The Animal Rights Struggle

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“Us,” the animals and “them”

Repulsive beasts

In order to better understand the phenomena described in the preceding chapters it is necessary to examine, going at least as far back as the Renaissance, the changes, in European societies, in both representations of animals and people’s emotional reactions to animals. Once again, rather than attempting to relate this story in all its complexity, we should identify a number of general trends which will form the basis for our analysis of the motives underlying the development of mobilizations in favor of the protection of animals. Within the framework of the civilizing process, which we have placed at the heart of our analysis, animality is often set up in opposition to civilized humanity. For Erasmus, for example, there could be no doubt that “differentiation from animals is the very essence of good table manners” (Thomas, 1985, p. 44). As a general rule, the bodily impulses frowned upon in well-mannered society were regarded as spontaneous uncontrolled animal impulses. Indeed, the pejorative notion of bestiality gradually imposed itself as a yardstick used to stigmatize any human behavior which resembled animal behavior either because of its aggressiveness, or its absence of modesty, or, last but not least, its expression of sexual desire. These developments represented not only a modification in the monitoring of manners, but also a significant transformation of human relations with animals.

Popular representations of the animal kingdom and aristocratic heraldic bestiaries were both characterized by a multiplicity of distinctions, positive or negative, flexible, reversible, and independent of one another. The evaluation of animal species – as with the establishment of hierarchical status between humans – depended on a mix of variably applied criteria. Evidence of this complexity can be made out from the frescoes which decorate the walls of the Palace of Justice in Padua. Constructed in 1218, this building used to house the city administrative offices and tribunals, and contains a series of representations of animal figures, both real and fantastic. Some of these figures were associated with the different levels of the tribunal, while others presented allegories of Justice and the Law. The dog, the cock, the panther and the centaur depict the moral virtues men must show in order to live in harmony, in the order established by their creator. This kind of representation of the animal world – rich in distinctions and associations and packed with a wide variety of connotations – was gradually replaced
by a radical separation of human and nonhuman animals: a rigid division was established between virtuous humanity and repulsive bestiality. In fact, association with pure animality gradually became a way of discrediting behavior which was judged inappropriate. Thus, reformers who mobilized against bullbaiting, the brutality of coachmen, etc., aimed to do more than simply proscribe those repulsive spectacles which upset their sensibilities, and advocate the discipline needed to generate wealth (see previous chapters). They were also motivated by what they saw as the need to make men more human, and to work toward the systematic humanization of their conduct. This strange pleonasm derives from the belief that a man's level of civilization of men is dependent on their capacity to break free of a tenacious and untrustworthy animality. The continuing existence of the practices condemned by moral reformers demonstrated that some men give in to their instincts and show themselves incapable of mastering their latent animality. Once again, this conviction often draws on older religious conceptions, according to which it is man's destiny to be tempted by the forces of the devil. Thus, for example, for William Wilberforce, who was an evangelical Protestant, to tolerate bullbaiting would be “to defend a practice which degraded human nature to a level with the brutes” (quoted in Turner, 1980, p. 24). For William Smith, another leader of the campaign against bullbaiting, to abolish this cruel pastime, would not only civilize the manners of the lower orders, but even make them “rise in the order of living things” (quoted in Turner, 1980, p. 24).

Contrary to what might have been expected, this determination to put pressure on people to abandon animality was in no way shaken by new representations provoked by observations of the animal world, or advances in a number of fields which would, at first sight, seem to support the idea that nonhuman and human animals were closer than had previously been thought. Comparative anatomy, in the wake of pioneering work by Edward Tyson, found that, notwithstanding differences between species, there were numerous similarities between organisms, notably between chimpanzees and human beings. Jean-Baptiste Lamarck's theory of evolution, and to an even greater extent Charles Darwin's The Origin of Species (1859) “encouraged the view that men were only beasts who had managed to better themselves” (Thomas, 1985, p. 173). Nevertheless these observations – attesting to the closeness between humans and animals – far from allaying fears regarding man's bestiality, actually strengthened the convictions of those who were determined to work to improve the mores of their insufficiently civilized contemporaries. Indeed, Darwin's theory of evolution was quickly assimilated by the most conservative sections
of the British social elites, albeit in a watered down form which made it compatible with religious belief. It is notable that when members of the RSPCA referred to Darwinism it was not to discuss its scientific validity, but to draw moral consequences from it, regarding the duty to be kind to animals and to struggle against the bestiality of men (Turner, 1980, pp. 60-62). A strong prejudice established itself in animal welfare circles, namely that a remedy needed to be found for the fact that some human beings, more than others, shared the ignominious brutish properties of animals, where a brute is understood to be “an animal devoid of reason” or “an animal considered in terms of its least human characteristics” (Littré, 2004, p. 654). In fact, the first animal protection movements were built on an ambivalent representation of the relationship of humans with animals. On the one hand being kind to animals was regarded as being a distinctive feature of respectable milieus: “Pity, compassion and a reluctance to inflict pain, whether on men or beasts, were identified as distinctly civilized emotions” (Thomas, 1985, p. 245). At the same time the discrediting of certain social groups – “faithless lawless brutes,” “savages,” “primitives,” “barbarians” – led them to be associated with the most repulsive features of animality. Such prejudices underpin, firstly, the success of physiognomy, as theorized by Cesare Lombroso, who claimed to be able to identify common facial traits in criminals, anarchists and the great apes, and, secondly, the prejudices of colonial anthropology, according to which the Indo-European peoples are largely devoid of animality, whereas even an intelligent dog would be capable of thinking on a par with that of a Bushman or an Indian (quoted in Turner, 1980, p. 65). In contrast to later developments, which will be discussed below, the main initial effect of the methodical observation of the similarities between animal species and certain humans was not to generate sympathy for animals, but to infantilize and attribute a lower status to peoples who allegedly resembled animals.

Monkeys, especially those from the old world, [writes Dr. Monin, for the attention of his colleagues at the SPA] are better at reading facial expressions than children; they sympathize with the pain of threatened animals and go to their aid, and they dream, which is a sign of a vivid imagination. They also have an idea of what property is. Like children and savages they love shiny things, they have a basic grasp of weight, numbers, and colors. They even have their own special language, a kind of murmuring made up of vowel sounds, which bears a striking relationship to the primitive languages of certain savages. (BSPA, 1883, p. 50)
Thus, it is apparent that there is a close articulation between, on the one hand, the stigmatization of the bestiality of certain humans, and, on the other hand, the processes of setting “Them” up in opposition against “Us.” These processes of differentiation, as we shall see, came in various forms which relied on the definition of national qualities, the perception of regional differences, and the competing legitimization strategies of dominant groups.

**Distinctive national virtues**

Disgust at the bestiality attributed to certain humans, pride at distinguishing oneself by one’s gentle treatment of animals: the emotions experienced and displayed by the first animal protection activists sets up a clear differentiation between “Them” (the brutes, in the way they treat animals) and “Us” (the righteous, in the way we treat animals). In the century of triumphant nationalism, it was inevitable that distinctions of this kind would be associated with the praising of virtues which, supposedly, characterized the people to which the animal protectors were proud to belong. Thus it was not uncommon for British pioneers of the animal welfare cause to mention the need to “purify the country from foul and disgraceful abominations” which were common practice in Europe (quoted in Li, 2000, p. 268). From this perspective, ill-treatment of animals was symptomatic of more generally depraved behavior or, even worse, irreligiosity and revolutionary spirit worthy of a Frenchman, no less! Thus, in a sermon titled “On National Cruelty” the Reverend Thomas Greenwood from Trinity College Cambridge, one of the founders, in 1830, of the Association for Promoting Rational Humanity toward the Animal Creation, attributed “the awful calamity [the 1789 Revolution] which has befallen the nominally Christian France” to its twin atavistic demons of effeminacy and cruelty: a “compound of the monkey and the tiger” (Li, 2000, p. 268). The tone of these attacks was all the more virulent because the moral reformers who congregated in the animal protection societies considered the irreligiousness and Jacobinism imported from France as intolerable threats to the alliance between the Church and the State, which they regarded as the twin pillars of the English nation. In fact, the first animal protection mobilizations took place within a historical context deeply marked by hostility toward the French Revolution and an intense religious revival. The idea that the protection of animals in Britain was something which distinguished it from other, less advanced nations persisted, however, for the rest of the century. Thus, in a sermon given in
1860, the Anglican vicar Thomas Jackson claimed that bullfighting, which was popular in other European countries, appealed to an archaic fierceness which was absent from the English character and which would remain so, providing his countrymen remained true to their religious convictions.

