effort not to harm anyone as much as you can" (Bára).

Petra and Tomáš envision an ideal world that completely eliminates animal agriculture: "The best scenario would be if the animal industry vanished completely, leaving only the plant-based industry. Animals would live in sanctuaries like the ones that exist already. The overbred animals that we have today would gradually become extinct and the suffering they experience now would end. Because chickens, for instance, used to lay about 6-10 eggs naturally, but now they're overbred and are forced to lay 300 eggs which results in health problems. Cows also face severe health issues due to their exploitation for maternal milk. They have mastitis and other illnesses. If all this ended, the animals would be healthier and eventually die out, leaving only wild animals to live in harmony with us. That's what a proper world where animals are treated well should look like" (Petra).

Tomáš draws inspiration for his vision from the movie *Carnage* (2017) that illustrates a society that has transcended agricultural animal exploitation and is reconciling with its non-vegan past, drawing parallels to modern Germans confronting their grandparents' past crimes: "Essentially, this movie outlined for me how that utopian society could look. A time when as humanity, we realise our... guilt, yes, I have to use that word" (Tomáš).

These activists' advocacy for abolitionism resonates with Garner's approach that doesn't universally eliminate all practices in which humans use animals for their own purposes but focuses on ending practices that inflict harm on animals:

"A topic that I feel is highly debated for example in these vegan circles and which I think is absolutely fine, is the use of animals as assistance. Like guide dogs or dogs

that help to calm down people who are prone to panic attacks and similar issues. To me, this is perfectly fine. And for instance, these animals that are now domesticated and wouldn't survive on their own... As long as they're well taken care of and people try to offer them the best living environment they can then I don't think it's necessarily wrong to use these animals in some ways. But again, they should be seen more as companions and partners in life rather than just objects for my use" (Bára).

In a casual discussion while street campaigning together, Tomáš expressed a nuanced perspective regarding the ethical implications of animal killing. He suggested instances where such actions might be deemed acceptable, such as for population control or feeding pets, provided that the source of pet food is not industrial but involves hunting (field notes, DATE). Conversely, Petra voiced acceptance towards pet ownership:

"If someone wants to own a horse, they should keep it on their own pasture. And if they want to ride it, it's okay, as long as it's a part of their friendship with this horse. But it should only be them riding it, so that it doesn't become a type of amusement for people. They shouldn't be making money out of it" (Petra).

This suggests a departure from Francione's (DATE) stance, illustrating that these activists do not perceive the core issue of animal exploitation solely in the animals' property status.

In discussions concerning animal exploitation, almost no one brought up other spheres of animal exploitation apart from animal agriculture, unless asked specifically. Tomáš noted on that: "If I make a list of priorities, which welfare organisations often have to do because of the sheer number of animal rights-related issues, well, zoos, for instance, fall somewhere towards the back" (Tomáš), implying that he perceives agriculture as the main priority.

When talking about other areas of animal use such as animal research or zoos, activists generally refrained from wholesale condonation as observed in agriculture. Instead, they presented arguments against specific methods of animal use. In response to a question about animal research, Petra highlighted advancements in technology that render animal testing unnecessary, stating: "Nowadays, we have artificial tissues connected to computers and things like that, so it's not necessary to test on animals. For the medications that need to be tested on

the whole organism, not just on specific tissues, there are volunteers willing to participate” (Petra). She further underscored the disparity between human and animal physiology, challenging the scientific validity of testing drugs intended for humans on animals: “There’s also this thing concerning testing drugs meant for humans on animals. They say, ‘A human is not a giant rat.’ So, testing vaccines on rats to see if it’s safe for humans doesn’t have scientific relevance because what might not affect a rat might still affect a human. Our organisms are different, we’re entirely different animals, so you can’t conclude anything from this research. Even with monkeys, though they’re closer to us, they’re still not the same. So testing on animals is not only unnecessary, but it causes suffering and is completely illogical. Testing on volunteers just makes more sense” (Petra).

Discussions about zoos similarly revolved around the rational type of argumentation: “I’d lean towards the idea that the agenda of zoos should really shrink and focus primarily on conservation programs that aim to maintain a certain gene pool. [...] There are debates among wildlife and animal advocates about whether it’s right to show wolves in enclosures to tourists. The educational value is debatable because visitors only see these predators within enclosures; they don’t observe them behaving naturally” (Tomáš).

