SLAVERY AND LIBERATION
IMPLICATIONS OF HUMAN HISTORY FOR THE EMANCIPATION OF ANIMALS

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Author’s note

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This paper does not purport to be a scholarly work. Rather it has an entirely practical purpose: to analyse the past, and so to glean insights into how the animal protection/liberation/welfare/rights/movement may be able to emancipate animals from all forms of human ownership and cruelty.

Although I make no claims of being objective about this subject matter, for this paper to be remotely useful, this analysis itself must be completely objective, and my application of logic to the facts must be rigorous.

The citations in this paper are exclusively for matters of historical fact that can be readily verified by anyone who is interested. I do not refer to any philosophical or academic discussions of animal or human rights or slavery issues, as they do not interest me and are not relevant. All the discussion, argument, interpretation and conclusions are entirely my own.

Abstract

This essay aims to shed light on the mechanisms and processes that might facilitate the abolition of animal slavery. To this end, it examines the recent history of formal and informal human slavery and its abolition, and compares the events and actions which led to their abolition with the events of our times and actions of the animal protection movement.

In addition to processes of incremental attitudinal change complemented by incremental legislative reform, and the types of actions that have supported these processes, it considers the role, for good or ill, of social and environmental emergencies and upheavals, including the Black Death, wars, political revolutions, technological revolutions and the immediate, unprecedented environmental crisis.

It concludes that, with the tools available to the modern animal protection movement, it might be expected that the abolition of animal oppression would follow very naturally in the wake of the ongoing abolition of human oppression - if it were not for the extreme and immediate threat of ecological annihilation.

It notes that the anthropogenic environmental crisis is the greatest threat animals on this planet have ever faced, but that the same crisis could also have the effect of fast-tracking the abolition of animal slavery.

1. Introduction

Animals, by definition, are sentient beings. All animals have a degree of awareness (via a nervous system) and volition. Perhaps protozoa and eukaryotes (which are included as animals in some classification schemes) have these qualities at such an early stage of evolution that they barely qualify; but all other animals have them in abundance. Indeed, human beings only have awareness and volition because we are animals.

Yet human law still treats all other animals as chattels (even wild animals are classified as property of the state), just as humans, since Neolithic times, have frequently treated a substantial proportion of their own species as chattels.

If we want to figure out how to change the status of animals, it would seem useful to: identify the key tools and processes whereby various manifestations of human slavery have been eliminated; compare the tools applied to facilitate those processes with the tools available to and in use by the animal rights movement; and assess the likely outcomes of these processes for the emancipation of animals.
2. Definition of slavery

If the meanings of words were fixed in stone, the term ‘slave’ could never be used to refer to the relationship between humans and other animals. All English dictionaries define a ‘slave’ as a ‘person’, and a ‘person’ as a ‘human’. Yet, for more than half a century, animal rights advocates have been referring to human ownership of animals as ‘slavery’, and many refer to animals as ‘persons’. The word ‘slavery’ has changed its meaning, and ‘person’ is changing. The dictionary definitions are out of date.

For the purposes of this paper, a slave is a sentient being (other than very young dependent offspring) whose life, quality of life and actions are totally or substantially controlled by another sentient being. The nature of the control could be lawful in several different ways: the law permits formal ownership; or a law or some combination of laws permits the control without actually using words like ‘slave’ or ‘owner’; or the law simply fails to adequately protect a being from the economic or physical power of another.

The nature of the control could also be unlawful, for example a person holding another person prisoner, unbeknownst to the authorities, but I do not deal with any instances of unlawful slavery in this paper.

Where the law authorises formal ownership, I refer to it in this paper as ‘formal slavery’ or ‘chattel slavery’. For example, all animals are formal slaves because all animals are property. Many human slaves throughout history have endured chattel slave status not much different from that of animals.

The other lawful forms of slavery I refer to as ‘informal slavery’. These include the status of women in most parts of the world since Neolithic times (until the 20th Century in western democracies), the status of Medieval serfs in Europe, and the status of their urban labourer descendants and the children of the poor, during the Industrial Revolution.

With formal slavery, there are likely to be few if any legal rights attributed to the slave. In informal forms of slavery (women’s slavery, industrial slavery and child slavery), the slave might have a few genuine rights under the law (eg a right not to be murdered), but the power of the master over the slave is still enormous. Serfdom is almost exactly halfway between formal and informal slavery.

I have not separated the informal slavery imposed on native peoples in European colonies from the informal enslavement of the poor more broadly. Indeed, these instances of informal slavery of native peoples are simply more recent examples of the same processes which began creating the world’s poor and oppressed about 11,000 years ago.

I also exclude as slaves people who are the victims of prejudice or institutional discrimination arising from fear of difference or intergenerational hatred, unless it is a remnant from an earlier period of enslavement. For example, discrimination against gay people would not be relevant to this paper, even though gays might sometimes suffer the same sort of discrimination still endured by women or African Americans. The discrimination against women and Afro-Americans can be traced to their former slavery, whereas the discrimination against gays has more to do with fear of difference and irrational notions of morality.
3. Origins of slavery

Both human and animal chattel slavery appear to have begun around 11,000 years ago (Britannica, accessed 2012, Barker G, 2009), during the Neolithic revolution, when agriculture was invented, herding replaced hunting, and cropping replaced gathering. The reduced status of woman also seems to date from this period (World History Centre, accessed 2012).

This next paragraph is pure speculation, but we have no evidence to the contrary. It seems to me very likely that the first domesticated animals were adopted as orphaned babies by human women who had lost their own young, or – just as modern women do – simply could not resist them. When these animals grew up, they thought of themselves as members of the family and did whatever the humans asked them to do, out of love for the family and obedience to the dominant members of the ‘herd’. In return they received not only love but also protection from predators, winter feed and human hands to soothe their injuries. They were physically powerful enough to wreak havoc, or could simply leave the herd if they wanted to. But why would they? They stayed because pulling a plough or letting a human child suckle their excess milk, or letting the humans cut off their hot, horrid wool in summer was just what you did if you were an ox or a goat or a sheep in a human family.

But as human technology advanced, human power to control these animals increased and animals were demoted to the status of property. They have retained that status ever since.

The status of woman was also reduced at this time because the new technologies especially weapons used to dominate powerful animals and other tribes, became the preserve of the males, making them more physically and economically powerful.

Because human slavery continues illegally in many countries even today, we can speculate on how it is likely to have begun. Excess children, especially girls, were given away as mates, abandoned, stolen, or simply traded to wealthier families in exchange for goods.

Debt slavery started around the same time (Harris 1999) and for much the same reasons. The new technologies brought about new divisions of labour, creating uneven distributions of wealth. Uneven distribution of wealth led to the beginning of personal debt, and ultimately to people selling themselves and their children to pay debts, or in exchange for goods.

When the new weaponry (and especially when it was combined with control of horses) was in the hands some human communities and not others, more powerful communities were able to wage war against weaker neighbours to gain their land or their goods; often the survivors were taken as slaves. Indeed, sometimes the war was waged for no other purpose than to take slaves.

Often, the conquered that were not killed or carried off as slaves, were kept in situ to farm the land for their new overlords (Harris 1999). The social stratification of the ancient world and the Middle Ages grew out of these conquests (Lenski, 1984), and eventually evolved into the industrial slavery of 19th Century Europe.
4. The modern decline and revival of human slavery

After the Renaissance in the 15th Century, human chattel slavery had been abolished in most of Europe; serfdom had declined and its formal abolition was underway; humanitarian and libertarian thought had begun to flourish; women had begun demanding higher status; people started to dream of abolishing human slavery in all its forms (Nisbet, 1979). By the mid-17th Century, even the first laws for the protection of animals had been passed in England.

These movements of thought, combined with the abject poverty and oppression still present in the real world, pervaded both the English Revolution of the mid 1600s, and the French Revolution of 1789.

In the English Revolution, the ideals failed of anything resembling realisation but they began a long series of incremental reforms over the next four hundred years. In France, during their Revolution, many of the same ideals were implemented immediately - but then betrayed, first by the Reign of Terror, and then by the despotism of Napoleon.

Meanwhile, economic drivers in the New World had revived the chattel enslavement of other races while, in the 19th Century, the informal slavery of the poor, especially children, was re-established in Britain to an extent that had not been seen in Europe for four hundred years. The informal slavery of ordinary women continued much as it had since the Neolithic Revolution.

5. Human slavery today

Human chattel slavery, as a lawful institution, has now been abolished in every country in the world. The last country to abolish it was Mauritania in 1981 (BBC News, 2007).