In modern times the peoples who indulge in bullfighting are the same peoples who enjoy the unhappy distinction of having surpassed all the other peoples of the earth in the arts of torture, as well as having invented the most ingenious methods for inflicting horrible and long-lasting pain on men, women and children. On our own island, the taste for the gallows and the mutilation of traitors has disappeared, along with bearbaiting and the brutal treatment of cattle being dragged to the abattoir; if ever religion and morality went into decline in our land and the old fever for ferocity returned, you can be sure that a renewed inhumanity toward animals would be one of its first symptoms. (BSPA, 1860, p. 334)

Throughout the 19th century national pride and evangelical missionary spirit merged to the point that the protection of animals was equated with the magnificent British oak – traditional symbol of the nation – and contributed to justifying its extension well beyond the boundaries of the Empire. Thus, at the annual conference of the RSPCA in 1933, one speaker chose to emphasize the extent to which compassion for animals and religion were intimately bound up with the civilizing mission which it was incumbent upon England to pursue.

If, when the banner of England is unfurled on distant shores in the cause of Christianity, missionaries inculcate these doctrines of mercy to the brute creation which we labor to diffuse then humanity will flourish, not only at home, but abroad, and the branches of a glorious tree will also extend, so that animals who cannot describe their woes, will find shelter, and sleep under its shade. (Quoted in Li, 2000, p. 271)

Antivivisectionism, more than any other issue, provides evidence of the way in which indignation stirred up by animal suffering frequently sets in motion a process whereby British virtues and continental abominations are differentiated. Although vivisection – the dissection of living animals for experimental purposes – has a long history, its practice only became widespread over the course of the 19th century. Positivism, according to which knowledge should be verified according to experimentation, was widely embraced by scientists working in the fields of physiology, biology,
toxicology and medicine, and provided the philosophical basis for the use of a practice now regarded as being the most reliable means of achieving scientific progress. The British medical profession, however, unlike scientists in Germany, France and Russia, resisted the use of vivisection. When, in 1824, François Magendie – who operated on live dogs as part of research into the differences between motor and sensory nerves – performed public demonstrations of vivisection it provoked a scandal in London, where his methods were regarded, and described, as being barbaric and belonging to another century. Richard Martin, who sponsored the first legislation to protect cattle from ill-treatment, denounced vivisection in a speech in the House of Commons. For British animal protectors what these foreigners were doing, supposedly in the name of science, seemed as horrible as anything butcher boys got up to, if not more so. The idea that such horrible practices could be imported to a country which hitherto distinguished itself by the gentleness of its mores helped recruitment to the cause. In a sermon from 1860 the Anglican priest Thomas Jackson issued a warning: “Humankind blushes at the cruelties committed in cold blood on animals by certain physiologists and, until quite recently, it was to be feared that our medical students in the English and Scottish capitals would follow this deathly training!” (BSPA, 1860, p. 337). The danger was thought to be so great that animal protectionists considered it wise to take preventive measures and counter the vivisectionist threat by treating the countries of Europe as “mission territories,” where this evil had to be destroyed at its source, before it has the chance to spread: “Mr. Harrison, a member of the Victoria Street Society [...] added that another reason to choose Paris over London as the host of the first congress is that cruel vivisection experiments take place in Paris, and that it is in Paris where there is an urgent need to react quickly” (BSFCV 2 [1884], p. 6).

One of the fiercest attacks against vivisection was launched by Frances Power Cobbe, the daughter of a landowning Dublin magistrate, himself descended from a prominent Anglo-Irish family: many members of the Cobbe family had distinguished themselves in either the British Army or the Church. No bookmark name given. of England (she had at least five archbishops among her forebears). After the death of her father, Cobbe took a trip comparable with the “grand tours” undertaken by well-to-do young men from the 17th century onward. Traveling through Italy was, of course, an essential part of the itinerary of any grand tour, and, on her return, Cobbe wrote an account of her Italian travels: Italics: Brief Notes on Politics, People, and Places in Italy, the tone of which left the author in no doubt as to the superiority of British civilization. In 1863, while she was
staying in Florence, Cobbe, who had recently published an article entitled “The Rights of Man and the Claims of Beasts,” launched a campaign against the German physiologist Moritz Schiff, who used vivisectionist techniques. She wrote a memorial address, which was signed by 785 Florentines, as well as a letter of protest to the Daily News which was picked up and published shortly afterward by the Florence newspaper La Nazione (Guarnieri, 1987). Cobbe’s comments suggest that she envisaged a campaign to enact laws in Italy, modeled on the legislation already in force in Britain.

Inquiring last winter of the probabilities regarding a “Martin’s Act” for Italy, I was informed, by gentlemen well acquainted with the country, that the passing of such a law might be effected, but that its practical use, even in Tuscany, would be null [...]. I do not feel sure, however, that my informant was right in this matter, seeing that 785 persons, from the highest to the poorest in Florence, were found willing, last winter, to attach their names to a memorial against the practice of vivisection at the Specola. (Cobbe, 1864, p. 103)

The experience of attempting to spread British mores abroad made a mark on Cobbe and, over a decade later, she went on to found, in London, the Society for the Protection of Animals Liable to Vivisection, this time with the aim of combating the spread of the practice within Britain itself. In doing so Cobbe contributed to the mobilization, which thus resulted from the indignation over an experiment conducted in public by a foreign scientist. In 1874, the French psychiatrist Valentin Magnan, who had been invited to the annual meeting of the British Medical Association to present his work on the effects of alcohol, was preparing to induce epilepsy in a dog by injecting it with absinthe when several members of the audience intervened violently to put a stop to the operation (Hamilton, 2004, p. xxii). Magnan was obliged to leave the country in some haste, to avoid being the subject of legal proceedings: the RSPCA had lodged a complaint against the French psychiatrist and the organizers of the meeting, accusing them of cruelty under the provisions of Martin’s Act. Over the next two years a dozen or so antivivisection societies were created across the whole country, although Cobbe’s organization, now renamed the Victoria Street Society, remained the most influential. To the members of the antivivisectionist movement the fact that the practice had now begun to become more widespread in British scientific circles made their cause more urgent. In 1873, Burdon Sanderson wrote the Handbook for the Physiological Laboratory, intended for British students, while significant numbers of British scientists started
to use vivisection in an effort to catch up with their European counterparts. From around this time, British opponents of vivisection were largely engaged in stirring up two complementary fears: firstly, the concern that, in the absence of vigilance, a practice regarded as alien would intrude onto British soil, and, secondly, that experiments on animals would soon lead to experiments on human beings.

Let nobody think [writes Cardinal Manning, the Archbishop of Westminster] that we are somehow exempt from the terrible mistakes which are being committed on the continent. I love my country and my compatriots, but I would be wary of the idea that things which take place abroad will not or could not happen here; and, if I thought that at the moment England had been granted a partial exemption, I would say: “Let us be careful not to suffer the effects of what is happening on the continent, as it is inevitable that whatever happens abroad will soon after happen here, unless we make it impracticable.” (BSFCV 2 [1885], p. 29)

It starts with animals and continues with humans [...]. Sir [writes a reader of the Zoophilist], allow me to draw to your attention the serious danger to which our hospital patients are exposed. With each passing day it becomes clearer that, once experiments have been performed on live animals, the next step is experimenting on poor people who have no family or friends. And with each passing day it becomes clearer that these experiments, which have become so common abroad, meet with the approval of certain circles within the medical profession in England. (BSFCV 12 [1898], p. 16)

French animal protectionists showed themselves to be no less keen than their British counterparts to frame their struggle in terms of a defense of customs, customs which distinguished the French from other peoples, judged to be more “barbaric.” From this perspective, the role of foil to the civilized Frenchman, threatening to invade France, belonged to the people who lurked just over the Pyrenees. Indeed, as early as in 1855 members of the SPA were expressing alarm at the idea that bullfighting could be allowed to spread onto French soil.

In the course of the work of [the SPA] a worrying and unexpected rumor has come to our attention. Apparently there have been discussions regarding the introduction into France, indeed into Paris itself, at the very heart of the civilized world, those pleasures which, because of the
gentleness of our customs, we have hitherto kept at bay. (BSPA, 1855, p. 114)

A rumor was going around that in the very near future bullfights – Spain’s national shame – were going to be held in Paris, and you were very upset, you and all the societies in Europe; but, thank heavens, this glorious period, crowned by the Universal Exposition, will not be tarnished; the Minister of the Interior was against it; Monsieur Billault replied to the entrepreneurs who approached him by categorically refusing to authorize the holding of a spectacle which is anathema to our customs. (BSPA, 1855, p. 110)

Bullfighting – the “shame of Spain,” “an anathema to our customs” – scoffed at the beliefs of animal protectionists “at the very heart of the civilized world”; during the first fifty years of its existence the SPA never ceased to rail against the introduction onto French soil of Spanish-style bullfighting, a form of bullfighting in which the bull is killed. An understanding of the history of moral protests against bullfighting requires an appreciation of both the heterogeneity and the evolution of the underlying reasons and motives of such protests. An evolutionary perspective is all the more necessary because the codification of bullfighting went through many changes over time. In order to avoid anachronisms, we should therefore carefully identify the “victims” of bullfighting, whose suffering provoked the indignation of its opponents. It is clear that, at first, the fate of the bulls was in no way regarded as a cause for concern, even by animal protectionists. The stabs that the bull inevitably received did not allow it to have any claims to the status of victim, which initially, in the minds of the animal protectionists, was reserved for horses.

