

An Interview with Syl Ko

Activism in terms of an epistemological revolution

Palang: You have phrased and drafted a comprehensive philosophical and sociological approach to crucial questions of nonhuman animal and human oppression and the oppression of the natural in [Aphro-ism](#). The fundamental approach supports an, as you call it epistemological revolution. How do you think can each one of us bring ourselves into action and discourse and become visible in context with newer approaches that seem to not be fitting the predominant patterns of the discussions so far? Not everyone feels able to write what she/he thinks and yet the individuals have awesome critical and constructive approaches, in other words I feel people who would endorse a fundamental revolution stay invisible particularly in terms of Animal Liberation (in context with the human and nature complex) since the majority the AR/AL movement still hold up the humanity-animality-binary view by not (yet) making the very epistemological ethical leaps or moves that are necessary. How could we tackle invisibility in these mainstreams or how could we become more distinct, in other words which approaches in activism do you think seem helpful to go the path of an EPISTEMOLOGICAL REVOLUTION?

Syl: Thank you, palang, for your incredible and insightful questions. The reader should be aware that you and I are corresponding in two different languages so there may be a few minor translation errors. I haven't noticed any that disrupt the core content of our conversation. Also, I should mention from the start that I'll address each of your questions on my own behalf as I cannot speak for Aph. (1) As you can see in *Aphro-ism*, we don't agree on a few points, so my words here should be taken to represent only my own views on these matters. With that being said, let's talk a little about the epistemological revolution. Epistemology is a word not used in ordinary talk, so I'd like to take a step back and briefly fill out the picture a bit.

Everyone has some familiarity with epistemology even if you've never heard or used that word before. For instance, everyone has wondered at some point: *how do I really know if I'm not dreaming right now? Is there some infallible test that would tell me whether I am awake or dreaming?* That is one of the most famous and enduring epistemological questions ever asked, most famously by the philosopher Rene Descartes. Descartes did not pose this question

as an empty exercise in mental flexing. Rather, he was trying to save science! In his time, the prevailing scientific view was that of the Scholastics, a school of thinkers influenced by Aristotelian thinking. Very crudely put, the Scholastics believed that explaining the behavior of physical phenomena, such as an apple falling to the ground, involved something more than what we now call physical laws. They thought the apple possessed its own soul-like substance that “willed” the apple to the ground.

Descartes was rightly concerned about such claims. He believed it was silly to think the apple moves toward the ground due to its having a willing soul and, more importantly, was concerned that such a claim was grounded in speculation as opposed to something that is true and justifiable. The kind of claims the Scholastics were making were not certain, and uncertain claims make for a bad science. (By the way, the word ‘science’ comes from the Latin ‘*scientia*,’ which means an indubitable truth. The natural sciences and philosophy emerged as one project.) We don’t want to build scientific laws on shaky foundations for the same reason we don’t want to build our homes on sand. So, Descartes set out to determine whether there was anything one could really ever know and start from there. If we can find at least one thing for which we can say we have true and justified belief, we can use that case to determine what are the criteria for having true and justified beliefs - knowledge- in general. And that is why he started with questioning the very foundational claim we take for granted every day that is the assumption that ordinary, perceptual experience is real! (2)

For another easy example of our familiarity with epistemology, just think of a time you’ve been in a squabble with someone and they told you, *well, that’s just your opinion!* And you responded with, *it is not just my opinion- I know it to be true!* Here we have a clear epistemological distinction being set out that, despite the disagreement at hand, both participants will clearly agree on: first, there is a discernible difference between having an opinion and knowing something and, second, knowing something is superior to merely having an opinion about it. Every time you are dealing with these kinds of fundamental questions and discussions about the very nature of knowledge, you are doing some epistemology, even if only informally. I take great pains to go into these details because I want to impress that epistemological questions are not pointless, mental masturbatory fodder. Rather, they carry immense weight and have informed most, if not all, major cognitive shifts throughout human history. So, I want your reader to understand why that is.

But many things that can be known are actually fictions of our own making. As a result, they are not fixed or static over time. We tend to think of reality as that which the natural sciences give us information about. But many thinkers disagree. Understanding or knowing something about reality boils down to gathering information not only about the physical world but also the social world, which is purely fictional but, because we all participate in it, it is also real in a different way. Some thinkers, especially in the decolonial tradition, stress that if it is true that physical and social reality work together to give us the objective world, then different social realities in the same physical world give us different objective worlds. What is it know something is contingent upon one’s social world. Therefore, what it is for something to be a true and justified belief is not an individual achievement, but a collective one.(3)

Consider the following example. The scholar Ramon Grosfoguel notes in his article “The Structure of Knowledge in Westernized Universities: Epistemic Racism/ Sexism and the Four Genocides/ Epistemicides of the Long 16th Century”, within hours of arriving at what he thought was India, the explorer Christopher Columbus concluded that the indigenous people living there lacked a religion.(4)(5) Columbus was not evil to draw this conclusion; rather, he did what we do all of the time: we think within the terms of the social world that we know. In Columbus’ social reality (which was a fiction specific to his region), what it was to possess a religion looked a specific way. For instance, religion was probably monotheistic, associated with particular rituals that would call to mind worship, having certain codes of dress, and so on. The very conception of religion Columbus was working with in general was very provincial. If the people he encountered in the Americas had a religion, he would not have even known it, unless he would have taken the time to gain internal access to their practices.

There’s another thing worth mentioning. Why did it matter whether the indigenous people had a religion? Well, in Columbus’ social world, *all* humans had a religion because all humans had a soul. (Notice this is another huge epistemological leap. But from the internal perspective of his world’s way of knowing it was completely logical.) Maybe some of the religions were the *wrong* religions (in those days, Judaism and Islam were wrong religions and Christianity was the right religion) but religion must appear wherever humans appear. So, when Columbus and his team concluded that the people he encountered were without a religion, it made sense- it was truly logical- to draw the further conclusion that there is something *not human* about these people. According to his social world, and the epistemology that molded it, it was a true and justified belief. Do you know what the very first philosophical debate was in the “new world”? You probably guessed it: whether or not the indigenous people should be thought of as having souls, or, in other words, *whether or not they were properly “human.”* For this reason- and this is going to sound strange- Columbus was extremely progressive for his time: he thought *anyone* in our species could be converted to Christianity, which means that, unlike many of his peers, he thought all humans were properly “human.” (6)

Grosfoguel tracks the subtle but disastrous epistemological shift that occurred during these debates: facts about one’s religious beliefs, or lack thereof, were transformed into facts about *the degree of one’s humanity*. Do you see what happened there? What was once knowledge about, say, the status of Judaism or Islam in the 15th century- namely, that they are “inferior” religions- now, in the 16th century, was knowledge about the *people who practiced those religions*- namely, *Jews and Muslims are inferior degrees of ‘human.’* He refers to this epistemological shift as one that moves from the theological mode to the anthropological mode.