But illegal and lawful informal slavery, mainly of women and children, continues in many parts of the world. Some estimate there to be more human slaves alive today than ever before in history (Skinner, 2010).

However, this assertion is comparing apples and oranges: informal slaves today with formal slaves two hundred years ago, forgetting that there were probably a good many more informal slaves back then than there were formal slaves.

6. Abolition processes selected for this paper

To examine the abolition of every instance of human slavery throughout history and everywhere in the world, would take a thousand books, not just one longish essay. I will focus on the first modern countries to make human slavery unlawful, in all its formal and most if its informal guises.

Although I will look at each of these slaveries and abolition processes separately, it should be noted that there are vast areas of overlap between them. Many of the incremental industrial reforms in 19th Century Britain improved the status of child slaves and women as well as adult male labourers, while the democratic movements that eradicated serfdom were the same movements that led ultimately to universal suffrage, including women’s suffrage.
I will consider:

- the abolition of serfdom (land slavery) in western and eastern Europe since the 14th Century;
- the abolition of the European chattel slave trade in the 17th and 18th Centuries;
- the abolition of chattel slavery in America in the 17th and 18th Centuries;
- the emancipation of the impoverished British workforce of the Industrial Revolution;
- the eradication of 19th Century child slavery in Britain; and
- the emancipation of women from informal slavery in Europe and its colonies.

7. Serfdom/land slavery in Mediaeval Europe

Land slavery began thousands of years ago when, instead of slaughtering a conquered people, victorious invaders kept them in situ to work the land for them. Over centuries, this relationship between conqueror and conquered evolved into a relationship between peasants and their overlords (Harris, 1999).

In western Europe, the peasantry was predominantly serfs who were prohibited by law from leaving the land they worked in return for a tiny fraction of what the land produced. Serfdom was a well-established part of the feudal system in most parts of western Europe by the 10th century (Wikipedia, Serfdom, accessed 2012).

By contrast, in eastern Europe, serfdom was rare because eastward migration from western Europe had always provided eastern landholders with an ample rural workforce. As the population of western Europe expanded, westerners could not move further west because the Atlantic Ocean was in the way, so they moved east (Wikipedia, Serfdom, accessed 2012).

There were several peasant revolts in Europe throughout the Middle Ages but they were always savagely suppressed.

7.1 End of serfdom in western Europe

Serfdom gradually disappeared from western Europe after the Black Death wiped out nearly half the human population between 1348 and 1351, thus increasing the bargaining power of the surviving peasants. These survivors could pick and choose who they worked for, how much work they did, and make other demands on their feudal masters.

After the Renaissance and the Reformation, as ideas of liberty began to take root and chattel slavery disappeared, serfdom began to die out more rapidly. Renaissance England was the first country to abolish serfdom when Elizabeth 1 freed the serfs in 1594.

In France, the Revolution liberated the serfs from their land slavery. The Napoleonic Wars and the spreading of the ideals of the Revolution into conquered countries eliminated most of the last remnants of serfdom in western and eastern Europe.

Throughout western Europe (except some of the Scandinavian countries where it had never existed), serfdom had been formally abolished by 1850.
7.2 End of serfdom in eastern Europe

By contrast to western Europe, serfdom became established in eastern Europe only when migration from western Europe ceased after the Black Death. This created a powerful incentive for the landowners of eastern Europe to introduce serfdom, binding the surviving peasants to their land. Serfdom in eastern Europe was not abolished until the late 19th Century (Wikipedia, Serfdom, accessed 2012).

In Russia serfdom was abolished in 1861, but a reprise of serfdom was introduced in the USSR by the Russian Revolution. This modern serfdom was only abolished in 1976.

7.3 Key instruments and processes of change

Serfdom began both its gradual disappearance from western Europe and its gradual establishment in eastern Europe as a direct result of the Black Death. Its abolition in western and eastern Europe was expedited first by the Renaissance, and finally by Napoleon’s conquest of Europe.

The final death of serfdom in western Europe came slowly but it is significant note that it had already virtually disappeared well before its abolition was formalised by legislation.

7.4 Ongoing oppression in eastern Europe

Although serfdom in Russia was abolished before the Russian Revolution, a form of it was re-introduced after the Revolution.

Peasants were again tied to their farms and required to provide all their produce to the state. As many as seven million peasants starved to death between 1923 and 1933 as a result of this policy.

7.5 Ongoing oppression in France

Peasants suffered as much as anyone else during the Revolution’s Reign of Terror. Peasants were executed as ‘traitors to the Revolution’ for complaining about the length of bread queues in the shops, and the fact that there was no bread left when they reached the head of the queue.

Napoleon spread many of the principles of equality through Europe but at the price of the democratic ideals that had been a primary objective of the Revolution.

7.6 Ongoing oppression in Britain

Even in Britain, where serfdom disappeared first, peasants were still exploited by their landlords, and dependent on them for access to enough land and surface water to support themselves.

In the 17th Century, during the English Revolution, many peasants fought on the side of the Roundheads, hoping their lot would improve in a republic. But they did not yet have enough
political clout to challenge the owners of wealth. Nothing really changed for the British peasantry at that time.

If it was the social upheaval of the Black Death that created the environment which led to the liberation of the serfs in Britain, it was another social upheaval, the Industrial Revolution, that cast their descendants back into abject (though informal) slavery.

8. The Atlantic Slave Trade

Between the 10th and 17th Centuries, most European countries had progressively banned human chattel slavery on their own soil (Julius, 1982). Women were still informal slaves, there were still indentured workers who were virtually slaves except that they could eventually work off their indentures and, in parts of eastern Europe, land slavery continued until the 19th century; but chattel slavery was not permitted.

But then, in the 17th and 18th Centuries, the American colonists in the New World demanded a work-force to work the new land for them. They began with indentured immigrants from Europe. But then the colonists found a cheaper source of labour, ready-made slaves on sale from African slave dealers.

Almost immediately, every European imperial sea power cashed in on the American demand for labour, buying slaves from African slave traders and transporting them for sale in the New World (Mannix & Cowley, 1962).

8.1 End of the Atlantic slave trade in France

In 1794, in keeping with the libertarian ideals of the French Revolution five years earlier, France became the first of the colonial powers to abolish the slave trade, along with slavery in its overseas possessions.

Napoleon restored slavery in French possessions in 1802 but ongoing slave rebellions became too much trouble and, busy with his conquest of Europe, he sold France’s remaining New World colonies to the USA in 1803 (Connelly, 2006). Slavery continued in the French colonies until the USA itself abolished slavery.

8.2 End of the Atlantic slave trade in Britain, Spain, Portugal and the Netherlands

In Britain, between 1788 and 1799, thirteen Acts of Parliament were passed (initiated by Wilberforce, Dolben and others) regulating the slave trade, mainly matters such as number of slaves transported in proportion to the tonnage of the vessel, space allowances, and financial incentives for slaver captains to minimise the number of slave dying in transit (Chronological Table of the Statutes, 1959 edition). These regulatory changes put financial pressure on the slave traders. The worst were forced out of business. The Parliament who passed these reforms hoped, no doubt, that they would satisfy the public outcry against the worst excesses of the slave trade, but in fact they seem to have just paved the way for eventual abolition.

The public debate accompanying each regulatory change raised awareness of the issue, resulting in a slow shift in the dominant paradigm. The failure of the minor reforms to address the fundamental cruelty of the slave trade fuelled the paradigm shift, but Parliament
remained intransigent on the issue of abolition. This was not altogether surprising since many Parliamentarians had vested interest in the slave trade.

Despite the gradual change in public opinion, economic imperatives would quite likely have prevented abolition in Britain for several more decades had abolition not won the support of the British Navy.

In the end, it was the war against Napoleon that finished the slave trade in Europe. The British Navy needed experienced sailors for the war, and far too many sailors were dying on the slave ships. Sailors, who were themselves informal slaves and treated even worse than the chattel slaves (who at least had economic value), did not have to be paid for their round trip until and unless they completed the journey. So slaver captains, being all-powerful aboard their ships, made sure many of them never made it home, usually by starving them to death. There are stories of the African slaves chained below decks handing their dreary rations up through the grates to the starving English sailors (Mannix & Cowley, 1962).

The death-blow to the British slave trade came in 1807 when the British Navy got behind the cause of abolition. In fact, the bill that abolished the slave trade, though brought by Wilberforce, was actually a bill to ban British subjects from aiding or participating in the slave trade to the colonies of Britain’s arch enemy (at the time), France. British ships, flying the American flag to avoid being fired on by the French Navy, were at this time not only killing off large quantities of British manpower needed for the war, they were also routinely delivering slaves (manpower) to the French colonies.