The bull is destined to be eaten, as it is established in advance that his meat will feed men. It is true – and it is a health argument which the Protection Society should add to its list of arguments for stopping these combats – it is true that, because of the states of fatigue and overexcitement of the animal preceding its death, there is a risk that its meat will not be palatable, or even healthy. It is therefore distributed among members of the lower classes, who eat it at their risk and peril: but it is nonetheless true that in a certain way it fulfills its destiny when it dies in the arena. The stabs which it receives are not deep wounds and are only intended to agitate the bull. Furthermore the animal is almost invariably killed outright thanks to the remarkable skills of the matador. (BSPA, 1855, p. 117)
Until their final hour, the victims of the cruel games which we have studied – stags hunted with hounds, pigeons used for shooting, fighting cocks and bulls used in corridas – have all “lived their lives.” This is emphatically not the case for THE HORSE. The real victim of the arena only yesterday worked our fields, transported the stones used to make our houses, and was our companion on the front. He worked in the town and in the countryside, he toiled, he suffered, he grew old in the service of men, he lived side by side with us, he gave us his all. And now, today, for the depraved delectation of the spectators in the arena, the picador will put a blindfold over his right eye, to remove any chance of him being saved. He will use him as a shield, and he will be offered up, a living target, to the bull’s horns. (BSPA, 1933, p. 10)

In this regard it is worth recalling that for many decades the picadors’ horses were equipped with absolutely no protection against the often deadly attacks of the bulls, so that the goring of horses was a common sight at bullfights. The SPA, whose membership included many horsemen, often of aristocratic stock, felt that they had no choice but to take a stand against the ill-treatment of this particularly noble animal: “the sad fate reserved for the horses which participated in these bloody celebrations had attracted the attention of the society for some time” (BSPA, 1855, p. 114). In fact the description of the suffering of the picador’s mounts, their cries and their desperate attempts to flee as they tripped over their own guts, as well as the horrified accounts of spectators, constituted a sensitizing device which was frequently mobilized in order to provoke emotional reactions of shock, disgust and revulsion, which would lead to calls for the immediate prohibition of bullfighting.

“...It was during a bullfight, I was in the front row of the terraces, two meters away, against the fence. A picador had come to lean against his old black horse. One of the horse’s eyes was blindfolded, so that he could not see the arena. The other eye which was on the side of the horse next to me, was uncovered, gentle, vaguely concerned, vaguely sad. Suddenly, the bull charged, and with a soft thud, its horn went straight through the horse’s belly and made a knocking sound as it made contact with
the fence. The horse did not budge, did not cry out, the skin on his bony neck just wrinkled a little. But his eye, the eye which was looking at me, was getting bigger, swelling horribly, and, as the bull dug his horn deep into the belly of the creature who was dying in stoic silence, I could see in his eye the horrible surprise that man could be so cruel and ungrateful." This is what bullfighting is like – this is the fate that horses used in bullfighting sometimes suffer; sometimes, because, more often than not, they suffer an even worse fate. In fact the horse is sometimes not killed outright. Life clings to him and, despite having been gored, the animal has to continue to provide entertainment for the crowd. We then witness a double treason. The horse – who was raised with care by men, has worked alongside men, is used to men's voices which he has quietly obeyed, and has trusted men – still does not comprehend the tragic event of which he is the victim. He cannot believe that the person who was his master could be capable of such a despicable act and once more he turns, mutilated, losing his blood and his guts, to men, and once more, he is betrayed. (BSPA, 1933, p. 11)

Recourse to such an sensitizing device was bound to have an effect. Firstly, these initiatives certainly helped stir up the emotions which were needed to fuel collective mobilizations and the sense of moral reward for the activists opposed to bullfighting (Traïni, 2009). Furthermore, as sensibilities evolved, criticism of the fate of the horses used in bullfighting seemed to have convinced the majority of aficionados themselves that the treatment of these animals was scandalous, and called for reform. In 1928, the dictator Primo de Rivera, who was keen for Spain to be regarded as a modern civilized country, made it obligatory for horses to be equipped with protective padding, to “avoid these horrible spectacles which so disgust foreigners and tourists” (quoted in Baratay, 1997). Now that horses were afforded protection from being gored by the bull, opponents of the corrida were robbed of an argument which had, throughout the 19th century, been central to their cause. Several decades went by before the status of victim would be claimed on behalf of the bull itself, as the suffering it experienced came to be part of the sensitizing devices used by antibullfighting campaigners. Today it is not rare for the activists to take the sensitization process regarding the horrors of the corrida a step further, by inviting the public to imagine things from the point of view of the bull. Such an attitude, which accords the bull the status of a victim worthy of compassion – which would have been inconceivable to animal protectionists in the 19th century – was only conceivable after a series of developments which will be examined in our final chapter.
For now we should note that in the 19th century, while opponents of the corrida were certainly angered by the ill-treatment of horses in bullfighting arenas, their principal concerns were over the emotional states of some of the aficionados in the crowd. This should come as no surprise: opposition to all styles of bullfighting, not just Spanish-style bullfighting where the animal is killed, was very much part of the wider movements to control popular violence which have been analyzed in previous chapters. We have already mentioned that the very first British animal protection campaign – expressly undertaken to combat the brutality of the masses – was conducted in 1820, and sought to suppress bullbaiting, which was reasonably common in England at the time. Like their English counterparts, members of the French SPA were steadfast in their opposition to any regional and popular traditions liable to whet the appetite of the working classes for cruelty and violence: “as regards cockfighting and bullfighting we have every reason to be surprised [...], that the efforts of the society, the decrees handed down by civil servants, and the successive edicts of the Interior and Agriculture Ministries have obtained so few results” (BSPA, 1883, p. 38). Bullfighting in the South of France and cockfighting in the North were equally subject to condemnation because of the large gatherings of common people that such deadly fighting spectacles could attract. The SPA could not “remain indifferent to these forms of entertainment in which defenseless animals die, after being cruelly tortured for the amusement of crowds who have come looking for excitement” (BSPA, 1855, p. 114). Once more, the scandal being denounced here was less to do with the suffering inflicted on animals than the worrying predispositions and uncontrollable urges these activities were suspected of provoking in those who enjoyed watching them. Tolerating spectacles of this kind would have involved ignoring one of the most powerful rallying calls of the earliest animal protectionists, namely the need to avoid the spilling of blood in public, “hide killing in order not to put the idea of killing into people’s heads” (Agulhon, 1988, p. 249). Bullfighting was presented as “the worst school of cruelty and nothing more than a succession of acts of torture. How can it be, when all over France bylaws forbid the slaughtering of animals in public places, in front of children, that there are those who call for the legalization of such bloody, scandalous performances?” (BSPA, 1895, p. 71). Once again, the accusation was that cruel spectacles performed within arenas contribute to violence and delinquency, which threatened to break out on every street corner:

And here is the crime that you, lovers of bullfighting, want the law to leave unpunished! It is indeed the moment for such tolerance! When crime
rates are steadily rising, when most assassins and criminals are between the ages of 17 and 20, when carrying a knife is becoming more common, you want these hateful, bloody, sickening and demoralizing spectacles to be allowed to take root in France, and declared legal! (BSPA, 1895, p. 70)

And so with these COCKFIGHTS do we sink further down the scale of cruel games [...]. The owner of the cock is not only preoccupied with taking care of the “material,” he also educates the animal, he does his best to pass on his talent for wickedness, he nurtures the bird’s fighting instincts [...]. The knife of the man is hidden under the feathers of the bird [...]. It is a villainous pleasure. The thug is in his element, he looks for and finds his own instincts, he judges the attacks, the parries and the low blows, he celebrates the victory of the strong. (BSPA, 1933, p. 10)