Thus, for context as to what is an epistemological revolution, here we have the first **epistemological revolution** that occurred in the “new world.” The western European explorers were not merely seeking to conquer land all over the planet. More importantly, they wanted to *epistemologically* conquer all people in the world. That translates to: what will be true for the indigenous people is what is true for people in Columbus’ world. (Columbus was explicit about this: he wanted the whole world to practice Christianity. In fact, he was

fanatical about it.) You can see why this is a problem. What was true for Spain was not true for the indigenous people. As decolonial scholar Walter Mignolo notes, the indigenous people surely did not understand themselves as subhumans on the day that Columbus and his team arrived.(7) Their world, and so their epistemology, was starkly different. To conquer people, you cannot just take away their land. You must also rip from underneath them their very ways of knowing the world, themselves, and others. And you must ensure that people's future generations are indoctrinated into your way of understanding and knowing the world, themselves, and others. This is why Grosfoguel and so many other scholars/activists emphasize the always-present practice of book burning in the conquest of lands and people, or, as they call it *epistemicide*. (And for scholar Silvia Federici, the burning of *women*, who transmitted knowledge orally rather than through books, so *their bodies/minds*, as the houses of that knowledge, were burned.) With genocide comes epistemicide. If you can control how a people understand the world and themselves (and you!), and you ensure that control is replicated in the future *ad infinitum*, you have conquered them.(8)

We're now in a position to connect the discussion to the general agenda in *Aphro-ism* in which a micro- epistemic revolution is spelled out. We're not simply pointing out that different kinds of people are missing in the conversation about what's happening to nonhuman animals. That is one construal of invisibility, but it is not one I focus on. There is an invisibility missing from the conversation *about* invisibility. All of this talk about 'humans' and 'animals' that we take for granted in discussing the horror of what is happening to nonhuman animals assumes a particular formulation of reality that is specific to only a very small group of people. According to their worldview, "human," "animal," and related terms are assumed to refer to literally biological human beings and biological nonhuman beings. At most, such terms may have some symbolic import as well. And, so, according to this worldview, the "right" way to understand animal oppression and the constant disregard for animal bodies and lives is simply a matter of "speciesism," or our species exercising species-supremacy.

But for those of us positioned in the social world radically differently, most of us with histories in which our kin was/are not considered "human" or were/are considered "animals," in which *we* are not really considered "human" or are considered "animals," this mere biological rendering of these terms rings false. We know that terms like "human," "animal," and related terms are above and beyond biological specifications and that our modern usage of these terms are internal to a global project that sought to claim human beings exist in degrees.(9) That means, if we want to participate with the mainstream criticism of animal a/buse, we have to pretend *the world as we know it does not exist*. We have to pretend that we don't know being considered "human" matters morally *even for beings who are members of the species homo sapiens*. We have to pretend that outgrouping many groups of human beings as "subhumans" or "nonhuman" is not really *that* bad because, *hey, being "human" isn't special anyway. . . and appealing to "humanity" is speciesist*. Do you see what's going on here? Our way of understanding the world is completely invisible such that we cannot even discuss this issue in our own terms without everyone taking up arms to ask, *what does this have to do with animals??* They are not asking this question out of interest. They are asking

because we are stepping outside of the epistemic lines that have been drawn that parallel their worldview. As they see it, if they do not understand the world in such a way, it cannot be true.

The epistemic revolution, then, is taking this invisibility to be a site of productive knowledge. That is, instead of shying away from or suppressing our way of understanding and knowing the world- and ourselves and others in it- to fit in with the “normal” way of understanding and doing things, we use this invisibility to produce an account of whatever phenomenon we’re interested in to convey an aspect of reality that the “normal” way of doing things has not and cannot reveal. That is why I describe this kind of invisibility as a superpower. We have access to a part of the objective world by way of our position in it that others, no matter how privileged, do not and cannot have. So, we have something novel to say because of the way these words- human, animal, etc.,- operate in the world as *we* have experienced them.

My advice, then, is don’t divorce yourself from your own worldview. (*) What would happen if we constructed an account of animal torture and murder- which is our food/ medical/ beauty/ etc. industries- using the resources at our disposal? What if we, as black and brown people, constructed an animal ethic generated from our experience of being cast as the antithesis of the ideal human, (“the Human”)? What would it look like to resist the narrative of the “Human” with the added advantage that we are already the farthest thing from “Human” there is in our social world? We have a very different understanding of the terms at play here and we have access to the subjective experience of being ‘animalized’. What would happen if we took those as positive tools to not only liberate ourselves but also to lend our aid to another group of beings at the same time in a way different than what the mainstream route can offer? Black Veganism is my way of trying to provide an answer to these kinds of questions. . . (I return to Black Veganism in a later answer below) but I’m sure there are other approaches too. I don’t care so much about there being different kinds of people representing veganism as much as I care about there being different kinds of veganism.

If you happen to be one of the few that is positioned as a member of the norm, you are welcome to join us. There is nothing about Black Veganism that is exclusive to black or brown people.(10) It is not an identity movement. We use “Black” to signify the structure of anti-black racism since race is a structure, not a mere skin color or identity. But if it makes sense to you to stick with the mainstream way of doing things, that is fine too. The mainstream grasp of animal oppression is fine and good. I am only pointing out that it does not capture every aspect of why “the Animal” is an inferior notion, and so it *helps* nonhuman animals to encourage the development of more and more views that aim to highlight other sides of animal oppression, and so other ways of understanding animal oppression, that have not yet been made visible. Some of our readers have the ridiculous idea that we want people to stop reading Peter Singer or that we want to denounce advocates who are going down a more traditional route, such as fighting to gain legal rights for nonhuman animals, etc. I suggest no such thing. I have immense respect for anyone using whatever means at their disposal to address this problem. As I stress in *Aphro-ism*, we have to get over the idea that there is only one way of doing things or that we will agree every time on either a philosophical or practical level about what is the best way to lend our aid to our fellow beings.

This problem stretches across every aspect of our society so we need people fighting from every corner.

How to “fit in” or “not fit in” as an activist

Palang: Plurality and empowerment have a lot to do with the emancipation of thought, i.e. with the fact that we are not dependent on intellectuals or any groups of people who seem to be regarded as thinking elites within our societies. We all need to think for ourselves and we are the most powerful resource for a plural fruitful discourse. Yet a comprehensive empowerment of each one of us (as activists) seems not to be asked for in the structures of many groups and organizations, at least there seems to be little space that people grant each other for standpoints, observations and experiences. Many activists even give up on their activism, because they feel no one is interested their individual contributions. Do you think the “classical” group dynamics (hierarchical thinking, for example) can pose a problem in activism and does it make sense in your point of view to go one’s paths at least partly alone too? And finally: is individual activism equally valuable in your eyes, when someone doesn’t find a constructive basis with fellow activists?

