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Solidarity with Wild Animals

Several scholars have identified a ‘political turn’ in animal ethics (Palmer 2010; Donaldson and Kymlicka 2011; Smith 2012; Wissenburg and Schlosberg 2014; Garner 2013; Milligan 2015; Garner and O’Sullivan 2016; Cochrane 2018). One of the key ideas behind this is that some non-human animals (henceforth “animals”) are not simply creatures with moral status, but fellow *members* of our 'multi-species communities' (see also Midgley 1983). In part, this is a *descriptive* claim: biologically modern humans have always had socially significant relations with non-human animals. The social significance can stem from direct contact and the various roles non-human animals have played for humans (e.g. as collaborators in hunting, guardians, etc.). It can also stem from the symbolic meaning humans project onto certain animals (e.g. in animistic cultures, or even in contemporary practices such as animal-assisted therapy). But the claim about animal membership is also *normative*: we come to a richer understanding of our obligations towards certain animals if we see them not as passive recipients of our moral agency, but as part of collective projects in pursuit of the common good. Acknowledging their political as well as moral status in this way means that our duties to these animals are not exhausted by prohibitions on killing them or causing them to suffer; instead, we must also consider the forms of *assistance* we can provide to help them flourish, as well as the *collective efforts* we can make in pursuit of goals that extend beyond human ends (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2011).

Reconceiving our political communities as ‘multi-species’ and less anthropocentric raises some important challenges. Not least, is the issue of whether familiar normative concepts and political institutions can or should help in building these new communities. In the ongoing research efforts on this front, there has been ample debate about concepts such as ‘justice’ and ‘political representation’ (Nussbaum 2006; Garner 2013; Cochrane 2018; Vink 2020). Less explored is the concept of ‘solidarity’. Yet solidarity is key in political communities, and in different ways. Solidarity entails fellow feeling and, in so doing, can serve as a complement to justice (Habermas 1986). However, solidarity is also more than that: as a unity that mediates between the individual and the community (Scholz 2008, 5) it takes us beyond sympathy and charity, and results in robust commitments (for example, to aid the vulnerable or make sacrifices for others) and practices (like health care or advocacy). These are essential in the reproduction and transformation of the social, in that members of a community can both rely on these commitments and practices for support and adjust them to suit new needs.

1 Solidarity, then, is about communal identification with the other through understanding the
2 perspective of the other. While solidarity comes in different forms, it always entails positive
3 obligations to act and to carry costs for others (Scholz 2008, 11; Rippe 1998, 356; Prainsack and Buyx
4 2012, 346). Without solidarity, individuals will find it difficult to make the necessary commitments to
5 positive, meaningful action and the sacrifices that are required of co-membership (Cochrane 2018,
6 120-126). Solidarity, we might say, makes co-membership possible and durable over time. If certain
7 animals are to be acknowledged as fellow members of our communities, then, it is vital that we stand
8 in solidaristic relations with them. But with which animals should that be?

9 To date, most of the discussion surrounding animals' membership has focused on
10 *domesticated* animals (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2011), and when a city like Nottingham organises
11 pensions for its canine police work (Coulter 2016, 77; BBC News 2013), we can call this solidaristic
12 without stretching the concept. Further, both the animal charity culture and the pet industry indicate
13 – for better or worse – that private individuals, too, are willing to carry substantial emotional, financial
14 and social burdens to benefit certain domesticated animals. However, there has been more reluctance
15 to see *wild* animals as fellow members of our political communities (Regan 2004; Donaldson &
16 Kymlicka 2011).[1] This is likely due to the fact that it is less obvious how solidarity obtains between us
17 and them. For one, unlike domesticated animals who live and sometimes work with us, wild animals
18 often live at a distance from us. Furthermore, while domesticated animals have been selectively bred
19 for certain traits that allow them to live within human settlements, wild animals are usually more
20 lacking in capacities like docility. Both of these facts make it harder to acknowledge the social and
21 solidaristic relations humans have with wild animals.

22 Yet not all wild animals live at a distance from us or lack sociability. Indeed, the complications
23 of definitively categorizing animals as 'wild', 'domesticated', or something else, are revealed by
24 animals with tangled histories and relationships with humans such as dingoes, pigeons, stray dogs,
25 stray cats, and the many other 'wild' animals (squirrels, rats, badgers, foxes, etc.) who inhabit urban
26 environments. To help us navigate these complications, then, we follow Clare Palmer (2012; 2016 p.
27 239) in identifying four different forms of wildness, several of which may be relevant for particular
28 wild animals. The 'locational' sense of wildness refers to those animals living (or left to live) outside of
29 our houses, villages and cities (such as ocean-inhabiting whales). The 'dispositional' sense of wildness
30 refers to animals who are not disposed to be 'tame' (lacking in fear and aggression) towards humans
31 (such as crocodiles held captive in zoos). The 'self-willed' understanding of wildness refers to being

[1] Martha Nussbaum (2006) takes seriously the idea of extending justice to wild animals, but does not go as far as suggesting that they might be fellow members of our communities.

(relatively) free from human control (such as feral dogs). And the 'constitutive' sense of the term refers to those animals who have not been domesticated (such as garden birds). Our understanding of 'wild animal' thus refers to an animal who exhibits any one or more of these forms of wildness. In going forward, these understandings will be useful to make more precise the ways in which solidarity between humans and wild animals can pertain, and to question some of the socially contingent distinctions between domesticated and wild animals.

