The Animal Rights Struggle

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6 The rise in the power of tenderness

In the previous chapters we have noted that the earliest animal protection campaigns did not focus on the suffering of animals. We will now examine the extent to which, over the second half of the 19th century, there was a turning point in the history of the movement, with increasing direction of compassion toward mistreated animals.

Animality, equality, fraternity

In view of our aims, the theoretical framework hitherto adopted would suggest an approach combining the perspectives of Norbert Elias and Alexis de Tocqueville (Déloye and Haroche, 2006, p. 110). The French aristocrat argued that the greater equality characteristic of the democratic era implies a softening of manners as well as an extension of sympathy. Drawing on the philosophical tradition, he takes sympathy to mean the intersubjective communication of feelings, of which the best example is compassion, namely the state of being affected by the suffering of others (Wilhelm, 2007, p. 72). “Sympathy is thus a phenomenon of identification by projection – of projective identification – by which we imagine being in the other person’s body, and suffering, albeit to a lesser degree, what we – with our own sensibility – would suffer if put in a similar situation” (Wilhelm, 2007, p. 75). For Tocqueville, the growing sensitivity to the suffering of others cannot be dissociated from the fact that hierarchical discrimination – which affirms that all persons are not equally worthy of respect – was becoming increasingly unacceptable: “[T]here are several causes which can concur to make the manners of people less rude; but, among all these causes, the most powerful one seems to be the equality of conditions” (Tocqueville, 1993, p. 229). Tocqueville notes, in support of this argument, that “when the chroniclers of the Middle Ages, who all, by their birth or their habits, belonged to the aristocracy, report the tragic end of a nobleman, there are infinite sorrows; while they recount in one breath and without batting an eye the massacre and tortures of the men of the people” (Tocqueville, 1993, p. 231). Thus he also notes the matter-of-fact way in which the Marquise de Sévigné, writing to her daughter in 1675, related the torture used in the putting down of a popular antitax revolt in Brittany. For Tocqueville, this “cruel banter,” showing indifference to the suffering of the lower orders, was a consequence of the hierarchical mentality typical of aristocratic societies,
“for there are real sympathies only between similar people; and in aristocratic centuries only members of one’s caste were regarded as being similar […]. Mme de Sévigné clearly did not understand what suffering was when one was not a gentleman” (Tocqueville, 1993, pp. 231-233). As egalitarianism developed, anyone who showed such insensitivity to human suffering would be greeted with widespread condemnation. Indeed, democratic mores require a very different emotional economy which, Tocqueville stresses, implies a close interdependence between equality of status, introspection, identification with others and finally “general compassion for all members of the human species” (Tocqueville, 1993, p. 233).

When ranks are nearly equal among a people, since all men have more or less the same way of thinking and feeling, each one of them can judge in a moment the sensations of all the others; he glances quickly at himself; that is sufficient. So there is no misery that he cannot easily imagine and whose extent is not revealed to him by a secret instinct. Whether it concerns strangers or enemies, his imagination immediately puts him in their place. It mingles something personal in his pity, and makes him suffer as the body of his fellow man is torn apart. (Tocqueville, 1993, p. 233)

In order to better understand the evolution of the emotional economy underlying animal welfare, we need to examine the extent to which the general trend described by Tocqueville – namely the gradual replacement of a hierarchical mentality, which encouraged differences in status between individuals, with compassionate egalitarianism – progressively extended to relations between humans and animals. Hitherto violence inflicted on animals had provoked fear and repugnance. Now, such acts also increasingly began to evoke compassionate feelings, thanks to the ability to feel, though empathy, another being’s suffering. In other words the development of democratic compassion is closely linked to a process of reduction of alterity, meaning that the other – in particular the animal – far from being regarded as being irreducibly different, is confused with oneself: “sympathy leads to losing the other by bringing it to oneself” (Wilhelm, 2007, p. 77). Animal welfare thus increasingly had affinities with the anthropomorphic tendency to attribute to animals the same feelings experienced by humans.

It was, of course, the Romantic poets who first contributed to awakening the imagination necessary to feel tenderness toward the misfortune of animals, regarded as our alter egos. In 1785, in “To a Mouse: On Turning Her up in a Nest with a Plow,” Robert Burns describes the plight of the animal
left homeless as a result of the action of a man, who apologizes for what he has done:

Wee, sleekat, cowran, tim’rous beastie
Thou need na start awa sae hasty [...]  
Which makes thee startle 
At me, they poor, earth born companion 
An’ fellow mortal!

In 1794, William Blake, in “The Fly,” compares his fate with that of the insect:

Little fly
Thy summer’s play
My thoughtless hand
Has brushed away*
Am I not
A fly like thee
Or art thou not
A man like me?
For I dance
And drink and sing
Till some blind hand
Shall brush my wing.

Four years earlier, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, full of enthusiasm for the promise of the French Revolution, addresses a young ass:

Poor little foal of an oppressed race [...]  
Thou poor despised forelorn! 
I hail thee brother [...]  
And fain would take me, in the Dell 
Of peace and mild Equality to dwell.

We can see that the feelings of the poets and the animals, similarly exposed to the unjust treatment of men, are closely related. Hence the aversion to discrimination and domination, as well as the antithetic recognition of the language of law, should provoke the solemn proclamation of the equal dignity of all animals. Thus, as early as 1789, Jeremy Bentham, in his Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation, expressed the idea
that the egalitarianism which led the French revolutionaries to abolish slavery should be extended to animals:

[T]he day may come when the rest of the animal creation may acquire those rights which never could have been withheld from them but by the hand of tyranny. The French have already discovered that the blackness of the skin is no reason a human being should be abandoned without redress to the caprice of a tormentor. It may one day come to be recognized that the number of the legs, the villosity of the skin, or the termination of the os sacrum are reasons equally insufficient for abandoning a sensitive being to the same fate. (Bentham, 1907, p. 311)

In fact, it would be mistaken, on the basis of accounts of animal welfare campaigns in the preceding chapters, to reduce the story of animal protection in the 19th century to the acts of a succession of conservative, even reactionary, moral entrepreneurs. Practically from the birth of the animal welfare cause, and increasingly as the century unfolded, the animal welfare movement included campaigns by progressive activists whose aim was to struggle against inequality and relations of dependence. In Britain, one of the leading figures in this tradition was Henry Stevens Salt (Dardenne, 2005). The son of a colonel in the British army, Salt was born in India in 1851. After distinguishing himself academically at Eton and Cambridge, he returned to Eton as a master and, at the beginning of the 1880s, became particularly interested in the ideals of justice and equality championed by the socialist intellectuals of the time. He joined the Fabian Society and, in 1900, was involved in the founding of the Labour Party. Salt had a revelation which led him to regard the meat eaten by humans as nothing more than dead flesh, produced by the slaughter of shocking numbers of animals. In 1886, the Vegetarian Society – founded nearly forty years earlier – published his book, *A Plea for Vegetarianism*.25

In 1891, Salt founded the Humanitarian League in the name of the need to reject violence, and to show compassion to all creatures. With these objectives in mind, the members of this new society campaigned on numerous fronts: for reform of the criminal law and the prison system; for the abolition of both capital punishment and corporal punishment; for an educational system which taught the obligation to be kind to all sentient beings, and – last but not least – for more wide-ranging and strictly enforced animal welfare

25 In his autobiography Gandhi claims that as a direct result of reading this book, when he was a student in England, he realized that it was his moral duty to become a vegetarian.
legislation. In 1892, Henry Salt wrote *Animals’ Rights: Considered in Relation to Social Progress*, a book now considered as a precursor of antispeciesism, which will be discussed at length below. For now, we should note that Salt’s “humanitarianism” may be distinguished from preexisting philanthropic societies: he rejected a condescending kind of charity which took pleasure in looking down on the unfortunate objects of its compassion from a superior standpoint of “irreproachable respectability” (Li, 2000, p. 278). Moreover he aimed to extend the principles of socialism by treating the exploitation of men and animals as manifestations of the same problem. Thus, the members of the Humanitarian League declared that they were struggling against “the cruelties inflicted by men, in the name of law, authority, and traditional habit, and the still more atrocious treatment of the lower animals, for the purpose of ‘sport,’ ‘science,’ ‘fashion,’ and the gratification of an appetite for unnatural food” (quoted in Dardenne, 2005). Certain campaigns led by members of the Humanitarian League managed to accuse members of such august and well-established animal welfare societies as the RSPCA of hypocrisy. Thus Henry Salt was critical of certain elegant ladies who became indignant at the behavior of coachmen while, out of a desire to appear fashionable, they adorned themselves with animal skins or hats decorated with bird feathers (Kean, 1998, p. 117). In a chapter dedicated to hunting in his book *Animal Rights*, entitled “Sport, or Amateur Butchery,” Salt went much further, denouncing the fact that a so-called gentleman can consider massacring certain species of animal as “an agreeable and gracious pastime.” So, members of the Humanitarian League alerted their contemporaries to two aspects of animal abuse, hitherto neglected, as being worthy of their indignation. Firstly, they pointed out that wild animals were also victims of human violence, and had the right to be treated with compassion; until then animal welfare campaigners had confined their efforts to the protection of domesticated species. Secondly, while RSPCA members were principally concerned about working-class violence, League members did not hesitate to condemn the fundamental brutality of a number of practices which were the preserve of the privileged classes: hunting, wearing fashionable clothing, and having a diet rich in meat.

