



The Anti-Speciesist Stance in J. M. Coetzee's Novels: An Analysis of Animal-Standpoint

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ABSTRACT

Animal-standpoint criticism focuses on the way human rights are treated in literary texts. It is against speciesism, which is a kind of species-based discrimination which gives different values to different species and inevitably leads to a hierarchy among species. Speciesism is thus regarded as a kind of racism by those defining and theorizing the field of animal-standpoint criticism, which is essentially against the supremacy of the human species over animals and which seeks the establishment of equality among species. Animal rights are emphasized by this criticism and the idea that animals are to be used for human benefits and/or progress is challenged. J. M. Coetzee, the South African novelist known for his allegorical works of fiction set in unknown times and places as well as his questioning stance on matters of colonialism, remains a writer of fiction who consciously tries to give a voice to animals, which cannot speak for themselves and are subjected to not only illegal but cruel treatment by human beings. For Coetzee, it is wrong to permit the establishment of a hierarchy between humans and animals and to disregard animal rights seeing them as entities in the service of human beings. From *Disgrace* to *Life and Times of Michael K.*, several novels, as well as nonfictional works by Coetzee, focus in some way or another on the rights of animals and the strange ties between human beings and them. It is realised in this treatments of animals that Coetzee also carries out his critique of Western rationalism through his focus on the related issue.

Keywords: Speciesism, Animal-Standpoint Criticism, J. M. Coetzee, Animal Rights, English Novel



Introduction

Contemporary literary criticism has tended to focus more and more on the elements of nature that have existed together with human beings on earth throughout centuries. Recent perceptions of nature and its components have also changed the perceptions relating to human's right to exercise authority over nature and its constituents. The present view that has gained wide acceptance in the field of humanities is that human beings are to be considered equal to the elements of nature and not superior and/or preferable to them. This recent attitude is anti-speciesist and bears the reflections of catastrophic as well as apocalyptic arguments focusing on the visible destruction and possible end of the world brought about by humans, which forces not only scientists and scholars, but almost everyone to reconsider the role of human beings on earth and the disastrous consequences of this role.

Animals throughout centuries have mostly been regarded as inferior to human although in certain societies and periods there was a relatively better attitude towards and moral treatment of them. The earliest ages of philosophy regarding animals are clearly founded upon the distinction between humans and animals although Aristotle is famous for being the owner of the saying human is by nature "a political animal" (Aristotle, 2009, p. 10), which in a sense equates human beings with animals. Nevertheless, it is rather the distinctions between humans and animals that are more focused on in philosophical works than the resemblances and the most important point of difference between the two species is a human's ability to think, which is at the same time is the main reason for the lack of moral concern towards animals in the philosophical world: "Most philosophers in the Western tradition followed Aristotle in denying any direct moral standing to animals, by virtue of a presumed moral gulf between rational and non-rational beings" (Fellenz, 2007, p. 19). Thus, it is the human being that is situated at a higher place compared to animals in the Great Chain of Being. Although it must be emphasized that some, if not all, animals were regarded as divine in the ancient periods, animals were almost always considered 'different' from humans until recent times. Descartes' dualism, with its main assertion that animals lack mind, once again stressed the difference between humans and animals. Descartes regards animals as material automata and develops an analogy between humans and animals on the basis of automatic behaviour. Although he was an important figure who provided the transition to modern ideas about creatures in general, Descartes himself was "remarkably isolated from other people" (Bach, 2018,

p. 19), which is at the same time ironic as far as his emphasis on the distinction between humans and animals is concerned.