The main purpose of this paper is to propose that solidaristic relations with certain of these wild animals are not only possible, but actually already exist in some contexts. This must make us reappraise our view of the multi-species communities we inhabit and should inhabit. And while the possibility and existence of these solidaristic relations does not mean that all animals must automatically be acknowledged as equal fellow members of our communities (perhaps there are countervailing reasons to deny them such status), it does offer an important stepping stone in helping to realise less anthropocentric multi-species communities. Crucially, we argue that solidaristic thinking invites this reappraisal in three ways: by transforming our understanding of the social that undergirds any political community through acknowledgement of our communal identification with certain wild animals; by recognising the oppressive nature of many of our relations with wild animals, and the necessity of collectively tackling them; and through recognition of the possibility – and importance - of building shared institutions which support all members of the community, no matter their species.

The paper proceeds via four substantive sections. The first section returns to literature in the political turn in animal ethics and argues that the concept of solidarity ought to play a more prominent role in its formulations. The subsequent three sections explore whether solidarity with animals – and with wild animals in particular – is even possible. To do so, three different understandings of solidarity identified by Sally Scholz (2008) – social, political, and civic – are addressed in turn and, in probing to what extent they can be applied to other animals, we also identify important different roles that solidarities can play in a renewed 'animal politics'.

1. Why Solidarity Matters

As referred to above, there has recently been a so-called 'political turn' in animal ethics. Traditionally, animal ethics has been concerned with the 'moral status' of animals, and our duties towards them. For instance, Peter Singer (1995) famously argued that all sentient animals (those with a capacity to experience joy and suffering in their lives) have equal moral status. As such, he argued that we have a duty to consider their interests equally alongside all other sentient beings (including humans), which

1 entails a range of subsidiary duties: to adopt a vegetarian diet; to not buy products which have been
2 tested on them; and so forth. Work in the political turn accepts claims about the moral status of
3 animals and our personal obligations towards them. However, it goes on to suggest that mutually
4 beneficial human-animal relations cannot rely solely on personal transformation: they also require
5 *political* transformation (Cochrane, Garner and O'Sullivan 2018). After all, the vast majority of harms
6 perpetrated against animals have structural (legal, economic, social, institutional and so on) causes,
7 and to meaningfully improve the lives of animals, we must not only change our political systems so as
8 to effectively stop moral atrocities, but truly accommodate animals as members of our shared
9 community or communities.[2]

10 While this political turn is important and creative, there is a danger that it can take existing
11 political communities for granted and attempt to simply 'stir in' specific animals. The danger of this
12 lies in the anthropocentric understanding of the social that undergirds existing political communities:
13 these are communities that have been created by humans for humans; the identifications they rely
14 on are human-exclusive; the causes they promote are human-exclusive; and the institutions that make
15 them up are human-exclusive both in terms of function and procedures. On top of this, these
16 communities have nearly always been built on the domination of animals: through instrumentalising
17 them for certain human purposes (food, clothing, transport, research etc.); and through inventing
18 certain kinds of animal ('farm animal', 'laboratory animal', etc.) that serve to reinforce these practices.
19 Hence, no animal is likely to receive what they are owed if they are merely stirred into these conceived
20 notions of community: what they are owed will likely be considered optional, of less importance, or
21 simply be blocked by anthropocentric thinking and structures. What the political turn must involve,
22 then, is a *reimagining* of our political communities – pointing the way to *rebuilding* them in less
23 anthropocentric and genuinely multi-species terms.

24 We claim that solidarity can be instructive here. It points to new ways of envisaging our multi-
25 species communities because it allows for critical discussion and reappraisal of three of their
26 components. First of all, solidarity invites reflection upon the 'social' which must undergird any stable
27 political community. This involves reflection on the communal feelings and identifications which
28 support the community; and draws attention to the contingent nature of the categories that are
29 commonly used to divide and control animals. Secondly, solidarity asks us to think about the
30 appropriate causes we should be pursuing to overturn existing oppressions and rebuild communities
31 in mutually beneficial forms. Furthermore, solidaristic thinking in multi-species communities insists

[2] It is certainly conceivable that certain wild animals, especially migratory ones, will have to be acknowledged by multiple political communities (just like many human beings).

that animals' own perspectives feed into these deliberations. Finally, solidarity also demands consideration of the relevant structures to protect all members. As such, in multi-species communities, we must ask how our institutions are best designed to ensure that the perspectives of non-human members feature prominently.

Crucially, this paper claims that thinking through the presence and possibility of solidarity with *wild animals* is vital to the project of reimagining our political communities. A focus solely on domesticated animals – on those animals who have been selectively bred over generations for traits suited to human purposes – has the danger of taking traditional, extant conceptions of the social for granted and extending political concern solely to those animals not only most like us, but most able to serve us. To rethink mutually beneficial multi-species communities, we need to at least be alive to two possibilities: that they will be made up of and serve animals of various kinds; and that the geographic boundaries of such communities do not neatly overlap with those we have established for contingent reasons (and often by violent means).

But what is solidarity? And is solidarity with animals – and with those commonly seen as wild specifically – even possible? While the concept of solidarity is contested, there are some important shared ideas about it that we will take for granted (see also Scholz 2008, 2013; Coulter 2016). For example, it is a key concept in human social and political movements and usually bears on matters of labour, health and social justice. As such, it is importantly different from both charity and disaster relief (Scholz 2008). Solidarity is also essential in the reproduction and transformation of communities that support their members and protect their interests. It is more than a feeling and less than a political system, but both feelings and institutionalisation are components of the full spectrum of solidaristic practices. While it mediates between individuals and communities, it does not aim at establishing homogenous groups; indeed, solidarity does and can prevail in groups whose individuals differ in various ways (e.g. race, sex, class, religion, nationality, etc.). And while it entails positive moral obligations, it does not presuppose or require reciprocity; we can stand in solidarity with individuals, like young infants or individuals who live far from us, who perhaps do not know of our solidarity with them, and/or who are unable to do anything for us (Gould 2007; Rippe 1998, 358). Hence, when thinking about extending solidarity to animals, it is important to emphasize that it does not operate on the condition of strict sameness (Coulter 2016, 150; Plumwood 2001, 200).

