

History Lessons: What Urban Environmental Ethics Can Learn from Nineteenth Century Cities

Samantha Noll

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Abstract In this paper, I outline valuable insights that current theorists working in urban environmental ethics can gain from the analysis of nineteenth century urban contexts. Specifically, I argue that an analysis of urban areas during this time reveals two sets of competing metaphysical commitments that, when accepted, shift both the design of urban environments and our relationship with the natural world in these contexts. While one set of metaphysical commitments could help inform current projects in urban environmental ethics, the second “de-animalized” or “cleansed” commitments that influenced the structure of post-nineteenth century urban areas could potentially harm projects in urban environmental ethics. Thus we need to be particularly careful when choosing a metaphysical base for our current urban environmental ethics, as, depending on your specific project, implicitly accepting certain commitments could inadvertently work against the overall goals of the project.

Keywords Urban environmental ethics · Environmental ethics · Feminist philosophy of science · Animal studies · Urban agriculture · Urban policy · Metaphysics

Currently environmental philosophers are working to address the “urban blind-spot” (Fox 2001; Light 1995, 2001), or the field’s disregard of environmental issues in urban contexts. These trends in the field are both laudable and necessary but may be hindered by unexamined metaphysical assumptions built into the concepts used to craft theory. Indeed, as illustrated by the work of Haraway (1989), Harding (1993), and Martin (1997), unexamined values and assumptions influence all areas of scientific inquiry and, according to Mills (2009), this analysis can be extended to

S. Noll (✉)
Department of Philosophy, Michigan State University, 503 S. Kedzie Hall,
East Lansing, MI 48812, USA
e-mail: nollsama@msu.edu

theoretical work, as well. It follows from this that an environmental ethic built upon problematic concepts might be unknowingly influenced by such assumptions resulting in ethical blind-spots. For this reason, the main purpose of this paper is not to provide another urban environmental ethic but to help build a strong conceptual base for these projects using historical contexts.

In the first section of this paper, I outline insights that current theorists working in environmental ethics can gain from the analysis of nineteenth century cities, contexts largely ignored by scholars working in this field. During this time period cultural changes shifted key metaphysical conceptions that greatly impacted human–animal relations and the structure of urban areas. An analysis of urban areas during this time reveals two sets of competing conceptions that, when accepted, help shift both the design of urban environments and our relationship with the natural world in these contexts. After this historical analysis, I apply these insights to the field of environmental ethics in order to illustrate how they contributed to the “urban blind-spot” and skewed early work on urban environments.

I go on to argue that key metaphysical conceptions found in pre-nineteenth century urban contexts could inform current projects in this field, while “de-animalized” or “cleansed” conceptions that influenced the structure of post-nineteenth century urban areas could potentially harm projects, especially those focused on increasing sustainability in urban areas. While some of these metaphysical conceptions already inform environmental work in urban areas, there are currently no urban environmental ethics that include all of these aspects. Before making this argument, however, it is especially important to outline how this paper contributes to the field and define key terms, such as “metaphysical conception,” as this paper is intended for interdisciplinary audiences.

Contributions to the Field

While humans have been crafting and using “ethics” or norms to guide behavior concerning animals and the environment in a multiplicity of contexts since the beginning of the discipline of philosophy (Thompson and Noll 2015), the specific field of philosophy known as environmental ethics developed during the 1960s and 1970s, with the goals of challenging anthropocentrism and crafting rational arguments to support claims that non-human landscapes and communities have intrinsic value (Brennan and Lo 2011). However, this field-wide focus and the subsequent identification of pristine forms of nature, such as wilderness areas, as repositories of value resulted in what is commonly known the “urban blind-spot” in environmental ethics (Light and Wellman 2003). According to Light and Wellman (2003), the field largely conceived of “non-natural” environments as not deserving rights and obligation (as they are not pristine) “in the same ways as ‘natural’ environments and in some cases have even been held up as examples of environmental disvalue” (p. 1). In response, current environmental philosophers, such as Fox (2001), King (2000), Light (1995, 2001), Palmer (2003), and de Shalit (2000), have attempted to address environmental issues in urban areas. However, even with this current work on urban environmental ethics, nineteenth century urban

contexts are largely ignored by theorists working in this field. Thus one of the contributions of this paper is to help address this blind-spot by providing an analysis of nineteenth century cities that could potentially contribute valuable insights to the field.