We should note that these familiar well-rehearsed arguments were initially not confined to bullfighting. Before focusing their campaigning efforts on the Spanish corrida, with picadors and the killing of the bull, 19th-century moral entrepreneurs expressed a wide-ranging aversion to any form of entertainment suspected of leading people to abandon the disciplined behavior and peaceful manners expected of them: the list of these activities included fights between animals, the game of burying geese up to their necks and then stoning them, as well as all the different styles of bullfighting. Thus, in 1873, the Beulé circular, in the context of the reestablishment of moral order dear to MacMahon, after drawing a distinction between bull-running and bullfighting, proposed that both these activities should be prohibited:

This kind of spectacle, which is likely to lead to serious accidents [...] and which is also of a barbaric nature, can but accustom the people to seeking to experience violent and unhealthy emotions associated with the sight of blood. Given that such a trend, and the kind of stimulations which could perpetuate and strengthen it, are, in my opinion, likely to have harmful consequences for the habits and customs of the nation, I invite you to withhold permission to hold bullfights and bull-running. (Quoted in Pierre, pp. 610-611)

In 1876, the members of the SPA were angered by what they saw as the first steps toward a potential climb-down, implicit in the distinction drawn in the circular, insofar as it could eventually lead to the prohibition of “bloody” sports, but would not extend to games of skill much loved by the working
classes but viewed with suspicion by the social elites (Pierre, 1998, p. 612). As we have already noted, the belief that working-class violence must be repressed was one of the earliest and most commonly stated motives behind the campaigns of all the pioneering animal protection societies in Europe. In France, however, moral protest against working-class games has another dimension, resulting from the country’s cultural and political centralism. Throughout the 19th century and well into the 20th the French animal protection movement was a largely Parisian phenomenon, and struggled to make inroads into the rest of the country: in 1870, 60% of SPA members were from the capital, in 1877 72%, in 1892 78.2%, and as late as 1911 77.2% (Pierre, 1998, p. 170). It can be adduced from the writings of certain eminent members of the SPA that the very Paris-centered nature of the movement led animal protectionists to regard the provinces as mission lands to which the animal protectionist word needed to spread. This is made very clear by documents such as “Project for the Extension of the Society for the Protection of Animals,” discussed at the annual general meeting of the SPA in 1886, or “The Protection of Animals in the South of France,” presented the following year by the secretary general of the society. The long extracts from these documents quoted below give a clear picture of the extent to which the French regions in which the Spanish corrida gained in popularity at the very end of the 19th century were formerly regarded as “barbarian” lands because of their attitude toward animals and blood:

Thanks to its large membership and its financial resources, the society has succeeded in exerting a healthy influence in Paris. Ill-treatment of domesticated animals is constantly monitored, reported or stopped, and, it must be said, to the credit of France’s first city, that these kinds of incidents are becoming increasingly rare there. The same cannot be said, however, for the provinces […] one witnesses so many shocking scenes of such cruelty and brutality to domestic animals that one wonders whether those who have no fear of committing them in public are not still savages and barbarians. We must work against these kinds of abuse; we must combat and eradicate these rough manners, these violent habits, these deep-rooted traditions. The society would not be equal to the task which has been given it, and would not live up to public expectations if it did not carry out its investigations outside the city limits, and extend its mission, in order to protect all the victims of the fierceness of a few people, as far as France’s frontiers! (BSPA, 1886, pp. 277-278)
Last year, at the same time of the year, we opposed bull-running in the South of France [...]. Encouraged by this recent campaign on the Spanish border, and convinced that this kind of animal protection tour can greatly benefit the cause that all of us here defend with all our might, we considered it important to undertake another peregrination this year. We should say immediately that although we have observed a great deal of progress it is also true that in certain localities people are unaware of the existence of the protection societies or the provisions of the Grammont Law. The temperament of Southerners, which is well known, seems to close their hearts to human feelings, to that loveable goodness and that universal love that we must have for everything that suffers [there follows a description of three Basque bear tamers]. Two children, dressed in the Spanish style, who could not have been more than twelve years old, led their little carriage, which was drawn by a donkey, across the town esplanade. We soon noticed that these children were not only dressed like our neighbors from the other side of the Pyrenees, but that they were displaying the same lack of sensitivity. Indeed, they prodded their animals with a stick which had a nail attached to the end. The nail was more than 10 centimeters long. (BSPA, 1887, pp. 281-282)

[Commenting on a description of children and women who, at Luchon, watched the butchers at work.] This is a faithful account of our trip in the South of France. We have noticed that a great deal of progress has been made there; we intend to spread and develop ideas about animal protection, bringing new reforms and new improvements every year; the authorities are supportive, they will help us and we have grounds to be hopeful that the South of France, so cruel, so blind, so resistant to all human feeling, will in time allow itself to be enlightened by the protective beacon of our society, which guides men toward the path of morality and justice. (BSPA, 1887, p. 307)

During corridas horses were ill-treated, and crowds were whipped up to dangerous levels of excitement; these practices seemed to be particularly welcomed by “those cruel people in the South of France.” We can understand why several generations of French animal protectionists prioritized campaigns outlawing bullfighting. With the rise of nationalism, protests against the corrida took on an even greater intensity. Imported from Spain, bullfighting with picadors and the killing of the bull provided an instance of foreign barbarity, and hence a means of highlighting, by contrast, the distinctive virtues of the French nation. To the long list of reasons to be
repelled by this practice could be added its national origins: the indignation provoked was further fueled by the fact that it was regarded as a harmful foreign custom intruding onto French soil.

What is going on? Will some citizens, emboldened by the impunity they are enjoying, be permitted to break the law to the point that they can offer the public the kind of monstrous spectacle we criticize our neighbors on the other side of the Pyrenees for performing? Monstrous spectacles so at odds with the religious spirit they claim is theirs, and which, in any case, cast a shadow over our civilized mores. (BSPA, 1883, p. 38)

I appeal to the souls of the deceased volunteers of ‘92, the heroes of the Republic and the Empire, to those of 1870, who sleep on the battlefields, along the border, and of the heroes of Tonkin and Dahomey. Ask the souls of our children who will spill their blood in Madagascar! Ask them whether – in order to serve under the French flag and be killed defending the honor of the nation – they need to remember the ephemeral glory, the dangers and the excitements of the arena! Oh gentleman, let us leave Spanish customs to the Spanish! Let us remain first of all and in all ways French. It is the best course of action and enough for us. (BSPA, 1895, p. 72)

All the indications are that before very long bullfighting on French soil will be no more than a bad memory. For this we owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. Ulrich. I believe that, in his struggle to defend our doctrines, he performed patriotic works. Defending one's territory from foreign attack and defending it from harmful foreign customs are identical acts which serve the honor of the nation. (BSPA, 1896, p. 136)

Like vivisection in England, the corrida was described as a *regression* unworthy of the gentle manners which – thanks to the vigilance and commitment of animal protectionists – set the French nation apart. Thus, just as Valentin Magnan was forced to flee England in 1875, Mazzantini, a Spanish matador who was preparing to fight a bull in Bayonne, was deported by the French government in 1895. The condemnation of foreign bestiality, driven back across the borders, often goes together with the celebration of a national community, among whose many qualities kindness to animals occupies pride of place.

This luxuriant flowering of fine disinterested feelings is the pride of our age, and, above all, the pride of our country. But who does not see that
one of the foremost of these creations is the work of the Society for the Protection of Animals? Who does not sense that the love of animals is one of the best and one of the purest of these many admirable, patriotic virtues? The protection of animals is an integral part of our complete, rich and varied intellectual and moral heritage, which we will pass on to the 20th century, which is soon to dawn, but whose course is so uncertain! (BSPA, 1886, p. 141)

In the 20th century, and particularly in the context of the rise of xenophobic nationalistic movements in the 1930s, the tone of these declarations hardened. SPA newsletters bristle with hostility toward the figure of the foreigner, whose ways threaten to corrupt the country. Members of the SPA are outraged that towns in the South of France demand “every summer, their bloody festivals. And [that] when troops of Spaniards arrive, a lot of money is spent. We are aware that when we campaign against bullfighting, and all other cruel sports, we are campaigning for the improvement of the race, for respect for life, and for peace” (BSPA, 1933, p. 12). Senator Louis Martin, for his part, expressed his indignation that efforts were being made “to put on bloody spectacles, a development which runs counter to the generosity of our race” (BSPA, 1935, p. 9).