Presumably, even though the last of these colonies, Louisiana, had by this time been sold to America, the British regarded the ties between parent nation and colonies as too close to trust. Wilberforce’s bill was a gift to the British Navy while, incidentally, abolishing Britain’s involvement in the Atlantic slave trade.

Within two more decades, Britain had paid out Portugal, Spain and the Netherlands to abolish their own slave trades, mainly so these nations would not simply increase the manpower they were delivering to the French colonies, filling the vacuum left by Britain.

After that, the European slave trade was dead.

8.3 Key instruments and processes of change

The key instruments that ended the Atlantic slave trade were: a revolution in France; a long and inherently inadequate series of incremental legislative reforms in Britain; the financial pressure those reforms put on the worst slavers; the changes in public opinion which both drove and resulted from these reforms; the political imperatives of an unrelated crisis – the need to win a war – and the buying out of the slaving industries in three other countries.

9. Chattel slavery in America

Slavery in the USA began with the importation of indentured servants who were slaves in all but name, most of them European (Barker D, accessed 2012). Later, African slaves were purchased from African slavers, primarily for use in agriculture because they were considered
physically better suited to the work than Europeans or Native Americans (Mannix & Cowley, 1962).

As indentured servants, they could eventually work off their indentures; but common law decisions gradually changed their status so that indentured servants who were black Africans and their descendants became established as slaves for life (Wood, 1970). By the time the USA, after its revolution against Britain, wrote its own constitution (“All men are created equal...”) in 1790, eighteen per cent of American residents were slaves (Historical Census Browser, accessed 2012).

9.1 End of chattel slavery in the USA: the North

The northern states of the USA abolished African slavery, one state at a time (starting with Pennsylvania), usually through a gradual phase-out process: no more slaves to be imported into the state; children of slaves to be freed after a reaching a certain age, or born free; registration of slaves with the government.

The phase-out was often accompanied by welfare reforms to ease the suffering of the current generation of slaves who would not benefit from the phase-out, for example, prohibitions on separating families (Wikipedia, Gradual Abolition of Slavery, accessed 2012).

9.2 End of chattel slavery in America: the South

Slavery persisted until 1865 in the agrarian South where cotton was economically critical and African slaves were the established workforce for harvesting it.

Several violent slave rebellions occurred, while many other slaves simply escaped. Canada and the northern states, where slavery had been abolished, were a safe haven for runaway slaves. Many abolitionists risked their lives providing a series of safe houses to enable escaped slaves to reach these slave-free places, inspiring many other potential abolitionists who feared or deplored more violent measures. The term coined during this period, ‘the Underground Railroad’ (Dictionary.com, accessed 2012), is still used by animal rescuers today.

It took a civil war to get rid of chattel slavery in the South.

9.3 Key instruments and processes of change

The key instruments that ended chattel slavery in America were: a long series of incremental legislative reforms in the North; the changes in public opinion which both drove and resulted from these reforms; the political imperatives of a not totally unrelated crisis – the need to bring the South in line with the Union; and the war that was fought to that end.

The impact of slave rebellions, sometimes assisted by white abolitionists such as John Brown, was ambiguous at best. John Brown became a hero of the abolition movement, all the greater because he was a white man who gave his life trying to free the black slaves (Blue, accessed 2012). Undoubtedly, he inspired many to risk their own lives for the abolitionist cause.
On the other hand, many people who were pro-abolition were frightened and appalled by the violence and withdrew some of their active support for the movement. While some southern states might have made efforts to improve the welfare of their slaves in the hope of preventing such violence in their own backyards, other states responded by treating their slaves even more viciously than before (Lewis, accessed 2012). It is a matter of debate whether these violent rebellions did any good in the long run.

The influence of the ‘Underground Railroad’, however, seems to have been both more subtle and more lasting. By saving individuals, it gave enormous personal satisfaction to people of conscience. Escaped slaves gave individual faces to the movement, telling their own stories. The escaped slaves were able to add their voices to the pressure on the American Government to bring the South into line.

9.4 Ongoing oppression

Removing the legal right of one person to own another as a chattel was only one (albeit very significant) regulatory step in the emancipation of black African Americans. After the Civil War, the liberated slaves were far from free. Laws enforcing racial segregation, white supremacy and legal disenfranchisement persisted into the mid-1960s.

The rights and welfare of many African Americans remains a matter of serious concern even today because of the legacy of their long history of oppression and imposed poverty (Wikipedia, Jim Crow Laws, accessed 2012).

10. Industrial slavery in 19th Century Britain

The Industrial Revolution began in Britain because there was wealth enough (from its colonies) to invest in the infrastructure of industrial reform (Kiely, 2011). An unrelated legislative change, the Enclosure Acts (the significant ones were passed between 1750 and 1860), provided the workforce the new industrialists required.

The Enclosure Acts allowed major land owners to cut off the traditional access of rural people to use their land (for cropping, grazing, fishing etc). Throughout the second half of 18th Century and into the 19th, this loss of access forced the peasant farmers and farm labourers of England to move to the cities to sell their labour in the factories (Thompson, 1991).

It was an employers’ market, and long hours of work seven days a week, appalling working conditions, and pay that was often not enough for a man to feed himself, let alone his family, were the inevitable results (Daniels, accessed 2012). Many workers slept beside their machines because there was not enough time to go home (if they even had lodgings to go to) and come back before beginning work again. These workers were as much slaves as their ancestors had been when they were serfs.

The only effective way the workers could fight back was through collective bargaining and the collective withdrawal of their labour (strike action). But the Combination Laws of 1799 and 1800 prohibited trade unions and collective bargaining by British workers. This drove the unions underground, and many people were imprisoned or transported to the colonies for
secretly belonging to a union, or for trying to take any form of industrial action (*Myfund*, accessed 2012).

10.1 End of industrial slavery in Britain

Initially, some workers tried to fight their oppressors with sabotage. They were in an excellent position to destroy the property of the factory owners. The Luddites, named after Ned Ludd, who allegedly smashed two stocking frames in 1779, took highly organised and effective action to destroy the new industrial machinery, and were not afraid to engage in open battle with the British army. Ultimately sixty people were arrested (including many people who had had nothing to do with the uprising), tried in justice-free ‘show trials’ to deter others, and many were hanged or transported. The Luddite movement was successfully suppressed with no apparent gains won for the workers of Britain.

While violence and sabotage in Britain itself had little impact on the conditions endured by the industrial workforce, the violence taking place in Europe in the wake of the French Revolution and Napoleon’s success in spreading the idea of revolution throughout Europe, was the single overwhelming reason for the repeal of the Combination Acts. Awful as it would be, thought the rich employers, to have to negotiate with the collective power of their work-force, it was better than the guillotine! So they allowed Parliament to repeal the Combination Acts.

Although trade unions were not formally made legal until 1871, the repeal of the Combination Acts in 1824-25 enabled industrial workers to engage in collective bargaining (*Webb S&B*, 1894). Obscure laws might still be invoked against people engaging in collective industrial action, for example the law prohibiting people from swearing oaths to each other which was used to convict the ‘Tolpuddle Martyrs’ but, from this time on, the trade union movement grew in strength.

Over the next century, industrial workers were able to win acceptable pay and working conditions: the two-day weekend, minimum wages, paid holidays, the eight-hour day. Further into the 20th Century, the wins continued with sick leave, annual leave, long service leave, maternity leave, workers’ compensation, and equal pay for women (*Victorian Trades Hall Council*, accessed 2012).

Britain was the only country whose workers were cast into the abject industrial slavery that resulted from the Industrial Revolution. But workers in all countries have benefitted from the invention of trade unions.

10.2 Key instruments and processes of change

Until the Combination Acts were repealed, any kind of combined action by workers was unlawful and severely punished, so repeal of the Combination Acts was an essential prerequisite for liberating the British workforce from industrial slavery.

The Combination Acts seem to have been repealed for three main reasons: the courage (or desperation) of the workers who continued taking industrial action despite the consequences; intensive lobbying of Parliamentarians by energetic individuals in an increasingly democratic
political system; and real fear of what was happening across the Channel, in and after the Revolution in France.

Once the Combination Acts were repealed, the liberation of the workers of 19th Century Britain from industrial slavery was able to proceed simply by the power of unions to impose collective direct action - the withdrawal of their labour. These actions ultimately forced not only individual employers to accede to their demands, they also enabled the improvements in pay and working conditions to be incrementally enshrined in law.