Syl: I’d advise against basing your beliefs and life projects on whether others value it. If you look at history, most world-changing ideas were not appreciated in their time and the people behind those ideas kept on trucking anyway. They really believed in what they were doing. No amount of derision or humiliation from either their peers or those whose minds they were trying to change could stop them. In fact, the more revolutionary your project is, and the more potential it has to really change things, the less likely you’ll find many friends or supporters. That makes sense. People are scared of change, even those who say they want it. Many people do not realize that one minor change they want cannot occur unless lots of major changes are made too, and that makes them uncomfortable. So, they will make a pretense of making change when really things stay the same. But of course they are celebrated because they didn’t make anyone challenge anything about themselves or their world. Most of all, the activist did not challenge him/herself. Everyone gets to stay comfortable.

Also most people think in the same patterns or they draw on the same ideas. Great people who make change, even in just small ways, tend to think outside the box. Such thinking usually strikes others as weird or irrelevant because they don’t understand it. It’s too different. You can pretend to be excited by what everyone is saying so that you are included in their projects. Or you have to accept that you’ll probably have to work mostly alone if you don’t want to abandon your ideas or if you want to adopt new ideas outside of the ones the group already relies on.

If you want to make big change and you’re zealous about it, people might even think you’re crazy. You could lose your friends or your job. You may even go to jail. Socrates, who is now considered the exemplar of a great critical thinker, was imprisoned and given the death penalty. That’s right: Socrates was a criminal. Why? Because he “corrupted the youth.” He thought in a different way and wanted other people to change how they think too. He

influenced young men who were supposed to care about continuing in their father's footsteps in prestigious careers and adding to their family's wealth to care instead about being good people. So, Socrates was sentenced to death. He didn't care. He gave a lecture about the very things that brought about his criminal charges *during his defense trial*. Even when he was on death row waiting for his final day, he gave lectures to his students who came to visit him. He lectured literally up until he had to drink the poison.

Socrates never received material rewards or positive recognition in his day for relentlessly trying to influence his fellow citizens to change their lives toward the search for the good. Socrates wore the same clothes every day, was considered annoying by all of the eminent thinkers of his time, and with the exception of a handful of followers (the equivalent of a small entourage of undergraduate students!) had no one who wanted to engage with his ideas. His project was to gain knowledge of the good and this became a very of his very character so his reputation or fitting in did not matter to him.

I think that is a more useful image of activism to follow than what we have floating around today. As I see it, activism- if you must use the word- should be a kind of obsession with trying to be a good person, which has little to do with your image, how anyone receives you, or if you belong to a group, or whether you witness any change from your efforts. It is a self-sufficient enterprise. All you need is the desire to be good and if you allow that to consume you, you will not care anymore about whether or not you are recognized, respected, or if anyone listens to you. That goes for life outside of activism as well, by the way.

So, I do not look at the output as what is reflective of good activism, whether that output is from the individual or from a group/organization. Even if an activist or group of activists succeed in accomplishing a mission, without good hearts and souls in society that mission can easily be reversed in a short amount of time. The emphasis should be on making sure we are right on the inside, nurture the moral sensibility that is vital for a meaningful existence, and allow that energy to flow into and shape the world, whatever that will result in. What may resemble progress now may really be a nightmare in the long-term and vice versa. We don't know what's going to work or what is best. We can only operate from good intentions and leave it at that.

And if you're considered a loser throughout your lifetime because of your mission, even by your more "accomplished" activist peers, you can't get funding, and no one pays attention to you, don't feel bad. Socrates was considered a loser too. You're in good company. Just stay the course!

The new discourse itself in the general public

Palang: Your and Aph's thoughts, your approach is full of deep insight in ethical, political and social clarity and you are making the epistemical revolution that you speak about reality with the discourse you initiated. As an activist inspired by your theses and thoughts I gather the impression that your ideas bear great relevancy for the discourse with people outside of the Animal Right/Animal Liberation and vegan movement. Could you imagine that a plurality in the discussion about Animal Liberation etc. can be

inspired in the general public independent of dynamics of a ‘mainstream reception’ in the AR/AL vegan movements itself? Is the movement itself always really the best informed and most open minded place when it comes to dismantle narrowminded views about animality and humanity?

Syl: I firmly believe discussions surrounding nonhuman animals, particularly ethically/politically/socially, can be paired with any ethical, political, and/or social discussion, and so whether those discussions occur within a space devoted explicitly to nonhuman animals or whether self-identified “animal advocates” approve of such discussions is irrelevant. This isn’t about them. This is about how do we successfully get the public to, first of all, acknowledge that what animals face is a legitimate problem for animals (and for us), and second, have that acknowledgment somehow dramatically materialize into action that changes the conditions in which animals are forced to exist.

Aphro-ism proposes that discussing animal liberation within the confines of the terms of “the movement” is nonsensical. The movement is focused on a small sliver of the wide range of ideas that sustain animal ab/use. Ideas of humanity and animality, however they are construed, are central to literally every present human oppression. And, in turn, ideas surrounding what we ordinarily take to be human oppressions are present in animal oppression. All of these things are linked. So, it stands to reason that if we want to see the big picture in *any* of these oppressions, which is really the same picture from different angles, we will need to connect these dots.

The way we connect the dots in *Aphro-ism* is by showing everything leads to the construction of the Human. Not *humans*, but the Human, the presumed “ideal” manifestation of what it *is* to be a human being, its most recent iteration being that invented in 16th century Spain. Some of the best literature I’ve read in the last few years that I think can work on the side of animals is not coming from people or fields focused on nonhuman animals. We must continue branching out of the box if we will ever wrap our minds around what is really going on. It is beyond a mere species prejudice. This is huge.

I think Black Studies and other ethnic studies programs are where I see the most potential in terms of expanding the discussion. You have to remember that black and brown people came to represent the “opposite” of that which is Human, subhumans. For a long time, that was a bad thing. Being “Human” was supposed to be the pinnacle of existence while being “subhuman” was to your disadvantage. But after years and years of clawing our way out of the hole that was dug for us, the white western empire is starting to lose hold of its control, not to mention the planet is in peril *because* of that empire and its influence across the globe. Now I see it as a *good* thing that we- as black people- were forced for so long to stand in opposition to the Human. We did not become them because we could not be them. By definition, we were excluded from the category as its contrary. We are by definition already anti-Human. So, it is no surprise that the most exciting stuff coming out that has incredible potential for pivoting our ideas about humans *and* animals and resisting the toxic narrative of the Human will come from works born from that contra-Human psyche. For those of us on the side of nonhuman animals, we need to keep our minds open and draw on that literature to

apply to our advocacy instead of assuming the only works that are applicable are those that explicitly mention nonhuman animals or come from the mainstream “Human” tradition.

