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Wayne Gabardi, *The Next Social Contract. Animals, The Anthropocene, and Biopolitics*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia 2017, pp. 242

One of the main focuses of the contemporary political theory is biopolitics. It takes into consideration the life itself and the methods of its governance. Hence the ultimate goals of biopolitics are always focused on maximizing the potential of body, regulating its biological processes and normalizing both of them according to the logic of population's health. In this sense, biopolitics is normative; it creates an image of desired and undesired people being either inside or outside the biopolitical community. Biopolitics, therefore, has both collectivizing and totalizing potentials. The majority of theorists working on biopolitics focuses on the latter, framing biopolitics as a negative and exclusive concept. As such it limits the potential membership to a community only to beings who meet the desired criteria. Political scientists mainly scrutinize either the mechanisms of such a limitation (e.g., autopoietic discourses, citizenship theory, etc.), the developed biopolitical identities or power distribution and relations. Not many of them, however, consider the meaning of the word 'being'. They automatically assume or take it as granted that the 'being' means a human. According to the author of the reviewed book, Wayne Gabardi, that is a huge mistake because humans are not the only species living on the planet Earth. According to evolutionary biology, a human is just another animal but with more developed cognitive and survival abilities. In its core, however, it does not differ from the other kinds of life. Based on that initial assumption Gabardi delivered an argument that we should reframe current politics into the affirmative biopolitics; that we should reconsider our

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anthropocentric approach, and introduce practices that would be more coexisting and inclusive towards animals, here argued as equal members of our communities. Did the author succeed?

Wayne Gabardi is a full professor, director of Political Science graduate studies at Idaho State University. He is a political scientist conducting the research on Frankfurt School of Critical Theory's influence on American social and political thought. His areas of interest include political philosophy, contemporary social theory, animal ethics and politics, which resulted in few major works including *Negotiating Postmodernism* (University of Minnesota Press, 2001) and *Contemporary Models of Democracy* (a chapter in *Mapping the World: Democratic Platforms*, edited by Pedro Barateiro and Ricardo Valentim, Polity, 2008).

Gabardi's most recent book is entitled *The Next Social Contract: Animals, the Anthropocene, and Biopolitics* and was published by Temple University Press in 2017. In the work, the author presents the affirmative approach towards biopolitics and puts the main emphasis on the place of animals in the contemporary social systems. In his opinion, right now animals are perceived and treated instrumentally as a means for achieving people's ends. But what would have happened, he asks, if we had reversed that logic? How would our communities look like if we agreed that humans are the means and animals are the ends? And particularly: how can we make animals members of our biopolitical communities but beyond the typical logic and claims of the welfare-animal rights debates? The answer that the author gives in the book (which is also its main thesis) is that we need to negotiate a new social contract in human-animal relations through the adoption of a more posthumanist and coevolutionary outlook, relating to animals on more equal terms.

The author posed himself a difficult task. In order to prove the validity of the indeed very complex and challenging thesis, he had to a) elaborate an approach to understanding animals, b) develop ethical and political arguments that would be qualitatively different from the existing animal rights debate, and c) expand the scope of studies on human-animal relations. To realize these aims, in *The Next Social Contract* Gabardi studied the theories of Gary Francione, Gary Steiner, Peter Singer, Kathy Rudy, Cary Wolfe, Matthew Calarco and Will Kymlicka, all being leading scientists working on animal ethics; and, despite taking some inspirations, he refused all of them as insufficient to justify the existence of *humanimal community*. Instead of their concepts, he proposed an alternative to which he refers to as "posthumanist communitarianism" or "*humanimal* coevolutionary communitarianism". To understand their meaning, we need to trace the author's reasoning.

Gabardi argues that the contemporary biopolitical debate is based on the assumption that the worthiness of animals is measured in human terms. In other