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26 In 1914 the Humanitarian League published a collection of essays, edited by Salt, entitled *Killing for Sport*, in which various authors, including George Bernard Shaw, Edward Carpenter and George Greenwood, challenged various attempts to justify the so-called art of hunting.

27 It is certainly true that, as we have seen earlier, the fate of wild insectivore species had already been addressed. Nevertheless, the previous scandals arose out of concern about the economic consequences of the destruction of organisms beneficial to agriculture, and not concern for the suffering of the creatures themselves.
Comparing SPA newsletters over an extended period serves to confirm the growing importance of a kind of fraternal compassion which was increasingly sensitive to the suffering endured by animals. Once again, the poems admired by animal protectionists provide invaluable evidence of this trend. While it is certainly true that the editors of the very first SPA bulletins already sought fit to allocate space to poetry, the poems they published were spiritual stories modeled on the fables of Aesop or La Fontaine. In these earlier texts animals are allegorical figures used to illustrate a moral. By the 1880s, the poems vaunted by animal welfare campaigners aimed to promote “kindness toward animals” (BSPA, 1883, p. 30). Just noting the titles of some of these poems gives a flavor of the compassionate tone which was then widely favored: “The Death of a Bullfinch” by Brizieu, “The Doe Has Lost Its Fawn” by Ernest Fouinet, “Pity” by Coran, “The Nest” by Berquin, “The Poor Man and His Dog” by Ducis. As in England, the influence of Romantic poets was felt, and facilitated the use of sensitization apparatuses which aimed to trigger the imaginative leap needed to perceive, through empathy, the unjust suffering of animals. It should be said that, as early as 1837, Alphonse de Lamartine wrote poems such as “You Will Conclude a Pact with the Beasts” and “You Will Not Spill a Drop of Blood,” and called for the fraternal kindness desirable between men to be extended to animals:

You will not raise your hand against your brother
And you will not spill a drop of blood on the earth,
Neither human blood or blood of herds
Nor blood of fish, or blood of birds
A dull cry in your heart forbids you to spill it. (Lamartine, 1837, p. 77)

Another famous quotation from Lamartine, who was involved in politics during the Second Republic, has been frequently quoted by animal welfare activists from the 19th century right up to the present day: “We have not two hearts, one for the animals and the other for man. We either have a heart or we do not.” By presenting engagement with tenderness in a positive light, the Romantics enabled animal welfare campaigners – who were, however, initially suspicious of “oversensitiveness” – to trust their emotional reactions “although the author [of a book praised by the SPA] only had to listen to his own personal sentiments to write the page which we reproduce below, as he wrote he would surely have remembered these tender words of Lamartine: ‘[O]bliging men to treat animals with the same kindness as they are required to treat one another is to improve mankind itself’” (BSPA, 1883, p. 30).
As Maurice Agulhon has pointed out, it was precisely this call to the development of universal compassion which led supporters of political egalitarianism and secular anticlerical republicanism to join the animal welfare movement (Agulhon, 1988). Some of the leading progressive intellectuals of the time, including Pierre Larousse, Jules Michelet and Victor Hugo, gave their backing to the often controversial cause of animal protection. For these writers, who cared deeply about tackling the most intractable problems of social inequality, “[where there is] the desire to pity and defend those who have been victimized, to whatever degree, one does not pick and choose,” “and the pity shown, in descending order, to the proletariat, women, children and animals, are all no more than different aspects of universal pity” (Agulhon, 1988, pp. 273 and 267). So, in 1850, when General Grammont sought to introduce a piece of animal protection legislation, his bill received, to his surprise, more support from left-wing deputies than from his own right-wing colleagues. Almost thirty years later, confirmation that animal protection, in outlawing the brutal domination of the weak by the strong, is closely bound up with the watchwords of equality and fraternity may be found in a speech, made at the SPA: “[A]lonside philanthropy and fraternity, which in our times have flourished and triumphed, it is natural that there is an important place dedicated to affection toward animals. Love for animals is the consequence of love for men, and complements it. (Applause)” (BSPA, 1886, p. 141). In 1899, Adrienne Neyrat founded the review *L’Ami des bêtes*, whose support committee included some of the leading republican and socialist figures of the day: Anatole France, Georges Clemenceau, Jean Jaurès, and, last but not least, Émile Zola. Zola, who will go down in history as one of the most courageous French intellectuals for his principled stands against injustice, had no hesitation in rallying to the animal welfare cause. On 24 March 1896, *Le Figaro* published an article by the famous novelist, entitled “The Love of Animals,” in which he reported the emotional effect the plight of animals had on him. “Shaking of the heart,” “pity full of anguish,” “surge of fraternal compassion” constitute such strong emotions that they provoke the author’s moral questioning: “Why are all the animals on the earth related to me, why does the mere idea of them fill me with mercy, tolerance and tenderness? Why are animals, like men and as much as men, all in my family?” A year before his involvement in the Dreyfus Affair, Zola made a speech at the annual prize-giving ceremony of the SPA at the Cirque d’hiver which went even further:

Let us love them [animals], because they are our little sisters, crippled and incomplete, without words to speak of their ills, without the faculty
of reason to use their gifts; let us love them, because we are the most intelligent [creatures], which has made us the strongest; let us love them; in the name of fraternity and justice, to honor creation which is in them, to respect the work of life and make our blood triumph, the red blood which is the same blood that flows through their veins and ours. (BSPA, 1896, pp. 139-141)²⁸

I did not know how to demonstrate courage, because the animal cause is for me more noble, [and] closely linked to the cause of men, to the point that all improvements in our relations with animals surely mark an increase in human happiness. If one day all men on earth are going to be happy, you can be sure that all animals will be happy too. In the face of pain we have a common fate which cannot be broken, it is a matter of minimizing the suffering of all life. (BSPA, 1896, p. 217)

This growing affirmation of universal pity invites us to examine in more detail the influence on the animal protection movement of another leading figure on the republican left. As everyone knows, the works of Victor Hugo had a massive impact on their time, thanks to their creativity, lyricism, engagement with political struggles and social issues, and, perhaps most importantly, because of their sympathy for the fate of the poor. Hugo – idolized by the republican left and more or less regarded as the official poet of the Third Republic – took humble characters and transformed them into heroes – Quasimodo, the hunchback; Jean Valjean, the convict; Gavroche, the street urchin, etc. – and he created a body of work whose outstanding characteristic was its ability to provoke great pity in the reader. In line with this, compassion, often combined with the author’s pantheism, is described as being all the more praiseworthy when it expresses itself through zoophilia – pity for animals – which thus appears to be the most advanced form of charity. Indeed, in 1884, the president of the French antivivisection society requested the support of Victor Hugo, “whose name is an inspiration for those who struggle to defend the rights of the weak against the violence of the strong” (BSFCV 1 [1884], p. 2). The poet replied

