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*Zoopolis: A Political Deconstruction of Animal Rights Theories*

A major appeal of Kymlicka and Donaldson's ground-breaking political approach to animal rights is the move beyond the necessity of having to choose between rights and relationships. Relational approaches to animal ethics (such as Palmer) do not challenge, but complement and improve traditional animal rights theory (ART). They resist the idea that what is owed to an animal is owed to all animals with similar capacities by acknowledging relation-based obligations toward different animals (domesticated, liminal, and wild). I will focus on the way in which *Zoopolis* avoids some of the flaws of traditional ART (1) by discrediting the phantasm of the wild animal leading its life free from human interactions and deconstructing false dichotomies such as autonomy/vulnerability; (2) by getting rid of the over-intellectualized understanding of moral agency (often confused with rational moral reflection); (3) by challenging our impoverished conception of animal agency and (4) moving beyond the parsimonious account of animal minds, limited only to sentience. Focusing on suffering makes it harder to secure the right to life and liberty – making us unable to express what is wrong with captivity and killing – and blinds us to the agency of animals – forcing us into the simplistic dichotomy between non-interference/domination insofar as we do not recognize the capacity of animals to co-author the rules of relationships.