words, the more human attributes and capacities an animal possesses, the more rights we are eager to grant. That premise is preceded by another, the unwritten one, that people are categorically different from and superior to all other species of life. Gabardi writes, however, that we need to reject that outdated belief and recognize the new one instead, that in many ways we are more similar to animals than different, hence they deserve more equal consideration as integral members of our community. Following that claim, the author elaborates the concept of post-humanism, i.e., an evolutionary ethics expressing five central beliefs. “First, the origin and purpose of morality lies in evolution as a biological adaptation designed to increase the fitness of individuals and groups through the regulation of social life. Second, morality exists in other social animals besides humans. Third, human morality has evolved in tandem with our species’ enhanced capacity for gene-culture coevolution. Fourth, one can base a normative ethic on evolutionary thinking. Five, one can develop a coevolutionary ethic based on the previous four beliefs” (p. 65). Posthumanism is, therefore, an intellectual framework within which the author constitutes the transition from ethics to political theory. And the key concept that allows him to do that is the notion of social contract. Gabardi underlines that his understanding of social contract is far from the classic liberal scope. Although he reconstructs its logic, he criticizes Hobbes, Rousseau, Locke and Rawls that all of them performed the thought experiment of return to the state of nature wrong: “[...] they diverge in locating the heart and soul of the next social contract: one is an ultramodern technological vision where humans transcend biology, and the other is a coevolutionary vision where humans reconnect to the biosphere and its inhabitants” (p. 27). Gabardi also refuted the belief that rational consensus should be the basis of institutional order legitimation. Referring to Nussbaum, he noticed that the fact that “the actual framers of the contract are human agents, does not logically imply that the recipients of contractual protections and benefits need to be rational agents – human, for that matter” (p. 125). For him, the only premises that allow to recognize animals as the side of the social contract are that they are “sentient subjects of justice” (p. 5) and by virtue of mutual biosocial kinship with humans. In result, the author opts for granting animals sovereignty which he understands as “a secure, demarcated, and legally recognized space that protects “community autonomy” and “community flourishing” within a stateless, socially organized territory” (p. 147).

The structure of the book is well thought and developed. Gabardi gathered the newest data regarding the condition of humanity, the Earth, the contemporary research on biopolitics and cognitive science, and presented them in four concise consecutive chapters. In the first one, he reconstructed the Anthropocene

hypothesis on the example of demographic and energetic data. The second chapter contains information about the mass extinction of animals and their current condition in general. The last two chapters provide the critical reconstruction of posthumanist ethics and its translation into the categories of political theory, using affirmative biopolitics as a term of reference. The correct technical development of an argument, however, does not guarantee its validity.

The first weakness of Gabardi's reasoning resides in the inconsistency of the following claims: a) Earth energy resources are severely exploited hence we need to act more responsibly, meaning to spare resources, and b) we should not kill animals, but breed them, reproduce, and create communities with them. The latter in fact creates only further ballast for the Earth supplies and deepens its current crisis. Also, the author tries to think widely and present a global perspective hence usefulness of his concept, yet he did not refer to the non-identity problem coined briefly into a question: why should we care about future generations? The author avoids stepping into that discussion hence it is hard to assess his position in it. That omission would not be a big problem if the book's theme and perspective were different. The tricky logic of non-identity problem also provokes us to ask the author another question: would other species be responsible towards us in the same way in which the author tries to be responsible towards them? The lack of awareness of that question is a serious flaw of Gabardi's argument and can be explained only in one way. Although he operates within the evolutionary paradigm, it seems he does not discern its most fundamental assumption that the primary instinct of all living beings is survival. Thus, since animals lack the moral agency typical to humans, we cannot treat them as the equal side of the social contract; we can simply be more than sure that an animal would choose its own survival prior to all other remaining moral choices.

Another flaw of Gabardi's argument is a fallacy deriving from his rejection of the classic liberal understanding of the social contract. Even if we agree with him that rational consensus is not a necessary element of making a contract, we intuitively feel that there is one thing without which making any agreement is impossible: that is a consensus, whatever rational or not. Therefore, the question posed by the author – are animals moral subjects? – should be asked differently: do animals possess an ability to make agreements? The intuitive ambiguity and contingency of making agreements with animals is also expressed in Palmer's cited statement: "There are deep disagreements about what constitutes a 'good life' for a cat" (p. 150). Based on that observation Gabardi, partially self-critical, argues that "it is reasonable to balance their [animals – B.P.] rights to sex, reproduction, and mobility with a biopolitics of population control" (p. 150). In that

claim it is discernible that the author, despite his earlier declaration about creating the affirmative biopolitics concept, in fact falls into the normalizing logic of Foucauldian negative biopolitics. The latter is not a mistake; rather reversely, it opens a discussion about the nature of biopolitics: where is the border line between them?, is every biopolitics totalizing?, and so on.

Eventually, Wayne Gabardi's book is a well-composed, exhaustively thought though challenging and provocative work. It provides us with new ideas and demonstrates how much is yet to be done within the field of political theory. The biopolitical issues of justice, power relations and distribution, moral and political agency are still being questioned and approached from divergent perspectives. The posthumanist ethics elaborated by Gabardi is one of the finest example that not the concept of human nature in its individualist dimension but the notion of community and its various forms resides in the heart of biopolitical considerations. Finally, however ambiguous is the main thesis of the book, I would still recommend it to anyone interested in biopolitics or political theory as such, especially because not many authors refreshed the subdiscipline to the extent Gabardi did.