²⁸ This extension of compassion to animals, although real, is obviously relative and dependent on distinctions regarded at the time as being self-evident. Hence the fact, noted in Chapter 3, that Émile Zola was moved by the lot of sheep and the lot of wolves to very different degrees. It is clear from the article, published by Le Figaro on 24 March 1896, that Zola’s compassion toward animals was reserved for those domesticated species which live together with humans.
with a short letter with which the campaigners were more than happy: “[A]mid these illegitimate uses of force, a [single] word from Victor Hugo would be enough to provoke a cry for justice. [The voice of the poet] may not always be listened to when it addresses the blind selfishness of the Crown; but it would certainly be heard by the great judge to which our society is answerable: public opinion” (BSFCV 1 [1884], p. 2). To this very day, animal rights activists, in particular antibullfighting campaigners, draw inspiration from the words of Victor Hugo, and often carry signs with quotations from his work when they hold street demonstrations (Traïni, 2010b): “You will never be, whatever the circumstances, completely unhappy if you are kind to animals” and, most famously, “Torturing a bull for pleasure or amusement is more than torturing an animal, it is torturing a conscience.” Nevertheless, the work which best illustrates Victor Hugo’s preeminent role in feeding the imagination necessary for the emotional economy on which, since the end of the 19th century, the animal protection movement has increasingly relied, is a text published in 1859: “Le Crapaud” (The toad). This long poem, containing 162 verses, from the epic collection La Légende des siècles (The legend of the ages), is positioned between two other poems extolling pity, “Après la bataille” (Before the battle) and “Les pauvres Gens” (The poor), and describes the agony of an unfortunate/ugly and pathetic creature. A pair of absent-minded passers-by, a priest and an elegant lady, step on the toad and put out one of its eyes, then a group of children play cruel games with it. As the little bullies continue to torment the toad, a cart approaches, pulled by an “exhausted, lame and miserable donkey,” itself the victim of cruel treatment from its carter. The children come up with the idea of squashing the dying toad under one of the heavy wheels of the cart, but the donkey performs an unexpected act, which adds a further moral and pathetic dimension to the poem:

The donkey saw the toad, and, sad, – alas! leaning
Over one who was yet sadder, – heavy, broken, doleful, flayed,
He seemed to sniff at it with his stooped head;
This slave, this wretched, patient creature, showed mercy;
He gathered up his strength, and, stiffening
His chain and his halter on his bloody muscles,
Resisting the donkey-driver who was shouting walk on!

In reply to the letter of the president of the SFCV, Victor Hugo wrote, “Your letter is excellent, because it is eloquent. Give your opinion on this serious matter, and I will echo it” (BSFCV 1 [1884], p. 2).
...}

In his weariness accepting the challenge,
Pulling the wagon and lifting the pack saddle,
He frantically turned the unyielding wheel,
Sparing the life of this wretched creature,
Before, under the whip, continuing on his way.
Then, letting the stone fall from his hand,
One of the children – the one who is telling this story –
Under the infinite vault, both blue and black,
Heard a voice which said: be good!

This quotation, though lengthy, nicely draws attention to one of the most important historical turning points in the history of animal protection. From the end of the 19th century onward the animal protection movement took on a more equivocal character, not only because it was joined by supporters of the republican left, but also, and more importantly, because of a significant shift in its underlying emotional economy. The extolling of love for animals, the pity shown toward the most despised animals, was part of a wider evolution which could be termed the leveling of compassion. The poem “Le Crapaud” may be regarded as exemplary, insofar as it celebrates the commiseration of the most humble animals with other unfortunate creatures: “[T]he humble soul coming to the aid of somber soul / the stupid creature leaning over, moved by a horrible sight / The goodness of the accursed giving the cruel chosen one cause for reflection!” In other words, here we part company from that asymmetric pity, which is downward-looking and one-sided, which enables the upper strata of society to reaffirm their preeminent status. To counter this aristocratic emotional economy, Victor Hugo’s contemporaries appealed to “goodness,” a democratic and horizontal pity which, rejecting the hierarchical model, affirms a beneficial solidarity which is equally accessible to those at the top and at the bottom of the social ladder.

Thus from the 1880s onward, SPA activists increasingly noted both their sensitivity to this sympathy for the suffering of animals, and their firm belief that the nurturing of such sympathy can encourage the development of solidarity between men. This change led to a significant modification in the pedagogical approach that they chose to adopt. Their aim was no longer to merely curb children’s tendency to be cruel; they now aimed to make them aware – through the mediation of the relationship with the animal – of the pleasures of tenderness, regarded as a civic virtue of the highest importance.

There is a reason [writes a member of the SPA, while discussing a treatise on moral and civic instruction for the use of young girls] why it is said
that friends of animals are friends of men. Kindness appears in the little
details. If you get into the habit of being kind to animals you will soon
be kind to everyone. (BSPA, 1883, p. 30)

To our schoolchildren, [...] “It is not necessary to be rich to be charitable:
showing kindness gives lasting pleasures, which continually renew
themselves, and which are a delight to recall.” Yes, my children, Monsieur
de Dégur is right, we can be charitable even if we are not rich, because
charity is not only expressed with gold. It is an innate quality which
domines the human heart, whatever a person’s station. A poor man
can therefore practice charity because, alas, there is always someone
worse off than oneself [...]. [C]harity is thus a virtue which leads us to
doing good to our neighbor, and to those dumb devoted creatures who,
with such generosity, lend us their strength to help us in our rude labors,
and give us pleasure in different ways [...]. Yes, young friends, learn early
to be fervent apostles of charity, the offspring of kindness and love for
humanity [...] and within humanity one must include domestic animals,
our half brothers. (BSPA, 1883, p. 162)

Statements of this kind demonstrate the extent to which the inclusion of
animal protection in the republican project to educate the masses – dis-
cussed in Chapter 4 – cannot be disassociated from the increasing diffusion
throughout society of a form of emotional economy which was previously
marginalized. In other words, the effort made to connect, through empathy,
with the suffering of animals, and the recognition that the hardships animals
are subjected to are a scandal requiring action have undoubtedly contributed
to the intensification, and spreading throughout society of these very general
trends, theorized by Alexis de Tocqueville and Norbert Elias. Kindness to ani-
mals probably constitutes one of the missing links in the chain, indispensible
to the better understanding of the close interdependence between democratic
leveling and the spreading of the changes in social attitudes beyond the
aristocratic circles where they first took root. Through their campaigning,
animal welfare protectionists have worked to assimilate, on the one hand,
repulsion toward violence, requirements of self-restraint, self-control, reserve
and tact and, on the other, “aspiration toward an equal division of recognition”
between all creatures (Haroche, 2001, p. 105). Thus in 1904 members of the
SPA were proud to apply what they called a “pedagogy of animal kindness”:
in schools, we will engage in propaganda by distributing praise and all
kinds of rewards. We will sow the seeds of animal protection to reap the
harvest of humanity and compassion. We try to take children and turn them into good, fair-minded people, by teaching them to know animals, to appreciate the contributions animals make, and to recognize their intelligence. (BSPA, 1904, p. 183)

Pets, refuges of intimacy

Over the previous chapters, it has become apparent that animal protectionists were initially mainly preoccupied with the mistreatment of cattle, horses, and other draught animals. Over the course of the 19th century, however, the movement developed in a new direction, as a result of the place now given to dogs, and later cats, by the upper classes. Previously, humans had used domesticated dogs to carry out a variety of tasks: finding game, pulling carts, turning roasting spits, and, above all, guarding property from intruders. In those earlier days, the treatment of dogs – and indeed the treatment of men – depended on the attitudes of their powerful masters, which varied greatly. Hunting dogs, whose skills were highly valued by their aristocratic masters, were often better fed and more comfortably lodged than the servants (Thomas, 1985, p. 136). From the late Middle Ages onward, another category of domesticated dogs enjoyed special status, namely the small dogs which noble ladies kept as pets. Indeed the terms “pet” or “household pet” date from this time, and are applied to an animal having no other function than to be decorative, and to keep its master or mistress company, thus distinguishing it from both wild animals, and domesticated creatures who are assigned useful tasks. Originally, this kind of animal, the “Lady’s favorite,” was especially close to its mistress, and was used in games of seduction developed within a civilizing process which exalted sweetness, a sense of propriety, and tactfulness. “Sweet smiles, affectionate glances, “innocent caresses,” and “lively games […], these compassionate feminine gestures are all messages directed at men. The animal is thus given a new role in domestic space: it mediates a propedeutics of sentiment” (Corbin, 1987, p. 482).

Nevertheless, once again, the importance of these new relations with a companion animal must be understood in the context of the modifications these relations go through as they are adopted by more and more people.

