This is [not] the A.L.F.? – Anarchism, punk rock and animal advocacy

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Abstract

Veganism and punk rock have gone hand in hand since the 1980s, and it is a relationship that is arguably best understood in conjunction with versions of anarchist politics of intersectionality. While rejecting the argument for animal 'rights' as a form of quasi-religion (contra Lowe in *Implicit Religion*, 4.1: 41–60) this article will seek to demonstrate through interviews that the analytical framework of Implicit Religion can be applied to animal advocacy within various iterations of punk to better understand the motivations of activists. It will demonstrate that considering animal 'rights' as a quasi-religion diminishes both religion as a concept and the place of activism in the lives of those interviewed. Furthermore it will explore the possibility that such behaviours and attitudes demonstrate the potentiality within anarchism and punk to look inward for experiential insights and connections. As 'rights' is a contentious term for many anarchists, because of the issue of enforceability this article shall be using the phrase animal advocacy.

Keywords: anarchism; animal advocacy; punk rock; Implicit Religion; Intersectionality; Quasi-religion

Introduction

There has been something of a growth industry around veganism and vegetarianism in recent years. There are an increasing number of vegan-only eateries in a growing number of

cities, and many of them are linked with specific musical subcultures such as punk, hardcore punk and metal. Often there will be a space for bands to perform, flyers for upcoming gigs, music for sale, leaflets about animal liberation or freedom protests or activities and so on.

When punk first exploded onto the scene the lyrics addressed a wide range of topics, but were very different from that which was popular and radio friendly. During what is commonly known as the second wave of punk, bands where formed whose members where inspired by wider topics such as human rights, the relationship between humans and animals, cruelty, and concepts of freedom. Many of these bands were often inspired and informed through their interaction with anarchist groups and texts. It should be noted that there is no consensus among these punks as to what anarchism is. They brought a do-it-yourself principle to punk activities in the form of illegal (or borderline legal) activism. These are bands such Conflict, Subhumans, Crass and Discharge. Many of these bands would include essays, notes, images and information on additional resources within their album and EP sleeves. They would often discuss these topics, in particular the treatment of animals or non-human species, in interviews and write about them in fanzines.

It is important to state that not all punks are vegan and not all vegans are punk; however the concept of animal rights, animal liberation and speciesism is rife within punk in the form of artistic expression, debate and activism. This has been noted by a small but growing number of religious studies scholars who have sought to include animal advocacy by punks in their work, which seeks to view it as a quasi-religion.[1] Given their position outside of the punk community a number of those scholars have neglected the wider connections with intersectionality throughout many iterations of punk, but especially that shaped by an interaction with anarchism. Drawing upon 37 in-person, online or e-mail interviews from

self-identified punks in South Africa, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Ireland and the United States, this article will first explore the issues that arise when animal advocacy is framed as a 'quasi-religion', before going on to demonstrate how Implicit Religion as an analytical tool can better tease out the connections between anarchism, punk rock and animal advocacy. It is important to state that interviewees were given the choice of how they wanted to be identified: all chose their own name, but some chose their city while others their country, and I have adhered to their choices. I hold on to a principle of refusing to 'tidy up' interview quotes on the basis that struggles with articulation is as important as the words they say.

Most of those who were interviewed self-identified as anarcho-punk, a total of 32 out of 37 interviewees. This was a term they proffered as a self-descriptor. They were not asked to select it from a list, nor was it suggested to them. When asked how they wanted to be described the term they used was 'anarcho-punk'. Anarcho-punk is a sub-genre of punk that is based on anarchism variously understood within it – perhaps best understood in relation to the interviewees here as a means of resisting capitalism through direct activism, resistance (including Protestant aspects of individualism and working as a form of service) and a cohesion between means and ends. Five interviewees were the exception to this. Jonathan was only loosely affiliated with punk, through a general liking of music. Kim and Brendan self-identified with straight edge and Krishnacore, and Susan rejected any attempts to further distil the concept of punk through labels and requested to just be described as a punk. Finally, Chloe had only recently approached punk through her developing friendships with individuals involved with it and felt she did not yet have enough of an understanding of it and its history to use it as a self-descriptor.

Animal rights as 'quasi-religious'

There has been an increase in the academic analysis of animal advocacy as a form of religion, be that 'quasi' as Lowe (2001) described it, 'functional' as Jamison, Wenk and Parker described it (2000), or as a form of social religion as Jacobson (drawing closely upon Durkheim) described it (2014). [2] There are notable points of compatibility on which these papers focus – a moral code expressed through a relationship with animals, a world-view that informs their perception of the world, attempts at proselytizing others, and various successes in forming a cosmology.

Certainly there is evidence within various strands of animal activism that these analyses do have some resonance. Interviewee Lou spoke of her first viewing of 'ALF's "Animal's Film" at age thirteen and immediately choosing to become vegan' as it 'fully resonated with my belief system of live and let live, animals and humans – all sentient beings' (South Africa, 9 April 2015).

