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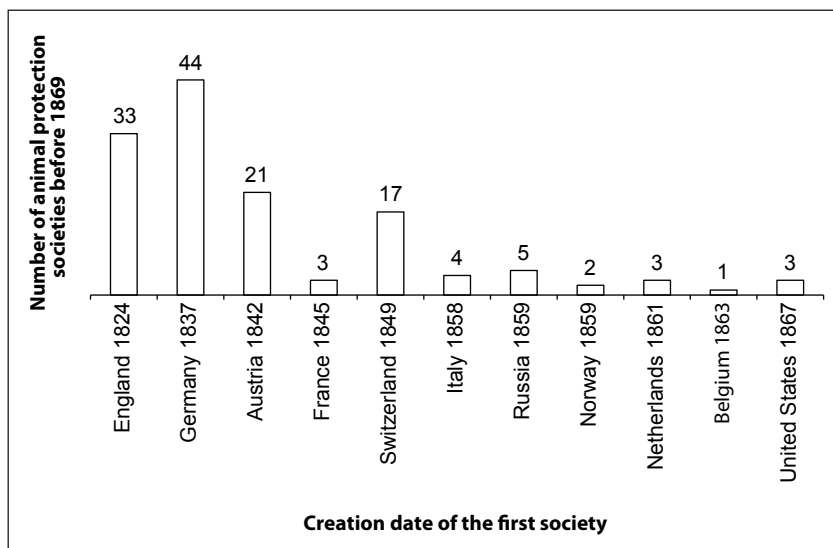
# 1 A long and complex struggle

## The pioneering influence of the British model

Although England is commonly credited with the invention of modern sport (Elias and Dunning, 1994), the role of the British in the genesis of the animal protection movement is less well known. It is, nevertheless, a well-established fact that any campaign to improve the way humans treat animals can trace their origins to the work of 19th-century English activists. As early as 1809, a group of prominent Liverpoolians set up the Society for the Suppression of Wanton Cruelty to Animals. Although this society soon folded, a similar organization, founded in London in 1824, was destined to be less short-lived: the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals still exists today, and indeed is still the largest animal welfare organization in the world. In the period after its formation the SPCA quickly managed to attract the support of many respected individuals, including members of the aristocracy and prominent figures from the ranks of the upper-middle classes, as well as numerous clergymen and members of Parliament. In 1840 the society obtained the patronage of Queen Victoria herself, which led to its adoption of its current name: the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA). Embraced by large sections of the Establishment (Harrison, 1973),<sup>6</sup> “the RSPCA became perhaps the most influential voluntary organization in Great Britain in the second half of the century” (Turner, 1980, p. 177). These animal rights pioneers were largely preoccupied with lobbying legislators, and campaigning for the introduction of laws which, by banning certain practices, would change public attitudes. Indeed, even before the foundation of the RSPCA, a number of its founder members had participated in campaigns to put pressure on Parliament to enact legislation for the protection of animals. In 1821, a group of MPs led by Richard Martin, and including William Wilberforce and Thomas Fowell Buxton, introduced a bill “to prevent the cruel and improper treatment of cattle.” A law was enacted the following year, largely thanks to the support of the clergy and a group of London magistrates. An “Act to Prevent the Cruel and Improper

6 In current usage, “The Establishment” is a contested term. In this book it will be used to indicate the 19th-century British ruling classes, comprising the Crown, the Royal Court, members of the aristocracy, the Church, members of Parliament, the Judiciary, Oxbridge, the heads of the armed forces, as well as top bankers, industrialists, business leaders, and City financiers.

Graph 1



Source: Graph plotted by the author using a list published in 1868 by the *Bulletin de la société protectrice des animaux* (BSPA)

Treatment of Cattle,” also known as “Martin’s Act,” protected only “horses, mares, geldings, mules, asses, cows, heifers, steers, oxen, sheep and other cattle.”