It is therefore clear that opposition to the introduction of the corrida to France has a long and bitter history, making the fact that it became established in certain French regions perhaps something of a surprise. In fact, it would seem that, paradoxically, opposition to bullfighting actually helped the cause of its apologists, by resulting in it being associated in people’s minds with other styles of bullfighting which were well established and appreciated in a number of towns in the South of France. Indeed, as we have already noted, the expression of opposition to bullfighting, by the SPA in Paris and the public authorities, began long before the introduction of Spanish-style bullfighting in 1854. A variety of traditional sports involving bulls – courses provençales, courses landaises, taureau à la corde, bouvines, etc. – sometimes not fully codified, and associated with seasonal rural festivals, had been a matter of some concern to local authorities, who regularly sought to ban them, on the grounds that they were a threat to public order. During the Second Republic, the crowds which assembled for these festivals would turn into democratic mobilizations against the authoritarian regime, which was regarded as being distant and arrogant. The mobilizations were further fueled by popular anger at the harassment by those prefects who tried to ban these events (Agulhon, 1988, p. 276). Under the Second Empire, the authorities, having succeeded in stamping
out the opposition of republican agitators, were less worried about popular gatherings and thus willing to tolerate bullfighting. The first corrida where the bull was killed was held in 1854, in Saint-Esprit-lès-Bayonne, under the benevolent gaze of Empress Eugénie de Montijo, who had Spanish ancestry. Because of the patronage of the empress, members of the SPA could not be too openly critical of the practice, for fear of incurring the displeasure of the emperor himself. Under the Third Republic, the controversy surrounding bullfighting mounted, and took on new meanings which would ultimately strengthen the position of its apologists. On the one hand, it was once again possible to directly criticize the corrida, on the grounds of its “bestiality” and the fact that it was alien to the French national genius, and in 1881, 1884 and 1886 the SPA managed to have the practice prohibited. These bans were generally respected throughout the country, including the South, and proper bullfighting events – such as the one organized in Paris in 1887 by a charitable organization, in aid of flood victims in the South of France – were actually quite rare at this time (Pierre, 1998, p. 615).

Contrary to a myth subsequently devised and promulgated by bullfighting aficionados, there was no suggestion at that time that there were definite affinities between the corrida tradition and the South of France (Baratay, 1997). In fact the 1890s witnessed a turning point in the history of bullfighting in France, with key initiatives taken by protagonists on both sides of the debate. On the one hand bullfighting impresarios redoubled their efforts to be allowed to operate all over the country; the first bullfighting reviews were published in 1888 (Le Picador and Le Toréador) and in 1889 (Le Torero); and bullfighting clubs were founded in Nîmes (1896), and Arles (1897). On the other hand, opposition to tauromachy intensified, bringing together such motley characters as the president of the SPA, the chief veterinary officer of the army, Ulrich, and the libertarian journalist, Séverine. The prioritizing of combating bullfighting in the Paris SPA was aided by the fact that it was a cause which generated indignation throughout the society and thus served to unite it, whereas issues such as the eating of horse meat and shelters for dogs had been divisive. The fierceness of the campaign, essentially launched from the SPA's Parisian stronghold, quickly elicited a reaction from the Southern citizens, for whom liberty and the protection of regional specificity were powerful rallying cries. The memory of the bans regularly imposed in the past on traditional French bullfighting facilitated the assimilation of the Spanish corrida with “traditions” treated with contempt by a centralized power scornful of the South. So, although the corrida had only been an established presence for a few years, it came to symbolize local freedoms. In October 1894, the radical socialist mayor of Dax and
future Minister of the Colonies, Raphaël Milliès-Lacroix, was dismissed by the president of the Council of Ministers and the Minister of the Interior for authorizing the staging of a Spanish-style bullfight (Traimond, 1995). On 16 July 1895, the mayor of Mont-de-Marsan and his deputies handed in their resignations to the Prefect of Landes as a protest against the prohibition of corridas in their town.

Under the Third Republic, supposedly a “regime of liberty,” but where in fact there is certainly less liberty than under the Empire, we are ruthlessly deprived of our most cherished liberties, local liberties. Since, despite the solemn and benevolent promises of the authorities, we have not been able to put on at our local festivals the spectacles which our fellow citizens love above all others, and which we solemnly promised would be held. (BSPA, 1895, p. 122)

This rapid rise of the corrida to the status of local tradition was given further impetus by the development of regionalist movements which promoted a wide range of cultural practices which were presented as capturing the essential spirit of the place: language, cuisine, clothing, music, festivals, the art of hunting, etc. When the Félibrige movement was at its height, Frédéric Mistral, although no fan of bullfighting, and well aware of the contrived nature of comparisons between Provençale games and Spanish bullfighting, attended the corrida organized in 1894 in order to register his protest against the presidential circular prohibiting them (Baratay, 1997, p. 321). Thus, the context was particularly favorable to the corrida. Being increasingly the target of criticism from its detractors from the North eased its assimilation within a Southern cultural heritage, justifying mobilizations against what was seen as dangerous meddling by central government, judged to be contemptuous and authoritarian. Some of the declarations made by opponents of bullfighting, quoted above, reveal that one of the favorite arguments of the countermobilization movement, namely the idea that people in the South were treated with condescending paternalism, had plenty of basis in fact. Bullfighting impresarios, aficionados, promoters of regionalism, and defenders of local freedoms experienced common emotions, and called for the denunciation of an insult to a group whose dignity needed to be reaffirmed (Traïni, 2003a). In such a context defenders of the corrida were able to benefit from resources, resulting from what some specialists in collective action term frame alignment (Snow et al., 1986). This indicates that they were able to promote the idea that the defense of tauromachy is indissociable from other typically Southern preoccupations: local freedoms,
the culture unique to the félibriges, the development of regional pride, the
desire to influence the center, and the kind of rebellious spirit which would
soon, in 1907, find expression in the revolt of winegrowers in Languedoc, etc.

Given that these mobilizations occurred in the heart of one of its most
loyal electoral strongholds, the young Republic could not take the risk of
alienating its electorate over a matter judged, at the end of the day, to be of
secondary importance. Indeed, certain politicians whose constituencies
were in the South of France lobbied to block the repressive policies which the
opponents of bullfighting were calling for. Thus in 1896, after the formation
of a government in which the Interior and Justice Ministries were occupied
by deputies from the South, the government decided that the corrida would
be tolerated. Loud expressions of dissent from opponents, noisy debates
in parliament, and legal arguments over whether the Grammont Law ap-
plied to the corrida (Mieussens, 2005) periodically broke out over the next
fifty years. In the 1920s and 1930s, as criticism of the strangeness of the
Spanish corrida intensified, aficionados were able to count on the support
of intellectuals and artists who, like Montherlant, Bataille, and Leiris, em-
phasized the sublime nature of bodies fighting and of confused emotions,
thus providing an aesthetic appreciation of the corrida15 (see Boltanski on
the aesthetic topic [1993]). The endless debates between opponents and
supporters of bullfighting were finally addressed by legislators on 25 April
1951. The new law represented a compromise: bullfighting was found to
fall within the provisions of the Grammont Law and therefore pronounced
illegal, except in places where an “uninterrupted local tradition” of such
fights could be established. The withdrawal of this exception in the law has
been subsequently campaigned for by antibullfighting associations such
as the Comité radicalement anti-corrida, the Fédération des luttes pour
l’abolition de la corrida, and the Alliance pour la suppression des corridas,
all created between 1991 and 1994.

The established, the challengers and the excluded

Hitherto the elites behind the first mobilizations in favor of the protec-
tion of animals have been presented as the members of a group united by
their revulsion at the bestiality of the lower orders. It is now important
for us to correct the misleading impression that animal protectionists

15 About the aesthetic topic see Boltanski [1993]. About the controversy that aesthetic appraisal
of corrida can provoke see Heinich [1992] and Traïni [2003b].
were a homogenous group, by offering a ternary distinction – between the established group, the challengers and the excluded – which reflects the variety of motives of the first animal protectionists. This perspective relegates the lower classes to the role of passive targets of those who attempt to exclude them, because of their supposed inferiority (Elias and Scotson, 1997). The upper classes, on the other hand, are divided into two subgroups on the basis of the two competing forms of accreditation which they sought to promote. Here accreditation indicates the behaviors and discourse through which the members of these groups “attempt to present their own qualities, expertise and experience as making them uniquely qualified to determine the common good of the community” (Traïni, 2003a, p. 4). Thus, on the one hand, the established group endeavors to maintain the primacy of the qualities on which their dignity, self-respect, power and respected status rest. On the other hand, the challengers, or “the middle classes operating on two fronts” (Elias, 1985, p. 302), did their utmost to emphasize the qualities which enabled them to question the superiority of the upper classes while not challenging what distinguishes them from the lower orders. This phenomenon made an important contribution to the spreading and intensification of the civilizing process, insofar as the challengers attached ever-increasing importance to methodical and constant self-control, the mastering of impulses, and promotion of introspection. Between the 17th and 19th centuries relations between the establishment figures, with their connections within the aristocracy and the clergy, and the challengers, whose origins were bourgeois, presented very different balances of power and forms of accreditation within the various European national configurations (Elias, 1973, 1996).