The liberation of workers from industrial slavery was another incremental process, one law reform at a time. Fear of violence allowed the first watershed legal change which allowed collective direct action, in the form of the industrial boycott, to proceed. Industrial action then won the other reforms needed to liberate the work force.

10.3 Ongoing oppression

For over a century, the legislative reforms that were won by the trade union movement, supported by the threat of industrial action, have been the only thing preventing the world’s workers from being cast back into informal slavery. The sweatshops in Third World countries where trade unions are still illegal or where the workforce is difficult to unionise, clearly show that industrial slavery has by no means ended.

The erosion of the lawful rights of unions in industrialised democracies over the last three decades shows just how easy it would be, even for workers who take their right to fair pay and conditions for granted, to slip back into abject slavery.

11. Child slavery

The worst manifestation of industrial slavery during the Industrial Revolution in Britain was child slavery. Child labour was the norm throughout Europe and all its colonies, as well as in most of the rest of the world. Children used as labourers had very little legal protection.

Elsewhere in the world, the employers were often the child’s own family, or people known to the family. If a child was abused by its employer, the child’s family or friends could, in many cases, step in and ameliorate the situation or rescue the child. It was still slavery, and there was still a great deal of cruelty; but it was in Britain that the exploitation of children reached its nadir. This was because it was in Britain that the adult workforce itself was so abjectly enslaved that it was unable to protect its children.

Children of the poor as young as three years old were sold or hired out as chimney sweeps or to work in the mines or the textile factories. Orphans and unwanted children went to the workhouses. Britain’s child slaves lived in appalling conditions, were subject to horrific punishments, and were often literally worked to death (Cody, accessed 2012).

11.1 End of child slavery in Britain

Legislated welfare reform was the path by which child slavery was eradicated in Britain. It was never formally abolished because it never had any formal existence to start with.
Between 1788 and 1897, in response to intensive lobbying, no less than forty separate laws were passed to improve the working hours and conditions of Britain’s child labourers (Education Resources, accessed 2012). As a result of these reforms, child slavery had disappeared well before the first Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act in 1904.

The campaign against child slavery was supported by the direct action of private citizens who rescued and fostered children and set up refuges, orphanages and schools for poor or homeless children (Wikipedia, Dr Barnado, accessed 2012).

11.2 Key instruments and processes of change

The drivers for the reforms that ended child slavery seem to have been threefold:
- intensive lobbying of Parliamentarians was undertaken by energetic individuals in an increasingly democratic political system;
- industrial reforms more generally were being won by the union movement;
- the campaign against child slavery was supported by the direct action of private citizens who rescued children and set up refuges, orphanages and schools for poor or homeless children.

11.3 Ongoing oppression

In Europe and its colonies, the idea of forcing tiny children to work for their living in any conditions, let alone the horrific conditions of 19th Century industrial Britain, would now be unthinkable.

On the other hand, the majority of the 27 million people some have estimated to be informal slaves elsewhere in the world today are believed to be child slaves, most working in sweatshops, many others in brothels.

12. Women’s slavery

Although not formal/chattel slaves, ever since Neolithic times until the 19th Century, women in Europe and its colonies were slaves in all but name.

This state of affairs was enforced by both statutory and common law. As late as the 20th Century, women in Europe and its colonies did not have the vote or the right to hold public office. They were required by law to obey their husbands. When a woman married, ownership of her property passed to her husband. Women were barred from universities and only permitted to undertake low-paid work. Any money a woman earned belonged to her husband.

Common law precedents had well and truly established that a woman’s husband was legally entitled to beat or rape her. If a woman ran away from an intolerable marriage, the police could capture her and return her to her husband who could imprison her (Wise 2009, Wojtczak, accessed 2012, Markevich, accessed 2012)
12.1 End of women’s slavery

Women’s slavery was abolished in Europe incrementally by a long series of legal reforms. From the 1840s, laws were passed that protected women’s property from their husbands and their husbands’ creditors (Erickson, 1993). The Matrimonial Causes Act in England enabled a woman to sue for divorce on grounds of adultery, desertion or cruelty (Shanley, 1989). The Infant Custody Act (Hansard, accessed 2012) allowed her, in some cases, to retain custody of her children if they were under seven. Over the same period, new common law decisions gradually eroded the presumption that wife beating was lawful in England (Wojtczak, accessed 2012).

By the 1870s, education up to age ten became compulsory in England for all children of all classes, including girls, while secondary education became available to middle and upper class girls (Stephens, 1998); but it was in the USA in 1841 that the first university degree was ever awarded to a woman, Sophie Willock Bryant (O’Connor and Robertson, accessed 2012).

In the 20th Century, the two world wars accelerated the emancipation of women because women had to do much of the work previously done by men, while the men were off fighting. After the Wars, it was so fully understood by men and women alike that women could do work previously assumed to be men’s work that there could be no reversing the paradigm shift, although it was still a while before they were paid the same as men for the same work.

Eventually, one country at a time, women won the right to vote. The first country to give women the vote was New Zealand in 1893, although it had been accepted in the Pitcairn Islands nearly sixty years earlier (NZ Electoral Commission, accessed 2012).

In America the state of Wyoming gave women the vote in 1869 and other states followed; but America as a nation did not achieve full women’s suffrage until 1920 (Wikipedia, Women’s Suffrage, accessed 2012).

South Australia was the first Australian state to give women the vote in 1894, and the Commonwealth in 1902, but it was another 6 years (1908) before all states had allowed women the vote, the last state on board being Victoria (Australian Electoral Commission, accessed 2012).

English women did not win the right vote until 1918 after World War I (Garrett, accessed 2012). Notably this was the same year universal male suffrage was won, but the vote was initially restricted to women over 30 years of age. Women did not win equal suffrage with men until 1928.

Despite the important role of women in the French Revolution, French woman did not win the right to vote until 1944. Switzerland was the last European country to give women the vote in 1971.
12.2 Key instruments and processes of change

The emancipation of women was achieved via a very long series of statutory and common law reforms, spear-headed by a number of very able women and supported by many equally able men.

It seems to have been possible only in the context of:
- intensive lobbying of Parliamentarians by energetic individuals in an increasingly democratic political system; and
- industrial reforms achieved by the union movement which included reforms for women workers.

It is notable that, unlike Australia, New Zealand, the USA and other European countries, the English Suffragette movement seems to have been characterised by the use of direct and sometimes violent action (often in response to much worse violence inflicted on them by police and prison guards), and it is still a matter of debate whether these actions helped or hindered their cause (Clare, accessed 2012). Given that several countries achieved votes for women without this sort of action, and women’s suffrage was achieved in Britain only after the Suffragettes suspended their campaigning for the duration of the War, direct action does not seem to have been particularly helpful in this particular emancipation movement.

The two world wars, themselves, played a significant role in the emancipation of women almost everywhere in the world (Wojtczak, accessed 2012). The men were taken away to fight, so that the women had to do much of their work. Once they had shown they could do it, there was no holding them back.

12.3 Ongoing oppression

Nevertheless, long after WWII, all over the post-war world, many employers continued to refuse employment to married woman and to sack women as soon as they married. It was as short a time ago as 1966 that the Australian Public Service (APS) relaxed its rule against married women as permanent employees, the last democratic country to do so (Australian Bureau of Statistics, accessed 2012).

Equal pay for the same work did not commence, even in the Australian Public Service until 1973 (Wikipedia, Equal Pay for Women, accessed 2012). Other trades and professions were even slower to offer equal pay.

In Australia’s social welfare system, the unequal treatment of men and women continued until 1993, when women with male partners were finally allowed to receive their own income support payments. (The whole payment had previously been paid, unless extraordinary circumstances applied, to the male partner.)

Much more blatant oppression of women continues in many other parts of the world, but it is slowly being eroded away.
13. The roads to human liberation

In short:

- Serfdom was established during the Neolithic technological revolution and the wars enabled by that new technology. Its eradication began with a massive human cataclysm (the Black Death) which caused a dramatic change in prevailing economic conditions, increasing serfdom in eastern Europe, reducing it in western Europe. Over the next 600 years serfdom’s eradication was completed as a result of changes in cultural/moral values, and eventually by legislated abolition. In one country it took a revolution to abolish it and, in another, two centuries later, a revolution re-established it.

- The Atlantic slave trade was established in the economic greed and frenzy of the New World exploitation. It was eradicated by decades of incremental legislative reform both reflecting and fostering changes in cultural/moral values. It was finished off by the imperatives of a war, and because one country was wealthy enough to buy out the interest of the others engaged in it.