In addition, the analysis in this paper largely focuses on non-human animals in urban settings and not specifically on flora, while it does touch upon urban farming and larger ecological systems. This focus is strategic as animals have historically been absent from various segments of environmental ethics (Palmer 2003). According to Light and Wellman (2003) and Palmer (2003), environmental ethics proper was historically understood as distinct from animal ethics, as environmental ethics focused on determining whether or not “nature” or larger ecosystems have intrinsic value in contrast to the project of determining whether or not humans have duties towards individual animals. Additionally, work on non-human animals plays a small role in the under-researched area of urban environmental ethics (Palmer 2003; Michelfelder 2003). However, non-human animals both use the built environment (Palmer 2003) and, as will be discussed below, have helped to shape the structure of built environments (Tarr 1999). Thus, again, one of the contributions of this paper is to help address this second blind-spot by providing an analysis of nineteenth century cities that largely focuses on how human–animal interactions in this context shifted conceptual landscapes.

Why Metaphysics?

As stated above, I argue that an analysis of nineteenth century cities reveals two sets of competing metaphysical conceptions that, when accepted, shift both the design of urban environments and our relationship with the natural world in these environments. However, before presenting this argument, it is important to define how this term will be used. Specifically, what are metaphysical conceptions and why do they impact work in environmental ethics? According to Rose (2004), metaphysics can be understood in two ways: In the specific sense, metaphysics is a branch of philosophy that has historically taken up the project of explaining the world by referencing transcendental features, such as reason, history, and first substances. More recently, this philosophical field focuses on better understanding basic concepts regarding what something “is,” the structure of “being” or the mind, and the relationship between concepts (Inwagen 2013). More generally, metaphysics can be understood as “the project of delimiting and determining the governing features of everyday social existence (or metaphysical conceptions)” (Rose 2004, p. 462). In the later sense, metaphysics is deeply interdisciplinary and, according to Rose (2004), the project of doing metaphysics is embedded within the fabric of the social sciences.

Building off of both these definitions, for the purposes of this paper, a “metaphysical commitment” should be understood as a basic governing feature of social life (Rose 2004) or a foundational concept that a person holds regarding what something “is” and the unexamined connections between basic concepts (Inwagen 2013). While Rose (2004) argues that the field of philosophical metaphysics is

outmoded, in actuality, such conceptions are deeply influential in all areas of life, such as in the formation of identity (Ricoeur and Blamey 1995), the labeling of individuals and areas (Derrida 2008), such as urban and wilderness areas or human and animal, and in philosophical and scientific inquiry (Haraway 1989; Harding 1993; Martin 1997; Wolfe 2008). Indeed, according to Harding (1993), metaphysical and value conceptions influence various stages of research, such as the choice of questions investigated, the formulation of research projects, and the interpretation of data.¹ Like in the sciences, these conceptions influence theoretical work in environmental ethics and in the subfield of urban environmental ethics. As will be argued below, different metaphysical conceptions can either hinder or help the project of crafting a working urban environmental ethic. In the next section of this paper, I identify key metaphysical conceptions that can be useful for the project of addressing environmental issues in urban contexts.

An Analysis of Nineteenth Century Cities

This section consists of a general analysis of nineteenth century cities, as during this time period, key conceptions of the previous age conflicted with new ideas and were radically changed or replaced. However, it should be noted that the analysis below is cursory at best, as I will be drawing from the vast literature of urban studies. This discipline, established during the later half of the nineteenth century (Steinhoff 2011),² produced a rich body of scholarly work examining the various causes of urbanization, the evolution or development of cities over time (Tarr 1999), and the collection of various quantitative and qualitative data on urban life (Gamber 2005). For this reason, the purpose of this section is not to provide an exhaustive analysis of nineteenth century cities. Rather, it's aim is to identify key metaphysical commitments, illustrate how these shifted during the time period, and provide an example of how work is important for the field of environmental ethics.

For example, according to Brantz (2011), two conceptual changes shifted human–animal relationships during the nineteenth century. First, enlightenment thinking and a growing emphasis on rationality and science, along with an insistence on progress and change, impacted these relationships and drastically influenced the structure of modern cities and the place of animals within this structure. Second, specific concepts of “civilization” and “domestication” began to emerge through the juxtaposition of “wild and primitive” and “tame, cultivated, and household” (Brantz 2011, p. 75). According to Palmer (2011), the concepts “wildness” and “domestication” do not signify capacities but different relationships between humans and animals. Wildness emphasizes the absence of a relation and a disposition that is markedly not “tame,” while a domesticated animal is one that is both controlled by humans and has been made dependent upon humans in various

¹ For similar arguments made in the sciences, see Pepperberg's (1994) critique of previous work on animal cognition, Savage-Rumbaugh and Fields (2000) work on ape consciousness and specifically their critique of previous work in the field, and Andrews (2011) analysis of anthropomorphism in the sciences.