To explore the ways in which solidarity might be present or possible with wild animals in subsequent sections, we draw upon three different types of relation to which solidarity can refer and which Sally Scholz calls 'social', 'political', and 'civic solidarity' respectively (2008, chap. 1).

2. Social Solidarity

One way in which solidarity manifests is as a result of individuals living with and depending upon one another; it is a consequence of individuals forming a group with which they have a shared sense of community and for which they are prepared to make sacrifices. This is what Scholz refers to as 'social solidarity' and it is primarily used as a *descriptive* term: this type of solidarity may exist within groups whose aims or structures we find abhorrent. Crucially for our purpose of reimagining our political communities, social solidarity, together with its accompanying pro-social attitudes of recognition, gratitude, admiration, shared fates, and so on, must be present for communities (multispecies or not) to be durable.

This form of solidarity can seemingly be applied across the species barrier straightforwardly (Scholz 2013; Coulter 2016). Not only do all social animals, not just humans, form communities in such ways, but we also already recognize many animals as part of our communities for whom we are willing to carry costs - the most obvious example being our companion animals. And such feelings also often extend to certain other animals who explicitly work for the public good, such as those who work in the police or the military. These domesticated animals are often regarded as part of the community by the public, as evidenced by medals and memorials in their honour, as well as campaigns to ensure improved protection (Hediger 2013).

Of course, it might be pointed out that such feelings of community do not extend as far as many would like. They are undoubtedly and unfairly partial, often concentrating on 'cute' creatures, or solely on those who can provide obvious instrumental benefits for humans. Indeed, the notion of the social is still mostly defined in anthropocentric terms with these animals just executing human intentions. Even in these cases, however, some humans will go to great lengths to ensure that the animals' proximate (even if not ultimate) interests are considered. And in certain other cases, some humans devote their lives to care for certain domesticated animals in entirely non-instrumental terms, as in the case of farm animal sanctuaries and rescue organisations for abandoned or abused companion animals. Contradictory as these forms of social solidarity may be, attesting to both the morally best in terms of empathy and worst in terms of instrumental profit seeking in people (Coulter 2016, 140), they strongly suggest that interspecies social solidarity exists – and that provides something for communities to build on and extend should that be desirable.

But perhaps this is too quick. Perhaps social solidarity properly conceived must involve some level of identification and sense of community from *all* members – and perhaps this is not an option for any animal. To be clear, the objection here is not that animals lack the *capacities* to either feel a sense of community with or to positively assist humans. Such a claim is dubious given some animals'

behavior: service animals, for example, do behave as if they are part of a community with humans, and they do assist members of that community. Furthermore, recall that reciprocity of feeling or assistance cannot be a *strict* requirement of social solidarity, given the implications of this for our community with young children. Rather, the objection here is that few animals do – and none *should* - feel a positive sense of identification with human communities. For as laudable as it may be for people who work with, say, horses or dogs, to strive to really improve their work lives, the horses and dogs might actually much rather be left alone. Indeed, they may rather not depend on humans in the first place. When thinking about extending solidarity to animals who live with and depend on human communities, then, it seems only right to ask, 'what's in it for the animals?' (Birke 2009; Coulter 2016, 3). For so-called 'abolitionists' (Francione and Charlton 2015), domestication and a life living amongst humans are not an option because of the dependency they bring about.

By way of response, it is important to reiterate that social solidarity is primarily a descriptive term referring to actual pro-social attitudes and identification – whether appropriate or not. Certain domesticated animals simply *do* identify with the multi-species communities in which they live, showing affection for other (human and non-human) members, and even making sacrifices for them. Furthermore, while a normative evaluation of the abolitionist claim is unimportant to the simple identification of social solidarity, it should be noted that authors in the political turn are keen to explore the possibility of human-animal relations that are mutually beneficial (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2011). We consider this to be a promising approach, and even one that might allow humans to potentially make up for past injustices.

Yet what about wild animals? When it comes to those who are *locationally* wild, one might expect that forms of social solidarity would be lacking – both in terms of identification and the emotional, financial and other investment associated with it. Can the social really be expanded to those who live far away from us, and thus with whom we have no intimate relations? And these concerns are also present when it comes to animals who are neither tame nor docile, and so *dispositionally* wild. Doesn't social identification require some kind of sociability? It is also unclear why humans should particularly identify with or care about animals who are *constitutively* wild and just happen to pass through our dwellings, or even cause damage to them. More identification and pro-social attitudes could be expected with regard to some of those creatures whose wildness is *self-willed*; after all, they usually still seek human company, at least partly depend on human communities, and can play important social roles. For example, think of the significance of pigeons in many communities who are often welcomed and fed (Amir 2021), or of those stray dogs (so-called "riot dogs") who have joined together with activists in political protests in Greece, Chile and elsewhere (BBC News 2011; Isfahani-Hammond 2020). On this basis, we will take for granted the presence and

1 possibility of social solidarity with such wild animals, and concentrate on the other three types of
2 wildness here.

3 Interestingly, identification with animals living (or left to live) wild both in the locational (e.g.
4 ocean dwelling whales) and in the constitutive sense (e.g. garden birds) is actually widespread. It is
5 true that for some, the ways in which they approach these animals are primarily motivated by a certain
6 exoticism stemming from the idea that wild animals are the quintessential 'Other'. Nonetheless, there
7 are also those indigenous communities who possess a very strong sense of *kinship* with them – from
8 symbolic and totemic relations, to the many ways in which the lives of human and animals are
9 intertwined through practices like hunting. And such kinship also extends to animals who are wild in
10 the dispositional sense (like bears or snakes). It is worth noting that even sometimes rather weak
11 identification can be built upon and grow: bird-feeding can go far beyond a Sunday morning pastime
12 and inspire people to identify with birds more concretely (think of the enthusiasm for birds during the
13 Covid-19 pandemic (RSPB 2021)), and even campaign on their behalf (think of opposition to wind
14 energy (Hogan 2020)).