Oppression and History

Palang: Is the “problem with humanity” a consequence of colonization and our inner colonization and of white supremacy? What role do oppressive cultures in the antique and ancient times play in context? How does the history of oppression that dates back connect with the system of white supremacy, arrogance and ignorance; in other words can we contextualize oppressive forms in cultures to understand different mechanisms of oppression?

Syl: Is the problem of humanity the consequence of colonization/ white supremacy? Yes and no. Obviously, western colonization did not *cause* human beings to start using and abusing nonhuman life nor is western colonization responsible for a particularly exclusive moral conception of being human. Anyone who asserts that western colonization *caused* animal oppression or introduced for the first time a morally exclusive idea of ‘the human’ is completely oblivious to the history of our species and should stop talking immediately and read more history. Go read some Aristotle if you don’t believe me. . . he existed *long* before Spain decided to expand its empire.

But, as I see it, western colonization did *determine* the problem of humanity, and so, the a/buse of nonhuman animals. We must tread the water carefully now because this assertion seems to suggest that a later event (western colonization) is bringing about an earlier event (nonhuman animal subjugation), which is impossible. I do not investigate the situation of western colonization for the purpose of explaining or interpreting attitudes and actions that occurred *prior* to western colonization. Rather, I wish to explain that attitudes and actions prior to western colonization transformed into drastically different things with the onset of colonization, *despite their (superficially) identical manifestations*.

The persecution of Jews and Muslims occurred *before* Columbus and his team arrived in the Americas. So, the subsequent colonization of the Americas, which gave rise to an epistemological order that submerged the native “beneath” the western European man on the scale of Humanity could not have *caused* the persecution of Jews and Muslims. A later event cannot cause a prior event. However, the new epistemological order whose chief operation was to rank degrees of Humanity, in turn, came to *determine* what the persecution of Jews and Muslims would come to *mean* and what being a Jew or a Muslim would *become*. That is, how one would come to understand Jews and Muslims was directly shaped and informed by the new knowledge system being crafted in the “new world.” As I mentioned in my answer to your first question, following Grosfoguel, the persecution of Jews and Muslims was *initially* understood to be a matter about practicing the wrong faith. Jews and Muslims were murdered, exploited, and pushed from their homes to foreign lands if they did not convert to Christianity because of the presumed inferiority of their religion. But after Columbus and the debates surrounding the Humanity of the indigenous people, disagreements about religion (or the lack thereof) were no longer simply about theology. Now, this was about whether or not you were a

“full” human! Of course, Jews and Muslims were still being persecuted but now it was a matter of their being persecuted because they were subhumans on account of their religion. On the surface, the exploitation, expulsion, and murder of these groups looked the same pre- and post- “new world.” But really they were substantially two different things. Jews and Muslims were no longer simply people who practiced the wrong faith. They were *not people*. And **that** then was the ground for their subjugation. Grosfoguel describes these events as a “boomerang effect.” So, even though the events occurring in the “new world” did not *cause* the subjugation of Jews and Muslims, they *determined* what the subjugation of Jews and Muslims consisted in and determined the new identity of “Jew” and “Muslim” moving forward. What it is to be a Jew or a Muslim is, post-new world, to be a different sort of being altogether.

So, again, analyzing the events in the “new world,” which is the starting point of the social world we inherited, cannot explain the persecution of Jews and Muslims, say, in the 15th century *per se*. That is not the object of the analysis anyway. Rather, analyzing these events helps us glean why their persecution today differs substantially from the 15th century and, thus, gives us the tools we need to address their persecution, and anti-semitism and Islamophobia generally speaking, *today*. Thus, a useful distinction here is that between logical and temporal order or priority. There is no doubt that the subjugation of a group of beings over time is informed by the conditions of the subjugation they suffered in the prior time period. But that is not to say the subjugation of a group of beings over time is necessarily informed by the *logic* of the subjugation they incurred in the prior time period.

This sets the stage for my view, Black Veganism, which argues that nonhuman animals are raced and we should understand their subordination as a racial phenomenon. As I said, I am not trying to take stock of the entire history of human beings ab/using nonhuman animals. That is one crucial difference between the ethic I propose and views you’re probably more familiar with, which makes my position quite heterodox and- unfortunately- subject to massive misinterpretation. I don’t deny it is necessary to look at the history of human beings ab/using nonhuman animals, but to conceptualize their current condition and a roadmap leading to an escape from that condition, demands recognizing that their current condition is a property of the logic of the *current, modern world*, which is the logic of *race*. To think otherwise is to dilute their condition in the haze of history.

Again, the logic of the current, modern world emerges when the debate about the humanity of the indigenous people in the Americas starts and is concretized when African slaves appear on the scene. Race came to be “epidermalized,” as Franz Fanon puts it, but race is fundamentally a globally instituted system that tracks degrees of Humanity and is necessarily reflected in the institutional makeup of the world. It is not true then that race and racism have always existed. Prejudices based on identity have always existed. Discrimination based on the same has always existed. But race is a novel idea. Race is a very specific system that did not and *could* not exist prior to a small group of people declaring they wanted to literally take over the whole planet and homogenize it under their self-image. That is key. Race-thinking is *the global foisting of a local self-conception, for in order to succeed at such an aim, one must colonize the very concept of ‘human’ in one’s favor*.

Now, what happens when you have a very small group of people declare they are the *true* humans (“Humans”)? This is where some work by Sylvia Wynter is crucial and I build on her account by adding considerations about the animal. (11) One must have analogous groups that come to embody what it is to *fail* to be Human, lest the banner of “true humanity” leads to a vacuous doctrine. But to *fail* to be Human is not to be a *nonhuman animal*. There are two reasons for this. First, nonhumans cannot successfully embody the failure of the Human to deploy because they are not human beings to begin with. So, they can never be proper Others. They can’t fulfill the demonstrative role needed to puff up the status of the Human. Nonhumans can be, at most, derivative Others. (12)

But more importantly, nonhuman animals cannot *subjectively experience a lack of humanity, whatever that is*. Again, nonhuman animals are epistemically resilient and epistemically closed to us so we cannot override their subjective perspectives such that we could program them to suffer what it is *like* to feel *less than human*. Wynter cleverly homes in on that aspect of Fanon’s work, the *subjective* experience of being black, or of being a colonized person, precisely because self-hating and other “autophobic”, negative features of internal racism are central to keeping in place the invention of the Human. The Human is parasitic on not just the category of the anti-Human, but especially on the *felt* inferiority of the anti-Human. (13)

The failure to achieve Humanness, then, must be found in *another* human being that presumably lacks what *true* humans (“Humans”) possess. This is the second key point that will distance Black Veganism from ordinary views. On my view, the human-animal binary or divide does not refer to literal human beings and literal nonhuman animals. My position is that the beings in the human-animal binary refer to “The Human” and “The Animal”, which are not biological abstractions that represent, in general, “all humans,” and correspondingly “all nonhuman animals.” Rather, they are *social* categories that represent what it is to be a “true” human and what it is to be the “opposite” of that, respectively. And, again, the opposite of a true human (“Human”) is not a nonhuman animal but other humans, the figure of “the anti-Human.” (14) So, the the Animal and the anti-Human should be understood as identical figures, which leads us to the astounding revelation that nonhuman animals are so invisible, *they do not even form the basis on which we represent the general category of The Animal*. The general category of the Animal is a Human disappearing act.