Nicholas spoke of having to gauge possible new relationships with people on the basis of the moral code he follows:

> Nowadays artificial insemination techniques are a universal crime to me – often it is been said 'those animals have been created artificially for this purpose'. Yep – so what? It is scaring, to think that we live among such nauseous bastards, they can deal with such issues in those terms inside of themselves really? I won't rely to psychology to tell them names, but indeed, I would never friend someone believing this, behaving that way. (Belgium, 28 March 2015)

However, there are serious issues with the approach to the study of animal advocacy as a form of religion that must be addressed in regard to definition, the reduction of religion, the imposition of a Christian framework and the nature of the term 'quasi'. The first issue is failure to engage with the concept of religion in terms of fully defining what it is. While relying upon other scholars to provide them with a framework (for Lowe it is Weber and Geertz, for Jacobson it is Durkheim, and for Jamison et al. it is Yinger) all treat religion as though it exists *a priori*. No attempt is made to acknowledge that religion is a western construct created for imperialist, colonialist and often Orientalist purposes. Timothy Fitzgerald writes:

> Writers on the subject 'religion' manage to blow life into a category as though it were an autonomous reality in the world, and often take its distinction from 'politics' as both a fact and a value … They are treated as generic and ahistorical, as though their meaning and the distinction between them is a natural aspect of the world. (2007: 2)

The problem, baldly stated, is that if one assumes (and it is an assumption) that something exists within the world simply because it exists then one can seek it out in a myriad of places without actually engaging with the concept itself. This is the case in writings that proffer animal advocacy as a 'quasi-religion'. In claiming animal advocacy as an undefined quasi-religion, scholars are not connecting wider commitments or making attempts to understand what these activists may use, and why, to integrate different and sometimes competing

aspects of their lives. Interviewee Jonathan, a student nurse, who has to deal with the reality that the life-saving medications he provides are tested on animals, exemplifies this. He says:

> It something I struggle with on a day to day basis. Firstly from using cosmetics I am so limited and I am constantly googling everything, using apps to see what e numbers are or various other ingredients. With the medicine, this is something I have discussed with some other vegetarians on my course and it's something we struggle to accept but live with the hope that one day the society we live in will change and these medicines will no longer need to be tested on animals. I mean we already know there are other means of testing; they just aren't as simple or widely used! (9 April 2015, Manchester, UK)

Likewise, interviewee Mick stated that his main commitment was to issues surrounding land use and ownership and unequal distribution of wealth rather than purely or primarily animal well-being (10 December 2014, Glasgow). Yet Lowe claims:

> In the animal rights cosmology, the dominant moral resource – what believers should pursue – is compassion. Conversely, the antithetical moral resource – that which is to be avoided – is cruelty … This permits the 'believer' to reinforce his/her identity as an activist through the creation of a barrier of ritual purity that eschews purity. (2001: 51)

Likewise, Jacobson states:

> When Jamison, Wenk and Parker (2000: 306) ask, 'What are the sources of this intensity and commitment?' my reply is 'the sacred'. (2014: 311)

It is not the reply of his interviewees, those involved with animal advocacy, but his assumption that they are attaching sacrality to their actions and motivations. He is enabled to do this because he has made no attempt to define religion, but rather has treated it as apparent and universal; therefore, he can locate it within animal advocacy on behalf of his interviewees.

The second issue in regard to this approach to the study of animal advocacy as a quasi-religion is that of reducing religion to being functional only. While functional approaches to religion enable a side-stepping of truth value judgements in regard to what can be a highly emotive and charged topic of the suffering and well-being of living creatures, it also runs the risk of elevating those judgements above criticism. This is of particular importance when one considers the activities of some activists in defence or liberation of animals. For example, at one end of the spectrum are open rescues in which puppy farms, duck farms, etc. are raided and the animals are taken for rehoming. No damage is done to property[3] or people, and the faces of the rescuers are openly shown to any security cameras or to cameras brought by the rescuers and released to the media (Libeman 2004: 156). At the other end of the spectrum, groups such as ALF[4] and SHAC[5] have undertaken arson,

surreptitious videoing of abattoirs and factory farms, which is then released online; they have even been accused of bombing buildings (Libeman 2004: 159).