In fact, “the idea that humans have at least some obligations to animals is very old” (Franklin, 2005, p. 1); however, the problem is that these obligations have not been systematically developed based on philosophical foundations (Franklin, 2005, p. 1). Until very recent times, those speaking on animal rights and/or their position in a human-centred society focused on such issues as animal sacrifice, and the consumption of animal meat instead of dealing with the issue of basing a philosophical foundation for providing animals with respect equal to that given to human beings. Kant’s approach towards animals and the possible respect they deserve is basically utilitarian. According to him, “...all animals exist only as a means, and not for their own sakes, in that they have no self-consciousness, whereas man is the end...we have no immediate duties to animals” (Kant, 1997, p. 212). In Kantian philosophy, animals are not considered to be agents and thus, moral obligations and moral rights do not apply to them. While a human being is not a thing, animals are *things* in Kantian thought. Kant does not of course tolerate violence towards animals and believes those who treat animals violently will treat people in the same way. His ideas on and stance towards the use of animals for scientific experiments are dilemmatic because he, on the one hand, believes those scientists are cruel while on the other hand he finds their job praiseworthy as it is for human benefits. Therefore, it can be said that Kant does not tolerate the violent treatment of animals but he at the same time considers human beings superior to animals. It is only in recent times that animals and their rights have begun to be explored on an ethical base. Tom Regan is one of the contemporary philosophers who not only dealt with the issue of animal rights on the basis of ethical philosophy but also was an animal rights activist. According to Regan, animals are abused and maltreated mainly in three sectors: food, fashion and research. Inspired by his readings of Gandhi, Regan discusses the way animals are treated throughout his works and says in one of his books “Whether the ways animals are treated by humans adds to the evil of the world depends not only on how they are treated but also on what their moral status is” (Regan, 2003, p. 115). Regan seems to accept that the treatment of animals adds to the total evil of the world; however, he is also hopeful about the future as he believes there is an awareness at present times of animal rights compared to past times.

Humanity has been given the right of dominion over the planet and its components in religious doctrines as well. Although “...within theistic traditions...there is the familiar

idea that animals are with us *common creatures* of the same God" (Linzey, 1998, p. 50), religions generally look at animals primarily as creatures to benefit from. That is, religious doctrines find humans and animals similar in that they are both created by God; however, animals have been treated as secondary creatures in daily practice and this treatment has not been found contrary to religion. It might be argued that it is a matter of cultures rather than religious doctrines; however, it should not be forgotten that cultures are also and, in a sense perhaps mainly, shaped by religious beliefs. Therefore, "in various expressions of Muslim culture, non-human animals are valued mainly for the services they provide for humans" despite the fact that "...the Islamic tradition, perhaps more so than any other, has much to say about the need to respect all parts of God's creation, even insects" (Foltz, 2006, p. 4). According to Erica Fudge, the view that animals are passive while humans are active comes from the belief that Adam is the namer while the animals are named: "Adam is active: he gives names; the animals are passive: they were named" (Fudge, 2002, p. 17).

Speciesism could simply and very briefly be defined as "discrimination against beings based on the species they belong to" (Vinding, 2015, p. 1). It is "the unjustified disadvantageous consideration or treatment of those who are not classified as belonging to one or more particular species" (Horta, 2010, p.244). Another well-known definition by Peter Singer equates it with "...a prejudice or biased attitude favouring the interests of the members of one's own species against those of members of other species" (Singer, 2002, p. 6). The term was coined by Richard D. Ryder in an essay on the use of animals in scientific experiments, titled "Experiments on Animals" and was later popularized by Peter Singer, who has become a more-remembered figure in the theory of the field. Ryder, equates speciesism with racism and claims the revolutionary atmosphere of the 60s "nearly missed out animals" while that atmosphere targeted other forms of discrimination. The problem was, according to Ryder, that revolution against forms of discrimination was against the forms of discrimination of humans against humans; in other words, in this revolutionary atmosphere animals and other nonhuman entities had simply been disregarded and discrimination was handled as an issue of human beings only. Ryder believes it has been scientifically accepted since Darwin that there is no "magical essential difference between humans and other animals" and then he asks "Why then do we make an almost total distinction morally?". Ryder emphasizes the illogicality of the idea of so-called human superiority and thus harshly criticizes the experiments on animals which are justified on behalf of scientific progress. Ryder also founded the philosophy of what he calls "Painism" and offers it as the alternative

moral theory, claiming that its basic aim is “to increase the individual happiness” (Ryder, 2011, p. 74). For Ryder, present societies are societies of pain and a better sense of community must be encouraged; however, we should not only take into consideration the human community. Instead, we must bear in mind *the community of all things who can suffer* (Ryder, 2011, p. 60, emphasis in original). The term ‘pain’ is used by Ryder to include “all negative experiences, that is to say, all forms of suffering, mental as well as ‘physical’” (Ryder, 2003, p. 26). And, naturally, it is not only humans but animals that suffer. However, because the traditional understanding of humans and other elements of nature and life has been based on speciesism throughout centuries, members of other species have simply been disregarded, which makes speciesism in the eyes of Ryder “a form of injustice” as “*speciesism* means hurting others because they are members of another species” (Ryder, 1998, p. 44, emphasis in original).