30 Originally the word pet – derived from the French word petit – indicated a spoilt, pampered child. From 1584 onward, the meaning of the term began to be also used to refer to cats and dogs, as well as the young of farm animals (Palmatier, 1995, p. 287).
Very quickly, the rising social classes, eager to resemble the aristocracy, also kept animals which they treated with care, thus distinguishing themselves from the common people, who tended to be violent toward animals. The decorative dog, and then the lapdog, fulfilled a display function: individuals used ownership of such animals to enable their owners to “define themselves as being extremely respectable” (Kean, 1998, p. 80). This explains the importance attached to being able to identify different breeds of dog, as well as the prestige of dog shows reserved for animals of the finest pedigree: people with taste cannot pretend to appreciate mongrel dogs. The first ever dog show was held in 1859, in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and was reserved for pointers and setters. In 1866, George R. Jesse published the first history of dog breeds, and between 1867 and 1886 *Dogs of the British Isles* by John Henry Walsh went through no fewer than five editions. In 1873, the Kennel Club was formed, followed shortly afterward by the Ladies’ Kennel Club (Kean, 1998, p. 93). In the latter club Pomeranians were particularly in vogue, no doubt largely due to the fact that the queen owned several: the Pomeranian soon became the breed of choice for ladies who were keen to appear highly respectable, such as Frances Power Cobbe, the *pasionaria* of the antivivisection movement. Generally speaking, “the structures that evolved in the third quarter of the nineteenth century to regulate the breeding and showing of pedigree dogs figuratively expressed the desire of predominantly middle-class fanciers for a relatively prestigious and readily identifiable position within a stable, hierarchical society” (Ritvo, 1989, p. 104). Furthermore, attachment to dogs became more widespread, thanks to the increasing popularity of stories praising the extraordinary loyalty of canine companions. Like the legendary hound Gelert or Greyfriars Bobby (Kean, 1998), dogs were all the more deserving of kindness as they appeared as “idealized servants who never complained or model children who never grew up” (Thomas, 1985, p. 155). French enthusiasts set up clubs for purebred dogs, following once again in the footsteps of British pioneers, although their organization departed from the British model in several respects, which are analyzed in Kathleen Kete’s excellent book on the subject (Kete, 1994). In 1881, the Central Society for the Improvement of Canine Races was founded, and dog shows became fashionable among the more comfortably-off strata of society.

Nevertheless, the role of companion dogs was certainly not simply to be an ostentatious marker of social status. As they became more commonly welcomed into middle-class homes, pet dogs took on new and determinant
meanings in the historical evolution of animal welfare. As is well known the middle classes, unlike the aristocracy, tend to favor a clear separation between public and private spaces, and between the world of work and the family unit. From this perspective, the family home – “Home sweet home” – is the most private of places, where one can spend time with, and show affection to one’s children. Indeed, the cozy bourgeois habitat is often elevated to the status of (place which is not simply private but also as) a “haven in a heartless world” (Jasper and Nelkin, 1992, p. 17), a restful retreat where one can temporarily escape from the cold calculation of interest which dominates the workplace. Thus pets “the dumb creatures that always return love for love” (Turner, 1980, p. 76), are all the more easily integrated into the family circle because the relations of affinity which tie them to the children and parents of the family contribute to the affective economy which distinguishes the household from the rest of the world. “By creating the modern pet – the cuddly puppy, the cute kitten – animal lovers manufactured an animal designed to quell savage nature with the balm of love” (Turner, 1980, p. 76).

Thus, from the last quarter of the 19th century onward, SPA newsletters devoted more and more space to reports, anecdotes or poems which underlined the extent to which members of the canine species display “qualities of the heart” which are far superior to those of certain men: “a heroic bitch who refuses to escape a fire if it means leaving her puppies behind” (BSPA, 1875, p. 256); “a kind, gentle creature [...] offering its teats to a hungry child” (BSPA, 1886, p. 68); a dog who saves a little girl from drowning (BSPA, 1875, p. 342); another dog who saves a violent man who, just a few moments before, had been mistreating it (BSPA, 1875, p. 222); two dogs who stopped fighting to save a little girl who had fallen in the water (BSPA, 1905, p. 407); when a man is drowning as the result of a suicide attempt, “his little dog jumps in the river after [him], as if he would rather die than live without his master” (BSPA, 1875, p. 256). Once again, the use of poetry shows the increasing value attached to emotions, which results from regular contact with “darling doggies” (BSPA, 1904).

31 Once again, this trend appeared in Great Britain well before other European countries. According to Keith Thomas, as early as the 16th and 17th centuries, “pet animals were established as part of the middle-class household, particularly in urban areas” (Thomas, 1985, p. 144).
32 It is worth noting that canine heroics were considered sufficiently praiseworthy that, at the 52nd annual prize-giving ceremony of the SPA, “collars of honor” were presented to two particularly deserving dogs (BSPA, 1904, 209).
33 These stories and poems are good examples of what we have termed a sensitizing device. From the comments which sometimes accompany them, it is clear that, in the view of activists,
TO MY LITTLE FRIEND / Is it possible without being ridiculous, / In the
eyes of the world, to cry over one’s departed dog? / Without hesitation,and without qualms, /I confess, alas, that I cry over mine. / Yes, I cry overmy faithful friend / Who waited for me, every day / Like a vigilant sentry/Awaiting then celebrating my return. / My pain is sharp and deep; / Yes,my grief is quite genuine; / What do I care what people say? / I cry for mylittle “Kid.” (BSPA, 1886, p. 69)

Turk was a loyal dog / The best guard dog you could have [...] / Obedient,he came when called [...] / Sensitive to the smallest act of kindness, / He showered you with the gifts / Of his tireless, boundless enthusiasm/ As discreet as he was kind / He would, I believe, have died of hunger, / Rather than touch anything / Which he had not been told he could take,/ Accepting everything, demanding nothing [...] / Kind reader, listenwell,/ Let me just sum up in a few words / What is the best thing aboutman? The dog. (BSFCV 6 [1888], p. 4)

Do not harm dogs, they are human beings. Frou-Frou was a little Englishgriffon with bushy whiskers, whose head was half black and half white.She had large eyes and a penetrating, expressive gaze [...]. Frou-Frou wasburied in Asnières cemetery, and on the block of white marble whichcovered her tomb, the following simple words were engraved, in goldlettering: FROU-FROU, WHO DIED OF GRIEF THE DAY AFTER THEDEATH OF HER MISTRESS. 1896-1908. (BSPA, 1909, p. 168)

Now try to live just with other humans [wrote Émile Zola], now that youhave allowed animals into your home, and you will immediately see thatyou are cutting into your own flesh, and that you are removing a relative.[These animals] have become family members, and getting rid of themwould be like tearing out a piece of your heart. (BSPA, 1896, p. 139)

In fact, the dog, far from solely being for display purposes, now – in theprivate sphere of bourgeois interiors – played a soothing role, being alwaysavailable to offer comfort:

their value lies in the fact that they provoke an emotional response from the public: “a numberof our colleagues were, quite naturally, moved by this story, and Mr. Guillaumin, in particular,took the trouble of bringing Mr. Gaubert to the attention of the prize committee”; “the followingverses express such touching sentiments that we felt that they were worthy of being reproducedin our newsletter.”
Ah! Creatures who are just, Creatures who console, who dress the wounds inflicted by men! Creatures, with your instinctive innocence, you are able to distinguish true merit and show indulgence to the weaknesses of the ambitious! Animals who, without getting involved in judging literature, you take in, by the simple goodness of your hearts, the candidate in distress! Animals, my sisters, how you have filled me with pride! Finally crowned! (Émile Zola, “L'Amour des bêtes,” Le Figaro, 30 May 1896, quoted in BSPA, 1896, p. 219)

[Regarding the increase of the tax on dogs] We would like the administration to understand that these dogs, which it regards as luxuries, are actually lifesavers and as such should benefit from a preferential rate. When we talk of a life-saving dog, we are not thinking of those brave creatures who, on one exceptional occasion in their lives, accomplish a glorious feat, but of those who every day, every minute, carry out their charitable mission of accompanying lonely souls, distressed souls, the underprivileged of this world, warming with their generous breath households which are struggling in adversity. (BSPA, 1933, p. 26)

We should note the extent to which the growing place given to “these creatures who live by ours sides and who, when life disappoints, are there to console us” (BSPA, 1905, p. 176) cannot be disassociated from the related evolution in the status of women from the rising middle classes. The bourgeois distinction between the public and private spheres is associated with a restricted definition of “true womanhood,” and the confinement of women to clearly delimited spaces: from this perspective public life is the exclusive domain of men, whereas private life is the women’s realm, or rather the “gilded cage” reserved for women (Knibiehler, 1992, pp. 407 and 423). The social existence of respectable women is strictly confined to roles – mistress of the house, wife and mother – which have close links to the matrimonial home.34 Women were tasked with supervising harmony in the home, and lavishing care on all family members, cats and dogs included. Men, on the other hand, while benefiting from the pleasant environment at home, also had the option of visiting brothels or seeing women, less virtuous then their wives, who could offer them sexual and sensual pleasure. In other words, limiting women’s role to that of homemaker entailed unprecedented