² See Steinhoff's (2011) brief synopsis of the field in his paper on nineteenth century urbanization and the sacred and Katznelson's (1991) essay “The Centrality of the City in Social Theory.”

degrees. These emerging concepts (civilization and domestication) built upon key dualisms (wild/tame, primitive/cultivated etc) then helped to shift the accepted definition of the home from an area where different types of animals were welcomed, to a place where only “pets” (or highly dependent animals) could enter. Due to these cultural changes, farm animals historically kept in the home, such as cattle, pigs, and chickens (Edwards 2011; Pascua 2011), were essentially banished from the house (Clutton-Brock 2011).³ As will be discussed below, the reliance on rationality and science (especially in the area of public health) coupled with the separation of most animals from the home had palpable consequences in urban environments during the nineteenth century.

In addition to these conceptual changes, Atkins (2012a) argues that humans historically placed non-human animals living within city limits into the following general categories: (1) useful animals (or those used for meat, transportation, etc); (2) animals that humans are able to enjoy (various wild animals that bring enjoyment, such as song birds and increasingly zoo animals); (3) desirable animals (domesticated animals allowed into the human sphere, such as companion animals); and (4) animals that transgress human–animal boundaries (rats, cockroaches, and other “pests”) (p. 3).⁴ While it should be noted that these categories are open to critique⁵ and that animals can belong to several categories at once, they provide a useful schema to better understand (1) how humans generally categorize animals in urban environments and (2) the dominant relationships between humans and non-human others in these environments. Indeed, Atkins (2012a) goes on to argue that, while the first three categories of animals were largely invisible within urban theoretical literature, the fourth category continues to be highly influential in “human–animal boundary” work that examines how shifting animals into this category often provided justification for the “cleansing” of non-human others from a “clean” urban environment (p. 3). Indeed, claims that animals are a “nuisance” and thus should be removed from the city commons often implicitly or explicitly make use of the argument that animals have transgressed human–animal boundaries (see Michelfelder 2003; McNeur 2011; Mizelle 2011). Like the conceptual changes above, categorizing previously accepted animals as transgressors or nuances also shaped urban environments during the nineteenth century.

Indeed, one of the consequences of the separation of all but desirable animals from the home was the increasing demand to de-animalize or remove animals considered a nuisance (i.e. not under the direct control of humans) from the city sphere. For example,

³ It is important to note here that historically various types of farm animals were not fully dependent upon humans. For example, pigs were largely self sufficient and allowed to forage during the day without human supervision prior to the industrialization of pork production (McNeur 2011). Indeed, even today, in contrast to industrially raised broiler chickens, escaped sows can often survive quite well on their own. Thus traditional types of farm animals could be understood as markedly different from pets or those that were bred for companionship rather than production purposes.

⁴ Also see Mizelle’s (2011) history of the pig in cities and Edwards’ (2011) treatment of domesticated animals in Renaissance Europe.

⁵ Palmer (2003) argues that the term “animal” is itself problematic and increasingly difficult to define. Indeed, Derrida (2008) argues that placing all non-human animals into one category is itself problematic, as it both creates a gulp between human animals and all others and erases the differences between various non-human animals.

this conceptual shift influenced the fight to remove pigs from New York City's landscape during the later part of the nineteenth century. The above definition of the home formed the foundations of the upper class cultural ideal of the cleansed and increasingly "private" space of the home that was celebrated in popular literature *ad nauseam* (Gamber 2005). While a large percentage of the population never obtained this ideal, instead living in boarding houses, those who did not achieve this middle class standard were often despised. In addition, prior to the nineteenth century, all classes owned pigs, but cultural factors combined to enable middle-class and wealthy New Yorkers to abandon raising livestock and cultivating gardens in favor of purchasing food at market (McNeur 2011). In contrast, African and Irish American laborers often relied upon raising pigs in the city to support their families, with humans, pigs, and other animals often sharing close living space. The cultural ideal of the home cleansed of working animals distanced the upper class from most animals (all but pets and horses), connected raising livestock to the lower class, and essentially shifted this class' perception of pigs from that of a useful animal to nuances or ones that transgress human-animal boundaries.

However, this separation may not have impacted the structure of the city, if not for New York's sharp increase in population. During this time, upper and middle class families began moving into lower class neighborhoods where swine often roamed the streets during the day, feeding on garbage, before returning to their homes at night (McNeur 2011). This factor, combined with the upper classes distance from swine, led to major legal and physical battles over whether or not pigs should be allowed in the cities, in particular, and whether or not public streets should be used as commons, in general. While the wealthy barred pigs from Atkins' (2012a) first three categories listed above, arguing that loose pigs impeded progress and were a nuisance (as they impeded transportation and performed improper acts on the streets), and a health hazard, the poor argued that these animals were useful, as they cleaned up the streets and providing food for families (McNeur 2011). The end result of this conflict was the removal of pigs from the city proper and new rules for the use of public spaces.