For Singer, animals have been treated cruelly and made to suffer by human beings solely for trivial reasons. It is a kind of animal slavery and this slavery has not yet been abolished. On the contrary, there are still defenders of the cruelty towards and abuse of animals. Singer believes that the unnaturalness of this attitude could be observed in the behaviour of children, especially in their rejection of eating flesh and in their innate love of animals (Singer, 2005, p. 214). However, it is a fact that children are in a sense forced to adopt an anti-animal stance by human-centred society. In other words, it might be argued that children are forced to perceive the unnatural as natural. Singer also tries to be optimistic about the present attitude towards animals like Regan; however, he also states that “...although many philosophers have come to favour the view that speciesism is indefensible, popular views on the topic are still very far from the basic idea of equal consideration for the interests of beings irrespective of their species” (Singer, 2005, p. 226).

Animal standpoint criticism shares similar characteristics with some of the critical movements of the late twentieth century like post-colonialism and feminism in that all of these movements are against otherization and repression of some sort. It is also against otherization and marginalisation of animals on the basis of a man-centred attitude. Steven Best summarizes the shift from a human-centred outlook to that of an animal standpoint as follows: “If we look at history from the animal standpoint, that is, from the crucial role that animals have played in human evolution and the consequences of human domination of nonhuman animals, we can glean new and invaluable insights into psychological, social, historical, and ecological phenomena,

problems, and crises" (Best, 2014, p. 1). Best's is an attempt to reveal the role of animals in the shaping of not only human but natural life. His purpose is also one of challenging the hierarchy established with the existence of humans on Earth. He wants to show us that species complement each other rather than pose authority over one another. Animal standpoint theory emphasizes the "interrelatedness of our fates" (Best, 2014, p. 1), that is, the interrelatedness of the fates of humans and animals and believes in the necessity of redefining the status and role of species on earth.

Best finds the origins of his new perspective in the works of Nietzsche and his view of science as a set of interpretations rather than explanations. Thus, history is also a set of interpretations based on various perspectives. Therefore, we can regard history as written from not only an "elitist, patriarchal, or racist bias, but also from a speciesist bias" (Best, 2014, p. 2). Animal standpoint theory is also related to feminist standpoint theory and has a connection with modern leftist tradition. What these perspectives or standpoints have in common is that they try to view life and history on Earth from a reverse position, not from the perspective of the so-called winners/conquerors of the world or from that of the oppressors of any kind. Thus, it could be said that it has inspiration from the Foucauldian philosophy of history and civilization. Animal standpoint theory sees animals as the slaves of human masters in a centuries-long struggle for dominance over the Earth. While emphasizing this, it also tries to demonstrate the fact that life on Earth is not a product and result of solely human activities and interactions. Like environmental determinism, which can be "defined in two ways: as treating the environment as a factor influencing human affairs independently and from the outside, and as an overriding emphasis on the environmental elements in a situation of nature-society interaction" (Meyer & Guss, 2017, p. 5), animal standpoint theory supports the view that geography, climate and natural forces play a very significant role in the shaping of human life and history over centuries; however, it finds environmental determinism lacking in that it has no special interest in animals' role in that shaping.

In short, humanity is not mere agent in the shaping and maintenance of life in animal standpoint theory, which points to the critical roles animals play in ecological diversity and stability (Best, 2014, p. 5). According to this theory, each species contributes to the process of sustaining biodiversity and some of the most important ecological disasters like water pollution, the destruction of the oceans, the decimation of rainforests, desertification and climate change are directly traceable to animal exploitation (Best, 2014, p. 5). The view of the animal in animal standpoint theory is different from the

traditional perception of it; rather than viewing animals as passive objects lacking subjectivity and a culture of their own, animal standpoint theory views them as active agents in the world. Best finds animals also as resisting beings and thus claims resistance is not a reactionary characteristic that only humans have (Best, 2014, p. 6). Still, it is apparent that humans have been forming civilizations since the earliest centuries, especially since the shift from hunting and gathering into the formation of agricultural society first appeared, is in fact the process of subjugating animals and then women on the model of animals.