Many researchers within this field are ill at ease making open judgements about the activities their interviewees are relaying. However, the reporting of such activities in connection with an insistence of considering them as a legitimate part of how religion functions is concerning as it may maintain the popular, but erroneous, myth of religious violence. William Cavanaugh argues that this myth utilizes the notion that

> Religion is a transhistorical and transcultural feature of human life, essentially distinct from 'secular' features such as politics and economics, which has a peculiarly dangerous inclination to promote violence. [The outcome being that] religion must therefore be tamed by restricting its access to public power. The secular nation-state then appears as natural, corresponding to a universal and timeless truth about the inherent dangers of religion. (2009: 3)

Interpreting or presenting the activities and motivations of those involved in animal advocacy as a form of quasi-religion implies that any violence within that is religiously motivated or justified – the mirror being that those not involved in activism are not violent because they do not see their actions as being a part of a quasi-faith. In this conception the deeper into animal advocacy one gets, the more it becomes a quasi-religion, and so the violence emerges. It is, therefore, religion as a concept and not the sake of living creatures that causes the violence. This is an unhelpful position to take, not just towards people who

may well have other justifications for their actions but also to the general and academic understanding of religion and its role in the world.

The third issue in considering animal advocacy as a quasi-religion is the frequent attempt to articulate the beliefs and actions as misunderstood, forgotten or re-interpreted versions of accepted religion – typically Christianity – as understood through the seven dimensions of religion proffered by Ninian Smart (1989). For example, Jamison, Wenk and Parker discuss veganism within the notion of a 'redemptive act', a ritualized meal akin to the communion meal and the use of animal images as comparable with religious iconography.

> Animal symbols such as the dove (the Holy Spirit), the serpent (Satan), the Lion (the apostle Mark), the eagle (the apostle John), the ox (the apostle Luke), and the birds that flocked to the sermons of St Francis, are especially significant in Christianity. Similarly, animistic and pantheistic religion employs animals as symbolic projections of god/human attributes, whereby the crow represents wisdom, the fox represents craftiness, and the jackal represents cunning. Animal Rights activists use pictures of monkeys strapped in chairs, cats wearing electrodes and rabbits with eye or flesh ulceration in much the same way: that is, as symbolic representations of human values and the corresponding affronts to those values. (Jamison et al. 2000: 319)

These articles state that many of their informants had such symbols in their environment; however they do not state what the environment is, the context, what the images are or what their informants have to say about them. Instead the informants are spoken for

through the lens of a very narrow understanding of religion. Jacobson, in analysing one of her interviewees' comments about the eyes of industrial pigs, makes a similar connection as Jamison, Wenk and Parker. As a result she speaks for the interviewee, making religious connections that did not exist:

> Interviewee: And when you see it there with their eyes, these pigs' eyes are totally different from other pigs' eyes. Like pigs going to slaughter. Or living in large industrial buildings. I still have those pictures. It is the eyes of some animal. [Interview quote ends]
>
> The eyes are the proverbial window of the soul and thus bring to mind that animals are being with a soul and therefore entitled to moral consideration and concern (Jacobson 2014: 315)

Her interviewee made no mention of a soul and was simply recounting watching an animal rights film. It is Jacobson making the connection to religion, not the interviewee. That is not to say that there is no connection between religious beliefs and animal advocacy. Lowe outlines some important examples of vegetarianism within the early Salvation Army as a means of avoiding temptations of the flesh (2001: 47). However noting it among self-defined religious groups and layering it over your interviewees is not the same thing. The latter serves to push a specific agenda and further obscures the nature of religion while failing to engage with the issue of privilege.

Interviewees were specifically asked whether they would consider their own involvement with, and understanding of, animal advocacy as either religious or quasi-religious. The responses were overwhelmingly in the negative. Of 37 interviewees only three said yes, with one, Chloe, seeing a strong and powerful link between the two (27 February 2015).[6] The other two interviewees, Brendan and Kim, both came to animal advocacy through their connections and involvement with Krishnacore.[7] Brendan stated:

> I had gotten into Youth of Today and all that and heard the messages of Ray and the others about vegetarianism and I was thinking about it and reading about it and basically learning more. Then I heard Shelter, the 'Civilized Man' song with the line 'the meateater kills the cows they just depersonalize to justify' and that was it, decision made. I had already become a follower of Hare Krishna, but the taking of the last step into fully embracing it was taking me a bit longer, but that song helped me line up the religion and the practice and I could suddenly see it clearly how they were both connected. Doing one was a part of doing the other. (Boston, MA, 7 January 2015, Shelter 1995)

For Kim, the link was in the opportunity to eat vegetarian food and talk with the monks at the Hare Krishna temple in New York that she had started to attend after listening to Krishnacore bands and reading the inserts and the information on pamphlets handed out at shows. She said:

> The foods they so willing gave us were delicious and it made me realise that it wouldn't be a sacrifice, so I questioned them about that. Like the reasons for being vegetarian. I guess I just wanted to know if they didn't eat meat for religious reasons or for taste. They very patiently explained that it was about reducing harm and suffering in the world, a key part of being a Hare Krishna. That they believed that all living beings were connected and a part of the universal brotherhood with a spiritual nature and therefore we must live in a way that promotes non-violence to all, including animals. That was the first Hare Krishna belief I grasped onto and made my own, I have taken others over time and rejected others as I said earlier. (New York, 12 January 2015)