15 Moreover, significant emotional and financial investment in wild animals is certainly present
16 within many communities. Just as in the case of abandoned or abused companion animals, there are
17 individuals who sacrifice potentially more lucrative careers and join together to rescue, care for and,
18 if possible, rehabilitate wild animals of all kinds. Often, such work is supported by other members of
19 the community through donations, including sometimes through leaving them legacies in their wills
20 (sometimes at the expense of other humans) (WWF n.d.). When we add to these examples the public
21 investment that many societies make related to the science and politics that goes into international
22 conservation efforts, it becomes apparent that meaningful social solidarity in the form of genuine
23 communal identification with any type of wild animal can be observed in a number of ways.

24 And yet, some might still be skeptical and argue that there cannot be genuine communal
25 identification in the absence of repeated interpersonal interactions: in other words, it might be
26 claimed that true social solidarity requires close proximity, intimacy and sociability, things which many
27 wild animals do not seem to seek with humans.[3] By way of response, it is worth stating three things.
28 In the first place, it is not the case that *all* wild animals live far from us and lack the ability to engage
29 with us socially. As we have seen, the category of wild is fuzzy, heterogeneous and contingent; as such,
30 it necessarily includes many animals who live alongside us (e.g. foxes, badgers, bats, rats, pigeons,
31 migratory birds, etc.), some of whom *do* sometimes seek human company or support (e.g. stray
32 populations of dogs, cats, etc.). Second, and more importantly, we should resist the idea that close

[3] Many wild animals are sociable *with each other*, of course.

proximity, intimacy and sociability are in fact required for communal identification and social solidarity to pertain. After all, the paradigm political communities of our time – states – are enormous and complex groups in which close proximity and intimate social relations between all members is simply impossible. Nevertheless, it makes sense to say that social solidarity exists within these communities on the basis that individuals identify with other members as part of the same community for whom they are willing to make certain sacrifices. Such identification might derive from an understanding of the contributions each member makes to the community, a sense of shared history, shared goals, or something else. But as we have explained, all of these identifications – and their sources – are possible and present with certain wild animals. Finally, none of this should be taken to mean that we are arguing for each and every wild animal to be brought in under the control of 'human' communities. The purpose of thinking through social solidarity with wild animals is not a claim about the expansion of *existing* communities. Instead, it is about reimagining and redrawing our shared political communities in genuinely multi-species terms: by recognising social solidarity where it exists and might exist, we can undergird our multi-species communities in less anthropocentric terms.

This call for transformation also helps to explain why we should not regard existing solidaristic relations with wild animals as normatively unproblematic. To reiterate, Scholz identifies social solidarity as a descriptive term, and we have been using it to draw attention to the many socially significant relations between humans and wild animals that already exist today. Importantly, the picture that emerges of the concomitant social solidarity is extremely varied and full of tensions; indeed, we should hope for communities to take a more systematic and normatively justifiable approach to these relations. For while social solidarity might be used to describe existing relations, that obviously does not prevent us from attempting to shape those relations in ways that are normatively desirable. We claim that solidarity's focus on work, health and social justice, can help to critically question extant social solidarities and forge improved ones. Is our acknowledgement of animal work too focused on the services provided by certain domesticated animals, and not enough on the work wild animals provide via ecosystem services (e.g. scavenging and population control)? In what ways is human health and food security dependent on the health of wild animals and their habitats (e.g. pollinating crops and aerating soil)? When considering the just distribution of resources within a society, how much weight ought to be given to the claims (e.g. to habitat, territory and even property) of the wild animals who reside there? Tackling these questions will surely be crucial in building and maintaining less anthropocentric and more plausible visions of our multispecies communities.

None of this is to claim that tackling these questions will lead to easy answers; without doubt, the pictures of social solidarity with wild animals that emerge will be contested. For example, at least

sometimes, individuals may identify with groups of animals whose interests are not aligned. Are you for the seal pup or for the orca? Are you for the hatchling crow or for the squirrel? How, if at all, can such identifications be reconciled? If we cannot identify with all wild animals, then how should the lines be drawn? There is no doubt that our pro-social attitudes are presently volatile, and too volatile to resolve these issues easily. But in our view, tackling these issues head on – and tackling them through the lens of interspecies solidarity and a transformed and expanded, non-anthropocentric view of community – can be very instructive here.

3. Political Solidarity

The second type of solidarity identified by Scholz (2008) is 'political solidarity'. This form of solidarity refers to when activists unite for a particular political cause or project. In particular, it relates to when activists generate a shared commitment to fight oppression that is human in origin and to develop strategies for success. It is important to see that, here, the normative commitment is prior to the community (of activists); indeed, the former brings the latter into being and can dissolve once the goal has been reached, no long-term identification is needed. Political solidarity can also act as a vehicle for reflecting on what types of communal identification with animals, if any, are appropriate, thus addressing some of the challenges referred to in the previous section with regards to normatively problematic extant forms of social solidarity. Finally, articulating the need for political solidarity with and on behalf of wild animals helps to identify and overcome existing forms of oppression of them, which, in our view, are as vital as the familiar causes around which most animal activists currently unite.