Encountered as symbols and treated metaphorically in the fables of medieval times for the first time, animals went through certain periods of shifting representations in different periods of literature. "Animals have always been a part of literature, but their presence, perhaps like that of dogs in some human cultures, has been as marginal as it has been constant" (Ortiz-Robles, 2016, p. 1). The supposed hierarchy between animals and humans has also been maintained in literary works, especially in the use of metaphors. "One of the most fundamental orientational metaphors in Western culture gives the concepts of human and animal a spatial orientation: human is up; animal is down" (Danta, 2018, p. 4). This is related above all to the erect posture of human beings, which is stressed, as Danta emphasizes, by Ovid in his *Metamorphoses*: "While other beasts, heads bent, stared at wild earth / The new creation gazed into blue sky" (Ovid, 1958, p. 5). Ovid's descriptions relating to man include implications of his supposed superiority from the beginning; after accounting the creation of the world with its geographical and formational elements, Ovid says "Yet the world was not complete. It lacked a creature that had hints of heaven and hopes to rule the Earth" (Ovid, 1958, p. 5). In Ovid's account, man is a Godly figure as he was created from God's essence. Man's erect posture and implications of his superiority over animals stemming from this very erect posture are also mentioned in the works of John Donne and John Milton, for example. It might thus be argued that metaphors relating to humans, especially males being of a vertical nature as verticality is associated with respectfulness and masculinity. Therefore, metaphors of horizontal nature are considered to be referring to beings of lower status as well as femininity (Danta, 2018, p. 7). In his study on the use of animal metaphors for humans, Andrew Goatly has found that the animal names used to define and/or describe human behaviours are almost wholly negative, which he argues "... reinforces the ideology of human superiority and disdain for animals, making it very difficult for us to conceive of animals and humans as having equal rights to exist, or for animals to be worth our sympathy" (Goatly, 2006, p. 28). That is, language could

also be said to have been formed in such a way as to impose human superiority over animals and point to animals' inferior status in culture.

Although animals play significant roles in ancient works, and, in a sense, pillars of literature, it is not possible to argue that animals are the essential elements of these works. In other words, literature "can be said to be about how humans describe themselves as *not* animals" (Ortiz-Robles, 2016, p. 1). As "animals as we know them are a literary invention" (Ortiz-Robles, 2016, p. 2), literature's role in representing animals and then turning this representation into the fact about the animal image cannot be denied. Thus, it could be argued that literature served to maintain the established difference between humans and animals and did not prefer to speak for animals until recent times, that is, until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when science and literature "created new species of thought about animals, ones that ventured outside the well-trodden paths of scientific reductionism, primitivism, and anthropocentric humanism" (Hovanec, 2018, p. 5). Darwin's theory of evolution is of course very effective in this shift of thought. As for the recent works of literature, there is an increasing awareness of animal rights and interest in questions about their status in the world especially with the growing interest in ecocritical studies. The emergence of animal studies as a relatively new interdisciplinary field is another very important step in this context. In these literary and critical studies, there is a trace of the attempt to erase the supposed distinction between humans and animals and evaluate both species on equal terms. In addition, most contemporary works of literature accordingly view animals as fascinating creatures that ultimately change our view of the world. They invite the reader not only to sympathize with animals but to re-examine human-animal relations. These works also re-evaluate the existence of animals from an ethical point of view and thus contribute to debates relating to the field of ethical philosophy. Re-invention of the animal fable is another characteristic of recent literary works focusing on animals and their place in society. Animals are represented to open debates on issues of human life, politics and society. Written from a realistic or fabulist style of narration, these works ask questions about the legacy of centuries-long human domination on Earth.

Representation of Animal Standpoint in Coetzee's Novels

J. M. Coetzee is well known for his sympathy for and empathy with animals, which he intentionally depicts in his both fictional and non-fictional works. In Coetzee, "there