In essence, this argument was not simply about pigs but a deeper conflict concerning animals' place in the city, the proper use of public space (McNeur 2011), and assumptions concerning human-animal relationships. The arguments of the wealthy commonly alluded to concepts of "progress," "modernity," "nuisance," "disease," and "wildness." Pigs and their owners were characterized as the "Other" who were wild, primitive, and vulgar (McNeur 2011, Burke 1982), in contrast to the wealthy and middle class who were tame, cultivated, and working towards the enlightenment ideal of progress. In this context, "tame," "cultivated," and "progress" were juxtaposed against "wild," "primitive," and "vulgar." Building off of Palmer's (2011) insight that such terms signify different relationships, the result was the conflict of two very different conceptions or understandings of how to live, proper human-animal relationships, and the subsequent place of animals in the public sphere.⁶ Thus emerging concepts (such as civilization and domestication) built upon key dualisms (such as wild/tame, primitive/cultivated etc) moved beyond influencing the structure of the home and helped inform arguments aimed

⁶ While this paper largely focuses on animals, the above conflict also aimed at shifting the behavior and habits of the working class in cities. McNeur (2011) provides an excellent overview of this topic in her essay "The 'Swinish Multitude': Controversies over hogs in Antebellum New York City".

at cleansing the city commons of all animals considered a nuisance by the dominant class, including, interestingly, stray dogs (Howell 2012). The above conflict was as much about conflicting metaphysical assumptions, as it was about land use policy.

In addition, anti-hog arguments made use of shifting conceptions of disease in order to claim that they were public health risks. Indeed, according to Atkins (2012b), it was only after commonly accepted views of disease and current conceptions of dirt and filth began to shift (due to the above cultural changes) that the process of “de-animalizing” the city began in earnest. Examples of shifting views include the commonly held belief that sickness can be transmitted through odors and the “folk wisdom” that illness was connected to the increasingly chaotic and dirty environment of the city (Atkins 2012b; Barnes 1995; Coleman 1982; McNeur 2011).⁷ According to Barnes (1995), “several significant elements of the pre-germ theory etiology of tuberculosis survived intact through the late nineteenth century... Among these elements are filth, stench, and overcrowding, all symptomatic of the underlying pathology of the city” (p. 25). These conceptual shifts greatly impacted the “on the ground” environment of the city, as human and animal lives were largely integrated in urban landscapes during this time. Indeed, slaughter houses were often located in neighborhoods, household pigs ran free, and manure from drovers passing through, household animals, and horses used for transportation filled the gutters (Atkins 2012b, p. 85).

These shifting conceptions of disease, dirt, and filth manifested themselves into sanitary policing, where smells from manure, trash, drains, slaughter-houses, and other sources became the target of increased legislation (Atkins 2012b; Stallybrass and White 1986). For example, the populations’ increased fear of disease (specifically rabies) greatly impacted the number of pets people owned and, for the first time, police were used to muzzle and round up stray dogs (Howell 2012). In addition, legislation concerning dirt and filth, coupled with rising land costs, helped push slaughter houses and farming operations out of the city proper (DeMello 2011). Such legislation, coupled with technological advances that displaced horses as the primary means of automotive power, had the effect of the attempted “cleansing” the modern city of animals either not under human control or considered enjoyable. Indeed, shifting conceptions of disease helped move animals previously thought of as “useful” and “desirable” (Atkins 2012a) into the category of animals that transgress human–animal boundaries or “nuisances.”

Sustainability and the Nineteenth Century City

In addition, according to Atkins (2012c), these attitude and policy changes directly undermined a complex and largely sustainable relationship⁸ between urban areas and

⁷ It is important to note here that this chaotic and dirty environment was not solely due to animals within in the city but also changes brought about by the industrial revolution, such as gas lamps, factories, and industrial waste (Barnes 1995).

⁸ According to Raffaele et al (2010), the term “sustainability” is itself a contested concept, with different theorists, agencies, and practitioners embracing various definitions. This paper will be using Norton’s (2005) definition where the concept signifies “a concern about and acceptance of responsibility for the future state of the world and the quality of life essential to it” (Raffaele et al 2010, p. 73).

what he calls the “charmed circle,” or the area surrounding the city (from 10 to 50 miles, depending on technology) that could benefit from manure produced there (p. 53). Specifically, nitrogen and other nutrients found in animal manure and human “high soil” were reincorporated into the surrounding environment through its use as a fertilizer in peri-urban fields and surrounding areas. In return, vegetables were transported into the city markets and hay and oats were used to feed the horses that, in turn, created more manure. Horticulture operations, or “land touched by the spade,” largely took place within city limits, as these farms grew “delicate” crops that could take advantage of immediate demand, such as asparagus, celery, and broccoli (Atkins 2012c, p. 54). While operations farther outside the city grew crops that did not fetch a high price at market, such as cabbage, beans, and potatoes.