Given that political solidarity relates to a cause to fight *oppression*, it is important to have a clear understanding of what oppression is. Here we follow Scholz's adoption of Iris Marion Young's conception, which sees oppression as consisting "in systematic institutional processes which prevent some people from learning and using satisfying and expansive skills in socially recognized settings, or institutionalized social processes which inhibit people's ability to play and communicate with others or to express their feelings and perspective on social life in contexts where others can listen" (Young 1990, 38 cited in Scholz 2008, 128). In political solidarity, then, individuals form a 'solidary group' when they respond to such oppression with a commitment to fight it. Individuals can take on various commitments of this kind (Scholz 2008, 142 f.), and such commitments can flow from a variety of sources: conscious choice, emotions, experience, desires and simple circumstances (Scholz 2008, 72). Political solidarity, then, neither relies on adherence to a single particular argument, say about moral standing, nor is it necessarily rational if 'rational' is equivocated with "in one's self-interest" (Scholz

2008, 75, 137, 144 f.). After all, political solidarity may require people to make considerable sacrifices. Moreover, Scholz claims (2008, 56) that individuals in the solidary group need not suffer from the respective oppression themselves; and, members of the oppressed group do not need to know of the activism or activists, nor be able to develop a reciprocal relation with them.

All of this would suggest that the concept of 'political solidarity' can apply straightforwardly in the context of human-animal relations. Take, as just one really clear-cut example, the vast majority of those domesticated animals used in agriculture. The human institutions and institutionalized processes are such that these animals are prevented from learning the necessary skills to navigate their communities and, a fortiori, from using such skills in satisfying ways. Humans also systematically inhibit most of these animals' ability to play and communicate both with their kin and with humans. And it is fair to say that these animals have almost no chance to express their perspective on social life "where others can listen". These kinds of relations are manifestly oppressive and animal activists are right to mobilize politically around them. The same is true for the many ways in which humans impinge on the lives of wild animals: wild animals who suffer from habitat destruction, are held captive in circuses, or who are traded as exotic pets straightforwardly meet the definition of oppression proposed by Young. Furthermore, at a time where human influence is changing living conditions on the whole planet, it is difficult to refuse responsibility for wild animals struggling to adapt to their natural environments.

Yet can we really stand in political solidarity with animals who seem to lack understanding or commitment to the cause for which we are fighting? Scholars of solidarity tend to think that it can be held with groups even when individuals from within that group are not (but could be) committed to the cause (e.g. feminism, see also Scholz 2008, 123 f., 136; and Rippe 1998, 358). But there still is a question of what happens when those individuals *cannot* be committed to such a cause. Much here hinges on the question of whether animals are capable of the kind of political agency to enable them to share such a political commitment (Coulter 2016, 152; Mejier 2019; von Essen and Allen 2020; Pepper 2021). For some, (Pepper 2021) animals cannot properly be said to hold such agency given their inability to intentionally affect political institutions, engage in shared intentionality, and imagine alternative political futures. For others (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2011; von Essen and Allen 2020; Meijer 2019; Hribal 2011), animals can be regarded as holding political agency when we adopt an expanded understanding of the concept which is primarily connected to embodied behaviours, actions and communication. There is clearly not the space to resolve this debate here, but two things are worth pointing out when thinking through its implications for political solidarity. First of all, we might say that in an important sense – namely one that is definitive of their good life and includes their ability to play, communicate and express their feelings – dogs will be dogs, just as cats will be cats. In

other words, no attempted change of political consciousness can alter who animals are, and we need not expect the lion to riot with the lamb against human oppression. Nonetheless, skepticism regarding the ability of animals to take up a political cause does not rule out political solidarity *on their behalf*. Indeed, Scholz explicitly argues that while political solidarity *with* animals is not possible, political solidarity *on their behalf* certainly is (Scholz 2013). Secondly, it seems plausible to adopt a conception of political agency – and hence commitment to a cause – that is not all-or-nothing. For instance, it does not seem outlandish to maintain that an individual can commit to a cause through certain behaviours and practices, such as sabotage, even if that commitment would rightly be regarded as stronger if it was backed up by a reflective rational intention to adopt it. In other words, a scalar understanding of political agency – in which animals (and humans) might have more or less of it – makes some sense.

Ultimately, the worry about animals' agency in political solidarity arises from the fact that humans are always in a position of privilege vis-à-vis animals. As such, animal advocates must question what their activism means for the animals themselves (Birke 2009; Coulter 2016); indeed, there is a real risk that a false sense of unity is created, one that obfuscates the animals' real interests. In this way, thinking through politically mobilizing for animals necessarily demands reflection on the kinds of relations (and identifications) we ought, and ought not, to be seeking with animals. Quite obviously, this demands seeking out and consideration of animals' own perspectives and, to the extent that it is possible and helpful, questioning human privilege. Yet Scholz (2008, 158) is also clear that the dangers of privilege should not preclude involvement of the privileged; instead it provides an imperative to make genuine attempts to adopt the perspective of the oppressed group. In so doing, she recalls feminist strategies such as 'world-travelling' (Lugones 1987). This involves endorsing and willfully exercising a "flexibility in shifting from mainstream constructions of life […] to other constructions of life […] animated by a [playful] attitude" (Lugones 1987, 3) with the goal of genuine changes in character that lead to the travelers being at ease in these worlds (Lugones 1987, 14-17). Playfulness makes exploring worlds safe and respectful. It is not about playing certain games, like chess, but approaching shared activities, like navigating a shared environment, with an open attitude that allows these activities to become games. Such games can be transformative (Lugones 1987, 16) and the link with solidarity is that the bonds that are created through such engagements are not those of domination, but of mutual co-creation. If that sounds theoretical and abstract, consider any type of real play between humans and dogs or (particularly young) cows. Not the mechanical or hierarchical type of play (e.g. repeat ball throwing) but that where roles are reversed and the animals are free to actually show themselves. Such interactions could broaden solidarity *on behalf of* animals to be more

informed by the animals' own agency and move in the direction of solidarity *with* them, in keeping with the scalar understanding of political solidarity referred to above.