is a strong theme of rediscovering our humanity through rediscovering our animality” (Heerden, 2010, p. 58). An author with a deep concern about nature and its constituent elements, Coetzee questions the place of human beings on Earth on the basis of his relation to nature and animals while frequently representing humans on an equal level with animals. Thus, a human being loses his distinct place and position being shown as a creature of the Earth and turns into a “suffering animal” (Leist & Singer, 2010, p. 11). Coetzee’s scepticism about and “demonstration of the limits of reason is part of his revision of the Enlightenment notion of the human as a disengaged, autonomous thinker” (Wiegandt, 2019, p. 3). In Coetzee’s fiction, humans are sometimes associated with spiders and bugs and sometimes with dogs. Even inanimate objects such as stones are used as means of identification for characters. Man’s return to nature and even his fusion with the Earth (Head, 1997, p. 111), as in the case of Michael K. in *Life and Times of Michael K.* is sometimes offered as a kind of resistance against a corrupt social and political order. Time spent in nature is incompatible with the formal time of people; nature is an alternative space set against that of the state and order of life. Earth is demonstrated as always enduring, always revitalizing itself as opposed to humans, who are subject to death and disappearance. Humanity is shown as being able to escape history while in and with nature. Nature is the freedom-giver and a kind of identity-shaper. Coetzee’s comments about the history of colonisation also touch upon issues of destruction of nature by the coloniser, which is, according to Coetzee, a problem as serious as the economic, social and cultural subjugation of the colonised, while presenting the colonizer as a reckless hunter of nature. In Coetzee’s fiction, “rapid social change in South Africa entails an intensified struggle for existence for all species. All animals, human and nonhuman, are pushed hard to maintain their equilibrium in this new environment” (Coleman, 2009, p. 599). This study is intended to reveal that Coetzee invites us to realize the animality in our own selves and that he tries to raise a consciousness about the unaided partners in our lives, namely animals. It is intended to show here that brutality against animals or the exploitation of animals must be viewed within the context of the exploitation of many disadvantaged groups including women, black, disabled, and other suppressed groups.

One of the most important works demonstrating Coetzee’s interest in animals and human’s relation to them is *Disgrace*, which is about the life and personal improvement of David Lurie, a professor of English literature at a technical university in South Africa who is notorious for his hedonistic life-style and relations with women and who is forced to resign from his job by the university committee after his affair with a student

is revealed. Dismissed from his job, Lurie then goes to the house of his lesbian daughter Lucy in the countryside of South Africa and tries to settle things, in which he becomes successful after a while until one day their place is attacked by three black South African men who rape Lucy, beat and attempt to kill David by setting him on fire and kill the dogs cared for by Lucy in cages. Due to the conditions of South Africa, the attackers are never found. Interestingly enough, Lucy does not want to report the event to the police and she does not talk about the attack and rape with her father for a long time. The two victims recover from the attack in different ways: while Lucy turns into a resigned acceptance of the event David begins to work together with one of Lucy's friends, Bev Shaw, who keeps an animal shelter and euthanizes animals.

It is especially after David begins to work with Bev Shaw that the novel begins to take issues relating to animal rights and their positions into consideration and open debates about these issues. This is not only an encounter with animals; as Herron suggests, it is a kind of turning point in his life which forces David "to abandon all that had hitherto sustained him as a white, liberal, libidinous academic" (Herron, 2005, p. 471). David can realise that sending animals, especially dogs, to death is simply violent. In time, he will question his own sense of being as a human being and develop empathy for these animals. It can even be argued that he goes through a transformation turning into a dog-man. His affection for animals is the main element that helps him to get rid of his identity as a "self-indulgent man of pleasure" (van Heerden, 2010, p. 55) and have moral development. In this process, he "emerges as one who embraces all living things as worthy of kindness and respect" (van Heerden, 2010, p. 56). Like a character from a Greek tragedy, Lurie "finds himself facing a battle, going through a catharsis, and finally achieving virtue and humanity. Like the viewer of a tragedy, the reader lives through the same catharsis" (Aaltola, 2010, p. 130).

David Lurie frequently makes comparisons with himself and animals; he even makes a comparison in terms of castration operations and while narrating this, Coetzee's attitude is ironical, or rather, cynical: "A simple enough operation, surely: they do it to animals every day, and animals survive well enough, if one ignores a certain residue of sadness" (Coetzee, 2000, p. 9). What is painful or what causes hesitation for humans can easily become normal and ordinary as far as animals are concerned. As animals have no rights about their lives and reproduction, they are easily subjected to such operations. They have no voice and thus no chance of refusing what is imposed upon them. One may even cease to feel sorry for animals; feeling sad about animals and the

unfair treatments they receive is not necessarily needed. When he goes to live with his daughter, Lurie feels that he has no objection towards activities relating to animal rights; he believes the world would be a worse place without animal lovers (Coetzee, 2000, p. 71); however, these first thoughts are at the same time far from being the thoughts of a person who *really* cares about animals; they are just opinions shared by many people on Earth; the problem is that most of these people who share these thoughts refrain from being activists and it could be argued that David's first attitudes are not to be equalled to that of an activist. The text acts as a spokesperson for animal rights while also giving information about the present state of animals in South Africa; it argues that there is almost no funding for activities aimed at protecting and/or caring for animals in the country. One might of course claim that South Africa as represented in the novel cannot even provide human rights not to mention animal rights; nevertheless, society would be a better society only by trying to solve problems in any field of life.