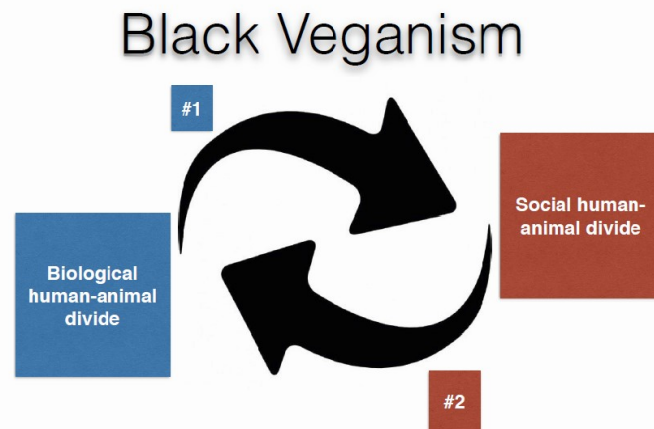
Many find my view upsetting. They believe:

1. I am trying to cut animals out of the scene by making the binary about only human beings.
2. Regardless of who “Human” and “Animal” refer to in the binary, that “Human” is the superior category and “Animal” is the inferior category has to do with the human tradition of speciesism.
3. This racial construal of the human- animal binary seems to have no application to actual nonhuman animals. Shouldn’t an account that purports to be a kind of veganism *be *about* actual nonhuman animals?*

All of these objections are perfectly reasonable and touch on parts of your questions so they are worth addressing, though I’ll do so out of order.

To begin with, this racial construal of the human-animal binary (the Human/ the Animal (a.k.a anti-Human)) is immediately applicable to non-human animals. It's important that we frame their struggle within the terms of the general project to invent the Human, so that we can identify *who* they are and *in what* their condition consists post- "new world." As people rightly point out (and set forth in objection #2 immediately above) the figures of 'the human' and 'the animal' have historically been positioned as not merely different but as *contraries*, so it stands to reason that if we invent a logic that reconfigures what the human is (now, "the Human"), we must also attend to the necessary reconfiguration of what the animal is (now, "the Animal/ anti-Human.") Prior to Columbus's arrival to the Americas, it is impossible to summarize the multitude of social worlds that existed that - under their own terms- made nonhuman animals (or at least some nonhuman animals) their victims. Many of those worlds we may never understand given we do not have internal access to those languages, ways of knowing, belief systems, cosmologies, etc., and so cannot know the rituals that involved nonhuman animals as well as other human beings. However, we can safely say that at least Columbus and his team came from a social world in which nonhuman animals were deemed morally inferior due to the belief that they lacked souls. This was explicitly communicated time and time again and, in fact, the conclusion they drew regarding the native people's likeness to animals was derived from the premise that animals do not have souls and, so, cannot practice religion. It's true that there has been a biological separation between human beings and all other animals conceived in moral terms, and not just in western Europe. Some scholars will go so far as to argue that human moral life *emerged* in virtue of conceiving ourselves as separate from all other animals and cultivating a specifically human life. For instance, my former adviser, Douglas Maclean, makes a point along these lines in his *Is "Being Human" a Moral Concept?*, though one could think both "human" and "animal" are moral concepts, such as Cora Diamond suggests, or more recently Alice Cray in her wonderful book *Inside Ethics*. (15) (They are all philosophers.) As I said before, I am not trying to deny the reality that nonhuman animals have been subjugated throughout the history of our species and seemingly for as long as our species has existed.

What was to become the core of race-thinking, the Human/Animal (a.k.a anti-Human) binary, then, certainly owes its roots to the biological separation we experience between us and all other animals that most human systems have interpreted morally. People are right to highlight this. But Black Veganism asserts that that is only one half of the story. I hold that a *feedback loop* has led the Human/Animal (Anti-Human) binary to *amplify* the very assumptions that brought it into existence.



In other words, we think of beings- many in our own species and *all* members of other species- through the concept “the Animal/ anti-Human.” Nonhuman animals are no longer subjugated beings simply because they lack souls. Rather, they have *become different kinds of beings and their subjugation is of a different kind, even if their subjugation manifests itself as (superficially) identical to what existed before.*

We’ve arrived at a sort of explanatory limit because how does one describe the contents of a concept? It’s the same kind of explanatory wall you hit if you try to describe any other morally loaded concept, such as “mother” or “pet.” I think it can be done but this interview is probably not the place to try!

Instead I’ll just say this: the absence of nonhuman animals in our social and moral imagination makes much more sense to me when I think of it through Black Veganism. Black Veganism presents the binary as a principle that is really about human beings and represents two poles which signify the presence of being human (articulated through its ideal manifestation, “the Human) and the disintegration and thus absence of being human, of literally being *anti-Human* (articulated through “the Animal.”) So, the space of the anti-Human is the space where morality loses its structure and sense since there is no being there sutured to it. The paradox is indispensable: you *need* humans who are not Human for these concepts to gain their moral purchase in the way they possess today. We conceive nonhuman animals *through* that paradox- the very structure of their being is patterned on anti-Humanness. If you think about what’s really going, it’s quite horrifying. Black Veganism reveals that the situation of nonhuman animals is, in fact, worse than we might have thought, at least on the conceptual level. We don’t simply operate on the assumption that nonhuman animals are morally negligible. .. We disappear them the very moment we conceive of them *as animals*.

Before, at least in the world that informed our current world- Columbus’ world, nonhuman animals were beings that lacked souls (or if they have souls, they have “lower,” non-rational souls). But the emergence of the Human transformed animals from beings that lacked souls to beings that just were essentially a derivative opposite of the Human. (**) So, what we have here is a monumental move.(16) Nonhuman animals were catapulted onto a scene that was invested in making claims about the nature of humanity. (17) Thus, nonhuman animals were **humanized**. Before they were inferior but altogether different beings. Now they came to

represent a *limit* in the scale of humanity. They were now playing in our game. The feedback loop took the information from the biological divide between human beings and animals conceived in moral terms and filtered that information through the Human/ Animal (anti-Human) binary it helped to create in the “new world”, only to now reinforce the abject inferiority and invisibility of nonhuman animals but in new, and more tragic, terms.