- Slavery in the northern states of America was established in the economic greed and frenzy of exploitation, and persisted in the south because of economic imperatives. It was abolished in the north by a long series of incremental reforms which both reflected and fostered changes in cultural values, supported by popular positive direct action in the form of the ‘Underground Railroad’. It was finished off in the south by a civil war.

- The industrial slavery of 19th Century Britain was triggered by the Industrial Revolution, but it was the direct descendant of the social and economic stratification left over from the feudal system, itself the child of the Neolithic technological revolution and the wars it enabled. Industrial slavery was eradicated after extreme fear of violence enabled a single significant legislative reform, and by incremental legislative reform thereafter. These changes both reflected and fostered changes in cultural/moral values, supported by the threat of direct action in the form of strikes and boycotts.

- Child slavery in 19th Century Britain was one aspect of the general industrial slavery in Britain during the Industrial Revolution, but it impacted on a particular class of beings not unlike animals in their extreme vulnerability and helplessness. It was eradicated by incremental legislative reform, which both reflected and fostered changes in cultural/moral values, supported by direct action in the form of child rescue, fostering and education.

- Women’s slavery had its origins in the Neolithic technological revolution. Women were emancipated by incremental legislative reform, which both reflected and fostered changes in cultural/moral values. The two World Wars expedited the process but even they did complete it.

What these (relatively) recent instances of slavery show is that human society can and does change, for better or worse, either suddenly or slowly, for two reasons.

Firstly, there is change that is unintended and essentially beyond the society’s control: some external cataclysm or social upheaval: an environmental disaster, a plague, getting conquered by another tribe or caught up in someone’s else’s war.
Secondly, a society can change because enough of its members want it to change, either suddenly through making war, or revolution, or slowly through a long process of incremental legislative, economic and cultural/moral change.

13.1 Cataclysm and upheaval

The role of social upheavals and cataclysms cannot be overstated.

All forms of slavery, but most significantly the enslavement of women and animals, have their origins in a 100,000 year long social upheaval – a technological revolution which had well and truly begun changing the face of the Earth by about 11,000 years ago.

Most of the world’s formal slaves and serfs throughout most of human history were the descendants of victims of consequential upheavals: wars.

But wars can go in either direction in the ways they change human society. If most wars of history became opportunities for enslaving people, it was a war in Europe, itself unrelated to slavery, which ended the trade in chattel slaves. A civil war in America, which was directly related to slavery although its real motivation was political (the imperative of ensuring that the United States of America was indeed a union) freed the last of the chattel slaves there.

Two world wars changed the world in so many ways, some good, some bad, there is no point in even trying to enumerate them. However, in direct relation to slavery, they gave the emancipation of women a major push. On the other hand, had WWII ended differently, all non-Aryan races of both genders would have become slaves to the Aryan ‘master race’.

Other cataclysms can also go either way as well. A plague – nearly half of Europe dead in three years - began the unravelling of land slavery in western Europe. But the same plague institutionalised serfdom in eastern Europe where it had barely existed before.

Even in western Europe the relative poverty and disempowerment of the peasantry, the legacy of their long serfdom, remained after the end of serfdom and was the root of the industrial slavery of the 19th Century - which arrived with another technological upheaval, the Industrial Revolution.

Clearly, cataclysms and upheavals, whether initiated by humans or by nature, are powerful but unpredictable triggers of change. We cannot rely on them to emancipate either humans or animals.

However, they do, sometimes, offer opportunities for intentional change if individuals are perceptive enough to grasp their potential – for example the opportunity offered by the war between Britain and France to end the Atlantic slave trade.

I will come back the issue of environmental cataclysms later in this paper.

13.2 Revolution

Revolutions can certainly change societies very quickly. Generally, they are driven by a desire to put an end to gross injustices, including formal or informal slavery. However, all
true revolutions to date have involved large-scale bloodshed, including the killing of many innocent people and animals.

Moreover, the political revolutions of the last four centuries have ended up (at least in the short term) simply replacing one dictatorship with another:

- English: Cromwell;
- French: Napoleon;
- Russian: Stalin; and
- Chinese: Mao.

I discount the ousting of Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines as a revolution. All it did was move the Philippines back into some slow, first steps along the incremental road to the emancipation of its poor, its women and its other informal slaves working in sweatshops. The Philippines ousted a dictator, it did not stage a revolution.

By nature, dictatorships necessitate oppressing someone in order to maintain the power of the dictator; and someone at the bottom of the heap ends up having their human (or animal) rights abused and becoming (at best) a slave all over again.

13.3 Self-initiated incremental change

In modern, more or less democratic societies, the process of self-initiated change for the better has usually taken the form of gradually changing social paradigms which both reflect and initiate gradual changes in economic or environmental conditions, and corresponding incremental changes in legislation.

All these changes seem to start with a few compassionate people, generally those who already have some political or economic power, though not necessarily a great deal of either, exposing cruelties, appealing to principles like ‘common human decency’, and urging changes to the most brutal excesses of some elements of the status quo.

Gradually, support is garnered for the first microscopic regulatory change. Having been sanctified by law, the first change then becomes an accepted element of the dominant paradigm. It may also place a financial squeeze on the worst of the offenders who are regulated, and this can begin a slow corresponding change in the prevailing economic conditions.

The first small change in the paradigm then prepares the way for the next slightly less microscopic change in regulation; then, as the change in regulation becomes the accepted lowest denominator, the opportunity arises to work on another small change in the paradigm. So it goes on - until the whole atrocity has been incrementally moderated and financially squeezed right out of existence.

On the other hand, sometimes, it is the complete failure of an incremental legislative reform to address any aspect of the fundamental problem that moves the paradigm shift along. The public, outraged by the failure of a promise, demand more radical change. And so it goes on.

There is abundant evidence that, unlike war, revolution, technological explosion or natural cataclysm, incremental reform can get you to emancipation eventually just by making things
slowly but steadily ‘better’. Ultimately, enough changes take place to indicate a complete paradigm shift. The child slavery that was endemic in Britain, America, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and most of Europe less than two hundred years ago and especially the extreme cruelty of that slavery in Britain during the Industrial Revolution, would be unthinkable in the same countries today.

13.2 Conditions and actions required for self-initiated change

Since those with the power to change laws are generally those who have a vested interest in keeping the laws intact in order to keep that power, the next question must be: what conditions and actions are needed in order to begin and continue this process of making things better.

The evidence of history seems to be that people in general, given the right information and the opportunity to influence decision making, will move gradually but inexorably towards a more humane and compassionate society.

The two pre-conditions that seem to have been necessary for achieving the incremental legislative change which ended the various recent forms of formal and informal human slavery were: a relatively free, and at least slightly democratic society (in the case of serfdom this was no more than the vastly increased freedom resulting from the labour crash following the Black Death); and individual people with the emotional energy, courage, stamina and economic resources to do whatever it took to make the changes happen.

There are a number of types of action that this history shows us assist the movement towards liberation:

- exposure of cruelty and injustice to the general public and the decision makers;
- the rescue of individuals;
- capturing the public imagination and inspiring people with heroic actions;
- unremitting political lobbying for incremental legislative reform; and
- placing financial pressure on those who, for economic reasons, are most defensive of the status quo.

13.2.1 Exposure

Before a society as a whole, however free and democratic, will even think about abolishing an endemic evil, first of all the evil has to be exposed to the view of enough individuals to start making a politically or economically noticeable noise.

The Atlantic slave trade, slavery in America and child slavery in Britain would quite possibly never have been reformed out of existence had it not been for the first-hand accounts of observers of the conditions endured by these slaves. Even more powerful, were the personal stories of those who had themselves endured the outrageous conditions.

Artists and early photographers, as well as journalists, writers and orators, helped to bring these first-hand and first person accounts into the consciousness of the general public.
13.2.2 Rescue of individuals

Rescue and care of children in England during the 19th Century not only saved thousands of individuals; it also supported, with real faces, positive stories and first-hand accounts, the political lobbying for legislated welfare reform.

Similarly, the ‘Underground Railroad’ in America provided vital support to the movement against chattel slavery there, by getting people who had actually been slaves into a situation where they could tell their stories to the public and lobby the politicians; where they could become real people to the people they met and lobbied.

13.2.3 Heroes

Every liberation movement has its heroes, but the abolition movement in the United States provides examples of two very different kinds of heroes: those who resorted to violence and those who (for the most part) did not.

Certainly, John Brown inspired many in the movement, and for generations after. Violent action by abolitionists in the USA may have increased the suffering of slaves in some states, and might also have silenced many supporters of abolition who were frightened or appalled by it; but it also inspired other abolitionists to redouble their efforts.