Lucy believes what she does for animals is found not so important by her father; however, she is ready to raise her objection against such an idea by stating that

You think I ought to involve myself in more important things... You don't approve of friends like Bev and Bill Shaw because they are not going to lead me to a higher life... But it is true. They are not going to lead me to a higher life, and the reason is, there is no higher life. This is the only life there is. Which we share with animals. That is the example that people like Bev try to set. That's the example I try to follow. To share some of our human privilege with the beasts. (Coetzee, 2000, p. 74)

David at first compares people who take part in animal rights activities to Christians who seem to care about animals although they begin to torture animals at the first opportunity. In addition, at first, he has speciesist thoughts; he believes we can be kind to animals but should not necessarily lose our perspective. David's perspective is that of a speciesist: "We are of a different order of creation from the animals. Not higher, necessarily, just different" (Coetzee, 2000, p. 74). When he first visits an Animal Welfare clinic to see what he is supposed to do there, he finds the relationship Bev has set with animals interesting although he cannot understand how she has managed to form a community of animals or the way she empathizes with animals. At first he thinks he can do his supposed jobs at the clinic such as feeding, cleaning and mopping up easily, that is, without a slight need for revision of his general thoughts about animals. However,

in time, especially after he witnesses the obligatory killings of the dogs, he realizes that he cannot bear these intentional killings:

He had thought he would get used to it. But that is what happens. The more killings he assists in, the more jittery he gets. One Sunday evening, driving home in Lucy's kombi, he actually has to stop at the roadside to recover himself. Tears flow down his face that he cannot stop; his hands shake. He does not understand what is happening to him. Until now he has been more or less indifferent to animals. (Coetzee, 2000, p. 142)

David in time realizes that animals, and specifically dogs understand what would happen to them, which is an idea that runs counter to the general idea that animals lack comprehension. He simply feels shameful when animals are prepared for death; he finds himself guilty as he does not prevent their killing. After they are killed, he is supposed to bring the dead bodies of the dogs to an incinerator. He at least tries to do this job without committing another act of dishonour; he wants to be as respectful towards animals as he can. He becomes aware that what he used to regard as simply animals are much more than that. He can see that animals can distinguish between a reliable and an unreliable man, that they know who to trust. He finds himself talking to dogs as people around cannot understand him although dogs patiently listen to and understand what he wants to say. Animals turn into creatures that would help David to compensate for what he has done wrong so far; with them, David begins to make a new sense of life and living. He begins to spend most of his time with the dogs in the clinic apart from reading and writing. He even risks being called a mad old man who sits among dogs, makes music with them, and sings to them. He in time learns the name of the feeling that he has towards animals, which is love. He is surprised to see the fact that dogs lead a much more peaceful life compared to humans, which could set up an example for human society filled with examples of unfair competition. He observes that dogs have a more dignified attitude towards life again compared to humans.

Dogs, which are "bred to snarl at the mere smell of a black man" (Coetzee, 2000, p. 110) in South Africa, and which, therefore, have been associated with the power of the colonising white man's power, thus urging black man's anger, turn into a metaphor for a country's tragic past while at the same time raising questions about the very notion of disloyalty. Both white and black members of South African society have betrayed

their country, an action not expected from dogs. Therefore, there is so much to learn from animals in general and dogs in particular. In addition all members of South Africa as well as the rest of the world must try to empathise with animals, not for the animals' sake but primarily for their own sake, which is the lesson David has learnt:

Why he has taken on this job? To lighten the burden on Bev Shaw? For that it would be enough to drop off the bags at the dump and drive away. For the sake of dogs? But the dogs are dead; and what do dogs know of honour and dishonour anyway? For himself, then. For his idea of the world, a world in which men do not use shovels to beat corpses into a more convenient shape for processing. (Coetzee, p. 146)

It might therefore be argued that his life with dogs plays a very significant role in David Lurie's re-understanding of his role in the world as a human being and his total self-enlightenment. David turns from a man of hedonism into an empathising man who will most probably begin to lead a more conscious life.