What then of political solidarity with or on behalf of wild animals? Arguably, people who assist individual wild animals who have been injured, or are experiencing hunger or thirst, or actively seeking human help, or even suffering from anthropogenic climate change, can be said to fulfil their commitment to a cause, even if it is one that may be fuzzy at the conceptual outline. Moreover, people who provide sanctuary for dispositionally wild animals rescued from oppressive living conditions in circuses or as pets are often acting out of a political recognition of these wrongs. Sanctuaries that take in abused bears and protect them from harm, also advocate for those animals' right to live without human control, even though they can only do so much for animals once the damage has been done. Indeed, Palmer discusses wild animals as paradigmatic cases for *reparation* precisely because these animals would have lived or would live independently from humans if it wasn't for the harms we have done to them (Palmer 2010, 101). We argue that understanding these oppressive relations as the kinds of cause around which activists ought to politically unite, too, is a vital step in realizing and maintaining more just multi-species communities.

While the actors described above may have political solidarity *on behalf* of these wild animals, is there any possibility of moving towards solidarity *with* them? As you will recall, that would require the animals' own input and perspective on the cause – including through such means as world-travelling. Is that an option with wild animals? On the one hand, social play and role reversal is definitely not the type of interaction we can or should seek with the vast majority of wild animals. But on the other, world-travelling would at the very least require us to be open to reconstruct our human self in the presence of wild animals. And there are important real instances of such 'playfulness' with wild animals. Think, for example, of attempts to condition wild animals in creative ways, and by associative learning, to better navigate shared environments (like using wildlife corridors) or to avoid poachers (like chimpanzees in Sierra Leone, on both examples, see Eberle 2021). Consider also those 'gamified' activities to encourage humans to join in on collective efforts in the interest of other animals (e.g. awards for counting garden birds, or interactive and fun platforms for analyzing data by citizen scientists, see, for instance, the many projects on Zooniverse). Finally, coming up with sensible and imaginative enrichment strategies for animals in sanctuaries also often exemplifies this kind of playfulness. The goal Lugones envisions for the human sphere, namely, to "understand what it is to be them and what it is to be ourselves in their eyes" (Lugones 1987), may of course be additionally complicated in the case of certain animals, but that does not make it impossible for all of them.

If we are to mobilize politically with or on behalf of animals, it is important that we pursue and model the kinds of multi-species communities we hope to facilitate. In other words, it is important that we tackle genuine oppressions in ways that are themselves non-oppressive. And while the injustices of capture, trade, habitat destruction and climate change may be relatively clear-cut, other harms which befall wild animals are more controversial. At the core of many current debates about wild animal suffering is often something different to the kinds of oppressions referred to above. Some thinkers argue that there is something unfortunate about how some species have adapted and evolved in nature (Horta 2010; Johannsen 2020; Faria and Paez 2015). It is pointed out that most wild animals suffer terribly in their lives: the vast majority never even make it beyond infancy due to malnutrition or predation, and those that do are usually struck by prolonged disease, hunger and injury (Horta 2010; but cf. Browning and Veit 2021). As a result, some philosophers have proposed that we have a duty to seek ways to reduce such suffering, with various possibilities proposed and evaluated: from preventing some of these sentient animals from coming into existence, to painlessly killing, or altering the genetic make-up of, predators (Moen 2016; Bramble 2021). However, since political solidarity is about uniting behind a cause to tackle *oppression* – that is, those particular harms caused by human institutions – it appears unlikely that it could or should coalesce around a duty to tackle this kind of suffering. Of course, this is not to deny that moral agents hold duties to do something about this suffering – perhaps they have certain weaker duties of assistance, for example (Johannsen 2020). But there does appear good reason to doubt that these are duties grounded in *social justice* and thus the right kind of commitment that follows from political solidarity.

However, maybe such a judgement assumes an already impoverished and anthropocentric understanding of the social. If there are particular wild animals we identify with in our multi-species communities, one can legitimately question why they ought to be left to suffer, even when the harms they endure are ‘natural’. Indeed, we might say that their neglect by their communities is a form of oppression in that it comes about both through inhibiting these animals from expressing their feelings in the sense Young admonishes, and through failing to have the appropriate institutional and social processes to mitigate and alleviate their suffering. This is undoubtedly the conclusion we would reach in the human case: if a society were to ignore the harms to a particular section of its population on the basis that they are ‘natural’, we would justifiably regard that as oppressive. So it is impossible to rule out the validity of mobilizing politically for wild animals even when their suffering is caused by natural processes such as disease, hunger and predation.

Of course, if our political mobilisation is both to pursue legitimate causes *and* be non-oppressive, the only way we can answer the question of whether to mobilise for this or that cause is to take heed of animals’ own perspectives on these matters. And as miserable as we might imagine

them to be, perhaps all, many or some would not wish to be the objects of such activism. This might entail respecting their desire for freedom and non-intervention even in the face of great hardship (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2011), or it might entail ruling out certain types of intervention, while permitting others. The crucial implication of this discussion, then, is that uniting in political solidarity with and on behalf of wild animals is perfectly possible, but requires us to explore and employ robust and imaginative tools – such as those of world-travelling – in order to understand those animals' perspectives and have these inform our views about the individuals we identify with and the causes we pursue. The next section addresses the importance of institutionalizing processes to that effect within our political structures.