When understood from this perspective, the large piles of manure and night-soil that fed the sanitary outcry were not piles of “dirty filth” but resources to be sold and used in the surrounding areas (Atkins 2012c). This “manured region” was an area of agricultural prosperity predominantly sustained by manure produced in the cities. Its radius was largely controlled by the price of carting waste products to farms and horticulture operations, as faeces is a heavy, low value product. In addition to London, other major cities such as New York, Philadelphia, Paris, and Berlin also enjoyed the prosperity brought about by the manured region. However, legislation, the change in attitudes concerning non-human animals’ roles in cities, the development of the automobile and train, and the rise in land prices helped to dissolve these operations (Atkins 2012c).

Lessons from History

Now that we’ve taken a closer look at nineteenth century urban contexts, what can we learn from them? Here I argue that the above analysis helps illustrate how shifting concepts or definitions of “civilization,” “domestication,” “home,” “disease,” and “progress” greatly influences concepts used in current environmental ethics, such as “city” and “nature.” The above analysis helps to identify metaphysical conceptions that directly influenced the structure of cities prior to the nineteenth century and after this time period and, also, our relationship with animals and the environment within these contexts. For example, prior to the nineteenth century, the following key conceptions appear to be embedded within (at least implicitly) accepted notions of the city: (1) a conception of the “city” and “nature” in non-dualistic terms, as cities were integrated habitats, with both humans and various categories of non-human animals sharing the same space (Atkins 2012b; Brantz 2011); (2) the conceptual connection between urban and rural areas as a “sustainable” unit, with both areas forming a sustainable whole (Atkins 2012c, p. 53); and (3) the integration of environmental and animal issues within urban areas, as shifting ideas and policies regarding proper use of urban commons greatly impacted humans and animals within the city and the structure of the city itself.⁹

⁹ Cities often made major changes to infrastructure in order to cohabitate with non-human others, such as better utilizing their labor. See Tarr’s (1999) discussion of how cities were improved to better utilize horse power in his essay “A Note on the Horse as an Urban Power Source”.

In contrast, post-nineteenth century notions of cities appear to be based upon the following conceptions: (1) the increasing separation of humans and non-human animals (from houses and urban commons), grounded in a fear of disease and shifting conceptions of filth, progress, and acceptable levels of wildness; (2) the separation of urban and rural pursuits and thus the delineation of urban and rural areas; and (3) the distinction between “domesticated” and “wild” animals and the cleansing of non-human others identified as nuances from the urban sphere. This analysis is particularly important as it illustrates how advances in public health, social factors, such as dramatic increases in population, and changing attitudes helped shift key concepts during this period and subsequently influenced land use patterns in cities. Indeed, one could argue that post-nineteenth century concepts helped to shape current cities, as this era is understood to be the birth of the “modern” city (Atkins 2012a).¹⁰

In the next section of the paper, I argue that metaphysical conceptions that form the foundation of anti-urban arguments in environmental philosophy developed from post-nineteenth century notions of urban life, and are thus using concepts that have at least partially been cleansed of the non-human animal communities that we profess to have ethical duties towards. Thus it is not surprising that environmental philosophy did not properly address environmental issues in urban contexts (Light 2001). If this is the case, then we must be particularly careful when developing urban environmental ethics so as not to import the above metaphysical conceptions into current ethics, as they may be anathema to the overall project. Thus what is needed is a competing set of metaphysical conceptions/concepts that may provide a stronger base for developing modern urban environmental ethics, such as those found in pre-nineteenth century urban contexts.

Current Environmental Ethics

As outlined above, the specific field of philosophy known as environmental ethics developed during the 1960–1970s (Brennan and Lo 2011) and, for the past three decades, largely focused on addressing a limited set of abstract questions, such as whether or not natural environments have intrinsic value (Light and Wellman 2003; Michelfelder 2003). While there could be several reasons for this trend, one predominant reason is that if the natural world has value in itself and/or a non-anthropocentric centered form of value, then we, as moral beings, have particular duties and obligations regarding nature. This move allows environmental issues to be decided by something other than anthropocentric human preferences, which are

¹⁰ Though it should be noted here that cities are not stagnant. Values and concepts are constantly in a state of adaptation and evolution. For example, current local food movements have sparked initiatives to reintegrate agriculture into the urban environment, including the reintegration of previously removed animals, such as chickens and goats. This reintegration program is already shifting current conceptions of what a city “is” and influencing land use patterns in these environments. See Delind’s (2011) essay “Are Local Food and the Local Food Movement Taking us Where we Want to Go? Or are we Hitching our Wagons to the Wrong Stars?,” Werkheiser and Noll’s (2014) “From Food Justice to a Tool of the Status Quo: Three Sub-Movements within Local Food” and Altieri et al.’s (1999) “The Greening of the ‘Barrios’: Urban Agriculture for Food Security in Cuba” for more detailed discussions of this phenomena.

ultimately grounded in shifting social practices and cultural norms (Taylor 1986). While the push to find or argue for the non-instrumental value of nature can be understood as an important project because it provides a foundation from which environmentalists could argue for the greater protection of natural areas, arguably, focusing on abstract metaphysical and ontological questions, such as intrinsic value, has consequences; consequences such as the “urban blind-spot” in environmental ethics.