I attribute this utilisation of pragmatic rational arguments—instead of solely ethical considerations—to the activists’ familiarity with employing this type of argumentation during street campaigns when engaging with the general public. Ethical arguments can be more easily dismissed as personal opinions. In contrast, the presentation of logical, fact-based reasoning serves as an effective tool as arguing against them can be perceived as unreasonable or lacking intelligence. Notably, People for Animals creates argumentation manuals for each of their campaigns that include factual arguments meant to sway public opinion. This strategy resonates with Garner’s perspective that emphasises the importance of associating animal welfare advocacy with human interests. By demonstrating that using animals in experiments is not only ineffective but also poses risks to human well-being, it becomes considerably more challenging to advocate in favour of such practices.

In some instances, activists employed the argument of unnecessary suffering to advocate for the abolition of particular practices: “From what I’ve read, I know that a lot of this research and animal testing that is done nowadays is unnecessarily cruel and oftentimes these tests are not absolutely necessary” (Bára). Particularly, the testing of cosmetics on

animals was highlighted as a practice that should be discontinued. Unlike the development of medicine, cosmetics do not bear vital significance to human life, hence it is easier to condone them morally: “Testing cosmetics on animals is absolutely unnecessary to me, I would stop this immediately” (Petra). This approach aligns with Garner's perspective which suggests that emphasising the concept of unnecessary suffering can garner broader public support for animal welfare causes more effectively.

3.3. Mutual Construction of Animals, Humans, and Society

Understanding activists' motivations in pursuing a change in the way society treats animals is impossible without addressing their views concerning the relationships between the human and nonhuman world. This section seeks to explore how activists construct identities of humans and animals, as well as traces the underlying ideas that inform these constructions. A critical examination of how these perceptions diverge from the broader societal outlook is also an aspect that will be investigated.

When discussing nonhuman animals during the interviews, activists placed considerable emphasis on highlighting the similarities between human and nonhuman animals, noting their sentience and its intrinsic link to their interests, echoing the ideas of Regan (1983) and Singer (1990): “Just like a human, an animal is its own sentient being. It has the ability to feel and to think, the desire to live, and it can be afraid and feel pain” (Bára). Personal relationships with animals have also been mentioned as one of the factors that defined activists' perception of animals as beings that are not that distinct from humans. Freeman (2010) states that the discourse of activists should not be centred around animals' similarity to humans, but, in the opposite way, should focus on humans' similarity to animals, embracing our animality (or ‘humanity’): “My perception of animals... I have cats, I sleep with them in the same bed. To me, they're just like my children or friends. So I really can't wrap my head around the fact that we treat them as things” (Eva).

The differences perceived between humans and other animals, according to activists, lack moral weight, which is similar in varying degrees to Francione (1996), Singer (1990), and Regan (1983), but rather call for a cooperative relationship, where one species aids the other. Though this statement can be regarded as patronising and positioning animals as less intelligent than humans – a notion that can be interpreted as quite anthropocentric – the

practical implications diverge from the conventional anthropocentric stance. Instead of exalting humans as superior, it asserts their responsibility to ensure the welfare of other species. Notably, Petra mentions the fact that animals predate humans, which can be interpreted in a sense that human has been an animal before inventing 'human' (Maurizi 2021):

“The majority of people in today's society see animals as their slaves with whom they can do anything they want. They're here for us, and we can treat them however we want because we're more intelligent than they are. [...] I want to show people that this isn't true because animals aren't here for us, they're here with us. They existed long before us. The fact that we have more intelligence doesn't mean we can enslave other species but rather assist them because the stronger should help the weaker” (Petra).

Bára draws parallels between the societal mistreatment of nonhuman animals and the treatment of other humans that is also based on the perceived level of intelligence, reflecting on the entanglements of human and nonhuman mistreatment (Weitzenfeld and Joy 2014):

“It kind of reminds me of when a person is just stupid. Society tends to treat this person as inferior, even though they are not. Just because a person can't quickly calculate a mathematical equation doesn't mean I should treat them as less than human. So why should a guinea pig or a whale have fewer rights than a human?” (Bára).