On the other hand, the courageous people who transported escaped slaves and operated the ‘Underground Railroad’ are universally recognised as heroes of the Abolition.

Similarly, the court of history is still out on whether the occasionally violent action by the British suffragettes hastened or delayed women’s suffrage in Britain. What is certain is that the women who went to prison for actions as innocent as handing out pamphlets and who endured horrific cruelty during their imprisonment, are now recognised as the heroes of that movement.

For that matter, the World War II images of a whole new generation of women in overalls, with grease on their faces, driving and repairing trucks, hammering and welding, and keeping the country running, gave the world a brand new heroic female archetype.

13.2.4 Political lobbying

When slavery, either formal or informal, is lawful, it can be abolished only by changing the laws that permit it. In the examples considered, each regulatory reform brought more public attention to the issue, and more sympathy for the slaves, enabling eventual eradication of the slavery.

Where the slavery, however absolute in practice, was informal - women’s slavery, 19th Century industrial slavery, child slavery - the reform process itself abolished the slavery, one step at a time. Where the slavery was formal (chattel) slavery, the abolition of formal ownership was just one step in the course of many reforms. Abolition of formal ownership was by no means the end of the process.
With both the informal and the formal slavery, the reforms which ended them were, without exception, brought about by the lobbying of a few persistent people who kept pecking at the system, winning one tiny reform after another, sometimes over the course of their entire lives, until the evil was effectively abolished.

13.2.5 Financial pressure

There are several ways in which slavery in its various forms has been (intentionally) made economically unsustainable.

13.2.5.1 Increasing regulation

In the case of child slavery, industrial slavery, and the Atlantic slave trade, regulatory reform tightened the noose on those who made their money out of the labour of others. The exploiters were forced to spend more money in order to meet the new rules, or to break the law making themselves vulnerable to expensive prosecution.

The worst, then the next worst, then the next, were squeezed out of business. Only those who were already treating their slaves ‘decently’ survived – until the next squeeze of the noose.

13.2.5.2 Financial incentives

Financial incentives were used in two ways by the British government in the struggle to end the Atlantic slave trade. First the government offered slave traders money to minimise the number of slaves dying on their ships. While this made little direct difference to conditions endured by most slaves, the simple admission by the government of just how many slaves were dying on the slave ships helped the fuel the public outrage against the slave trade.

Secondly, Britain ended the slave trade throughout Europe by the simple expedient of buying off the slave industries in Spain, the Netherlands and Portugal.

13.2.5.3 Damaging property

Another option for doing economic damage to the exploiters is to do it directly, by attacking their property.

Historically, it is difficult to separate those who chose to damage the property of their oppressors, with a view to coercing them economically, and those who chose to do violence to people, with a view to coercing them with fear of personal injury.

However, in the recent civil struggles for emancipation I have looked at in this paper, there is little conclusive evidence that damaging either the property, or its owners, did much to help the cause. The peasant revolts of the Middle Ages, the slave revolts in America, the more violent actions of the English Suffragettes and the Luddites of Industrial Britain were all violently suppressed without any significant reforms resulting from their sacrifice. Their heroism itself may have had a positive impact (see Heroes above). But their own brutal actions probably turned others against them, while the brutality with which they were suppressed made others afraid to speak out.
On the other hand, it was fear of the violence in Europe spreading to Britain that led to the repeal of the Combination Acts, and thus to the liberation of British workers from industrial slavery. There can also be little doubt that acts of violence against people and property assisted the people of Europe to throw off enslavement by Nazi Germany during the Second World War.

13.2.5.4 Boycotts

Boycotts, not only of labour but also of rents and taxes, have a long history of use in libertarian causes (Wikipedia, Boycotts, accessed 2012), for example the Boston Tea Party that signalled the beginning of the American Revolution (Wikipedia, Boston Tea Party, accessed 2012).

In the 19th Century, once collective bargaining became legal, non-violent economic coercion in the form of work boycotts - strikes, go-slows and picket lines, and the threat of them – provided a clear road to the abolition of industrial slavery.

Another sort of boycott, the consumer boycott, does not seem to have played a role in the abolition of human slavery or any other social injustice before the 20th Century. There does not appear to have been any concerted effort to buy coal or textiles only from factories and mines that did not use children, or cotton from plantations that did not use African slaves.

14. Animal slavery

Even if the relationship between humans and what eventually became domestic animals started out as a fully equal and symbiotic interdependence, it had degenerated into slavery by late Neolithic times, and remains so today. Even companion animals that are loved and protected as fiercely by their humans as any human family member are still slaves because the law regards them as property. No doubt many owners of human slaves through history have loved and protected adopted family members who were nevertheless slaves by law, with the same fierce devotion.

The slavery of animals has strong resonances with the chattel slavery of the black African Americans, since animals are always chattels. It also has strong resonances with child slavery, the powerlessness and innocence of the victims, the fact that they cannot fight for their own rights. Both children and animals rely on the altruism of adult humans to fight for them.

14.1 The movement for the emancipation of animals

Not surprisingly, the same century that saw the gradual abolition of both formal and informal human slaveries in industrialised countries that were on their way to becoming democratic also saw the beginning of the animal welfare movement (Wikipedia, accessed 2012).

During the 19th Century, the animal welfare/rights movement followed the same basic strategies as the child welfare/rights movement: rescuing and providing homes and refuges for individual abused or abandoned animals, raising public awareness, and lobbying for legislative change.
But the early movement against cruelty to animals could not have predicted the explosion of new animal cruelty associated with 20th Century agriculture, industry, medicine, warfare, consumerism, habitat destruction and wildlife ‘management’.

It is this unprecedented escalation of greed-driven cruelty that triggered, in the 20th Century, the evolution of the animal welfare movement into a movement for the liberation of all animals from slavery.

14.2 Options for change for animals

In terms of upheavals and cataclysms, the current environmental crisis certainly has huge implications for animals. I will come back to this later.

Revolution is obviously not an option for either animals or their human advocates. Like 19th Century Britain’s child labourers, animals do not have the means to rise up and fight for themselves, even with our help. But even if revolution were an option for us and our animal friends, it is not an attractive one. Revolutions have been singularly ineffective in achieving their libertarian and humanitarian goals, at least in the short term, but have still managed to cause incalculable suffering to humans and animals along the way.

The movement for the emancipation of animals will therefore have to rely on incremental attitudinal changes and corresponding incremental legislative and policy changes. Frustrating as this dependence may be in the short term, it is reassuring to recall that child slavery, women’s slavery, and African American slavery in the northern United States of America were all abolished without war, plague or any threat of bloodshed.

14.3 Conditions and actions required for incremental change

In most of the countries that have incrementally abolished formal human slavery outright and eroded informal human slavery to near non-existence, we elect our governments by (more or less) universal (human) suffrage. Within collectively agreed limits, we have freedom of speech, movement and assembly. And we certainly have individuals of courage and energy, some of whom have already given their entire lives to the cause of helping animals.

14.3.1 Exposure

Public exposure of cruelty remains the first requirement of any movement to end that cruelty. For thirty years, animal protection advocates have been very successful in exposing legal cruelty to animals taking place inside sheds and laboratories, and in wild places far from ‘civilisation’ where, but for the work of the activists, no member of the public would ever know about them.

20th and 21st Century technology has added a whole new dimension to the exposure of human and animal slavery and cruelty. Using this technology, animal activists have been able to send photographic and video evidence of animal abuses far and wide. These images of cruelty have been an extremely effective tool in winning public support, sometimes forcing a government to change a law or regulation, sometimes inciting a boycott that forces a facility, or ultimately a whole industry, to reform its worst abuses.
So effective has this exposure been, that some governments have reverted to making new laws that viciously suppress the collection and publication of this evidence of cruelty. Historically, authoritarian governments have always fallen back on this kind of suppression whenever their right, and the right of their cronies to harm, exploit and kill the powerless has been challenged. The obscene ‘ag gag’ laws in various once-free countries and jurisdictions are a classic example of this panic reaction on the part of the rich and powerful.

Animal advocates will have to continue this work of exposure, despite new laws like these, if the movement to end these post-industrial cruelties to animals is to succeed. However, there is some consolation in the fact that so much footage is already available and in the public domain that, in many cases, fresh exposés will not be necessary.

14.3.2 Rescue of individuals

The animal protection movement has its own widespread rescue and foster networks for companion animals, rescue and rehabilitation networks for wild animals, and an ‘underground railroad’ for animals rescued illegally from abusive conditions.