However, for most interviewees there was no connection with religion as an informer or motivator of their involvement with animal advocacy. Nate said:

> No I don't see it as connected to religion at all; it is about personal choice, about responsibility for one's own actions. People aren't clones of each other, we all have our own reason, to boil the whole thing down to be religious or semi-religious is just bullshit and another attempt to quantify and compartmentalise people. (Boston, 27 November 2014)

While Shawn stated:

> For fuck sake no, that's fucking ridiculous. It has got nothing to do with religion at all. Some religions can't even agree as to what constitutes life, when life beings or if an animal has a soul. Other religions do some truly inhumane and awful shit to animals because they think they have the right to, Muslims and Jews and their slaughter methods for example or the Christian belief that people are more important and have control over animals. In fact, I find it really offensive that anyone would try to link the two, animal rights and religion in the way you say here that it is a form of a religion, that's totally different from saying that some religions support compassion for animals (Manchester, UK, 16 January 2015)[8]

Understanding animal advocacy through a Christian framework reinforces the dominance of the West, which was historically Judeo-Christian. It not only negates or diminishes other cultures and their multi-relationships with animals and animal advocacy but is limited and informed by a progressive or neo-liberal agenda. Success of neo-liberalism relies upon our affective, moral and social inclinations, as it presents a distinct, and often religious, moral economy. For example, Bethany Morton's *To Serve God and Wal-Mart: The Making of Christian Free Enterprise* (2009) shows how neo-liberalism was tightly bound up with the culture of evangelicalism in the American South, thus marking neo-liberalism as a Christian free enterprise, rather than a free market, that derives legitimacy from Protestant consumption cultures, service (to God and the boss) and female sacrifice/subservience.

There is one final problem to be raised with regard to considering animal advocacy as a quasi-religion, and that is the very notion of something as 'quasi'. The term 'quasi' as the precursor reinforces that animal advocacy is close to a religion, but not quite there yet; it falls short. All things being equal the quasi-religion is only being used because the individual cannot, for whatever reason, access 'actual' or successful religion – the implication being that 'real' religion is to be preferred and, indeed, exists 'out there'. In using such terms the very thing being examined is reduced status; its importance to the individual or community is disregarded or dismissed. It is not taken seriously because it has failed to reach some mythic (and specious) level of being 'a religion'. While Bailey rightly notes that using the term 'religious' in the popular sense[9] is neither new nor inappropriate, he speaks out against forcing the term 'religious' upon those who do not desire it, and to that I would add using it to reduce activities and motivations to a more diminutive stature than that which they hold for their partakers (1998: 13).

> For me, punk was an awakening, learning about the inequalities of life – especially class-based inequalities – and engaging in challenging systems, religions and cultures etc. that create or promote/reinforce any form of coercion or inequality. So what convinced me was the lyrics – those challenging stereotyping, the system of perpetuating inequalities etc.; as well as the people engaged in the anarcho-punk movement – people who treated me as an equal, as someone (or rather a young woman) with rights who was free to claim and practice my rights. That's basically what convinced me at first that it was far more than just music – it was a movement of activists – one which I completely related to. (Lou, South Africa, 9 April 2015)

> Punk, to me, well [pauses] punk bands made it ok to be angry, to cry at being unwanted, to laugh in the face of self-appointed shitty authority, to feel a sense of injustice about the world, to be absolutely fucking furious at the previous generations for how they had destroyed the world and set systems in place to screw us over – their own fucking kids. Punk made it ok to be vegan, to be sober, to be critical, to be different. Really punk made it ok to be me and it still does. (Danny, Belfast, 3 December 2015)

Lou and Danny both articulate, very eloquently, what punk means to them. They are clear on their reasons and their passions. They have thought this through and carefully considered how they want to express their answer to this question.[10] Yet in papers that propose animal advocacy as a quasi-religion, the passions and commitments of the interviewees are reduced, diminished and termed a quasi-religion, something incomplete and second best.

Taking on board the objections raised above this article will not be claiming that animal activism is a quasi-religion; in fact it strongly argues for the opposite, and the remainder of this article will focus on animal advocacy as it is found within various strands of anarchism and punk, using Bailey's analytical tools of Implicit Religion and William Keenan's framework of granulation (2015). Bailey's analytical tools of Implicit Religion focus on commitment, integrating foci,and intensive concerns with extensive effects.

Politics of anarchism (commitment)

Figure 1: Amebix's 'No Gods, No Masters' patch.