4. Civic Solidarity

The third type of solidarity identified by Scholz is civic solidarity. This is more than a set of pro-social attitudes and also more than a political or social justice movement: it refers to the institutional apparatus to protect vulnerable members within the community and to ensure their continued participation in social life. At the level of nation states and some supranational organizations such as the EU, civic solidarity usually manifests in terms of health services or pension schemes as well as some social services that enable members to access this protection and support. Importantly, these are not institutions of charity, but respond to the justified claims of individuals as members of a political community. Such institutional support can serve as scaffolding for social values and ensures assistance for all and especially the most vulnerable members, even when feelings of charity or resources are low. Importantly, civic solidarity does not just respond to vulnerabilities that stem from institutional oppression; it also deals with the vulnerabilities all community members face whether they stem from age, injury, sickness or any other increased level of dependency. Thinking through civic solidarity with wild animals has important implications for the institutional design of multi-species communities and the processes by which we can take heed of their perspectives within them.

We have already touched on certain health services and pension schemes in the case of service and certain feral, so self-willingly wild, animals above. Public health initiatives like One Health, which explicitly link the health of humans and non-human individuals might be seen as 'embryonic' forms of civic solidarity with all kinds of animal (Rock and Degeling 2015). It is even possible to see some animal welfare laws – for instance, those that require humans to provide their companion animals with sufficient exercise, or that penalize taking wild animals out of nature without compelling reason – as 'skeletal' forms of civic solidarity, given that they are tied to an institutional framework supported by public funds to prevent certain harms befalling particular animals. Furthermore, recent

discussions about animal ombudsmen and -women (e.g. in the city of Lisbon, Brookland 2019) are promising developments in providing institutionalised representation within our political processes. And finally, conservation is perhaps the most obvious policy area in which political communities already invest considerable resources and money.

However, these embryonic or skeletal forms of civic solidarity are a far cry from the types of institutional arrangement we have created for human members of our societies. Just consider, for instance, the ways in which current societies advocate for animals at the institutional level. Not only is it striking how few dedicated animal advocates exist within our political apparatus, but even when they are present, they do not have the same standing as, say, child protection or immigration case workers. This is because most animal welfare laws are only intended to outlaw the most egregious harms and in ways which ultimately serve human interests. This anthropocentrism is not only explicit in conservation practices, but is also evident in initiatives like One Health, where non-human health is of concern insofar as it serves that of humans. In addition, none of these institutions entails their respective communities making *significant* sacrifices; and none is central to the communities' self-understanding. Instead, the investments they entail are minimal or based on charity. So, while forms of civic solidarity with all animals – whether domesticated or wild – exist, they need to be bolstered hugely if animals' political status is to be made good on. But how is that to be done?

Importantly, establishing robust forms of civic solidarity involves more than just copying moral sentiments onto the institutional canvas; after all, our political structures cannot (and should) not be simple facsimiles of our individual moral beliefs and commitments. To help illustrate this, consider Peter Singer's famous 'child in a pond' thought experiment (1972). By using the example of a near-drowning child most people would no doubt want to rescue, Singer elicits a moral intuition: namely, that we can, by investing relatively little, save the lives of distant others with whom we have no special relations. Some thinkers have argued, quite reasonably, that this idea travels well across the species barrier: if, a sentient being's suffering could be easily prevented, then we have a moral obligation to do just that – whether that being be a puppy drowning in a pond (Moen 2016), or a frog in a pool. It seems, then, that this establishes collective general duties to minimize all these creatures' respective suffering if it comes at little or acceptable cost to ourselves.

But thinking about wild animal suffering through the lens of civic solidarity invites different responses. For it is clear that the institutional questions we face are very different from those that arise in the drowning child (or puppy or frog) case. First and foremost, solidarity concerns what communities must provide in terms of *social justice*, not beneficence; in other words, what members are owed in terms of social and political rights. Singer, in his example, on the other hand, is concerned

with what individuals owe to other individuals. Secondly, unlike in the drowning child case, political communities are not confronted by cases of 'easy rescue'. Communities instead face decisions that are complicated across a number of dimensions. We do not merely confront a single suffering being, but huge numbers of them. Moreover, not only are the reasons behind individuals' predicaments often varied and complicated, but so too are the appropriate remedies, their effectiveness, and the means of funding and distributing them. Sometimes the suffering of wild animals is a result of natural processes, and at others it is the direct result of human policies and institutions; sometimes an intervention will have little effect beyond the individual we are saving, at others it might have all sorts of 'cascade' effects that disrupt the ecosystem in which that individual resides; sometimes an effective remedy is available to us, at others it will require new investment and research; and so on. In summary, the *moral* imperative for one agent to conduct an 'easy rescue' tells us little about how we should design our public services. This is not a question of one individual aiding another, but of a community deciding how to fund, organize and deliver a collective response to the very different needs and claims of the community as a whole.

And the third reason why civic solidarity requires us to think differently about cases of wild animal suffering comes down to the fact that it refers to the institutional framework to protect members of *specific* communities Put simply, a community's institutions cannot protect the basic interests of *everyone,* and must pay special attention to those of its members. While a full account of which wild animals (or any other individuals) warrant membership in which communities is beyond the scope of this paper, a few points are important to make clear. For example, some have suggested that the relations which give rise to special duties of support might be generated from the *benefit* that humans accrue from certain wild animals: for example, think of the benefits to wildlife photographers from "majestic" animals or to stressed people from garden birds (Jalagania 2021). And yet, civic institutions exist to serve the *common good* which is more than the aggregate of individual benefits; and importantly, not everything that benefits an individual is beneficial to the public. But of course, and as we have seen already, many wild animals do contribute collective benefits to the public, whether that be through aerating soil, pollinating crops, landscaping, or simply inspiring us to scientific and artistic innovation. Indeed, thinking about our relations with wild animals through the lens of solidarity invites reflection on the real contributions many animals make to the functioning and flourishing of our communities. Such consideration undoubtedly opens the door to a broader and less anthropocentric understanding of community membership. However, there are very good reasons to not make the provision of benefits a necessary condition of membership (think of those members with certain disabilities who nevertheless receive support). But even with this caveat in mind, we can still acknowledge that when benefits are provided, we have good reason to uphold the status of those

contributors as fellow members. Crucial in this is that these contributions are accounted for under the perspective of true mutualism, so that both humans and the animals in question have something to gain from the arrangement.