Similarly, Tomáš underscores the resemblance between contemporary animal treatment and the institutionalised racism of the past: “...we cannot allow the suffering of living beings in a similar way to how 19th-century society realised it needed to treat black slaves better” (Tomáš).

The activists contrast their own perspectives on animals against those prevalent in industrial consumer societies. Numerous interviewees highlighted individuals' failure to acknowledge animals as sentient beings with distinct needs; instead, animals are perceived merely as commodities for human use (Clark and Wilson 2020). Martin talks about the dire situation of farm animals: “The position of farm animals is terrible because we don't perceive them as living beings, but we see them... or they are perceived by the majority of society as a means to satisfy our needs. They are not seen as living beings” (Martin). Eva echoes a similar

sentiment, attributing this reductionist view of animals to a pursuit of financial gain, echoing Nibert's (2002) argument that the modern mistreatment of animals is linked to capitalism and its imperative of financial profit: "The society has degraded (animals) into things because people are ready to do absolutely anything for money. [...] They need to save up the space, to make as much money as they can, so they give the animals the worst conditions it's possible to make the most profit" (Eva).

When prompted about the reasons behind current exploitation of animals, activists provided diverse explanations. Some have referred to the anthropocentric notion of humans occupying a unique status in the world (Rae 2016). while also acknowledging the influence of cultural and historical practice of animal consumption (Maurizi 2021). In this view, the practices of animal mistreatment lack philosophical justification in today's world, suggesting that while historically, consuming animals might have been pragmatic, contemporary circumstances offer numerous alternatives, making the exploitation unjustifiable:

"I think people tend to think too highly of themselves. Generally, we somehow have this idea that humans are the masters of creation, which doesn't have any real moral or philosophical basis. Of course, a lot of it is rooted in culture; many people justify it with religion, which I find really inadequate logically. Not everyone is religious, and not every religion has the same view on this topic. At the same time, it's also rooted in history. Back when there wasn't much else to eat, it made sense for humans to try to survive as best they could. But in today's world, where we have plenty of other options, at least in our circumstances, whether I go to Albert and buy packaged tofu or packaged ham doesn't really affect my comfort; it's purely about taste" (Bára).

Tomáš also recognises the inconsistency between humanity's anthropocentric views of itself and its treatment of nonhuman animals:

"[I perceive the position of animals in current society as] quite desperate obviously. Quite desperate and significantly deviating from the illusion that humanity holds about itself, particularly in the part of the world that we chauvinistically call 'developed.' The illusion of considering itself civilized and advanced, that is in complete opposition to the conditions in which we keep animals, especially farm ones" (Tomáš).

Activists predominantly contextualised the issue of animal exploitation as a societal problem rather than attributing it to individual actions, although some recognised the intertwined nature of both: “If it’s a societal problem or a problem of individuals... I think it’s both. You can’t really do anything about the individuals unless you catch them redhanded, but we have to deal with the societal problem” (Eva). Certain activists linked people's mistreatment of animals to the deliberate concealment of abusive practices by the agricultural animal industry. This sentiment resembles the mechanisms of carnism described by Weitzenfeld and Joy (2014):

“I think most people have no idea what goes on in those large-scale farms and the way it looks in there. Those large farms, it's the same old story, right? There are usually high fences, often made of concrete, or with barbed wires at the top. You can't see inside those large farms from the street. People don't know what's happening there, which I think is intentional, of course. [...] And then there are some movies where you see happy cows and advertisements too. And it's true after all that when a person is driving a car, they can see those cows in the fields in the Czech Republic or Austria. Of course, in the Alps, you can see a lot more, there are those animals, sheep and cows. But it's definitely not something that prevails” (Martin).