The presence of prestigious supporters among the RSPCA membership provided a model which groups in other countries sought to emulate. Societies for the protection of animals were soon established in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Other countries, which seemed to be lagging behind, were targeted by British campaigners. In 1834, Sir John de Beauvoir, an RSPCA committee member, traveled to Paris with the mission of encouraging the creation of a sister organizations in France. It was not until ten years later, however, that the Société protectrice des animaux (SPA) was set up in Paris, later followed by groups in Lyon and Fontainebleau. One of the founders of this new society was Viscount Pinon Duclos de Valmer, who “married an Englishwoman and, during his stay in London, took the opportunity to observe the SPCA at work” (Pierre, 1998, p. 290). The founding statement of the SPA, written on 2 December 1845, makes clear its intention to model itself on well-established foreign organizations: “We hereby found, in Paris, a society which, like those already existing in Bavaria and England, aims to pursue, by all means at our disposal, the outlawing of maltreatment of

animals." By 1855, the Paris branch of the SPCA already had six representatives of the London RSPCA among its honorary members (BSPA, 1855). In 1891, Queen Victoria made a donation of 2,500 francs to help set up a branch SPA in Biarritz, with Princess Frederica of Hanover as its patron (Fleury, 1995, p. 161).

In Italy the creation of societies modeled on the RSPCA also owed a lot to the involvement of British people, shocked by the maltreatment of animals which they had witnessed while holidaying in the "Bel Paese." Their indignation caught the attention of polite society in cities such as Florence, Turin, Rome, Naples and Brindisi (Tonutti, 2007, p. 73 and 81). Even in countries where British campaigners were not directly involved in the creation of societies for the protection of animals, they still often exerted influence through the experience and expertise they were able to offer fellow activists on the Continent. In Amsterdam, in 1859, the British Consulate in the Netherlands received a request for details of the British law relating to the protection of animals, with a view to similar legislation being enacted in the Netherlands. In Belgium, the RSPCA was consulted prior to the drafting of legislation outlawing the cruel treatment of animals. The birth of the animal protection movement in the United States was also inspired by the English model. Henry Bergh, the son of a wealthy New York shipbuilder, and a key early figure in American animal advocacy, was deeply shocked by the treatment of animals in Russia, where he had witnessed several shocking incidents of cruelty to animals during a brief appointment as a diplomat in Saint Petersburg. On his way back to the United States from Russia he made a stopover in London, where he attended a meeting of the RSPCA. He was very favorably impressed, and in the following year, 1866, created the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA).

On the other side of the English Channel, in Paris, the beginnings of a similar movement saw the establishment of an animal protection society, as well as the adoption of legal provisions which made the mistreatment of animals punishable by the law. In 1850 General Jacques Philippe Delmas de Grammont introduced a bill which was clearly inspired by the objectives laid out in the founding articles of the SPA. The *loi Grammont* (Grammont Law) which was put onto the statute books on 2 July 1850, provided for the punishment, by a fine of between 1 and 15 francs and a prison sentence of one to five days, of "persons guilty of publically maltreating animals" (Agulhon, 1988). Once more, although the protection offered was limited to domestic animals, this legislation established an important precedent for animal protection legislation for the remainder of the 19th century.

In the final quarter of the 19th century, British campaigners were again at the forefront of efforts to regulate the use of vivisection for scientific experimentation. As we will see, the protests around this issue provide a clear demonstration of the main reorientations of the movement, without which we cannot understand the complexity of present-day animal rights cause. In London in 1875 Frances Power Cobbe founded the Society for the Protection of Animals Liable to Vivisection. The Society for the Abolition of Vivisection was set up soon afterward. The following year the RSPCA noted that there already existed ten antivivisection associations in England (Tonutti, 2007, p. 55). Once again, like-minded people in other European countries were largely inspired to set up similar organizations by the example of British pioneers. By 1885 there were twenty-six antivivisection societies in Europe: fifteen in Great Britain, three in Switzerland, two in Germany, and two in France (BSFCV 3 [1885], p. 52). The translation and distribution of British antivivisection pamphlets by campaigners, eager to have an impact on public opinion, extended the influence of the British model across Europe. In Germany and Switzerland (Tröhler and Maehle, 1987), as well as in Sweden (Bromander, 1987), vivisection was widely discussed and debated in the national parliaments. In France, however, in spite of the creation, in 1883, of the Société française contre la vivisection and the Ligue populaire contre la vivisection, antivivisection campaigners struggled to generate interest in their cause among the wider public. Once more, the members of the Société française contre la vivisection declared that their movement was an extension of the struggle initiated by like-minded British people.