In England, the bourgeois middle classes operating on two fronts – who managed to move up the social scale in the direction of the establishment – tended to present themselves as champions of moral excellence inspired by Christianity. Indeed, the upward social mobility of the bourgeois classes seemed closely linked to the proliferation of religious movements and Protestant sects which developed in parallel to the Church of England.16 Thus the challengers particularly valued close study of the Gospels and their practical application in everyday life. The challengers aimed to embody and display Christian rectitude, to not only distinguish themselves from the

16 Several specialists on the history of England have noted that in the Victorian era many members of the upwardly mobile middle classes had a nonconformist Protestant, often Methodist, background (Bédarida, 1990, pp. 128-134; Charlot and Marx, 1978, p. 19). Subsequently, membership of these movements spread well beyond its core social base.
barbarous masses but also, albeit in a rather more subtle way, from indolent aristocrats. For these champions of Christian morality, being a religious person was not enough: the first principle laid down by the Redeemer (“To Go about Doing Good”) requires one to engage in works founded on continual vigilance and discipline. In order to live as a Christian one must not only do good deeds, but demonstrate an unusual capacity to free oneself from habits and temptations which are often regarded as insignificant. The best Christians can be recognized by their temperance and self-discipline, as well as their belief in the power of individual resolve, and in the possibility of continual self-improvement, as part of a quest for perfection. From this perspective, any dealings an individual has with an animal present an opportunity to surpass the standards of those at the very top of the social scale. Thus John Wesley (1703-1791), the founder of Methodism, used a slack rein when on horseback, in order to publicly demonstrate the care and attention which he paid to the consequences of all his actions (Kean, 1998, p. 21). At the end of the 19th century for other evangelists, who were equally keen to display “a high degree of self-awareness and self-control,” treatment of insects and other “lower animals” [frogs, minnows, toads and snakes] “became important precisely because that treatment seemed so trifling” (Grier, 1999, p. 104). Furthermore, relationships with animals also provide an individual with an opportunity to test their thoroughly puritanical ability to turn their back on immediate sensual gratification: alcohol, gambling, reading novels, “amusements which violently inflame and gratify [men’s] appetites” (Grier, 1999, p. 98). By the same token, as we have already seen, a wide range of popular practices, such as bullfighting or cockfighting, were roundly condemned. The moral excellence of evangelists caused them, like John Wesley, to go further in their rejection of self-indulgence, by giving up wine and meat. Refraining from eating meat appeared particularly virtuous, firstly because meat production involved inflicting violence on animals, and, secondly, because meat constituted an important part of the kind of copious and luxurious diet only the rich could afford.

Thus, the accreditation procedures of the middle classes operating on two fronts, by praising their qualities of rigor and optimal moral vigilance, contributed to the emergence of a new type of animal protectionist. To the prescriptors, who were characterized by their aptitude for formulating norms to which deviants should conform, may be added the ascetics, who are able to control and modify their own behavior, with a view to improving the moral order of the world. In Great Britain these accreditation procedures based on ascetic qualities have undoubtedly greatly contributed to the spread of vegetarianism, whose values are widely accepted in Britain,
particularly among animal protection activists. It is certainly important, once again, when considering the motives for adopting a vegetarian diet, to take into account that some of these motives have a longer history than others, and that they can be heterogeneous, and vary over time. Nevertheless, two particular bodies of evidence explain how the intensification of the civilization of manners contributed to vegetarianism becoming associated with campaigns to outlaw cruelty to animals. Firstly, the decision to give up eating meat can have its origins in feelings of disgust at breaches of the integrity of an animal’s body which result in bleeding, injury and death. Thus, John Oswald, a British soldier who had no doubt been deeply affected by horrors witnessed on the battlefield, and was the author of the 1791 work *Cry of Nature*, recommended the adoption of a vegetarian diet as way of avoiding the sight of animals shedding blood (Turner, 1980, p. 18). Sir Richard Phillips, on the other hand, in the entry on “Diet,” in his *Dictionary of the Arts of Life and Civilisation*, published in 1833, refers to the traumatic incident which led him to want to distance himself from meat eaters: “at twelve years of age the author of this volume was struck with such horror in accidently seeing the barbarities of a London slaughterhouse, that since that hour he has never eaten anything but vegetables” (Phillips, 1833, p. 571). Secondly, as we have already established, giving up meat could also be a course of action, inspired by Protestantism, which enabled ascetics from the middle classes operating on two fronts – exercising superior moral fortitude – to demonstrate gentler habits than those prevalent among members of the establishment. In fact the creation in 1847 of the Vegetarian Society was largely the initiative of members of nonconformist churches, such as the Bible Christian Church (Tonutti, 2007, p. 65). For nonconformists eating meat, which was often regarded as a “sin of the flesh,” represented the antithesis of temperance, on which they sought to base their primacy (Gusfield, 1986). During later phases in the history of animal protection these forms of accreditation, based on ascetic rigor, which required the observation of a particular diet became more widespread, although Christian references progressively disappeared from the rhetoric. Thus, nowadays, animal protection activists, even more than ecological activists (Faucher, 1998), equate the rigorousness of their dietary regime with the intensity of their commitment to their cause. If they are vegetarians they eat no meat or fish; dietary vegans, also known as strict vegetarians, take their stand against animal exploitation a step

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17 This disappearance of Christian references manifests itself in a process of secularization, accompanied by a reinterpretation of the representations which, in Eastern religions, notably Hinduism, provide justifications for following a vegetarian diet.
further by eating no eggs, milk or cheese, as well as no meat or fish. Ethical vegans, on the other hand, are also careful to avoid using anything whose production caused animal suffering of any kind. This can affect their choice of clothing and footwear, as well as other products they use, and leisure activities, etc. An ethical vegan avoids all animal-derived products, such as leather, wool, fur, or cosmetic and household products which have been tested on animals.18

In France, the accreditation procedures of the middle classes operating on two fronts who joined the animal protection movement obviously do not have the same affinities with the ascetic practices inspired by the Protestant reformers. The bourgeois members of protection societies were much more likely to make reference to applied sciences and the philosophers of the Enlightenment than the revelation of the messages of Christ. Thus, as we have already noted above, doctors, veterinarians and hygienists made up a large proportion of the first cohorts of SPA activists. For them, their involvement in the animal protection cause represented an extension of the accreditation procedures through which they attempted to establish the collective value of their professional skills and knowledge. Throughout the 19th century such initiatives caused tension, controversy and conflict within the SPA, where members of the large establishment contingent, who generally had aristocratic backgrounds, were, for their part, anxious to regain the status which had declined during the revolutionary period. Thus, dissenting voices, heard within the society when attempts were made to promote the consumption of horse meat, were a manifestation of underlying power struggles over status within the animal protection movement. Doctors, veterinarians and hygienists from the upwardly mobile middle classes – such as Dr. Blatin, the first vice president of the SPA – believed that the debate over whether or not to eat horse meat provided them with an opportunity to demonstrate the social utility of scientific expertise and knowledge, which guided their own relations with animals. Other members of the SPA, who had aristocratic backgrounds, considered that eating horse meat degraded an animal which the nobility traditionally used to associate with its exceptional status and with its prowess on the battlefield. The resonance of such representations should not be underestimated, especially when we recall, for example, that the first president of the SPA, from 1854 to 1865, Viscount Pinon Duclos de Valmer, joined the animal protection movement after a career in the military: he had risen to the rank of captain in the lancers during the Bourbon

Restoration. Even more exemplary in this regard was another of the leading figures in the SPA, Jacques Philippe Delmas de Grammont, who, apart from giving his name to the first piece of French animal protection legislation, was also a cavalry general and the founder, in 1850, of the French League for the Protection of Horses. In fact, throughout the 19th century many of most influential and highly regarded members of the French SPA were horsemen and, keen to cultivate their upper-class connections, were proud to count among their number a Spanish grandee who enjoyed the unusual privilege of being allowed to enter churches on horseback (Fleury, 1995, p. 33). Under such circumstances it is not difficult to imagine how this kind of activist – already concerned by the way burgeoning industrialization was marginalizing horses – could be outraged by a campaign which reduced this noblest of animals to a mere source of protein – and for the humblest members of society! While eating horse meat prolongs the accreditation initiatives of upwardly mobile sectors of the bourgeoisie, it also excites fears of loss of status among the members of the established group, who stress their links with the aristocracy and its equestrian culture.