> When it comes to choosing a political ideology, Punks are primarily anarchists. There are few who promote the continuation of any form of capitalism or communism. This is not to say that all Punks are well read in the history and theory of anarchism, but most do share a belief formed around the anarchist principles of having no official government or rulers, and valuing individual freedom and responsibility. (O'Hara 1999: 71)

As O'Hara notes, the influence of anarchism does not necessarily denote an in-depth understanding or knowledge, nor should the reader assume that all anarcho-punks agree with all aspects of anarchism. Often privileged within punk is a sense of anarchism that places lived experience above wider activism. This creates something of an identity crisis for those who feel they must, in some regard, compromise with capitalism, like John:

> I ain't an anarchist, not really. I mean not the way most would understand it. I've a wife, kids, job and a mortgage. I go to parent teacher meetings and sit quietly and tell my kids they have to respect and obey their teacher, waiting in terror for the day they say 'why, did you dad?' [laughs] But yet I call myself an anarcho-punk because I have strong anarchist tendencies and so many of the ideals I carry and value and commit to and want to pass on to my kids come directly from the music I listen to, from the anarcho-punk bands.

> Like what?
>
> Well like, respect, compassion and concern for everything, for myself, for others, for the world around us and that includes animals. (Glasgow, 4 March 2015)

So, although there is a wide variance in interpretations of anarchism, there are certain key parts to which most anarcho-punks commit themselves, focusing on issues such as class, gender, inequality, power imbalance, oppression and freedom. Ian Glasper expresses it as:

> They wanted their children to inherit a planet where the sun still shone, where the air could still be breathed, where you could walk down the street without flashing an ID card, free of the cold hard stare of CCTV cameras, free of curfews, free of oppression, free of fear. Just because they've convinced us over the years to think we're being paranoid doesn't mean that we're not being watched! … No rules was the only real mantra after all! (2006: 9)

Anarchism, in relation to punk, is perhaps best understood as an ongoing struggle and discourse over the structure and interpersonal relations of society. William Keenan makes the argument that in faith there is no smooth finish regardless of surface appearance (2015). Instead, he argues that there are multiple granulations – rough edges that must be negotiated, constructed and reconstructed. This equally applies to anarchism as it is related to, understood by and lived out by punks in their everyday lives.

> Capitalism relies upon dehumanisation, division, speciesism, and harm all for the purpose of exploitation for profit for a few. We need to do away with all borders, real and psychological to get at the heart of these problems and fend off this sickness. Borders in terms of state set up barriers; they put one against another for arbitrary reasons and make people compete for resources and prestige. Borders psychologically tell us that animals are less than us and only useful if they can serve us somehow. Same bloody thing really. Capitalism needs borders to thrive so let's tear them down as soon as possible. (Will, Manchester, 13 January 2015)

Interviewees have made what Bailey would consider a commitment to anarchism, but it is not a monolithic understanding and articulation; it varies and changes. This further highlights the problems raised above of assuming, as Jamison, Wenk and Parker, Lowe, and Jacobson, that anyone involved with animal advocacy can be understood in the same way and thus categorized as a form of 'quasi-religion'. It simply does not work because of the way they are assembled and held together. Bailey's notion of commitment helps understand this in more depth.

Bailey argues that commitment 'points to behaviour [and attitude] whose explanation involves, in part, exercise of a certain freedom' (1998: 17). This is a notion of an exercise of will that necessitates a judgement, and action concurrent from that judgement. To commit to something involves making a judgement that it is correct, proper and meaningful to such

an extent that it warrants the necessary sacrifice(s). Certainly sacrifices, or the risk of sacrifice, are made in pursuit of animal advocacy. For example:

> Yeah it did cost, I got hit so hard by the coppers on a hunt sab up [anonymised] that I still get headaches from it years later. I got arrested for taking part in a demonstration over in London, that cost me m'job at the time, couldn't have a record ya' know (Danny, Belfast, 3 Decemeber 2015)

> Typical aspects of the '90s compared to the '80s were that you had to act and move on alone, all alone, in the most efficient way possible. So you don't get caught, so you leave no trace behind you. One had to study a map, a situation, involve in role-plays, integrate specific networks – a much more subtle approach than dropping in as a crew and smash everything. Sometimes it could be about disappearing for an entire year, not giving any news or sign of life to relatives. In the end the effects may be more important as you may become a really informative insider, and have access to realities hardly ever known about. But such personal involvement has physical, and sentimental, dangers. (Nicolas, Belgium, 28 March 2015)

> Social [Services] threatened to take my son because I was hunt sabing; they said it was too close to child endangerment. We had to pretend to stop it to make them go away. We had to pretend that we were eating meat for one of the social robots who would come round and look in our cupboards. We would have to go and steal some meat to put in them so she would think we weren't at it anymore (Justine, Leeds, 14 January 2015)

However, it would be wrong to assume that these risks only come with such activism; other anarcho-punks who did not get involved with animal advocacy faced similar risks over issues such as anti-fascist rallies, squatting, working with or aiding illegal immigrants and so on. Animal advocacy and liberation is not the main or most significant commitment that many anarcho-punks were making; instead it is to either the principles of anarchism (as they interpret them) or to anarcho-punk itself that they commit.