During the movements for human emancipation, a rescued or escaped individual could be a compelling ambassador for their cause. While humans can speak in words, animals can speak to people in many other ways, and often at a level much deeper than words – in the same way that small children could for the movement against child slavery.

In these days of mass communication and the Internet, when the face of the victim can reach so many more people, individual animal rescue has become an extremely effective instrument.

14.3.3 Heroes

The courage of animal activists over the last forty years, sneaking into secret facilities, taking pictures and rescuing animals, has inspired an entire generation of young activists.

Animal activists have also pioneered the ‘human shield’ tactic for animals, and broadcast the footage of their exploits to the world. This type of action as a deliberate tactic, rather than the instinctive shielding of a loved one, first occurred in the early 1970s when Greenpeace activists placed themselves in small inflatable motor boats between whalers and whales, so that the whalers could not fire their harpoons without risk of killing a human in the process (Hunter, 1979).

Since then, numerous variants on this tactic have been used for the protection of many other wild animals (and the environment): people lying in front of bulldozers, chaining themselves to trees targeted for felling, standing in front of hunters’ rifles. This ‘over my dead body’ tactic captures the public imagination because of the sheer courage of the rescuers, willing to risk their own lives to save animals or ecosystems.

14.3.4 Political lobbying

It is an interesting but potentially misleading fact that the first Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act in Britain was passed nearly fifty years before the first Prevention of Cruelty to
Children Act. It is misleading because the first Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act protected only a narrow selection of animals from a narrow selection of cruelties, whereas the first Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act protected all children; and also because, by the time the first Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act was passed, child slavery had already been abolished by over forty incremental reforms to other laws. It was a little like abolishing serfdom after serfdom has already disappeared or, more recently in the Australian Capital Territory, banning battery cages after the only battery egg producer had converted to barn egg production.

There have, however been some interesting loop-backs in the stories of human and animal liberation. For example, Switzerland banned the battery cage between 1981 and 1992 under federal environmental legislation, the first country in the world to do so. But Switzerland only gave votes to women at the federal level in 1971, the last democratic country in the world to do so. (In fact, the first canton to give women the vote did so only in 1959.)

These days, in the industrialised countries, children are protected under labour law, education law, family law and many other areas of legislation. The only protection animals have had (pretty much anywhere) is under legislation dedicated exclusively to protecting animals. A single piece of legislation is inherently far more vulnerable to corruption and sabotage than a multi-faceted network of clauses under other legislation.

Animal activists have been relentless in their pursuit of incremental legislative reform, through both statutory and common law, using the footage of abuses and the faces and stories of abused and rescued animals to support their efforts. Progress has been slow everywhere because of the political and economic power of those who have a vested interest in exploiting animals. The use of codes of practice to make breaches of animal welfare legislation lawful has been a powerful instrument inhibiting reform. The commercial media, the owners of which are the wealthy cronies of the wealthy animal exploiters, has assisted this stonewalling of reforms for animals by suppressing much of the information about animal suffering.

Direct lobbying of politicians, supported by submissions, participation in government and community committees, appeals under legislation, prosecution and defence in court cases, and numerous other mechanisms that are now inalienable rights of humans in a democratic society, have been used on behalf of animals. The reaction of the privileged and powerful, who still dominate our governments, has been, increasingly, to completely ignore all such representations. But at least these governments have not yet denied animal advocates the right to make them; and they have not yet found a way to shut down social media.

The failure of governments to respond to public concerns about the various legal forms of cruelty to animals has even led to the formation of political parties (such as the Animal Justice Party in Australia) which seek to systemically change government decision making processes so that the impacts of any government decision on animals are always and publicly considered.

The cement of eleven millennia of unbroken ownership of animals is proving difficult to fracture. For example, in Australia, a major problem has been that, even when abuses have been prohibited, the worst offenders are either exempted from the legislation, or the prohibitions are not enforced.
However, some hairline cracks are beginning to appear, as the worst abuses – for example battery cages, sow stalls, cosmetic testing on animals etc - are slowly being regulated or prohibited.

14.3.5 Financial pressure

14.3.5.1 Increasing regulation

In Australia, the financial impact of regulation on animal exploiting industries is often undermined by failures of enforcement, and by the use of codes of practice to exempt animal exploiters from animal welfare law. Enforcement is almost always left to the RSPCA (a charitable organisation, lacking any of the resources of a police force). Codes of practice require the agreement of the relevant industry and therefore invariably endorse all the cruelties currently practised by that industry.

The potential of regulation to financially squeeze cruel industries out of business remains. However, to use it effectively, animal advocates must first break these two watersheds: the police must be forced to take responsibility for animal welfare law; and the legal clauses which allow codes of practice to bypass animal welfare law must be removed.

14.3.5.2 Financial incentives

In the late 20th and early 21st Centuries, around the world, financial incentives have been used increasingly in preference to regulation to encourage exploiters of people, animals and the environment to reduce the harm they do.

A recent and highly successful example was the offer made by the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Government to pay $1 million to Parkwood Eggs to convert their hen housing system from battery to barn. Once Parkwood had been converted, the government was finally able, without a backlash from anyone, to enact its 15-year-old policy, and ban the battery cage in the ACT. They were also able to ban sow stalls, simply because there were none in the ACT.

Although it was the buy-out that enabled the abolition of the cage, more than fifteen years of use of all the other tactics and strategies had preceded it: public exposure, rescues, heroes, intensive political lobbying, increased regulation, no less than four bills brought in the Parliament by a sympathetic minority party, and finally an act of sabotage (cutting egg conveyor belts) at the facility itself.

All this, just to get rid of only the very worst excesses of the exploiters against just one species, in just one tiny territory.

14.3.5.3 Damaging property

Generally speaking (there have been a few exceptions), animal activists have not made a strategy of resorting to violence (by which I mean actions that harm, or risk harm to sentient beings). They have recognised the critical difference between violent and non-violent sabotage.
There are, however, a number of ways in which animal activists have used damage to property to further their cause:

- destroying instruments of destruction (e.g., collecting or neutralising poison baits, traps or nets set to kill animals);
- breaking into land, buildings or cages in order to either obtain footage which exposes cruelties, or to directly rescue or shield animals (e.g., breaking a lock or cutting a fence);
- causing financial damage to a commercial animal abuser with a view to irritating them out of business (e.g., disabling a whaling ship, or cutting the egg conveyers at a battery farm);
- smashing up property or scrawling graffiti as a visible protest action (or just to vent grief and frustration).

In the animal movement, these actions can be as divisive as they were in the various human emancipation movements, and for the same reason: the very reasonable fear of a public and/or government backlash against both animals and their advocates. No matter how carefully conducted such actions may be to avoid risk of harm to living things, the exploiters will always characterise them as ‘violence’ and do their best to generate a hysterical overreaction in the Parliaments and the media.

As a tactic for animal activists, the historical impact and effectiveness of damaging property needs to be carefully considered when evaluating, on a case by case basis, the pros and cons of the action.

14.3.5.4 Boycotts

The tactic of the consumer boycott came into its own in the 20th Century, not only as a tool against animal cruelty but also as a tactic against the commercial exploitation of humans and against environmental destruction.

While human rights and the environmental activists have focused on boycotting particular companies (e.g., Nestle) or particular products (e.g., palm oil), the issue of consumption for animal activists is deeply personal rather than merely tactical. Meat, leather, fur and many other products cannot be produced except by killing an animal, while (in modern agriculture) the conditions endured by animals kept to produce eggs and dairy products, and the economic ‘necessity’ of killing non-productive animals (males and older animals), makes the choice not to consume these products a moral imperative, irrespective of whether this choice has any value as a tactic.

However, it is certain that consumer choices based on concern for animals have had enormous value as a tactic. For example, the rejection of battery eggs and the consequential increased demand for non-cage eggs (an order of magnitude increase from 6 per cent twenty years ago to 65 per cent now) has, in hard, real figures, reduced the number of hens in cages. Barns and free range establishments may still be a long way from the emancipation of chickens that animal advocates continue to strive for, and the slaughter of non-productive individuals (males and older layers) may be unchanged, but this consumer choice has still achieved a very real improvement in the lives of millions of very real individual animals.
Animal advocates have two powerful tools for garnering support for animal friendly consumer choices: on the one hand showing the public the cruelty involved in the production of the products they wish people to boycott, and on the other promoting the deliciousness of the vegan alternatives.

15. The future, all other things being equal

If the future were allowed to unfold following the patterns of the past, but without any further world-changing upheavals and emergencies, it seems likely that the Third World would eventually drag itself out of poverty, and the world’s wealth would be shared more fairly among the world’s people. Adult suffrage, education, personal freedom (of speech, movement, association, religious and political persuasion) would become universal. Women would take charge of their own fertility. The laws and institutions that allow informal slavery to continue would be abolished, and all the humans of the world would finally be free.