According to Light (2001), in addition to a focus on abstract questions, another reason why urban environments may have been largely ignored by environmental philosophy is due to the widespread assumption that cities separate humans from nature and this contributes to the destruction of the environment (p. 45). Roughly, the argument goes as follows: If urbanites are separated both psychologically and physically from nature, then this population will not care about the environment and thus will not curbe their consumption or manage their “ecological footprint” (Rees and Wackernagel 1995; Rees 1999). In other words, according to Rees (1999), separating people from the land that sustains them has severe ecological consequences. In addition, cities are unsustainable in a pragmatic sense, as rural turmoil can break the necessary supply chains needed for a city’s survival. Thus it is better for both the environment and human populations if people lived in rural rather than urban areas. At the very least, wilderness areas should be conserved so that urbanites have the opportunity to bond with the natural world (Dowie 1996).¹¹ According to Light, such critiques grounded in “ecological footprint analysis” often form the lynchpin of anti-urban arguments in environmental philosophy. Similarly, de Shalit (2000) argues that environmental philosophy suffers from “ruralism” or the simultaneous glorification of country life coupled with a conception of urban life as degraded and inferior. Light (2001) goes on to argue that, contrary to this position, there are several reasons why we should include a push towards densely populated urban areas as a part of a larger environmental sustainability plan, such as that cities consume less energy per capita than rural areas. However, if this is the case, then crafting an urban environmental ethic is of the utmost importance.

While Light (2001) goes on to craft his own ethic, there are three important metaphysical conceptions that form the foundation of most anti-urban arguments: First, the above arguments accept specific conceptualizations of the “city” and “nature” that are in dualistic opposition to one another. The claim that urbanites are separated both psychologically and physically from nature is built upon specific conceptions of nature and the city as separate and mutually exclusive entities. Second, cities and the countryside are largely conceptualized as distinct areas, with the city generally understood as an area of consumption and the country as an area of production, rather than conceptualizing these two areas as forming an ecological whole. This specific dualistic coupling forms the foundations of mandates to curbe or limit one’s ecological footprint.

Third, the above anti-urban arguments utilize a conception of nature that is largely cleansed of non-human others, as it is difficult to maintain the claim that cities are bereft of nature if you include non-human animals within that category.

¹¹ Specifically, read Dowie’s (1996) section on interest groups.

Here “cleansed” does not signify the complete removal of animals but the removal of animals not in Atkins’ (2012a) second (wild animals enjoyed by humans) and third (desirable or domesticated animals) categories. Animals in Atkins’ first category (useful animals) left the city during the later nineteenth century as increasingly “useful” animals, such as horses, were replaced by technology (Tarr 1999) and as processing activities, such as those in slaughter houses, gradually moved out of city proper. Non-human others in the fourth category (those that transgress boundaries) are continually being removed. Interestingly, both domesticated animals and animals for enjoyment signify a relationship or social contract with humans. This relationship can be understood to move them out of nature proper (Palmer 2011). In the case of domesticated animals, this relationship is one of control (Palmer 2003), while enjoyed animals are either controlled, as in zoos, or are allowed into human environments but at the constant threat of removal, if they transgress boundaries or are considered a nuisance. Thus one could argue that these animals have largely become invisible in urban environments. This integration and the subsequent removal of first and fourth category animals helped contribute to a conception of nature that is largely cleansed of non-human others. Indeed, as Light and Wellman (2003) argue, there is often a clear division between environmental ethics, or those that focus on duties towards ecosystems and landscapes, and animal ethics, or those that focus on animal welfare.

Here it is important to note that each of the above metaphysical concepts are currently being contested within the field of environmental philosophy. For example, Light’s (2003) urban environmental ethic is built upon the foundational assumption that the city contains nature, as it calls for the enlargement of the boundaries of community to include the environment and for a citizenship ethic that requires active participation and the fulfillment of moral obligations to both human and non-human others. Light advocates using urban parks and natural areas in the city to promote this ethic, thus focusing on cultivating greater connections between humans and animals for enjoyment or expanding Atkins’ (2012a) second category to include more non-human others.