> What am I committed to? Freedom, freedom in every sense – free from government control, free from capitalist control, free from an education system designed to force you to not only pay homage to but delight in being controlled and manipulated. I commit to making that happen, not just for me and those I care for but for everyone, for society, for all living beings. (Jake, London, 28 November 2014)

> It is a fundamental part of my sense of self, self-worth, self-esteem and basically just the biggest part of who I am and what I am. It's kind of hard to express – it is deeply engrained in me, it's my belief system, it is what guided me in life and I took almost all my teachings from – especially the foundation of my belief system of 'live and let live' (which I must emphasise I extend to humans, not just animals/sentient beings). Today it continues to inform my thinking and my sense of confidence to question and challenge, to engage critically with the state, religion/the 'church', the education system and the related systems that are state, church etc. -influenced. Today I am an education activist (have been for 20 years now) and I work for and with a global

> movement of education activists – it is anarcho-punk that got me here in many ways. (Lou, South Africa, 9 April 2015)

These quotes demonstrate that animal advocacy is not the main commitment but rather one facet of a much larger and stronger commitment to an anarchist intersectionality. That is, a commitment is made to liberation for all, to a re-ordering or re-structuring of society – the politics of anarchism being anti-state, anti-fascism, anti-capitalism, anti-racism, anti-sexism and anti-speciesism. Thus considering animal advocacy on their own a quasi-religious movement does not hold up ideologically; it is too smooth; it is a veneer that has not been granulated. It does not work to hold a community of disparate and sometimes volatile individuals together, which we can observe in greater detail in an examination of the music through Bailey's second criterion of integrating foci.

Anarcho-punk and music (integrating foci)

Anarcho-punk bands such as Crass, Poison Girls, Flux of Pink Indians and Conflict offered or created a means to gather the disparate elements of life into a coherent identity, ideology and activism, and that included animal advocacy. In other words, through their music, lyrics, live performances, interviews and leading by example they shaped the integrating foci of anarcho-punk. Bailey describes integrating foci as

> It provides a point of intersection between its two components. It suggests that Implicit Religion will reveal itself in those focal points that integrate wider areas of life … it could refer to either individuals or to groups … the width and depth of

> human interaction, from the individual and personal, through the familial and face to face, to the social, societal, corporate and species.(1998: 11)

That is, the integrating foci are aspects of the experience that help to coalesce disparate elements of life and self into a coherent whole. To be understood within the Implicit Framework, the integrating foci must be directly related to the commitment. Anarcho-punk, like most forms of punk, is protest music from a long tradition of multiple genres of protest. The music often mirrors the emotion, sounding angry, restless, dangerous and unpredictable as befits the subject matter, which includes animal advocacy. For example:

Well, can't you see that that juice is blood?
From new-born throats, red rivers flood
Blood from young hearts blood from the vein
Your blood, their blood, serves the same. (Conflict, 'Meat is Murder', 1981)

Conflict asked the listener to consider the true origins of the things they ate and how diet is linked to consumerism and profit. Often while the bands were playing these songs live they would 'project video footage, obtained by the band themselves [in this instance Conflict] by infiltrating abattoirs, onto screens behind the stage as they performed' (Boisseau and Donaghey 2015: 4).

Figure 2: Conflict playing with video footage in the background.

This type of live, immersive experience can have a powerful impact on individuals. Chloe related how the music and the live experience helped her to integrate the various aspects and dispel her previous prejudice. It should be noted that she directly correlates her exposure to punk, and coming to understand it, as key to her step into veganism. She said:

> I suppose I thought punks had a hard shell of cool, maybe even mean, but that stereotype was shredded completely. Everyone I met at the gigs was unusually kind and giggling and the theme of the music and community was about helping the oppressed, being passionate, honest and responsible for your life on earth and being proud to rebel when needed. I also loved the wild style and refreshing willingness to engage difficult subjects. 'Let's not talk about politics and religion' is NOT a motto of mine or the punk scene which I love. I felt honoured to be invited and to share in the contagious energy of these concerts. I am a long time vegetarian, now vegan because of exposure to punk, feminist and concerned with the fate of our world– and I was deeply moved by how punks stand up for their passions and concerns. They do not give up because it is a tough world, they don't say "Fuck it" they try to enact a difference. (New York, 27 February 2015)

This correlates with similar experiences of other interviewees who likewise found it to be a means of integrating foci.