Elizabeth Costello, one of Coetzee's novels that might easily be termed as a novel of ideas and which includes the two chapters that make up *The Lives of the Animals*, is about the life of an Australian writer who has become very famous only to recognize the fact that her present condition needs to be questioned primarily by her own self. Her relationship with her son is also problematic, which is reflected upon in her dialogues with him in which she finds herself often in the position of the asked who has to defend herself against unending accusations. This woman appears in her different roles in the narration; sometimes she is a mother, sometimes she is a sister, sometimes she is a lover and sometimes she is a writer. She delivers lectures in different universities of the world and leads discussions about various issues. These conferences do not only reflect her ideas about moral, aesthetic, and philosophical matters; they also contain slices from the very life of that woman.

Among the topics discussed by Costello, whom we can consider "a hybrid, a scapegoat, and above all a wounded animal who touches on that wound in every word she speaks" (Mulhall, 2008, p. 54) like Coetzee himself, are animal rights and human-animal relations as well. "During a dialogue with her son John early in the novel, animal imagery begins to be used to exemplify issues regarding animals' position and the situation in the world. One of the earliest examples relating to animals and their present situation asks

questions about zoos in contemporary life. Zoos are depicted as places where animals' rights of privacy are violated. Animals in zoos, in other words, could be regarded as taking part in a show (Coetzee, 2003, p. 31). Elizabeth Costello claims animals have no right of privacy if they are in the show. In one of her conferences, Costello indicates that the lives and deaths of animals are horrible and that animals are subjected to terrible treatments in various places such as trawlers, laboratories, and even in farms, which might be better-called production facilities rather than farms (Coetzee, 2003, p. 61). Costello makes it clear that the way Jewish people were killed by Nazis is strangely described with terms that are associated with animals. Expressions such as "They went like sheep to the slaughter", "They died like animals", and "The Nazi butchers killed them" are used to describe the deaths of these people. The thing that is ironically emphasized by Costello is that death is considered normal as far as animals are concerned although they also die like human beings, which indicates the fact that what deserves attention and respect where people are concerned turns into something that does not somehow require respect and attention and is normalised.

For Costello, contemporary times' attitudes towards animals are no less cruel than that of the Nazis towards Jewish people:

Let me say it openly: we are surrounded by an enterprise of degradation, cruelty and killing which rivals anything that the Third Reich was capable of, indeed dwarfs it, in that ours is an enterprise without end, self-regenerating, bringing rabbits, rats, poultry, livestock ceaselessly into the world for the purpose of killing them. (Coetzee, 2003, p. 63)

Costello thus believes that cruelty towards animals goes hand in hand with cruelty towards human beings. She finds all those ancient philosophers who talk about animals and their rights as people that wasted time by not focusing on the essence of the problem. The history of philosophy and thought has led people to consider animals "thinglike" and humans "godlike" (Coetzee, 2003, p. 65). And the history of the world is above all a history of a confrontation and war between humans and animals, a war which was "definitely won" (Coetzee, 2003, p. 67) by men. Thus, animals in today's world are in silence: "Animals have only their silence left with which to confront us" (Coetzee, 2003, p. 68). It is clear that Costello has an anti-speciesist stance as she considers all human beings animals. She also raises her objections against the commonly-held view that animals lack such faculties as reason and understanding claiming that it is not at

all clear whether we are better at understanding the universe than animals. She also simply cannot understand why the assumed lack of reason must be the reason behind the exploitation of animals. Costello also raises questions about eating animal flesh and states her objections against it. She tries to draw people's attention to the cruelty of bullfighting and other so-called sports in which animals are forced to take part in wild confrontations. Such so-called contests, for Costello, are ways of killing animals, or rather, beasts "by all means, they say, make it a contest, a ritual, and honour your antagonist for his strength and bravery" (Coetzee, 2003, p. 95). According to Costello, people first kill animals on such brutal occasions and then eat their flesh and do so in order to get something of its courage and strength. That is, humans' treatment towards animals includes paradoxes. Nevertheless, the main reason why we treat animals badly is related to speciesism: "We treat them badly because we despise them; we despise them because they don't fight back" (Coetzee, 2003, p. 101).

