

Original Article

Animal Citizenship, Phenomenology, and Ontology: Some reflections on Donaldson's & Kymlicka's *Zoopolis*

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Abstract: This paper is a dialogue with Sue Donaldson's and Will Kymlicka's book *Zoopolis: A Political Theory of Animal Rights*. My thesis is that, despite the authors' reticence, considerations in first philosophy regarding humans and nonhumans are relevant to their goal of building a more comprehensive animal rights philosophy. What is more, I believe that first philosophy actually can be of help for their proposal, specifically in the form of phenomenology and phenomenological ontology. For this purpose, I first summarize the basic outline of *Zoopolis*'s position and indicate some questions that arise from a strictly internal consideration of its theses. And secondly, I introduce some aspects in which phenomenological research would be relevant, along with some particular and provisional analyses carried out from the standpoint of a phenomenologically-based ontology. Especially, there is a theme that stands out: the intersubjective realms between humans and nonhumans.

Key Words: Animal Rights, Animal Philosophy, Phenomenology, ontology Bioethics, Ecology.

Introduction: Animal philosophy received a decisive impulse with Sue Donaldson's and Will Kymlicka's book *Zoopolis: A Political Theory of Animal Rights*¹. It offered a comprehensive theory that, to a great extent, creates a new theoretical framework for thinking the moral status of nonhuman animals. In fact, it is not an understatement to say that *Zoopolis* is already a reference so unavoidable as Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation*. It has acquired one of the greatest relevance statuses: that of being an inevitable part of the discussion.

This contribution wants to engage in this now inescapable dialogue with *Zoopolis*. My starting position is that of a basic acceptance of its positions, as well as an acknowledgment of Donaldson's and Kymlicka's achievement. Nonetheless, as the authors know very well, the greatest act of philosophical admiration consists in engaging a dialogue that does not shy away from possible suggestions or corrections. In this regard, I want to defend the relevance of first philosophy, in the manner of phenomenological analysis and phenomenology-based ontology. Contrary to the authors' suspicions, I defend that this discussion does not necessarily undermine the case for animal rights but may even strengthen it.

A brief overview of *Zoopolis*: The first step in my argument is an assessment of *Zoopolis*' great theses. The main argument of *Zoopolis* has a clear structure: the quality of selfhood and self-interest, unquestionably present in nonhuman animals, justifies their deserving the same