I was starting to dislike the taste of meat more and more, and began questioning why I was still eating it. I bought a suitcase from a charity shop. Inside I found a Buddhist pamphlet and a vegetarian cookbook. The next week I met a goth punk guy who was vegetarian. He was going to University and gave me a stack of punk vinyl and a PETA leaflet. Shortly after, I met another vegetarian goth into punk. The next day I stop eating meat. A few weeks later I find myself at a Damned and 999 gig, along with a group of guys who I have just met, heavily into punk. We spend the next few months listening to Black Flag, Fugazi, Bad Brains, Subhumans, Conflict and more. Back to square one. Did I ever have a choice? (Fiona, Manchester, 20 April 2015)

It slowly began to make more sense, took a long time, it was a hell of a lot to take in you know. I think now if I had just been faced with books to read or whatever it would have been overwhelming and I probably would have just liked the music and done nothing else with it. But it wasn't just that, you had videos playing behind bands of horrific things being done to animals, animals I ate, while they sang about it and about how it was no different to racism or sexism and then other bands showed me how those things are a part of the wider system of repression to turn a profit. Then interviews you would read about being vegan, going on protests and people would talk about sabs and then you got invited along. So yeah it was gradual, but somehow through these bands I was able to create this one identity, I was me but all the parts of me if you know what I mean. (Phil, Belfast, 15 December 2014)

In addition to live performances, there were zines, benefit gigs and record releases, all serving both to provide "a material connection between punk and animal rights [in which] the everyday cultural production processes of punk are turned towards activist causes" (Bouisseau and Donaghey 2015: 4) and as a means of integrating all the aspects into a core identity. This also resonates with Keenan's assertion on granulation – he argues:

> Assemblage or faith-holding, in the late modern world, should be regarded as a relatively eclectic process ranging across and within traditions and sub-traditions. (2015: 5)

These factors work together to create and strengthen a community of disparate individuals. It enables a multitude of experiences and approaches to coalesce around common causes and activism. Integrating foci enabled an understanding of animal advocacy as part of a wider intersectional concern for anarcho-punks, which is the final focus of this article, analysed through Bailey's intensive concerns with extensive effects.

Intersectional concerns – (intensive concerns with extensive effects)

Figure 3: Animal Rights benefit CD from Mortarhate Records.

Intensive concerns with extensive effects are understood by Bailey as a level of intense emotional and intellectual concern that impacts upon an individual or a community, or indeed both, in a wide and substantial manner (Bailey:2006). This should be understood as the impact or effects of their behaviour, motivation, outlook, understanding and emotional

responses. Such a focus prevents the individual from being divorced from the social and vice versa, something that was prevalent in the papers considering animal advocacy as a form of 'quasi-religion'.

Anarchism, since its beginnings, has focused on a range of struggles, seeing them as intimately interconnected, bourgeois rule, patriarchy, heteronormativity, speciesism and race. Therefore we find classical anarchist thinkers such as Peter Kropotkin writing on economics at the heart of feudalism and capitalism, the use of scarcity of food to drive up prices, the importance of voluntary cooperation for a successful society and the creativity of species. Emma Goldman wrote on a wide range of topics including, but not limited to, capitalism, militarism, religion and atheism, marriage, homosexuality, rising anti-Semitism, and freedom of speech. Mikhail Bakunin wrote on class struggle, religion, anti-Semitism, violence and repeatedly against Marxism.

For those interviewed, the anarchism within their identity is about finding a solution or alternatives for multiple oppressions and recognizing the intersectional nature of oppression rather than focusing on one as worse or more important than the others – focusing instead on how they are interlinked. This is perhaps most obvious in regard to animal advocacy, and it illustrates why claiming it to be a form of 'quasi-religion' is to entirely miss the point. Doing so negates intersectionality and raises one form of oppression above others. While perhaps an argument could be made that in wider society animal advocacy is viewed by those involved as more important, it would still be unconvincing. Typically, those involved in animal liberation, rescue, veganism, etc. are also involved with one or more groups raising awareness of homelessness, wage inequality, gender imbalance and anti-war (Clarke and Linzey 1990: X)

Benefit gigs are a norm within anarcho-punk (and indeed wider punk), and while it will often be for a specific cause, that cause will not be the only one mentioned or promoted. It therefore seems reasonable to assert that in reality the intensive concern within anarcho-punk is that of inequality and injustice, power imbalance, exploitation and the desire to eradicate these results in extensive effects, which include, but is not limited to, animal advocacy. The belief is often expressed that until all are free none are free, or animal liberation is a part of human liberation. They are neither distinct nor independent but deeply entangled, which is why considering anarcho-punk through Implicit Religion, rather than claiming it as a form of 'quasi-religion', is preferable, appropriate and revealing. Doing so enables a connection between the subculture and animal advocacy to be understood both on a more holistic scale and in a way that does not diminish either for the sake of fitting it into a narrow conception of religion when that does not conform to the perspective or understanding of the participants themselves.

Figure 4: Flyer for a benefit show.