Costello's lectures about animals open up debates on the way animals are represented in literature and dealt with in philosophical works as well. She is aware of the fact that raised consciousness about animal rights is a recent phenomenon. She believes a centuries-long attitude towards animals is a kind of racism and thus shares the ideas of recent theorists on the issue. Also *Elizabeth Costello* includes a postscript titled "Letter of Elizabeth, Lady Chandos, to Francis Bacon". The passage is introduced with an epigraph from Hugo von Hofmannsthal's "Letter of Lord Chandos to Lord Bacon", a well-known elliptical text, which is in harmony with Coetzee's own ideas on the animal world or, to put it in a better way, the whole ecological system with its animate and inanimate constituents:

At such moments even a negligible creature, a dog, a rat, a beetle, a stunted apple tree, a cart track winding over a hill, a mossy stone, counts more for me than a night of bliss with the most beautiful, most devoted mistress. These dumb and in some cases inanimate creatures press toward me with such fullness, such presence of love, that there is nothing in range of my rapturous eye that does not have life. It is as if everything, everything that exists, everything I can recall, everything my confused thinking touches on, means something. (Coetzee, 2003, p. 219)

Diary of a Bad Year, which is another novel of ideas with interesting narrative levels, is another work by Coetzee in which animal rights are brought up for discussion. Animals

and humans are once again treated as similar, sharing similar problems and fates. One of the most interesting points emphasized by the writer Coetzee in his book titled *Strong Opinions*, the chapters of which go along with the main plot of the novel thus forming metafiction, is related to animals' lack of identity cards. The writer harshly criticizes the state and makes a comparison between animals and people who do not want to accept what is imposed by the state. The argument is that those who are against the state are treated like animals, which are also outcasts of society. While emphasizing this point, Coetzee does not only criticise the fact that animals are otherized, he also finds those who are against the idea of the state as an imposing structure as distinguished people and thus finds animals also distinguished. The book also raises the author's objections to eating animal flesh. Coetzee in *Strong Opinions* claims we are in a sense forced to feel accustomed to the kitchen programmes on TV in which animal flesh is presented as a means of reaching delicious meals. The author believes what is presented on screens is presented to us as normal; however, we should look at kitchens differently and see it:

...with what Viktor Shklovsky would call an estranged eye, as a place where, after the murders, the bodies of the dead are brought to be done up (disguised) before they are devoured. (Coetzee, 2007, p. 63)

"On the Slaughter of Animals", the title of the chapter in *Strong Opinions*, from which the above quotation is taken, is about the atrocities against animals under the pretext of the cattle trade. Coetzee argues that it is simply nonsensical to expect animals to go to death calmly and that it is natural for an animal to react against attempts to kill it. Some other parts of this novel of ideas are about the use of animals in laboratories, which is another issue protested by Coetzee, while a chapter titled "On Boredom" attempts to challenge the supposed hierarchy established since ancient times between humans and animals. Coetzee deliberately prefers to call human beings "human animals" (Coetzee, 2007, p. 208), which is simply a sign of this attempt.

Conclusion

It is possible to find similarities between Coetzee's characters in fiction and animals; the deepest motivations in Coetzee's characters "are animal and beyond the ability of language to articulate. Like the animals of the novel, its human characters fear death and brutalization, seek out sex and comforting contact with others" (Oerlemans, 2007,

pp. 186-187). To conclude, Coetzee believes that we can save our humanity by dealing with animal rights and problems and making them the main focus of attention. Himself being a vegetarian and a member of different animal rights organizations such as Voiceless and the Australian Association for Humane Research, Coetzee also took part in various campaigns against animal abuse and for animal rights. He turns his fiction into a platform where animal rights are opened to discussion and sometimes uses his fictional characters like Elizabeth Costello as the spokesperson for his own ideas on these issues. That is, he also takes on an activist role with his fiction as well. In other words, he offers his poetics “as a form of persuasion” (Aaltola, 2010, p. 141). He deliberately uses his fiction as a floor of discussion since he thinks fictional works will be much more effective in raising consciousness about animal rights compared to theoretical works, which are admittedly, less read and sometimes found to be boring, which causes them to lose their intended effect. However, it could also be argued that Coetzee’s fictional works are in a sense fictional theories or fictional philosophies about the issues with which they deal. In short, Coetzee also contributes to the building of animal rights philosophy with his fictional works.

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