So, to objections #1 and #3, no, I am not trying to cut nonhuman animals out of the picture. On the contrary. Unless we are discussing very practical matters, we cannot talk about nonhuman animals if we do not also talk about race. And we cannot talk about race if we do not talk about nonhuman animals. I do not think anti-racism is effectively mobilized if we leave out billions of beings who we view *through racial thinking*. To do so is to dismiss a significant portion of the narrative of race. Thus, you are not really analyzing race. The black (anti-Human) is the template through which we think the modern conception of the animal. If we want to tackle racism and rid ourselves of racial thinking, which means disposing of this social world, we have to look at *all* areas in which race thinking operates, and one of those areas is right there in front of us on our plates.

It also brings to light the stark recognition that the mechanism that allows for our society to remain unperturbed by the widespread torture and murder of nonhuman animals, usually used to make food, is made possible through the very same mechanism that makes us shrug at the persistent assault on black and brown Life and life. People do not realize their unwillingness to challenge themselves about nonhuman animals is a mark of the gigantic hole that race-thinking burrows into our souls. We know that nonhuman animals are being harmed. That’s not the issue. The issue is that they fall through the hole so their pain is not felt. We are literally untouched.

Veganism ought to address not just literal non-human animals, but also and especially the narrative of animality that is responsible for all of the ideas we form about anything we think of as an animal. Since the 16th century, the narrative of animality (or rather, “Animality”) has been directly constructed as an analog to the narrative of Humanity- the propping up of the western white man as the ideal manifestation of a human being. That stacks of literature has been investigating the situation of the animal while overlooking this obvious fact speaks volumes about how oblivious most people are to the far reaches of race.

Ways of coming together practically in new spaces

Palang: The gain of deconstructing the human-nonhuman animal binaries in terms of a full-spectral decolonization will be so fundamental, that a complete new insight about animality and humanity will result in terms of all the relevant variables and influencing factors. Do you think society can already develop islands of new understandings of social justice, involving nonhumanity in terms of dismantling colonial claims and definitions. Can we already built spaces being human in radically ‘clarified’ ways were we includingly encounter nonhumanity differently and appreciatively for their – the nonhuman – cultural contexts? Is the time there for breaking up the human-animal

antagonism, if not what hinders us still and what could we contribute to really change the dominant toxicities of colonization and of other blocking oppressive factors?

Syl: I think some parts of my other answers speak to this question. Black Veganism is a post-Humanist theory. Following the work of scholar Zakkiyah Iman Jackson, I identify a particular conception of human to be the culprit in this story, not *the* concept of human. (18) If anything, I am hoping to recuperate begin human by saving us from the Human narrative. It follows that my diagnosis of the condition of nonhuman animals is 180 degrees away from the kind of diagnosis we're used to hearing. The ordinary diagnosis is that we have been mythologizing ourselves on the basis of our species. This mythologizing has gotten in the way of the "facts"; namely, we *too* are animals and we are not special in any way. So, the inclination is that dismantling the human/animal binary must mean deflating the human for the sake of elevating the animal. That's why Peter Singer talks about "desanctifying" the human. A lot of this is fueled by an appeal to science, of course. If you look at science, humans don't possess anything at least one other nonhuman species doesn't also possess.

But, as I argued in my chapter on "Revaluing the Human as a Way to Revalue the Animal," I'm not convinced by that reasoning. If the human (conceived as a biological category) has been morally weighted to disadvantage the animal (again, as a biological category), then deflating the human in order to elevate the animal is not a suitable corrective. This is still binary thinking, except you've adjusted the weight on each side. What it would be to dismantle the binary has to be more than shifting the weights. Dismantling requires disambiguating the moral connotation of one term from the other. Perhaps they mean they want to shift the emphasis to our shared animal "nature," though I am never sure what such a phrase means.

There's more. Theoretically speaking if the binary were truly dismantled, you could still have a morally weighted conception of human. . . you just wouldn't need animals to give that conception its weight! Family terms operate that way. I would do things for my sister that I would not do for my neighbor but it is not because my sister has certain capacities or properties to which I am responding that my neighbor lacks. That I think of her as my "sister" alone lends moral weight to her interests. That is, just saying she is my sister does the work for me. I don't need to go further and everyone gets it. But that doesn't mean I can just do what I want to my neighbor. I still have moral obligations to him too, just of a different sort. That is one easy example of a morally loaded conception that is okay since it does not exist within a binary. If it existed within a binary, that would mean my privileging my sister must come at the expense of any one that is *not* my sister (or rather, whatever is constructed as the "opposite" of my sister).

The example illuminates a disconnect in the very way mainstream advocates understand the category of species and the way I see the category represented in my favorite decolonial literature. Mainstream advocates draw a parallel between species and categories like race and sex whereas the decolonial thinkers I draw on present the category of species as a family category. The former thinks a parallel exists between all of the cases because they think an identical mechanism brings them about. Namely, a morally arbitrary trait is being made to have moral relevance: race, sex, and species, respectively. This parallel doesn't work for

many decolonial thinkers of a certain strand (not to mention most ordinary people!). What makes racism and sexism bad for these thinkers is that members of the community are not considered members of their community, the community being humankind. It is only by thinking of the category ‘human’ as a family term, and so morally loaded, that we can say what gives racism and sexism its badness. The weight of humanness isn’t derived by tracing a trait or capacity that is exclusive to human beings. It is not a thing you find with the natural sciences. Rather, its weight comes from the aspect of reality that is social, that is a function of our subjectively experiencing ourselves existing as a specific species.

In an essay I’ve been working on for the past two years I elaborate on this difference in terms of “species-objectivism” and “species-subjectivism.” (Black Veganism is under the species-subjectivist label. I explore it as a “subspecies subjectivism.”) Both views are claims about the objective world, and both claims are on the side of nonhuman animals, but from two different vantage points. Species-objectivists sketch out being human by looking at human beings from the outside. From this vantage point, there is no morally relevant difference between us or, say, bats. To invoke this category is no different than to invoke a category like race or sex. To use an everyday example, this methodology would similarly reveal that the man I called my “dad” is actually just one man among billions and there is nothing really distinct about him from an outside perspective. Or another useful example is to consider “being alive” to simply be a statement about breathing, having a beating heart, and so on.

But species-subjectivists describe being human from standing in the shoes of the human. From this vantage point, being human is definitely different than being a bat because *you are the human, not a bat*. While it is true that my dad is one man among billions, I feel a different sort of way about him than I do the billions of other men. .. because he’s my *dad*. It’s not because I think there is something different about him. And it would be silly for you to try to convince me I am wrong in my feeling about him based on the fact that there is nothing discernible about him compared to the billions of other men in the world. Or, for another useful example, to “be alive” is not simply a statement about breathing, having a beating heart, and so on but is about having a particular *gusto* or to live with *oompf*. (So, one could be “alive” but not really be *alive*.)