> Animal rights, if you like, although I fundamentally disagree with the concept of rights, but anyway, yeah, they are not stand alone, they are part of a wider connected web of abuse and repression. The notion that someone or something living, feeling, breathing, with a future and what not is only useful if they serve a purpose to someone else is fundamentally wrong. People and animals should be valued for their life and that is it, not for who can eat their bodies, wear their skin, pay them less to make shitty products, pay them less in wages because of their reproductive organs. More than that these issues relate to wider problems that have

> come about, I guess more obviously in the last two centuries but no doubt existed before such as how we think we can own and use land for example. It sickens me and so yes I will respond with force, with whatever I can, however small a difference it makes it is still a difference. I will take the consequences of my actions because how can I not act? I am compelled to by what I see around me (Mick, Glasgow, 10 December 2014)

All interviewees referred to their approach to animal advocacy in intersectional terms; we can also find this expressed in many songs. This is but one example:

> We're not very different; we're very much the same
>
> Animals have feelings, animals have a brain
>
> People have feelings, people have a brain
>
> Animals feel pain, people feel pain
>
> Myxomatosis stinks, oppression stinks
>
> I don't want to see man's murder anymore…
>
> Man-made oppression, man-made pain. (Flux of Pink Indians, 'Myxomatosis', 1982)

The very nature of this intersectionality expressed by Flux of Pink Indians lies in the nature of compassion, which is more than an emotional response to the pain or suffering of others. Compassion takes the next step into activism through a desire (often a rational one) to alleviate suffering. This article has argued that this is the way animal advocacy should be

understood, an act of compassion that is borne from an anarchist intersectional understanding of the nature and consequences of oppression. It should not be framed as a single strand plucked from the tapestry and woven into its own quasi-religion.

The nature of animal advocacy, the headlines that it grabs and the way it is portrayed in the media, often forces it to the fore in regard to what anarcho-punks protest about. It is seen as the ultimate means of expression and, sometimes, all they stand for. However, in looking through the framework of granulation at the intensive concerns we can discern both a core concept of compassion and a myriad of ways it is enacted upon; the extensive effects include, but are not limited to, animal advocacy.

Concluding thoughts

This article began as a reaction to reading three papers that described animal advocacy as a form of religion, be that functional or quasi. Three important concerns about this approach were raised – the assumption that religion exists because it exists, that it can be extracted from other binaries and analysed or indeed functions on its own; the reductionist approach to faith and religion in particular – the only thing that is of concern about religion is how it functions; and finally, the notion of 'quasi' itself – that animal advocacy was somehow incomplete and merely a poor man's second choice for a 'real' religion.

Utilizing Bailey's Implicit Religion and William Keenan's granulation framework, attention was then turned to animal advocacy within anarcho-punk. Many of the participants of this subculture are actively involved with illegal and legal behaviours in regard to the rights and liberation of animals from human interference and misuse. Applying this dual approach enabled a determination that commitment was made, not to animal advocacy per se but to

anarchism as an ideology, and the activism was a working out of that commitment. Furthermore, we observed that it was the anarcho-punk and in particular the musical community and its mores and norms that functioned as a means to create a unified community. It was not animal advocacy but punk that acted as integrating foci. Finally, we observed an anarchist intersectional understanding of oppression that motivated these individuals. This was reflected in the intensive concern that was held for a range of oppressions and so resulted in multiple attempts to act upon them, including, but not limited to, activism for the liberation and well-being of animals.

Bailey notes:

> The suggestion is that we may gain in our understanding of people if we were to try and apply something of what we now know of religious life, to ordinary secular life. It might contain signs of something which is a little bit like some kind of religion, albeit of its own. (2012: 195)

Doing so can help to understand what matters to people. However, we must be careful and vigilant against doing what the initial three papers that sparked these thoughts did – applying it the wrong way around, shoe-horning an aspect of life into a preconceived notion of what religion is. Instead seeking to understand both on their own terms and then exploring any connections will help further explain and illuminate hidden depths within punk and religion.

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Notes

[1] In addition to those engaged with in this article see also; Marie Mika; Josephine Donovan and Tom Reagan.

[2] From here onwards I will be using Lowe's term 'quasi religion' for ease of reading.

[3] In some cases broken locks are replaced with new ones.

[4] Animal Liberation Front.

[5] Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty.

[6] Chloe is heavily involved with a range of mystical practices and religious traditions that she combines to create what she terms a nomadic theology.

[7] Krishnacore is a strand of hardcore punk that is infused and informed by Hare Krishna teachings and practices. It has been explored from the perspective of Implicit Religion in 'Beyond Krishnacore', Francis Stewart (2012). See also Mike Dines, 'The Sacralization of Straightedge Punk: Nada Brahma and the Divine Embodiment of Krishnacore'.

[8] Similar objections are noted by interviewees in *Burning Fight* by Brian Peterson (2009: 96–99).

[9] To follow a football team or to train at swimming religiously, for example.

[10] Both were interviewed by e-mail and had over a month to respond to the question.