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34 This requirement that respectable wives remain in the private sphere was so strong that the French expression femmes publiques (public women) became a derogatory term applied to “fallen women,” who were living a “bad life,” i.e., engaged in prostitution.
restrictions on women's sexuality. The Victorian era – synonymous with prudishness and corset-clad women – was characterized by developments in gynecology which led doctors to seek to confine women's sexuality to its procreative function (Knibiehler, 1992, pp. 398-406). In this context, relations between women and their pets assumed complex and ambivalent meanings. Caring for a puppy or a kitten, by awakening the “maternal instinct,” was perceived as being one of the best ways of preparing little girls for their future role as housewives. Nevertheless we could equally present the hypothesis that showing tenderness to animals could be a convenient way of evading the group of representations according to which sexual relations with men can only have two outcomes: childbirth or debauchery. Far from constituting a language of seduction addressed – in a euphemistic form – to the male suitor, the tenderness lavished on an animal could have been the best way to elude the frightening sexuality of men.35 Thus, Marie Huot – who invented the Malthusian slogan “strike of the wombs” – described the caress given to an animal as a source of satisfaction bordering on the sublime:

It is a moving and curious spectacle; when the pussies have finished their meal you should see how they rub their backs against the dresses of their benefactress, jump on her shoulders, asking with their pink muzzle to be kissed or stroked, as if this were the dessert (of the meal). This proves that animals do not live by material sustenance alone either, and that they too have a heart to satisfy (Huot, 1890a, p. 12)

I add that it is because I felt my thoughts leave the limbo of the material, because I felt my intelligence grow and develop, as my senses became keener; because I felt my soul open and bloom more loving, and softened in the fragrance of sympathy; all this explains, dare I say it, why I cherished the animal I had met. Because often a caress is enough to make gush forth from this being, plunged in the shadows of bestiality, the embryonic soul trapped in its passive flesh (Huot, 1887, p. 50).

35 We should not forget that Victorian prudery, in order to preserve the innocence of young girls, excluded from their education any information which would have prepared them for the sexual relations which marriage held in store for them. In fact, from the testimony of the activist journalist Séverine – whom we will come back to presently – the events of their wedding nights were often a shocking and traumatic experience for young brides.
Thus, the relationships that women of that time had with their pets resulted from conditions which offered them few options. They could either resign themselves to having the social existence of a procreating spouse confined to the matrimonial home, or escape – by choice or force of circumstances – from being subordinate to a husband, and live in cruel social isolation. Articles in SPA newsletters, starting at the end of the 19th century and becoming more common at the beginning of the 20th, show the extent to which many women came to consider their dog or cat as the only being which provided some relief from the loneliness and torments of their dismal existences.

Mme Séverine was awarded a gold medal for the delightful book The Memoirs of a Dog [...]. She tells us that only women feel a special tenderness toward animals because they are more often alone than men, and when they come home to an empty house, they are happy to find someone waiting for them, who greets them, scolds them for their absence, and celebrates their return. (BSPA, 1904, p. 208)

In fact the gifts made to the SPA by generous female donors increasingly seemed to be intended to be expressions of gratitude to dear departed companions: short homages to the loyal pet can be found, alongside details of the sums given: “in memory of Zézette,” “in memory of Ponnette,” “in memory of Friquet.” Bequests became an even more significant source of funding for the protection societies than gifts. In 1933, no fewer than seven of the ten donors who “made the necessary provisions in their wills to aid the continuing work of the SPA” were women (BSPA, 1933.)

A woman of some importance recently sent the Boston Society the following letter: “Please find enclosed a check for a thousand dollars which I would like the Massachusetts Society to accept, as a token of gratitude to my dog who, during my fourteen years of reclusion and suffering, was my constantly loyal friend and devoted companion.” If everyone who found comfort from the company of these dumb animals followed my example, what great relief could be brought to the daily undeserved suffering of those who we miss so much! (BSPA, 1886, p. 63)

Thus for women whose social condition provided them little feeling of self-worth, animal welfare – and in particular the care offered in cities to stray dogs and cats – took on a special significance. In actual fact, the help given to animals in distress contributed to the dualist posture which the
early feminists used to exploit as best they could the bourgeois polarization of masculine and feminine functions: they demanded the right to intervene in the public sphere, “in order to highlight the power of the private sphere, as well as subvert its boundaries by introducing so-called private questions into the public sphere” (Käppeli, 1992, p. 576). This accreditation strategy – relying on supposedly typically feminine qualities – is used to good effect when applied to those practices which consist of transforming the domestic responsibility for household pets into a more general concern for the way animals are treated outside the context of the family. At the end of the 19th century it was women who pioneered the initiatives which still constitute the main activities of many animal protection organizations: caring for abandoned dogs, feeding the homeless neighborhood cats, and putting down newborn young “to [better] protect individuals and to avoid an increase in the number of abandoned animals” (Huot, 1890a, p. 14). In a public lecture, in June 1890, Marie Huot, president of the Popular Anti-Vivisection League, praises a “another kind of zoophile protection which if we did not create, we did encourage it – to the extent that this devotion is in need of encouragement” (Huot, 1890a, p. 11).

Sometimes in the evening, by waste ground, gardens and public buildings, we can see the silhouette of a woman, a basket over her arm, standing in the shadows, quietly calling to invisible creatures. To this call, which they know so well, a host of cats, appearing from everywhere, rush up to the mysterious stranger, who hands out a portion of food – served on a piece of paper – to each one of these famished creatures [...]. Without having discussed this among themselves, women and girls, young and old, beautiful and ugly, rich and poor, are all prompted by a spontaneous feeling. These abandoned creatures provoke the same maternal instinct, this sacred instinct, innate to the hearts of women, that makes them join in compassion, and lean down lovingly toward all that suffers and all that call out for help. (Huot, 1890a, p. 11)

For the speaker, these “sisters of charity,” these “humble and holy women,” these “devoted servants of the cause of pity,” are the “apostles of a new religion,” the pioneers of a world where men “open their hearts to the same emotions, and do not believe that their manly dignity will be threatened if they show kindness to creatures who are crushed and tortured by life, even when those creatures are animals” (Huot, 1887; 1890a, p.11). In our next chapter we will analyze in greater detail the extent to which this new form of animal protection was a revolt against the overwhelming prestige
and abuses of the “stronger sex.” For now, we should note the significance of changes in the animal protection movement which resulted from the growing importance of showing tenderness toward pets.

Apart from the foundation of animal protection societies, the most significant development in the history of animal protection was undoubtedly the institutionalization of refuges to shelter and care for abandoned dogs. According to James Turner, the first establishment of this kind was established in London in 1860 and moved to its Battersea site in 1871 (Turner, 1980, p. 122). The fact that it was referred to as a “Dog’s home” attests to the influence of those representations which incite women to denounce a public scandal in terms of roles which are allocated to them within the private sphere. Here, the aim is to come to the aid of animals in need of a family by finding them a suitable new home, after their former owners have abandoned them. In Paris, a number of women such Mesdames Donon, Masson and Dessinge become known for establishing refuges for abandoned animals (Fleury, 1995, p. 141). Marie Huot claims that the Popular League against Vivisection, of which she was the president, set up the first “zoophile refuges, which are often described in the press, where lost dogs and cats are sheltered and cared for until their owners can be found” (Huot, 1890a, p. 6).

The SPA hierarchy, under pressure to open a refuge by a growing proportion of the membership, showed little enthusiasm for the project; they considered it to be motivated by a thoroughly feminine “oversensitiveness,” which a serious protection society should not allow itself to be influenced by. Nevertheless, after numerous discussions, the members finally bowed to the pressure from activists and agreed to provide occasional funding for the kennels of the ladies mentioned above.

In spite of continuing opposition, at the 8th International Congress of Animal Protection Societies, held in Brussels in 1880, the supporters of refuges found grounds for optimism. In one of its reports, the congress expressed the wish that “animal protection societies, following the lead of the Women’s SPCA in Philadelphia, will persuade the authorities to allow them take over the running of animal pounds, or at least those facilities where dogs are sheltered” (BSPA, 1882, p. 79). An examination of the terms used to describe the “refuges,” which were intended to replace the municipal “pounds,” reveal that this recommendation was open to conflicting interpretations among the increasingly heterogeneous grassroots membership. For the older members such initiatives were simply aimed at continuing to apply measures on the basis of a well-established emotional economy. Indeed, the Women’s SPCA in Philadelphia was campaigning to put an end to the sight of offensive acts of violence committed by municipal pound
employees, who often behaved as badly as the worst coachmen: “the capture and killing of stray unmuzzled urban dogs, by city employees, was carried out in a revoltingly cruel way” (BSPA, 1881, p. 76). The ladies’ recommendations – that lassos be replaced with nets, and that the killing the dogs, by asphyxiation, be carried out in a more humane way – aimed to “decrease the suffering of an animal which is, after man, one of God’s most noble creations.” But they did not in any way question the thinking behind one of the most long-standing concerns of the SPA: to campaign against the multitude of dogs in cities which uselessly consume food, offend people with their unsavory appearance, and generate fear about the spreading of rabies and other harmful miasmas.36 It is clear, however, that newer recruits to the movement, influenced by the increasingly close relationships people enjoyed with pets in a domestic context, saw the collection of abandoned dogs in a very different light. This new perspective among activists is apparent in the following touching account, which describes in detail the feelings that a visit to the animal pound, recently opened by the SPA in Arcueil, could provoke in visitors.