Similarly, the liberation of animals would progress incrementally as part of this ongoing civilising process, until complete abolition of animal ownership and enforced legislative protection of all animals from human cruelty is achieved. It might take another two or three centuries to get there, but the history of the last two centuries seems to show an ongoing rejection of human slavery, coupled with increasing concern for the rights of non-human animals.

Against this positive movement is the exponential increase in numbers of animals exploited to accommodate an exponential increase in the human population, coupled with an unprecedented escalation in per capita consumer expectations. Against it is the weight of power, money and privilege invested in these things. Against it is the fact that the owners of the commercial media are also owners of so much of the world’s wealth, have so much money invested in the status quo and so much power to prevent information about cruelty from reaching the public. And then there is the sad fact that, even in industrialised countries, the education systems fail to teach the general public how to think; this makes the public readily vulnerable to manipulation by the commercial media.

However, these impediments are no worse than those faced by our ancestors who nevertheless won for us all the comforts and freedoms we enjoy today. Given time, it seems likely the movement towards justice and away from cruelty would continue.

The problem is that the Earth does not have another two or three centuries.

16. The environmental emergency and the forthcoming social upheaval

Most people who are involved in the animal protection and emancipation movement (the primary target group for this essay) are well aware of the current environmental and climate crisis, but maybe not all fully appreciate that it has the potential, at worst, to destroy all life on Earth - and to do it within our own lifetimes.

A slightly better option is that life will survive but not in any form that resembles the animal and plant kingdoms that exist here today.
A better option again is that human life will crash so devastatingly that, although massively depleted, many of the current animal and plant species will be able to survive.

The last, best - and unfortunately least likely option at the moment - is that human society will act in time to avert the worst outcomes of the crisis.

17. The problem in brief

Humans have gradually displaced the Earth’s ecosystems, turning them into an extension of ourselves. We have eroded away species after species, undermining the biosphere’s resilience.

Among innumerable other damaging actions, we have cleared fifty to sixty per cent of the world’s forests, mainly to pasture our animal slaves (World Resources Institute, 1998).

Forests are the world’s most biodiverse terrestrial ecosystems, its primary mechanism for retaining surface water and stabilising soil, and one of the two mechanisms that keep our atmosphere breathable and our climate liveable (the other being marine vegetation). The replacement of forests with slave animal pastures has therefore injured the biosphere on multiple fronts at once.

Humans have done similar damage in the oceans through overfishing, trawling, dredging, chemical and radioactive pollution, nutrient pollution, sound pollution, acidification, ozone depletion, greenhouse warming and changing currents (Australia State of the Environment Report, Data Reporting System, 2006).

The loss of vegetation (greenhouse sinks) from both the ocean and the land, combined with the explosion of greenhouse gas emissions from domestic grazing animals (as their populations are increased to meet the demands of our own increasing population), combined with the greenhouse emissions from our burning of fossil fuels, is leading to a further catastrophe which threatens to dwarf all the others: dangerously accelerated climate change.

18. The hope

In theory, humans could easily reverse much of the damage we have done to the biosphere. The five critical ways we can do this are: moving to an entirely plant-based diet; replanting with forests and perennial food crops all the land that has been stripped to raise our animal slaves; stealing no more land or water habitat from the world’s surviving wild species; stealing no more wild species from the land or waters; and shifting to non-fossil fuel sources of energy.

These changes would, between them, address all the biosphere’s most serious problems: marine and terrestrial biodiversity loss, soil loss, the freshwater crisis and, of course, anthropogenic climate change.

It is curious that most of the media hype we hear about the climate crisis focuses on reductions in anthropogenic greenhouse emissions; and even those discussions generally fail to acknowledge that our livestock animals account for nearly half those emissions. Even less
attention is given to the absence of sinks, and the depleted resilience of the biosphere as a whole.

In effect, all the attention seems to be focused on less than a quarter of the problem.

Reducing fossil fuel emissions, even if we could get our governments to take it seriously, cannot save us. But if we also abolish the world’s animal production industries and replant their pastures with dense, leafy vegetation, there is some hope we could slow and even ultimately reverse the harm we have done.

19. Animals and the environmental crisis

If humans were to take the actions which are needed to save their planet, it would not automatically raise the status of animals to something other than slaves, nor would it guarantee their protection from malicious and wanton cruelty. But it would remove, almost in its entirety, all economic incentive to continue to treat animals as slaves. It would be the beginning of the end of animal slavery. Like the abolition of serfdom in Mediaeval Europe, all the legal instruments enforcing animal slavery would be fairly easy to abolish once commercial ownership of livestock animals had already ceased.

Thus, the current environmental crisis can go only one of two ways for animals. It will fast-track them to the end of their slavery; production of domestic animals will be replaced by forests and crop production; wild animals on the land and in the waters will be left alone to recover.

Or it will be the worst disaster for them since the Neolithic Revolution, quite likely the worst since the extinction of the dinosaurs, and possibly the worst and last disaster ever.

20. The common cause

The animal protection movement alone is not strong enough to put an end to the all the world’s animal production industries, not in the few decades that are left before it will be too late for every sentient being on the planet. But, with the two natural allies of the animal protection movement, saving the world and emancipating both its humans and its animals, may be possible.

Environmentalists are natural allies to the animal protection movement. Yet many environmentalists do not yet seem to understand that every breath they take, every word they speak is a waste of precious oxygen while they continue to eat meat and while they continue to lobby only for clean energy production, or for protection of a few endangered species, rather than for the end of animal agriculture.

Moreover, many people who call themselves environmentalists believe that wildlife has to be ‘managed’ and ‘pests’ should be persecuted. Although this treatment of animals cannot be justified ethically and the scientific logic behind this thinking is inherently flawed, a whole ‘animal management’ industry has now developed which is dedicated almost exclusively to killing wild animals. This industry has somehow taken control of the environmental movement and successfully conned many sincere environmentalists into believing this cruelty is an environmental imperative.
Over the last two or three decades, this environmental commitment to killing animals has alienated the animal protection movement from the environmental movement. Given the time we have left, it is certain that this division between the movements must be healed, or both causes will ultimately be lost.

Similarly, the human rights movement is a natural ally of the animal rights movement. The people in this movement work ceaselessly for the ending of poverty and for the abolition of the informal human slavery which is, historically, an inevitable consequence of poverty.

Yet many of them do not yet seem to understand that animal production is one of the most powerful causes of poverty. It is one more way of concentrating wealth (in this case in the form of concentrated protein) in the hands of the already wealthy few, at the expense of the impoverished masses (as well as the animals themselves).

What is more, human rights advocates often alienate animal rights advocates by encouraging impoverished humans to help themselves out of poverty by increasing their exploitation of animals, rather than by working for the end of animal agriculture. Once again this rift needs to be healed, or there will be no time left for either humans or animals to be liberated from poverty and slavery.

The abolition of animal production and the resumption of land for the production of high protein vegetables for human consumption is not just the only option for saving the biosphere; it is not just the only option for emancipating animals; it is also the only option for eliminating world hunger, ensuring world peace, and forever eradicating all forms of informal human slavery.

21. Conclusion

My conclusion is therefore two-fold.

To emancipate animals from slavery, the animal protection movement needs to keep up the tried and true strategies and tactics that have worked for human liberation: relentless work to change laws, economic systems and cultural paradigms, supported by use of the existing political and legal systems, the mass media (and now social media, as well), rescue of individuals, public exposure of evils, promotion of heroes, and all practical forms of economic pressure that do not alienate the movement’s own support base.

But there is one great additional task that could make the difference between ultimate success and the most abject of all possible failures (global extinction): reclaiming our natural allies. The animal protection movement must find a way to re-orient the environmental movement towards its raison d’etre of saving the biosphere, and explain to environmentalists that killing animals (as well as being cruel and unethical) actively harms the environment. The animal protection movement must also find a way to work with the human rights movement to eliminate the complex collective causes of both human and animal oppression.

And, meanwhile, what can an individual animal protection activist do but keep working for incremental reform, supported by brave actions, direct rescues, exposure of evils and conscientious consumption? Even if abolition is never achieved because the humans destroy
the biosphere and life as we know it ceases to exist, at least life might be made slightly better for a few million animals before the end.
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Note: All the citations in this essay refer to sources of factual material. All discussion of the implications of this collection of factual information is entirely that of the author.

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