Species-objectivism and species-subjectivism differ in degrees of distance: one is talking about a world that is far and the other is talking about a world that is local. Since we are usually looking for answers as to how to navigate our local lives, we cannot dismiss the species-subjectivist perspective as “speciesist” nor should we dismiss it as a world-guiding view. It would be like looking at the Voyager image of the Earth to figure out a bus route to your new job. The Voyager was not designed to give us information to get around the streets of downtown. If you want to get around downtown, you need to go on Google maps instead. While it is useful to have the “pale blue dot” perspective of Earth, as Carl Sagan beautifully put it, one must always remember we do not float in the universe and understand the Earth that way. We have our feet planted firmly *on* Earth.

If an account misses that the category of species membership can function as a local, family term, then it won’t be a good account, and it certainly won’t be very convincing. I emphasize the distinction between “human/ human being” and “Human” in Black Veganism to capture

that dual aspect. We know that the Human is a bad idea because it eclipses that aspect of humanness that has great potential to play a positive bonding role. The Human needs to be disposed of and I agree with Wynter that if such a feat can be achieved, we are on the horizon of a new mode of human existence, one that would not require an Other. (19) (20)

I don't think humans coming together on account of their humanity is in tension with animal liberation. I see the two projects going together. So, I'm afraid I don't agree with mainstream advocates about what it will look like to dismantle the antagonism between the members of the binary, as you nicely phrased it, at least not the logic of it. They're working with a really different view of moral life altogether, one I find impoverished. I think we will always have a social conception of what it is to be human along with a bare empirical conception. I believe the social conception of being human is like an indexical marker, a group version of a name. Indexical markers are native to our psychology and I don't see them as problems in and of themselves. We may always hold the social conception of being human in moral regard and that does not mean there must be a human-animal binary in place, nor does it mean that we have more moral weight objectively speaking. Several thinkers have dominated the direction of thought in animal advocacy and it is their theories that get us twisted into unnecessary knots. As philosopher Bernard Williams said, it's one thing to say humans are important to the universe but it's quite another thing to simply say humans are important to each other. (21) I am confused why so few people will grant that sentiment.

But all of that doesn't get in the way of the possibility of immediate practical change that all of us on the side of nonhuman animals can probably agree on even if we don't agree on the logic. I have a friend who is studying urban planning doing exciting work in design with a mind on designing the space around the needs of several different kinds of animals that exist in the community and neighboring communities. The independent researcher Sue Donaldson and philosopher Will Kymlicka published *Zoopolis: A Political Theory of Animal Rights* a few years ago, which considers different kinds of animals positioned in different kinds of relationships with us and discusses which animals could rightfully qualify as citizens, etc. It's beautiful and creative and respects all of the myriad differences between us and different kinds of animals and their needs and potential contributions. In the legal realm, here in the U.S. we have the Nonhuman Rights Project, which is comprised of a group of dedicated lawyers who literally challenge the conception of personhood operational in the courts. They have argued on behalf of chimpanzees, dolphins, and elephants thus far. In terms of general changes in lifestyle, I know lots of people who welcome different kinds of animals into their homes and yards to create micro-sanctuaries, as the activist and writer Justin van Kleeck describes it. (22) The most exciting thing I've come across is work by the scholar Anat Pick, who does work in "vegan cinema." (23) Contrary to what you might think, vegan cinema is not propaganda to get people to go vegan. Rather, Pick demonstrates the very ethos of violence and consumption present in an audience's gaze of a film in general. So, she is approaching the idea of veganism from a really interesting, abstract perspective. You mentioned in a question not listed in this interview the lack of good work being done on speciesism in the media. Well, Pick is one person definitely doing interesting work in that field. She is challenging what it is to coexist with nonhuman animals (and nonhuman life in general) from the very point of the gaze. All of these are good examples of ways we can

slowly push forward to make life with nonhuman animals realizable in a non-exploitative, and mutually beneficial fashion.

However, I'm not sure what to say about difficult cases in which we are dealing with nonhuman animals that are not easy to live with or even impossible to live with. The case of rodents strike me as particularly perplexing. The philosopher Elizabeth Anderson, who promotes an ethical pluralism when it comes to different kinds of animals, much like Donaldson and Kymlicka's political pluralism, suggests animals with whom we can imagine some sort of life, either together or as close/distant neighbors, deserve heavier moral consideration than those with whom we cannot imagine such a life. (24) Rodents count as one such an example. Lindgren (Johnson), one of the authors I mentioned earlier, recently told me birth control for some rodents has been developed to lower their population in infested areas. That's obviously a more compassionate method of handling infestation but raises a moral quandary nonetheless. So, I'm sympathetic to Anderson's argument that a parallel should not be drawn between categories like race/sex and species because race/sex create differences where there are none (theoretically, we could all learn to live in peace with one another) while species membership tracks a real difference (it is not likely that we can live in peace with every other species, even as distant neighbors).

Starred content:

(*) I would *not* give this advice when you are encountering a foreign social world. That is a different case. But I give this advice when you are in your *own* world and your vantage point is overlooked or inferiorized because of your social location in that world. When highlighting the reality of social positionality, one should be careful to highlight not just the external/ institutional/ structural ways in which one is positioned, but also the subjective experience of what it is to be positioned a certain way.

(**) Be careful not to confuse the process through which all nonhuman animals were changed with the change in the particular role attributed to the ape. In the medieval period, apes came to represent the image of the degenerate human, especially due to committing some sin for which they must be punished (see the famous *De Mundi Universitate* by 12th century writer Bernardus Silvestris). The ape already played the role that it would later come to play in the post-Darwin social imagination, except in natural scientific rather than theological terms. Sylvia Wynter discusses the iconography of the ape-as-degenerate-human in "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/ Power/ Truth/ Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, It's Overrepresentation--An Argument" CR: The New Centennial Review, Volume 3, Number 3, Fall 2003, pp. 257-337, which can be found here: https://law.unimelb.edu.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0010/2432989/Wynter-2003-Unsettling-the-Coloniality-of-Being.pdf. The role of the ape is a very early example of the humanization of a particular nonhuman animal. Note that I focus more on the humanization of nonhuman animals at the level of the very concept of 'Animal.'