So while thinking about civic solidarity invites tackling wild animal suffering through these different ways (social justice, complexity, membership), what would the institutional frameworks to which it gives rise actually look like? And how would they function? For example, how would they be set up to respond to the aforementioned example of the orca and the seal pup, whose interests very obviously conflict? While there is no hope of detailing fine-grained blueprints of the make-up of these institutional arrangements, three points can nonetheless be made. First, a trans-species welfare state able to rescue each and every human and non-human animal, domesticated and wild in whichever sense, from potential suffering is clearly neither practical nor desirable. It is not *practical* because, even when members are restricted appropriately, it will still be impossible to prevent or alleviate all types of harm for all members. For example, not all seal pups can be saved – but certainly some can. How then should we prioritise? Should, for instance, our institutional priorities rest with those who have been made vulnerable through human policies and actions (Palmer 2010)? It is also not *desirable* to attempt to eradicate all harms because any such attempts will likely be so intrusive and unwanted that they will backfire. For example, an attempt to save all seal pups from harms may not only have devastating consequences for orcas, and many other species, but may in fact be detrimental to certain seal pups themselves, say by making them too dependent on humans.

As such, and this is the second point, any institutional arrangements that we do create must have input from all members. For example, we need to determine which wild animals count as members in which communities and what their preferences and interests are. Various proposals have been put forward in the 'political turn' literature on how animal agency can be facilitated (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2011; Meijer 2019), and/or representation secured (Cochrane 2018; Vink 2020) and these need to be utilized and if necessary adapted so that wild animals can also be heard. In addition to these types of political representation, there are also more informal institutions which can play an important role in helping communities be attuned to wild animals' perspectives. One example that might be instructive here is that of wild animal sanctuaries (Pachirat 2018; Abrell 2021). Sanctuaries can and should be seen as expressions of solidarity: in the human exclusive case, to provide sanctuary is a political act; and cities who declare themselves sanctuary cities do this out of a recognition of the rights of refugees and at the risk of considerable political costs. In the case of animal sanctuaries, however, people tend to primarily look at things from the perspective of charity and not from social rights. This makes the important work sanctuaries do contingent on feelings of sympathy, and we have already touched on how such feelings can often be conflicted and paradoxical. Instead, then, it would

be helpful to reconceive of sanctuaries as sites of learning through world-travelling and, as such, as laboratories of less anthropocentric communities. Such learning can involve humans learning to appreciate mutualistic relations between different species if they get to care for or introduce members of so-called keystone species. But it can also apply to wild animals themselves when sanctuaries work to equip them with the skills needed to return, if possible, to life as locationally wild animals.

Finally, and relatedly, the ultimate point of taking the perspective of wild animals is not so that we know better how to rescue or save individual animals, but so that their interests can properly feed into constructions of the common good. It is impossible to eradicate all suffering, and do away with all risks within any political community, multi-species or not. The aim must be instead to forge a collective good which emerges through processes of decision-making that are open, fair and take the interests of all members into account. The goal, then, is to design policies which ensure that the risks and hardships faced by members are distributed in a way that is as equitable as possible. At present, humans are the most powerful political animals on Earth; we should create and use institutions – from science to politics – to end the various systematic forms of oppression of animals, and to enable animals to have their say.

5. Conclusion

This paper has explored whether solidarity with wild animals is either present or possible. Through looking at three different forms of solidarity – social, political and civic – we have argued that solidarity with wild animals is not only present and possible, but an important concept to employ when thinking through our political relations with animals. Most crucially, employing the lens of solidarity to reflect on our relations with wild animals in particular, offers us a means to expand and transform our understanding of the political community in less anthropocentric and genuinely multi-species terms. By thinking about social solidarity, we can reflect on the communal identifications we already have with wild animals – as well as the ones we ought to have. By exploring political solidarity, we can think not only about the oppressive relations with wild animals that we ought to mobilise against and attempt to eradicate, but also the means by which animals' own perspectives can feed into that process. And thinking through civic solidarity with wild animals demands that we reflect on the institutional processes of our multi-species communities, and the ways in which the myriad interests of all members – human and non-human – can feed into constructions of the common good.

And focussing on solidarity in its various forms has certain other benefits. For example, it can also move discussions in animal ethics and politics beyond what we might call 'group-thinking'. At

present, animals are often seen to belong to a specific group – that of domesticated, wild or liminal animals; accordingly, we debate their respective lots. Yet these groups are contingent and fluid, as can be demonstrated by the fact that some animals (like rabbits) 'occur' in all groups, or others (like feral goats) 'migrate' from one into another. And not only are these groups problematic in terms of categorising animals, they are also problematic in terms of directing our political attention. For what seems important to our political relations with animals is less whether an animal is 'domesticated' or 'wild' but whether we identify communally with that animal, how we should identify with them given their contribution and participation in our societies, whether they are the victims of oppression, how we might respond to their needs at an institutional level, and so on.

Without doubt, important questions remain which have not been addressed in this paper. Is there a truly meaningful way in which solidarity could be extended to non-sentient beings (see Plumwood 2001)? How can we draw the boundaries around multispecies communities to keep them both fluid and operational? And how can we form communities with members who do not necessarily form solidaristic relations with one another? While this paper leaves these and other important questions unanswered, we hope that it has done enough to show the importance of continued research into solidarity when thinking about membership and flourishing in our shared multi-species communities.

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