Clearly, the motives we have hypothesized are linked to gnawing, ill-defined fears and did not necessarily give rise to an intense discursive formulation of the reasons for an aversion to eating horse meat. Moreover – providing further evidence of the heterogeneity of the underlying motives and reasons for animal protection campaigns – opposition to eating horse meat, even within the SPA, was not confined to the indignation of horsemen and horsewomen attached to the prestige traditionally associated with equestrianism. As we shall see in Chapter 7, there were other SPA members whose indignation was linked to their own subordinate status, which led them to identify with overworked draught animals. For others, their opposition to eating horse meat came out of a more reasoned understanding of basic principles as to what constitutes civilized practices and behavior. In any event, critics of the practice attacked promoters of hippophagy and their claims to have a perfectly rational approach to animal protection, using a procedure which we have already clearly identified, by associating the eating of horse meat with excluded domestic groups or foreign atrocities. Thus, for Dr. Robinet, the public health and economic arguments advanced by hippophages are based on the false premises of an argumentation which, taken to its logical conclusion, could only result in a regression to the cannibalistic practices resorted to by our primitive ancestors. For Georges Noguès, “the [adoption of] hippophagy [which] comes from the Caucasus and Dagestan” should be seen not as civilizational progress, but as a step backward toward the obsolete practices of peoples distant in time and place:
Members of the Circassian race are sickly, ignorant and superstitious, and as regards commerce and industry restrict themselves to trafficking their young women, who are brought up to be sold into servitude. […] The Circassians who have settled in Constantinople in the Tophane neighborhood, spend their time smoking and shaking off their vermin, and when they have enough money to indulge in a little debauchery will get together with a few of his compatriots, have a whip round and go to Albazar to buy a horse which is no longer fit for work. The animal is slaughtered, and prepared for consumption. No learned society dedicated to the thankless task of trying to popularize the eating of horse meat has derived as much satisfaction from converting people to their cause as the Circassians obtain from feasting on this national delicacy. Here we have an example of a practice presented as an example of European progress which in fact originates from another tradition. (Noguès, 1865, p. 24)

It would seem that humans did not stop eating horse meat because of its taste or any difficulty they had digesting it but that, as they evolved from being savage – in other words in the primitive state where, as a hungry carnivore, they devoured all prey (even other humans) – to offering protection, and a certain level of respect to those nonhuman species who were close enough to them to be able to share their domestic or public lives […]. After the horse it will be the turn of the dog, despite the fact that its meat is quite unpalatable; and who knows, perhaps even anthropophagy will become acceptable. (Fremaux, 1864, p. 1308)

Statements of this kind, and other evidence, make it easy to imagine the kind of sharp exchanges of views which the topic of eating horse meat must have provoked within the SPA. Indeed, a row ensued after it was suggested that a bust should be commissioned to honor Dr. Blatin’s contribution to the society. The project was abandoned due to the fact that this tireless activist had stood on a committee for promoting the consumption of horse meat. The comparison between France and Britain provides further confirmation of the importance of the struggles for status which underlie the debates between supporters and opponents of eating horse meat. The campaign in France in favor of eating horse meat had no British equivalent. The continuing prestige of the aristocracy, and acceptance of the established order of the monarchy by the bourgeoisie, further strengthened opposition to the idea that the horse, an animal whose reputation for nobility was particular well-entrenched in Britain, could be regarded as merely a source of meat. Almost one hundred and fifty years later, both the French and the British
still had difficulties understanding the very different attitudes to eating horse meat which prevailed on the other side of the Channel. Thus, when, in February 2013, there was a scandal, in England then in the rest of Europe, after some frozen beef burgers were revealed to contain Romanian horse meat, in France the coverage of the scandal focused on the tricking of consumers and food traceability, whereas in England there was the added element of the undeclared meat being a taboo food. The British popular press seized the opportunity to compare the French habit of eating horse meat to other repulsive local cuisines from around the world: deep-fried monkey toes in Indonesia, bull testicles in Spain, squirrel brains in the United States (Hamilton, 2013).

Debates over vivisection provide even clearer evidence of competition between the opposing accreditation enterprises of the established group and the challengers. In the previous section antivivisectionism appeared to be essentially underpinned by nationalist motives, setting up British gentleness in opposition to the horrors perpetrated on the Continent. Revulsion at a practice defined as “foreign” was intensified by the fact that it was a way of proclaiming one’s pride at being English. Of course, there were other motives behind opposition to vivisection; to neglect other, complementary, explanations would be highly reductive. Indignation at the practice also appeared to be a way for the traditional dominant classes to react against the accreditation enterprises of the scientific community, put in place by the upwardly mobile bourgeoisie. As we have already seen, the leaders of the first societies to denounce vivisection in terms of a regression toward barbarity of the most horrifying kind came from the aristocracy, the judiciary and the clergy. The members of the dominant classes who engaged in charitable works to help the poor reacted particularly sharply to the threat represented by scientists and physicians, who claimed that their work presented a greater contribution to improving the lot of humanity because to their ability to push back the boundaries of science. The Victoria Street Society, formed to campaign against vivisection, included such prominent members of the establishment as Cardinal Manning19 and Lord Shaftesbury.20 Frances Power Cobbe, before founding the society, had

19 Henry Edward Manning was the son of a merchant who served as a director then governor of the Bank of England, and sat on the Conservative benches of the House of Commons for nearly thirty years. Manning himself, after graduating from Oxford University, embarked on a career in holy orders during which he attempted to orient Christianity toward the promotion of social justice.

20 Anthony Ashley Cooper, the seventh Earl of Shaftesbury, a prominent philanthropist, who was elected to Parliament in 1829, played a leading role in the passage of a wide range of social reform
already been engaged in much more conventional philanthropic works. At Mary Carpenter’s school in Bristol she had worked with young women who had been in prison, workhouse inmates, prostitutes and other unfortunates. She had also been involved in visiting hospices, to comfort the sick, which was, at that time, one of the more common ways of engaging in philanthropy (Duprat, 1993). One can easily imagine that, in the course of these traditional charitable activities, Cobbe crossed the path of doctors who, having a high opinion of their own scientific knowledge, had a correspondingly low regard for what they regarded as old-fashioned charitable works. In other words, vivisection debates were largely fueled by competition between conceptions of charity based on antithetical accreditation enterprises. On the one hand, the traditional elites call, with magnanimous indulgence, for respect to be shown to a long-established and harmonious order, within which the powerful are under an obligation to protect those beneath them in the hierarchy. On the other hand, the technical competence resulting from new scientific discoveries allowed some members of certain professions to aspire to leadership roles, in order that a social order – purged of the most persistent kinds of poverty – might be founded.

Challenged in this way, the established group was bound to react with the utmost hostility. Thus, in “The Medical Profession and Its Morality,” Cobbe described doctors as a class of parvenus who scoff at values such as patience and compassion and extolled the kind of scientific progress which did not necessarily work for good of humanity, but which certainly did facilitate their personal enrichment. Furthermore, scientists and doctors who display no sensitivity when practicing vivisection will be unlikely to treat their patients in a humane way: “a patient is to the doctor what a rock is to a geologist, or a flower to a botanist – the much desired subject of his studies” (quoted in Dardenne, 2003, pp. 213-214). Elsewhere Cobbe vehemently denounced the hygiolatry which resulted from efforts made by doctors to convince their contemporaries to attach more importance to the physical health of their bodies than their moral virtue. The antivivisection struggle was given an added urgency by the fact that it was part of a bigger fight against the scandalous “takeover” plans of the “new priests”: “today there is no one to stand up to the French Medical Board, which occupies a position strangely comparable with that of the priesthood in ancient times” (quoted in Dardenne, 2003, p. 158). It should be noted that, as a rule,
antivivisectionists were less hostile toward science per se, than toward the “experimental method,” which posed a serious threat to the knowledge on which the best established authorities relied.21 The idea that medical students should be taught that the acquisition of knowledge should depend, not on unquestioningly accepting the authority of one’s glorious predecessors, but on investigating and revealing the unknown, was profoundly troubling and controversial. This attempt to pervert young people was seen as not only an attack on the gentleness of customs, but also the faith on which Christian morality is built.22 Once again, attacks on the practice of vivisection often conjure up images of uncontrolled violence, whose effects are unpredictable and irreversible:

The child takes a watch and breaks it in order to get to the “little animal” inside that intrigues it, just as a vivisectionist takes a living being and submits it to horrible suffering, in the hope of solving life’s elusive mystery: it will no doubt elude him for a long while yet, and it is not presumptuous to predict that, if one day human science does succeed in fully explaining organic life, it will be the result of the patient and protracted observation of its normal functioning, combined with the painstaking and meticulous disassembling and observation of organisms, and not by the work of a brutal and destructive hand on a living creature, which involves the perturbation of all natural phenomena. (BSFCV 1 [1884], p. 5)

Vivisection, for its detractors, represents less a contribution to advances in the medical field than a promotion of unhealthy curiosity and insensitivity to the pain of other living things. Such attitudes, they argue, are incompatible with the qualities required of a doctor. Training medical students to cultivate the detached attitude necessary to engage in the dissection of live animals can only result in them becoming immune to the suffering of their future patients (Turner, 1980, pp. 79-121). The idea appears all the more

21 This led some doctors and hygienists, particularly older ones, to support the antivivisectionist movement. For them, supporting the cause was a way of protesting against experimental medicine’s questioning of the authority of practitioners whose research had involved many years of patient clinical observation. Such practitioners, who had their own motives, rejected vivisection, defending a body of knowledge which they regarded as being more reliable, but whose credibility went into a long decline in the last decades of the 19th century, as a string of medical discoveries were made thanks in whole or in part to animal experimentation.