Endnotes:

- (1) See Aph's chapters "Why Animal Liberation Requires an Epistemological Revolution" and "Creating New Conceptual Architecture: On Afrofuturism, Animality, and Unlearning/ Rewriting Ourselves" in *Aphro-ism* for Aph's direct thoughts on the subject.
- (2) If you've never read his *Meditations*, I highly recommend doing so now that you know what he was up to. It's one of my favorite books.
- (3) I'm oversimplifying but the oversimplification will suffice.
- (4) Published in *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self- Knowledge*: Vol. 11: Iss.1, Article 8.
- (5) Just stop for a moment and think about that. Think about what kind of mindset one must have to draw such a conclusion before having any substantive interactions with this population and, further, to then assume with no qualms that now this land (and these people) are yours for the picking! In a chapter of his popular *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*, the historian Noah Yuval Harari recounts the exploratory voyages of Admiral Zheng He of the Chinese Ming dynasty, which started in 1405 and ended around thirty years later. In fact, one of the armadas carried around thirty thousand people. Yet, Zheng He merely visited different countries, he did not attempt to "conquer" them. Harari notes that the Romans and the Persians too had the technological ability to attempt to conquer foreign lands but did not do so. It's worth quoting him in full: "There was nothing peculiar about that. The oddity is that early modern Europeans caught a fever that drove them to sail to distant and completely unknown lands full of alien cultures, take one step on to their beaches, and immediately declare, 'I claim all these territories for my king!'" See page 291. I have to thank philosopher Martin Gibert for enthusiastically encouraging me to read this book. See his interview with the author: <https://lamorce.co/dou-vient-la-domination-humaine-entretien-avec-yuval-noah-harari/>

Also: the lack of anything resembling religion among a group of people is not a *lack* in general. It may just mean they have *something else* that your own world does not have. Walter Mignolo argues this point about philosophy in his chapter "Philosophy and the Colonial Difference" in *Latin American Philosophy: Currents, Issues, Debates*, ed. Mendieta, Eduardo (2003).

- (6) That's not to say Christian missionary itself is progressive. I am just commenting on Columbus' mindset compared to his peers regarding what the unification of the globe could look like: "I, that we might form great friendship, for I knew that they were a people who could be more easily freed and converted to our holy faith by love than by force, gave to some of them red caps, and glass beads to put round their necks and many other things of little value, which gave them great pleasure, and made them so much our friends that it was a marvel to see. (110) and "They do not know any religion, and I believe they could easily be converted to Christianity, for they were very intelligent. " (119) See *Journal of the First Voyage of Columbus* from the Wisconsin Historical Society Digital Library and Archives here:

<http://www.americanjourneys.org/pdf/AJ-062.pdf>. The simultaneous presence of beauty and horror in these first interactions between Columbus' team and the native people cannot be denied when reading excerpts from his journal.

- (7) See his chapter "What does it mean to be Human?" in *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*. Ed. Katherine McKittrick. Duke University Press (2015)
- (8) There are lots of interesting things to say here about one major difference between the subjugation of human beings and the subjugation of nonhuman animals. My good friend, the Finnish artist Terike Haapoja, who, along with Laura Gustafsson, is responsible for The Museum of Nonhumanity, noted that nonhuman animal resistance to human subjugation might always be stronger than our own subjugation to one another precisely due to our inability to exhaustively control how they perceive the world, themselves, and their perception of us. That is, they have epistemic resilience.
- (9) When U.S. President Trump described Latinos as "animals," he was not being a good biologist. He was making a social claim.
- (10) For instance, see Lindgren Johnson's *Race Matter, Animal Matters: Fugitive Humanism in African America (1840-1930)* Routledge (2017). Lindgren and I consider her text to be in line with the spirit of Black Veganism.
- (11) See Wynter's article "Towards the Sociogenic Principle: Fanon, The Puzzle of Conscious Experience, of "Identity" and What it's Like to be "Black"" for her discussion on human Others: http://coribe.org/PDF/wynter_socio.pdf. By the way, this is the greatest article I've read in the past ten years. I think this is the article to read if you want to get into Wynter because she explains why Fanon is so important and understanding her obsession with Fanon and the hard problem of consciousness puts her work, big picture, into perspective.
- (12) Occasionally people of color joke that it is more likely that nonhuman animals will be morally recognized before they are. I don't think that's correct but from a theoretical standpoint it is true that the Human doesn't need nonhuman animals to constitute its Other- it needs only other human beings to do so.
- (13) I borrow the terminology of the 'anti-Human' from the Afropessimist tradition, though I don't claim to represent the tradition.
- (14) For an alternative view, see Claire Jean Kim, who argues instead that we should think of the Human, Animal, and Black as a triad instead of a binary. I don't agree because I think this is forcing the entire-tradition-of-using-animals approach with the current-modern-world approach, and so overlooks the redundancy in listing the Animal *and* the Black. Otherwise, though, our work is in the same spirit. See her article "Murder and Mattering in Harambe's House" in *Politics and Animals*, Vol 3. (2017).
- (15) For Maclean's article, see *Philosophy and Public Policy Quarterly* 30 (3/4):16-20 (2010); For Diamond see "Eating Meat and Eating People." *Philosophy*, Vol. 53, No. 206 (Oct., 1978), pp. 465-479.; For Crary see *Inside Ethics*, Harvard University Press (2016).
- (16) As Mark S. Roberts notes, "the animal is placed squarely within the human." See his *The Mark of the Beast: Animality and Human Oppression (New Directions in the Human-Animal Bond)*, Purdue University Press (2008): 20.

- (17) The theory of evolution was indispensable to this major taxonomic shift. The theory of evolution was not *responsible* for the shift, but the governing social dynamics guaranteed that once Darwin gave compelling evidence to collapse the distinction of human and animal, animals would play a role in establishing a point about humans.
- (18) See her “Animal: New Directions in the Theorization of Race and Posthumanism.” *Feminist Studies* 39, no.3 (2013)
- (19) Some of our readers assumed this means we should stop referring to ourselves as humans. I don’t think that at all. I just meant I don’t think we should strive to be or think of ourselves as “Human.”
- (20) The story is more complicated than how I put it. What will allow us to escape the loop of yet another but new an equally harmful “Human” premised on an Other is familiarity with the law that governs our consciousness, which she believes is the sociogenic principle, her interpretation of Fanon’s notion of sociogeny. She argues that our discovering what this law is gives us the power to use it to our advantage, much like discovery of physical laws. See the article I cited earlier by Wynter. I will not discuss the matter further in this interview, but the sociogenic principle is the heart of my essay in progress.
- (21) See his chapter “Theory and Prejudice” in *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*. Harvard University Press (1985): 118.
- (22) See his “Microsanctuaries: A Micro-Manifesto”:
<https://strivingwithsystems.com/2016/08/06/microsanctuaries-a-micro-manifesto/>
- (23) ‘Vegan Cinema’, *Thinking Veganism in Literature and Culture*, ed. by Emelia Quinn and Benjamin Westwood. Oxford: Palgrave, 2018, pp. 125-146. I’m grateful to Lindgren for bringing Pick’s work to my attention recently.
- (24) See “Animal Rights and the Values of Nonhuman Life.” in C. Sunstein & M. Nussbaum (Eds.), *Animal Rights*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (2004a)

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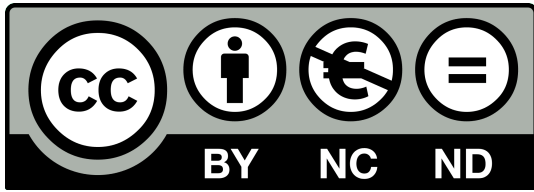
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