Perhaps in the way they look, full of curiosity, at the visitor, one can discern a vague expression of hope. These dogs remember an absent person who they belonged to, someone they loved. Who can be sure that they do not think every day of the master they have lost, or who lost them in order to have one less mouth to feed, one less burden on their meager household budget? Each one of them has a story – perhaps poignant, perhaps wonderful – but which unfortunately will never be written. In any case the hearts of those dogs, heavy with all the suffering they have experienced, will be quick to love those who will give them back, as well as their liberty, the joy of having a home. (BSPA, 1884, p. 202)

Just as the use of phrases celebrating the loving qualities of dogs became more widespread, sensitizing devices of this kind paved the way for an emotional economy quite different from the antisentimentalism which the founders of the first protection societies claimed adhered to. The imagination grasping the distress experienced by the abandoned animal; the care that the benefactors offered to comfort him; the spectacle of his immediate and immense gratitude, as well as the promise of the development of a

36 It should be remembered that, as early as 1855, hygenist ideas, widely held among doctors and vets in the SPA, led the society to recommend a tax on dogs, which was duly introduced by the public authorities.
growing joy shared in his new home, now allowed emotions to be shown which fall within a *register of pity* (Boltanski, 1993). The possibility of experiencing these emotional states attracted new members to the SPA who knew practically nothing about the preoccupations of older members. These senior members were indignant, and deeply concerned by the influx of the newcomers, who threatened to deflect the society from its original, noble aims. While the more determined of the old guard fought the growing influence of these new members – who were flocking to the SPA to wallow in pity – many of the longest-serving members preferred to leave the society now that, as the “dog lover” contingent grew, there were fewer opportunities to rub shoulders with erudite, enlightened individuals.³⁷ The criticism directed at the supporters of the refuge by the widow of Dr. Blatin – for many years a leading figure among enlightened animal protectionists – gives a good indication of the kind of opposition provoked by the fact that unprecedented importance was now attached to the emotional register of tenderness.

If one was willing to take the trouble to go back and consult the past papers, and the newspapers, even when they were critical, they clearly show not only that the society is not playing its proper role when it ostensibly and officially involves itself in a question of sentiment; but in fact if you study the matter, it is clear that the society promised not to become a women’s club, namely, as everyone knows, a purely sentimental society, and only recruited serious members on the understanding that this would not be the case. [If it becomes a women’s society] it also means that there will never be men who are *good enough* to mix with these women […]. Look at the large majority of women on the refuge committee […]. Who are the people who are so vigorously demanding the creation of a refuge, which is a wholly sentimental initiative? It would be difficult to find any public utility in it, as there is a pound which already takes care of such problems. These are people who may have little knowledge of administrative matters, indeed the ladies themselves willingly admit as much, and yet [this initiative] will cause nothing but problems, administratively speaking! There are also the new arrivals in our society, who have been members for two or three years at the most, and who are not concerned that there are many other outstanding questions, all of the utmost utility,

³⁷ This clearly shows the extent to which the emotions approved of by the sensitizing devices within the organizations determines the turnover of activists, i.e., those who enter, stay in, or leave the organization (Fillieule, 2005).
concerning the animals we are protecting, but as they know nothing about these questions yet, they cannot appreciate them. All other matters are made to wait, while we decide about the future well-being of the cats and dogs of Paris! And if we gave in, Ladies and Gentlemen, if we no longer formed a majority, believe me that another overwhelming and dangerous majority would soon materialize, a majority which would be new and consequently ignorant of the intrigues in our society; in this case any question which appeals to sentiment will be well received, and it will be a matter of who does the most, of who is the most extreme. After a refuge has been built they will ask for a building fit for these dear animals, then kennels decorated with golden fringes, and silver-gilt drinking bowls [...]. The doctors have already withdrawn [from our society], and the veterinarians are no longer shown respect in the “sentimental assembly.” What will become of us? (BSPA, 1883, p. 222)

If the tone is alarmist, it is because of the significant amount of pressure that the new wave of activists was able to exert on the leadership of the society. First in 1881, then in 1885, the SPA opened refuges (Fleury, 1995, pp. 141 and 149) because the board of the society, despite serious reservations, was obliged to “defer to the consensus” among the membership (BSPA, 1885, p. 200). Nevertheless, the complaints within the old guard that [the purpose of] “this costly creation had been misunderstood” (BSPA, 1886) resulted in Émile Decroix, president of the society and leading advocate of hippophagy, shocked by the high running costs of the refuge, decided, in 1888, to close and sell the establishment (Fleury, 1995, p. 151).38 This demonstrates that at this time there were still enough supporters of the “demopedic register” in key positions in the society for the changes initiated by the “supporters of tender feelings” to be halted. Nevertheless, despite this gallant last stand by the pioneers of animal protection, from the following decades until the second half of the 20th century, the forebodings of Dr. Blatin's widow were confirmed. On the one hand, caring for abandoned dogs and cats became a central preoccupation of the membership, not only of the SPA, but also, and to an even greater extent, of many other, newer, animal welfare

38 As we can see from Graph 3, below, the one-off payment for the shelter is reflected in the SPA accounts for the year 1886. Because of the way the society hierarchy reacted to this, it was not until the first years of the following century that assistance to animals – back-up horses and dog pounds – once again accounted for a large part of the society's expenditure. The drop in spending that can be observed in the 1930s is due to the advent of automobiles, which dramatically reduced the number of horses: from then on the SPA activities were more focused on helping dogs.
organizations. In 1899, a charity named L’Assistance aux animaux, was founded. One of its key objectives was to run an animal shelter at Gennevilliers: its membership rose from 1,500 in 1903 to 6,000 in 1909 (Pierre, 1998, p. 735). In 1908, an animal shelter was set up in Saint-Maur and administered by an organization called La Protection française, founded by the famous beauty Madame de Yourkevitch (Fleury, 1995, p. 237). The SPA branches set up in various French cities, which were registered as nonprofit organizations long after the Paris center, also prioritized animal shelters and the emotional register of tenderness.  

Our account of the history of the very first mobilizations in favor of animal protection reveals the major shift in emphasis within the movement, from the outlawing of ill-treatment of cattle and horses, to the advocacy of tenderness in the treatment of dogs and cats. Key changes modified not only the emotional economy of animal protection, and the sociological profile of the grassroots campaigners, but also the financial and organizational constraints on protection societies. Indeed, the high cost of running shelters and caring for abandoned animals required the society to spread its nets

Source: Graph plotted by the author based on the bulletins of the SPA

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39 The SPA for Lyon and the southeast was registered as a nonprofit organization in 1893; the Normandy SPA and the Nice SPA in 1930; the central France SPA in 1934.
widely in search of donors, in marked contrast to the first protection societies, who prided themselves on being somewhat select organizations. As we saw above, the development of the register of tenderness is closely bound up with the increase in donations and bequests which members made in recognition of their closest companion. But providing care for animals requires not only more funding, but also organizational logistics with which the first activists, whose principal concern was reforming the mores of their contemporaries, did not need to concern themselves.