In addition, Thompson (1994) argues that environmental ethics can learn a valuable lesson from agriculture; specifically, we need to include “an ethic of production” in environmental ethics, as production is necessary for human life as we know it (p. 12). While Thompson’s ethic of production has not yet been integrated into an urban environmental ethic, it could help renovate previous conceptions of the city as an area of consumption and rural areas as production zones. Indeed, it could also provide the foundation for environmental ethics specifically tailored to areas of production, as the city was historically an area of production (Atkins 2012d). This approach could be informed by an analysis of the history of useful and domesticated animals in nineteenth century cities.

Finally, theorists are working to integrate environmental and animal ethics in complex contexts, expand categories, such as wildlife, and break down conceptual boundaries. For example, Michelfelder (2003) argues that wild creatures are present within the urban landscape but relatively invisible to the human eye and Bird (1987) states that urban wildlife, in reality, do not number in the thousands but in the millions. These theorists argue that urban “wildlife” does not consist of easily

visible cougars or wolves (i.e. animals that transgress human–animal boundaries). In actuality, the urban natural world includes many types of wildlife that largely fit into these areas such as micro-organisms, fungi, dandelions, birds, squirrels, mice, possums, and the occasional coyote. Indeed, arguments for the removal of visible “wild-life” often claim that they are a nuisance to humans and/or have transgressed human–animal boundaries (Palmer 2003), thus moving these non-human others into Atkins (2012a) fourth category. The above critique challenges this trespasser argument, as the city is not a cleansed area, but an area of ecological diversity. In addition, it provides strong evidence for taking such wildlife into account when crafting an urban environmental ethic.

However, while theorists are currently contesting the above metaphysical conceptions that form the foundation of anti-urban arguments, this work is largely understood to be based upon separate critiques of the field of environmental ethics. In contrast, I argue that the metaphysical foundations of anti-urban arguments may come out of post-nineteenth century conceptions of the “city” and “nature,” largely informed by shifting understandings of “civilization,” “domestication,” the “household,” “disease”, and “wildness.” Indeed, the key assumptions that historically influenced the development of post-nineteenth century cities largely map onto the metaphysical assumptions that form the foundation of anti-urban arguments. For example, the conception of the “city” and “nature” as separate and mutually exclusive entities is characteristic of urban areas after the de-animalization of the modern city. The clear delineation of rural and urban areas is also characteristic of cleansed cities. Finally, the conception of urban nature cleansed of animals that are either not under direct control of humans or that bring humans enjoyment may also be informed by urban contexts after working and nuisance animals were removed from urban areas.

While the shifting conceptual landscape that marked the creation of the “modern” city is clearly visible when analyzing historical contexts, many of these metaphysical conceptions have moved into the conceptual background, so to speak. However, as the analysis of anti-urban arguments above and their subsequent coupling to dominant nineteenth century concepts illustrate, they inform both the shape of current cities and do philosophical work in environmental ethics. Specifically, they influence how we come to understand specific contexts, actions, and phenomena within those contexts and can guide projects of critique and the creation of ethics within the field. For this reason, we must be particularly careful when developing urban environmental ethics so as not to import the above anti-urban metaphysical assumptions into current ethics. Indeed, an environmental ethic built upon problematic concepts might be blind to a large set of ethical issues in urban areas and continue to contribute to specific urban blind-spots. Environmental philosophers may also find the metaphysical conceptions that shaped pre-nineteenth century urban environments useful when developing current urban environmental ethics.

In addition, I argue that these contexts could provide examples of “working” cities where non-human animals, larger ecosystems, and urban production were integrated in a single urban environment. While pre-modern cities suffered from environmental justice issues, as slaughter houses and manure piles were often

placed in poor neighborhoods (Atkins 2012c) and there were many instances of animal cruelty, as domesticated animals were often treated badly and slaughtered in inhumane ways (Atkins 2012d; Howell 2012), in at least some instances, these cities also formed largely sustainable systems where useful animals, animals for enjoyment, companion animals, and animals that transgress human–animal boundaries shared a common urban environment (Atkins 2012a, b, c, d). Thus, pre-modern cities could provide examples or models of sustainable and integrated urban landscapes that may be useful when attempting to build workable urban environmental ethics, in addition to insights useful for addressing current urban environmental issues.

However, it should be noted here that changes in views of health and various societal pressures that influenced changes in cities were both good and bad. For example, increasing knowledge of disease transmission and developments in public health led to beneficial changes in urban environments, such as increased sanitation and a decrease in disease transmission (Barnes 1995). In addition, factors such as rising populations often forced urban populations to adapt. Thus I am not arguing that we somehow should go back to a pre-nineteenth century city structure as, in many instances, this would be impossible for both social and environmental reasons (cities may be too toxic for some animals to fair well). However, now that ecosystem pressures and social movements, such as the local food and environmental movements, are making it difficult to ignore many of the impacts of industrialization, these contexts can still provide working examples that could help inform the design of urban areas, the use of commons, and policies regarding non-human animals in city limits.