22 We have observed that the British middle classes operating on two fronts placed a lot of emphasis on a view of moral excellence inspired by Christianity. As a consequence the antivivisection movement in Britain – unlike its French counterpart – had support within the very middle classes where the vivisectionist movement was strongest.
worrying when one considers that these medical practitioners will surely be invited into civilized homes in which it is increasingly common for a dog or dogs – the main victims of vivisection – to be treated as one of the family.²³

Given the wide variety of beliefs held by members of protection societies, it is unsurprising that the issue of vivisection gave rise to heated debates and to regroupings and even splits within these societies. These debates became more heated when, at the beginning of the 1870s, as we have already noted, vivisection was no longer confined to continental Europe, and British scientists, in an attempt to catch up with their German and French counterparts, made efforts to establish the use of vivisection in the scientific research throughout Britain. In 1875, Cobbe convinced the RSPCA to put pressure on the British government to pass antivivisection legislation. The government duly set up a Royal Commission to investigate the issue and, after numerous hearings, they produced a report which formed the basis for the Cruelty to Animals Act, enacted by Parliament in 1876. As we shall see later, the vociferousness of the antivivisectionist campaign provoked the scientific community to mount a concerted countermobilization, which subjected the government to intensive lobbying. In fact the provisions of the act represented a compromise which satisfied neither the promoters of vivisection – who felt that the legislation seemed to reflect the views of those who suspected them of immorality – nor its detractors, who were scandalized that scientists would not be subjected to external controls. Sickened by the conciliatory attitudes of both the government and the RSPCA, Cobbe established that the policy of the Society for the Protection of Animals Liable to Vivisection would be clear and uncompromising: anything less than the total abolition of the practice would be unacceptable to them. Over the next two decades, the stance of the pasionaria of the antivivisection movement became increasingly radical and estranged from mainstream elements of the animal protection movement, who were worried that her excessively aggressive criticisms of science were giving animal protectionism the reputation for being reactionary and dogmatic. Increasingly marginalized within the society she herself had founded in 1875, Cobbe went on to found, in 1898, the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection.²⁴

²³ In Chapter 7 we will examine the extent to which the increasing popularity of companion animals and the feminization of animal protection greatly influence subsequent antivivisection campaigns.
²⁴ The British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection (BUAV) is still active today.
In France, within the SPA, opponents of vivisection experienced far greater difficulty in having their point of view accepted. It should be noted that of the sixteen committee members tasked with formulating policy on vivisection no fewer than five were doctors. The committee concluded that “a morally sound appreciation of this issue could not consider vivisection techniques used exclusively for scientific purposes as constituting acts of cruelty to animals. This kind of experimentation may be justified by reference to its noble aims, its usefulness, and the immense scientific progress enabled by it” (BSPA, 1861, p. 180). French protectionists openly admitted to their embarrassment at the offensive launched by their British counterparts: “Delegates from the London society, believing that they were providing us with support, did not hesitate to provide testimony of the repugnance felt in England for vivisectionist practices [...]. The argument that the use of vivisection is unavoidable necessity, which is attacked and denied by English doctors, and supported by the French medical profession, left us greatly perplexed” (BSPA, 1861, p. 180). In conclusion the committee recognized, except where abuses occurred, that the legitimacy of vivisection depended on the careful consideration of the underlying principles guiding the protection of animals: “If the protection of animals is the duty of every human who has an honest heart, we are also obliged to obey the divine law to love and bring relief to our neighbor, being guided by our motto: Justice and compassion for animals, Love and devotion for our fellow men” (BSPA, 1861, p. 180). As one would have expected, this timorousness provoked particular criticism from the Marquis of Mostcick-Gozom, who was the vice president of the SPA. In his opinion the commission, which contained a large contingent of doctors “gave in to all the demands of the animal experimentation lobby, and rejected the demands of the animal protectionists” (BSPA, 1861, p. 365). “Their blindness, which results from a culpable esprit de corps, represents a denial of the true nature of a practice which constitutes the art of prolonging both suffering and life, [of] endless torture cruelly inflicted on gentle obedient animals, on poor beings who are defenseless and speechless” (BSPA, 1861, p. 366). To fail to strenuously oppose vivisection was to lose sight not only of the essential mission of animal protectionists, but also of the fact that the actions of these scientific parvenus were no less brutal than those of the carters from whom they claimed to be quite different:

On the contrary it is up to the animal protection societies to protest in the strongest possible terms, and to do everything in their power to put a stop to the multitude of sterile experiments which demonstrate nothing,
except the presumptuousness and cruelty of the men who perform them [...] How can we, on the one hand, show serious concern for the whipping and overloading of animals and, on the other, solemnly declare that we do not wish to oppose the horrible suffering inflicted on other animals. I am not talking about operations of true anatomists, who are few and far between, but (and this is the great evil) by ignorant individuals, who vainly ape science, or by depraved voyeurs who derive pleasure from watching pain being inflicted! (BSPA, 1861, p. 367)

Over the following decades pro- and antivivisectionists managed to coexist within the Society for the Protection of Animals. In 1877, Mme la Comtesse Antonin de Noailles, patroness of the society, offered a prize of 1,500 francs to the best essay attacking the practice of vivisection (BSPA, 1877, p. 142). In 1883, notwithstanding denials from the president of the SPA, antivivisectionists claimed that they had been prevented from expressing their views within the society. They also called for the SPA to provide funding for the French Society against Vivisection (BSPA, 1883, p. 104). In fact, that same year not one but two societies solely dedicated to denouncing vivisection were created in France. The stated mission of the French Society against Antivivisection was to “provoke, by all legal means, a groundswell of public opinion, in order to alert the authorities to the danger that the practice of vivisection would have a negative impact on the development of national mores” (BSFCV, 1884, p.1). The thirty members of the first board of directors of the society included seven titled noblemen and noblewomen, fourteen women and three doctors. For her part, Marie Huot founded the Popular League against Vivisection which she used as a platform to attack both perverted medical practices and bullfighting aficionados. In 1901, Baron de Knyff founded an International Union which was authorized to add to its title that of Popular League (BSPA, 1908, p. 260) and in the 1910s the Russian countess, Mme de Yourkevitch, well known in Paris high society well for her beauty and elegance, was the president of the National Union against Vivisection (Le Figaro, 25 June 1910). Although antivivisectionists were involved in the movement for a wide variety of reasons, they were united in their shared aversion to the faith which French people increasingly placed in experimental medicine. Thus, in 1885, at the annual conference of the French Society against Vivisection, Maria Deraismes set out “to attack the aforementioned method in the shape of its most fervent advocate, Claude Bernard, the great high priest of experimental psychology” (BSFCV 4 [1887], p. 31):
The only motives behind [Bernard's] overwhelming passion for experimentation are the desire to put his name to a so-called discovery, and, equally importantly, use it to his personal advantage. Vivisection is to be denounced and renounced, as it does no good, on the contrary it is force for evil. We cannot accept the assurances of Claude Bernard that experimenting on human beings is motivated by a desire to relieve the suffering of humanity. There is a great deal of evidence to show that the curiosity which drives these so-called scientists is often of an unhealthy nature. (BSFCV 4 [1887], p. 31)

Thus, between 1870 and 1930 – the period when the use of animals in laboratories first came in for widespread criticism – the experimental method, which the members of the middle classes operating on two fronts invested in for accreditation purposes, provoked the indignation of increasingly heterogeneous groups of opponents. While it was certainly the case that early mobilizations well fueled by the anger of conservative upper-class representatives of the animal welfare establishment, as we shall see later open hostility to the rising prestige of scientific medicine came, progressively, to take on other unprecedented, complementary meanings.