As the register of tenderness attracted a growing numbers of the kind of affiliated members who favored very costly initiatives, campaigning organizations were caught in what some regarded as a vicious circle, others a virtuous circle: they were forced to concentrate on recruiting more and more members and donors. Hence, at the very beginning of the 20th century, the former policy of selective recruitment of worthies was abandoned by SPA management in favor of rewarding activists who attracted funds by recruiting new members: “[T]he board has decided that at the annual prize-giving ceremony a bronze medal will be awarded to members who have presented ten individuals who have accepted to join the society.” (BSPA, 1904, flyleaf)

Unsurprisingly, the prioritization of caring for domestic pets inevitably resulted in a feminization of the animal protection cause; this trend has continued to intensify right up to the present day. Evidence of the increase in the proportion of women members can be found in SPA records: in 1875, the minutes of the 23rd annual public prize-giving ceremony noted the presence of “more than 400 people, of whom women were in a very large majority” (BSPA, 1875, p. 129). Similarly, the list of the generous gifts received in 1894 reveals that 65% of gifts were from women, and 35% from men (BSPA, 1895, p. 30). Nevertheless, the feminization of the membership did not extend the SPA boardroom which, despite protests from women members, continued to remain a male domain:

Mlle Laurent asked for confirmation that women were eligible to sit on the board. Women have shown themselves, in the running of the animal shelter and on the dog committee, where they are in a majority, to be not without administrative abilities. The president replied that nothing in the regulations indicated that women could not be appointed to administrative posts. While they could not be named to the presidency, or one of the vice presidencies, if members wish to vote for a woman to represent them on the board, there was absolutely nothing in the statutes or the rules to prevent them from doing so. (BSPA, 1886, p. 12)
A number of female members sought to obtain representation on the board of directors in the hope of making their voices more clearly heard. In 1902, when one of them said that she was standing for election to the board of directors her announcement was greeted with a certain amount of sniggering, and she only managed to obtain 14 votes, whereas the last male candidate had won more than a hundred (Fleury, 1995, p. 217). There were five women candidates to replace the third of board members standing down in 1904: three of them obtained 14, 10 and 1 votes respectively, whereas the successful candidates won 165 votes (BSPA, 1904, p. 28). The following year the only female candidate won 21 votes, compared to 137 for the successful candidates (BSPA, 1905, p. 9). So, although a woman won double the number of votes of previous female candidates, at that time it still seemed inevitable, even among the swelling ranks of women members, that the positions of responsibility in the organization would continue to be reserved for men. Then, remarkably, at the beginning of the 1930s, the balance of power, which seemed destined to remain in the hands of men, swung in favor of women. It is true that the register of tenderness and the welfare of dogs had become such priorities for most members that any candidate for a leadership role was obliged to take them seriously. In 1925 François Friry was elected president in 1925 after campaigning in favor of the extension of the Gennevilliers animal shelter (Fleury, 1995, p. 272). Four years later, Camille du Gast, who had been the owner of this shelter for a number of years obtained 627 proxy votes and was elected president of the SPA. This power shift was all the more striking since du Gast’s election was accompanied by the voting of eleven women onto the thirty-six-seat board of directors (Fleury, 1995, p. 275). Subsequently, this change within the SPA, in terms of gender composition, has seemed irreversible: between 1976 and 2008, four out of five occupiers of the presidential office were women.

Therefore feminization of the animal welfare movement, from the leadership down to the grass roots, coincided with an increasing focus on abandoned dogs and cats. As a consequence of these trends today, in both England and France the biggest animal welfare organizations in terms of membership and resources – the RSPCA, the national and regional branches of the Société protectrice des animaux, the Fondation Brigitte Bardot, the Fondation assistance aux animaux, etc. – all have animal shelters whose running costs take up a sizeable part of their budgets. At this point it is

40 The SPA alone runs fifty-seven refuges, permitting around 40,000 animals to find a new home each year, as well as twelve free clinics, which conduct 120,000 veterinary consultations annually, for animals whose owners have limited resources.
worth commenting upon how the history of animal protection is closely linked to certain related changes in the work of veterinarians. It is firstly worth recalling that veterinary science originally developed as zootechny, dedicated to making improvements in the breeding and keeping of livestock and draught animals (Hubscher, 1999). The rising status of domestic pets within urban families therefore offered veterinarians the opportunity to increase the prestige of their profession, as it became less dependent on farming and commerce. Where a veterinarian’s work once consisted of assisting carters, cattle breeders, and various actors along the agri-food chain as far as the butcher, he could now lay claim to the more gratifying status of doctor, responsible for the health of animals, now regarded as family members. The opportunity for the veterinary profession to reinvent itself could, however, have been missed, had it not been for a number of enterprising practitioners who strove to promote not only animal protection, but also the social standing of their profession. In this regard, the career of Fernand Méry was exemplary.

Méry was born in the first decade of the 20th century in a family of wine merchants in the Hérault, and as a child he offered no clues as to his future calling. But then, in 1914, heartbroken by the government’s requisition of his pony for the war effort, he made the decision to become an army veterinarian (Lescure, 1995). After completing his studies, he became the assistant of a Paris veterinarian whose practice specialized in treating horses, which were still a very common at the time in the city. Then, more or less by chance, Méry was invited to offer his services to the pets of some of the wealthiest dog owners in Paris. The provincial vet was not slow to see the business opportunity that this market represented, at the very moment when the development of motorized transport heralded the imminent decline of predominantly equine practices. At the same time, having had the chance to move in prestigious circles, far removed from the world of carters, Méry was moved to express outrage at “the way his profession is not held in high enough esteem,” “how veterinarians are regarded as mediocre, and often enjoy no prestige whatsoever in the eyes of the public” (Lescure, 1995, p. 46). For the rest of his long career Méry worked tirelessly – as a practicing veterinarian, journalist and, last but not least, animal welfare campaigner – to raise the standing of a profession which, in his opinion, did not receive the recognition it deserved.

Méry first set up in private practice by opening a surgery in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré quarter of Paris. The fact that he castrated male cats under general anesthetic – which was quite an unusual practice at the time – enabled him to rapidly build a clientele among the high society ladies who lived in the area. His practice thrived to such an extent that he was
obliged, in 1934, to move into larger premises in the 17th arrondissement, where, in the Croix bleue clinic “he treated the animals of the great and the good from the worlds of politics, diplomacy, show business, literature and the arts” (Lescure, 1995, p. 57). The veterinarian built up considerable social capital, which he was able to draw on for the rest of his career. In 1949, the veterinarian’s pleasant manner got him a meeting with Pierre Desgraupe and Georges Delamarre, who invited him to present a weekly three-minute radio show on the Actualités de Paris, Ici les bêtes, which ran for twelve years, and was a great success with radio listeners. From 1952 to 1984 he wrote a column in Point de vue-Images du monde, a weekly magazine largely devoted to the lives of celebrities and royalty. This column gave Méry the opportunity to exercise his talent for increasing public interest in companion animals. He also wrote over twenty books, in a similar vein: Bêtes et gens devant l’amour (For the love of people and animals, 1952), Sa Majesté le chat (His majesty, the cat, 1956), Notre ami le chien (Our friend the dog, 1957), Médecin des bêtes. Le roman d’une vocation (Animal doctor: The story of a vocation, 1962), etc. In 1953, the veterinarian created the association “Friends of the Animals” and managed to recruit his His Serene Highness Prince Ranier of Monaco and a number of famous people to serve on the support committee. Only a year after coming into existence, and after a televised gala performance, supported by Line Renaud and Georges Brassens, the association could already boast a membership of over 10,000. Throughout his career, Fernand Méry used his influential connections and media fame to lobby for legislation regulating the treatment of animals. In 1950, the centenary of the Grammont Law, he helped coordinate the drafting of a text, in consultation with a number of animal protection associations, which was intended to form the basis of an animal welfare act. In 1970 the self-styled “doctor to the animals” founded the National Council for the Protection of Animals (CNPA), an organization which led veterinarians to consider themselves to be in the front line of the struggle to protect animals.

41 Social capital may be defined as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Bourdieu, 1980, p. 2).

42 In fact, it would another ten years before the objectives of this mobilization – to extend the provisions of the loi Grammont (Grammont Law) – were finally reached. The decree of 11 September 1959 specified the penalties for ill-treatment of animals. The law of 19 November 1963 outlawed acts of cruelty, and specified provisions for sentencing. The law of 10 July 1976 widened the scope of the law to cover serious ill-treatment of an animal and willful abandonment of an animal. It also authorized state-approved animal protection organizations to institute civil proceedings, and to obtain compensation for those on whose behalf they are acting.
In 1974 Fernand Méry involved the CNPA in a campaign to circulate the text “Man’s Twelve Duties toward Animals,” which mobilized the French national union of veterinarians, the newspaper *Le Parisien libéré*, the weekly magazine *Point de vue-Images du monde*, and the radio station RTL. A petition in support of the text garnered more than two million signatures. This campaign led Jacqueline Thome-Patenôtre, a parliamentary deputy and the president of the SPA, to organize a parliamentary group which invited a number of veterinarians – including Fernand Méry – to draw up an animal charter. This charter formed the basis of the law passed on 10 July 1976.