Back to Swine: An Example of the Broader Uses of Nineteenth Century Insights

For example, lets return to the earlier example of swine in the city.¹² The analysis of pre-modern cities could provide useful insights concerning current problems, such as crises experienced by the pork production industry in both the US and Europe. Specifically, Fairlie (2010) argues that these crises are partially caused by breaking our historical relationship with pigs as recyclers and grain banks. Prior to the 1990 s, pigs performed the following useful duties within urban areas: (1) they ate food unfit for human consumption and (2) they acted as “storage” containers, as they were fed excess grain during a good year to convert it into meat for later consumption. In addition, according to Mizelle (2011), pigs were used as both a garbage removal service and a source of food within cities. Thus they were, historically, an important part of urban ecology and were highly efficient recyclers. This relationship was largely broken in both Europe and the United States due to changing animal feed legislation influenced by disease scares (such as BSE, which

¹² There are many other animals within city limits that could be focused upon, as Michelfelder (2003) argues. The purpose of this case study is simply to illustrate how nineteenth century contexts could provide valuable insights.

doesn't affect pigs), the increased control of large grocery stores, the general populations' lack of familiarity with pigs, and economic pressure to create more confined animal feeding operations, as it's hard for the large scale operations to benefit from local resource boons. The direct result of this legislation is the banning of feeding pigs food scraps (largely produced in the cities) and thus a shift away from using pigs to recycle food waste. Thus pigs are now competing with humans for food, as they are being fed grain fit for human consumption, and this effectively erases the profit margins for farmers.

When analyzed from the context of pre-modern cities, again, along with other factors, it appears that shifting conceptions of disease are being used to argue for legislation that continues to undermine an integrated and sustainable urban environment and relationship with non-human animals. In contrast to the pig industry in Europe and the United States, where the majority of pigs are now raised in CAFOs and are fed grain fit for human consumption, the majority of pigs in China (the country that produces over half the world's pork) are raised in backyards and in small facilities (Fairlie 2010). In this context, pigs are often kept behind restaurants and other food establishments so that they can be fed daily food waste. Thus the historic role of pigs as recyclers is largely intact in this region. However, the above modern pressures are currently working to change the relationship with the pig in this area, as well.¹³ If our goal is to create urban environmental ethics where sustainability and interspecies relationships are highly valued, then the above shift in pig raising could be understood as an act that moves us away from achieving the goal of creating a sustainable city. Such arguments should at least be at the table during talks on legislation changes, as the consequences of such changes can be far reaching, especially in urban environments.¹⁴ This is simply one example where using pre-modern cities as potential models and sources of insight could be useful when addressing modern environmental issues.

Conclusion

For over three decades, the field of environmental ethics largely focused on addressing a limited set of abstract questions, such as whether or not nature and the nonhuman communities that make up "nature" have intrinsic value (Light and Wellman 2003; Michelfelder 2003). This field-wide myopic focus and the subsequent identification of pristine forms of nature, such as wilderness areas, as repositories of intrinsic value resulted in an "urban blind-spot" in environmental philosophy. In response, current environmental philosophers, such as Light (1995,

¹³ Indeed, some modern urban landscapes may be unfit for certain animals, such as swine, due to increased pollution or infrastructure changes that make integration difficult if not impossible. However, this does not negate the argument that these possibilities should be discussed when working towards sustainability.

¹⁴ According to Fairlie (2010), one consequence of this shift is the impoverishment and bankruptcy of small scale swine producers. Indeed, According to Pimbert (2008) the shift to industrial farming systems led to "200,000 farms [disappearing] between 1966 and 1995" alone (p. 22). While there is not space to discuss this topic here, Shiva (2000) and Perfecto (2009) discuss this topic at length.

2001), Palmer (2003), and de Shalit (2000) have attempted to address environmental issues in urban areas. The main purpose of this paper was to help build a strong metaphysical base for such projects using historical contexts, as work in this area may be hindered by unexamined assumptions found in problematic concepts.

In this paper, I outlined valuable insights that current theorists working in urban environmental ethics can gain from the analysis of nineteenth century urban contexts. Specifically, I argued that an analysis of urban areas during this time revealed two sets of competing conceptions that, when accepted, shift both the design of urban environments and our relationship with the natural world in these contexts. While one set of metaphysical conceptions could help inform current projects in urban environmental ethics, the second “de-animalized” or “cleansed” conceptions that influenced the structure of post-nineteenth century urban areas could potentially harm projects in urban environmental ethics. Thus we need to be particularly careful when choosing a metaphysical base for our current urban environmental ethics, as, depending on your specific project, implicitly accepting certain conceptions could inadvertently work against the overall goals of the project.

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