Tomáš addresses the concept of carnism explicitly:

“Quite unequivocally, I'd [attribute current position of animals to] a highly successful lobbying effort from the meat, dairy, and egg industries. They've been very successful in imposing a dehumanising vocabulary into on public discourse, allowing us, albeit unwittingly—the whole point of it is that it’s based on unconscious behavior—to treat animals in such a dreadful way, or rather, tolerate their suffering. Lately we’ve been using the term carnism or the carnist ideology to describe this ideological package, if I may call it that. So that's definitely the reason why it's possible, because that lobby invests enormous financial resources into shaping this discourse, which, of course, subsequently turn into profit. Whether it's through earnings or in the form of agricultural subsidies disproportionately favouring the animal industry. So, that's definitely the question of why it's possible, although upon closer examination, the

present form of the animal industry makes absolutely no sense and is morally unjustifiable” (Tomáš).

The activists find it reasonable to attribute animal mistreatment to a lack of awareness since many of them became involved in animal rights matters primarily after being exposed to information regarding animal mistreatment in agriculture. Bára recollects a specific video she encountered online, profoundly impacting her perspective: “Once I was on Facebook and a video popped up showing how roosters are treated in the egg industry. The footage of those day-old chicks going through that grinder while still alive really touched me. So, around 2015-2014, I stopped eating meat from factory farms because of that” (Bára). Similarly, Martin recalls an activist demonstration he witnessed firsthand that influenced his decision to transition to a vegetarian diet: “It started at Stephansplatz in Vienna in 2017, where there were some activists with screens showing... I don't even want to talk about it. It made me really sick. I still remember it to this day. And I said to myself, ‘No, I just won't be participating in this’” (Martin).

For Petra, her journey toward veganism and activism similarly began after she encountered an animal advocacy organisation's Facebook group. However, when discussing the reasons behind animal mistreatment in society, she highlights individual responsibility and the tendency for many to deliberately overlook abusive systems:

“Every person needs to know that, see it with their own eyes, and learn the facts that most of society closes their eyes to when you try to tell them. It's crucial for them not to shut their eyes to it and be able to face the reality. There's a lot of publicly available materials, yet people say, 'I don't see it; it's not here,' just to feel better. Everyone must open their eyes. Any person with emotions and who is not a complete psychopath would say that things need to change. We see it when we show the Cube of Truth, and parents who are passing by with children try to pull the children away, saying, 'Don't look at it!' So of course, they know something is wrong but just don't want to admit it” (Petra).

CONCLUSION

This bachelor's thesis explores a prominent animal welfare organisation in the Czech Republic and the factors influencing its members' approach to animal advocacy in the context of the diverging perspectives within the movement. To conclude, I will provide the answers to the positioned research questions.

- How do new welfare activists construct the vision of meaningful activism while facing criticism from other organisations?

Despite encountering criticisms about their approach, the new welfare activists within the researched organisation derive meaning of their activism by focusing on achievable goals that acknowledge the diverse viewpoints prevalent in the broader society. They consider the political and cultural context, opting for strategies that are deemed more likely to succeed. Similar to Garner (2010), they recognise the potential advantages of combining diverse approaches and express remorse over the rivalry within the movement. Beyond aiming for the long-term goal of eradicating animal exploitation, these activists also perceive welfare reforms that alleviate animal suffering as inherently valuable, as they address current issues faced by animals.

- How do they perceive desirable interspecies relationships?

Animal welfare activists perceive desirable interspecies relationships through various lenses, driven by their advocacy for change in how society treats animals. Their visions encompass pragmatic approaches, as well as more utopian conceptions for an ideal society. The former emphasises humane treatment within animal agriculture, perceiving the abolition of animal exploitation as a goal that is too far out of reach. The later envisions the world in which agricultural exploitation of animals ceases to exist. They envision ideal society as vegan and devoid of instrumental treatment of animals, similarly to Garner (2010), though their vision does not necessarily include abolition the abolition of the property status of animals advocated by Francione (1996).

- How do the animal activists in the researched organisation perceive and construct the status of animals in contemporary Czech society?

The activists perceptions of nonhuman animals centre around the acknowledgment of the sentience of nonhuman animals emphasising the interconnectedness between human and

nonhuman beings. They note that in contemporary consumerist societies, animals are predominantly viewed as means for human ends, especially in the realm of industrial consumerism, where animals are reduced to commodities. There's a strong acknowledgment among the activists of the carnistic method of deliberate concealment of abusive practices within the agricultural animal industry that allows companies to keep profiting from the exploitation of animals.

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