Having traced the emblematic career of Fernand Méry, we should note the extent to which the evolution of animal protection over the course of the 20th century was closely linked to the increasing focus of veterinary medicine on family pets, the ownership of which became increasingly common over that period. As we will see below, the subsequent extension of the right to veterinary treatment to wild animals also represented an important development in the history of animal protection.

**Imaginary beings and children’s soft toys**

We have already observed that the progressive subordination of protection societies to the emotional register of tenderness cannot be understood independently of the continuing rise of domestic pets, not only as a presence within the home, but also, and even more importantly, in children’s education. The promotion of dogs, cats, guinea pigs, budgerigars, etc., to the role of indispensable tutors, entrusted with a key role in the emotional and social development of children is an underlying motivation for the involvement of later generations in the animal protection movement. From the end of the 19th century onward, companion animals are regarded as providing invaluable help in making children aware of the virtues of gentleness, self-restraint and mutual trust (Grier, 1999). For young girls, looking after a small dog or cat is thought of as a way of awakening the “maternal instinct” of future wives and mothers (Knibiehler, 1992, p. 409). Among the initiatives to provide a propedeutics of kindness, women at the end of the 19th century could turn to a relatively novel source for raising awareness: a number of fictional works retelling the life stories of an animal which would swiftly achieve the status of classics of children’s literature.43 These books differ

43 *Mémoires d’un âne* (Memoirs of a donkey) by the Countess of Ségur, published in France in 1860, was the archetypal text of this kind.
from earlier texts – such as the stories of Reynard, or the fables of Aesop or La Fontaine – in that the animal character itself is the narrator, enabling it to tell its own story in the first person. These stories told from the point of view of the animal do not simply anthropomorphize animals, but also invite the reader to sympathize and identify with them.

In 1867, Frances Power Cobbe, whose crucial role in the antivivisection movement we have already stressed, wrote *The Confessions of a Lost Dog Reported by Her Mistress*, the biography of a Pomeranian, told in the first person, in which the dog recounts how it suffered at the hands of men, before being rescued by some charitable women (Kean, 1998, p. 89). Then in 1871, Anna Sewell, who was born into a devout Quaker family and suffered from fragile health for all her adult life, started writing her only novel: *Black Beauty: The Autobiography of a Horse*. Sewell was virtually bedridden at this time in her life, and dictated the book to her mother. The central protagonist *Black Beauty*, who appears first as a young foal and grows into a fine adult horse, recounts a series of adventures involving encounters with human beings, some of whom are kind to horses, others cruel. On publication in 1887 the book became an instant bestseller; in two years a million copies were sold in Britain alone, and in the 20th century it was translated into many languages and became a classic of children’s literature. Its great potential for helping the animal cause, by raising awareness of cruelty to animals, was immediately recognized, and the RSPCA financed several additional editions of the book. In the United States, the American Humane Society handed out free copies to coachman and dubbed *Black Beauty* the “Uncle Tom’s Cabin for horses.” In England the book’s success actually had a real impact on the lives of horses. The depiction in *Black Beauty* of the use of bearing reins, which forced carriage horses to keep their heads up, contributed to the successful campaign to have these devices outlawed. Use of these devices, though ensuring posture which was aesthetically appealing to some people, could also be tiring and painful for the horse: (Kean, 1998; Lansbury, 1985a). In 1893, Margaret Marshall Saunders, inspired by *Black Beauty*, wrote *Beautiful Joe*, the misadventures of a dog, told from the animal’s viewpoint. The book was a massive bestseller and is considered to have made a major contribution to exposing and denouncing cruelty to dogs. In 1903, Séverine, who throughout her life combined political activism alongside Jules Vallès with commitment to animal protection, wrote *Sac-à-tout: mémoires d’un petit chien* (Sac à tout: The memoir of a little dog).44

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44 In her memoir of her childhood, *Line* (1855-1867), Séverine emphasizes the importance of a book she read as a young girl, *Mémoires d’un âne*. “As the child became an adult she conserved
As we have seen, the pioneers in the use of the innovative narrative technique which consisted of having an animal tell a story in the first person included a number of animal protection activists. This type of story has become so common that it would be almost impossible to draw up an exhaustive list of the countless works which allow rabbits, bears, mice, lions, little pigs, etc., to speak directly to children. Indeed, the cognitive and emotional development of children has been accompanied by animals to an even greater extent since the animated cartoon industry – starting with the Walt Disney Studios in the 1930s – has allowed them to regularly engage with narratives recounted by animals.\textsuperscript{45} The center role played by fictional animals during the earliest stages of socialization also owes a lot to another noteworthy 19th-century pedagogical innovation. Around the middle of the century dolls, which previously looked like adult figures, were increasingly were made to represent infants. A baby doll, often equipped with a bottle, was a new toy which, like a little cat or dog, required care and so served as a kind of “apprenticeship for the maternal role; a renewal of the intentions which a new childish gesture translates, as a prelude to a school of home economics” (Corbin, 1987, p. 482). From 1880 on, Margaret Steiff, a German toy manufacturer, made stuffed animals using leftover material from her uncle’s factory. In 1902, her nephew persuaded her to take some sketches he had just made of bears at a zoo in Stuttgart and use them as inspiration for the creation of a soft toy which could appeal to both girls and boys. The following year, at the Leipzig Trade Fair, a major American importer bought a large batch of the toys. When they were released onto the American market the toys quickly sold out. The commercial success of this first toy bear, which was soon renamed Teddy Bear, encouraged other manufacturers to produce all manner of soft toys in the shape of rabbits, kittens, tigers, monkeys, lion, etc. The craze for these objects is intensified by the fact that children were able to use them as a substitute for their first “transitional object,” namely an object which, according to Donald Winnicott, offers an infant the emotional support necessary to gradually free itself from its anxiety-inducing dependence on its mother. Once again,

this faded, battered book like a relic. It became a lifelong source of her great friendship for animals, and of the pity she felt for the suffering inflicted upon them by cruel, selfish humans” (Séverine, 1921, p. 107).

\textsuperscript{45} In 1995, a psychologist, Evelyn Goodenough, collected 360 stories written by seventy girls and sixty-seven boys in order to explore the thoughts, desires and fears which people children’s imaginations. Animal characters appeared on average in 65% of the stories written by 2 to 4 year olds and, more precisely, in 80% of those written by 3 year olds and 85% of those written by 5 year olds (Melson, 2009, p. 188).
soft toys in the shape of animals are now so commonplace that it is difficult to evaluate their – probably decisive – influence on how representations of and attitudes toward the animal kingdom evolved. In the world of soft toys which children are given to play with, wild animals – such as bears, lions, or wolves – may be found alongside domesticated species such as dogs, cats, pigs and cows. In other words, the world of play of young children challenges the conception of wild animals as embodiments of a hostile and threatening ferociousness. In children's bedrooms soft animal toys, fictional characters from comic books or cartoons, and real dogs and cats which they take care of, are all regarded as reassuring and positive presences. Of course, relationships with real pets appear to be particularly influential, given their capacity to nurture “the feeling that other beings love you, appreciate you and take care of you. It is clear that animals – especially interactive animals like dogs – play this role for many children” (Melson, 2009, p. 95).

This set of developments, which have shaped children's socialization, has had an influence on the development of sensitizing devices now widely used by animal protection activists. Soft toys, stickers, children's drawings, photographs and film clips are often used to evoke the tender feelings generally closely associated with the very young. In this regard, three complementary scenes regularly appear. Firstly, images of puppies, kittens, bear cubs and fox cubs, or other “little balls of fluff,” trying to attract their parents' attention, or rolling around playfully. Secondly, the representation of mutual bonds of tenderness between mothers and their young: a lioness grooming her cubs, does suckling their fawns, a litter of polar bear cubs tagging along behind their mother, etc. Finally, the scenes depicting the exceptionally close complicity which can develop between animals and children: a bird perched on the shoulder of a little girl, a small child and an enormous Saint Bernard cuddling each other, exchanging a lick for a kiss on the nose, etc. Of course the impact of such images is increased insofar as they evoke caresses exchanged during childhood, between children and real animals or soft toys given them by kind parents. In other words, the encouragement of children from a young age to show kindness toward animals may be a vital way of motivating them to subsequent rally to the animal protection movement. Thus, in 1998, according to the responses to a questionnaire filled in by 270 protesters at a demonstration against animal experimentation, 98% of the activists interviewed stated that they own a pet and/or had one when they were a child and 72% of them owned several animals (Jasper and Nelkin, 1992, p. 38).