

Sociology

<http://soc.sagepub.com/>

Book Review: Bob Torres Making a Killing: The Political Economy of Animal Rights Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2007, £11.00 pbk (ISBN: 13-9781904859673), vi+171 pp

Roger Yates

Sociology 2010 44: 171

DOI: 10.1177/00380385100440011202

The online version of this article can be found at:
<http://soc.sagepub.com/content/44/1/171.citation>

Published by:



<http://www.sagepublications.com>

On behalf of:



[British Sociological Association](#)

Additional services and information for *Sociology* can be found at:

Email Alerts: <http://soc.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

Subscriptions: <http://soc.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

Reprints: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

Permissions: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>

Bob Torres

Making a Killing: The Political Economy of Animal Rights

Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2007, £11.00 pbk

(ISBN: 13-9781904859673), vi+171 pp.

■ **Reviewed by Roger Yates, University College Dublin**

The timing of this book could hardly be better since it is published as the animal rights movement, its subject matter in large part, is currently emerging from the shadow of animal welfarism. Given that there has been a social movement in existence since the 1970s bearing the name ‘animal rights’, that assertion may sound odd or in error. However, Bob Torres explains that animal rights is a new social mobilization and outlines the reasons why the movement that has borne the name for so long is not a rights-based movement at all.

Throughout *Making A Killing*, Torres acknowledges a debt to the intellectual inspiration of this new rights movement, US law professor Gary Francione. He begins with Francione’s concept of ‘moral schizophrenia’, which contrasts the concerns human beings tend to have for cats, dogs and other ‘companion animals’ while we exploit other equally sensitive non-human animals such as cows, pigs and chickens with instrumental ruthlessness.

The theoretical direction by which Torres approaches his subject is highly original. This ‘political economy of animal rights’ investigates the structural and historical dynamics of oppression in general, and the oppression of non-human animals in particular. Locating these dynamics in economics, ideology, and everyday social practices, Torres adopts a perspective based on social anarchism, following Kropotkin and Goldman, while the social ecology of Bookchin and a Marxist political economy model substantiate the framework employed throughout. The sociology of David Nibert provides the final part of the book’s conceptual infrastructure.

Making a Killing describes long-standing power relations based on the principles of capitalist market competition, arguing that the systematic oppression of human and non-human animals should be core analytical factors in order to fully understand this hegemonic order. While Torres accepts that animal exploitation could exist without capitalism, he argues that ‘the structure and nature of contemporary capital has deepened, extended, and worsened our domination over animals and the natural world’ (p. 11). With such thoughts in mind, Torres explores the commodification of humans and other animals, consumer culture and the importance of private property in capitalist relations.

Exploring hierarchal thinking, Torres employs Bookchin’s notion of the ‘equality of unequals’ to strengthen his claim that non-human animals deserve greater moral value involving the elimination of their property status. Torres next moves towards a consideration of the agents of socio-cultural change. Combining themes from Bookchin and Francione to illustrate the domination of nature and animals and how best to oppose it, Torres argues that a ‘struggle against domination and hierarchy’ needs a movement of people committed to the restructuring of human–human and

human–non-human relations to undermine what he identifies as the ‘animal rights industry’ led, in North America, by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA).

Essentially, this section of the book contains a critique of ‘new welfarists’: animal advocates who tend to use the ‘rights’ label rhetorically while rejecting rights-based theory in favour of utilitarianism. Torres objects several times to the characterization of utilitarian philosopher Peter Singer as the ‘father of the animal rights movement’ whose most famous text, *Animal Liberation*, is known as ‘the bible of the movement’. Highly critical of the prevailing animal movement’s theory and praxis, then, Torres argues that they do not taking rights seriously, helping to explain why animal organizations give awards to slaughterhouse designers and business leaders who sell meat and dairy. This advocacy, he says, betrays the dearth of imagination and creativity within a movement that believes that endless parades of nearly naked female celebrities is radical politics.

Torres brings all his themes together in a final chapter, ‘You Cannot Buy the Revolution’. Here social anarchist values and human and animal rights advocacy emerge in a blueprint for scholarship and activism reminiscent of C. Wright Mills’ public sociology and the ‘hands-on’ perspectives of people such as Steven Seidman, Piers Beirne and Phil Scraton. Torres is focused on overcoming domination in all its forms; a lifestyle based on ethical veganism, anti-hierarchy, and the promotion of grassroots collectives working as consensus-based affinity groups.

Making a Killing is not the usual type of book about animals, the animal movement, or social movements in general. It is not a history; nor is it about the details of how humans exploit non-human animals in the various way in which we do. However, it serves to place such accounts in their social, cultural and economic context and, for that reason alone, is a valuable text. Its greater value, however, lies in its sophistication of analysis of what ‘animal rights’ is all about, especially at a time when the movement for animal rights appears to be undergoing a sizeable change of direction.

Roderick Martin, Peter D. Casson and Tahir M. Nissar

Investor Engagement – Investors and Management Practice under Shareholder Value

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, £45.00 hbk

(ISBN: 978-0-19-920260-7), xvii+219 pp.

■ **Reviewed by Fatima Malik, Glasgow Caledonian University**

The book provides a much required conceptual and theoretical review of the complex nature in which shareholder value in practice elicits synergistic and networking relationships between investors and firms and how these in turn improve corporate identity, economic performance and corporate governance and social responsibility. It aptly reflects on growing management dependence on the changing nature of shareholder value and how this can be improved through investor relations and management practice approaches of engagement. Case studies are used effectively to explain how investor engagement varies in accordance to investor type and how