But, given that we here in France want to closely follow the generous example offered to us by our neighbors on the other side of the Channel, our French society must do more than make a vague statement of aspirations, and develop a clear strategy for tackling the serious problems it seeks to resolve. (BSFCV 1 [1884], p. 4)

### **Equivocal, evolving and cumulative engagements**

Emphasizing the essential contribution of British trailblazers is not to suggest that the first animal protection movements were the work of anglophiles, who were simply mimicking their neighbors from across the Channel. Our brief historical summary was intended to stress, as a preliminary point, that the cause of animal protection has always been a *transnational* movement. As a consequence of this, it is indispensable to clearly distinguish

watchwords used internationally from forms of appropriation which vary considerably in different national contexts. To this first level of complexity it should be added that campaigns claiming to be motivated by a desire to protect animals have always been deeply ambiguous. By that we mean that analysis of the organization of campaigns reveals a host of *reasons* and *motives*.<sup>7</sup> Under such conditions the historical sociology of Nobert Elias seems to us to provide with the best theoretical tools for taking account of the interdependent evolutions, which involve multiple heterogeneous configurations. We decided to analyze the history of the animal rights movement from this perspective, as a cumulative succession of forms of indignation over the ways animals are treated. Thus, throughout this book, we shall endeavor to identify what it is about the treatment of animals which appears – in the eyes of a generation, or group of activists – to be sufficiently improper, scandalous or disturbing to warrant the organization of collective action, with the aim of putting a stop to that particular practice.<sup>8</sup> Our analysis will therefore attempt to identify the sociological conditions which lead to a situation where certain individuals feel that there is an intolerable discrepancy between *what is* and *what ought to be*. The fact that we accord attention to sociological factors in no way implies a conception of individuals as passive agents of superior and irresistible forces. Indeed, our guiding hypothesis, which in itself constitutes an implicit rejection of mechanical determinism, is that animal protection activists, through their militant engagements, actively endeavor to transform affective states which are unpleasant, even distressing, into opportunities for experiencing socially valued and gratifying emotions. For this reason we will explore at some length the *sensitizing devices* used by militants at various points in the history of the animal rights movement. By sensitizing devices, we mean to refer to “all the material support, the placement of objects, and the staging techniques that the militants exploit, in order to arouse the kind of affective reactions which predispose those who experience them to join or support the cause being defended” (Traïni, 2009, p. 13). This concept is useful in

7 I use *reasons* to indicate the causes and justifications that militants refer to in their discourse, in order to emphasize the seriousness of their engagement. *Motives*, on the other hand, refers to the determinants of the engagement, which do not generate discursive justifications from the actors being studied but have been reconstituted by the researcher, as hypotheses, using the cross-checking of information gathered during the course of his investigations.

8 In other words we will make a detailed study of the contexts of this *scandalization*, or calls to act virtuously, which, along with appeals to the greatest number and to the lessons of science, constitutes one of the three ways in which collective causes are publicized and legitimated (Offerlé, 1994, p. 112).

that it obliges us to make a clear distinction between, on the one hand, the emotions that moral entrepreneurs endeavor to generate in order to attract support for their cause, and, on the other hand, the affective reactions actually generated, which may be different from the reactions the activists themselves anticipated. In fact, the sensitizing devices generally provoke a range of equivocal and ambivalent emotions which escape the control of those who stirred them up. As a consequence, as we shall see, mobilizations and countermobilizations are interdependent, and militant engagements can have social effects which go far beyond their original strategic aims.