Caring for Animals in Early Modern France, 1550-1750

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Contents

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Abstract

This thesis explores how perceptions of nonhuman animals and animal-human relationships intersected with theories, attitudes and practices of care in early modern France.

This study comprises five chapters. The first considers the animal-human continuities that Michel de Montaigne envisages and how his philosophical scepticism shapes his perceptions of animals. The second chapter challenges the long-standing association of René Descartes with the beast-machine doctrine. I show how his metaphysics inform his views on animals as feeling beings who possess certain forms of thought and consciousness. The third chapter contends that the beast-machine doctrine primarily arose from Cartesian reinterpretations of Descartes' thought. I then consider how both Guillaume-Hyacinthe Bougeant and Marin Cureau de la Chambre reinterpret Descartes' metaphysics to posit their own distinct theories of animal soul, consciousness and language. Their works emphasise the moral concern we ought to show towards animals and begin to recognise care as a mutual interspecies relationship. The fourth chapter explores how Madeleine de Scudéry's account of her chameleons both reflects the inherent fluidity in the ways animals were perceived in early modern France and demonstrates care as an emotional and a practical response. The final chapter pursues these connections and considers how perceptions of animals informed the care advised for them in the agricultural manuals of Olivier de Serres, Charles Estienne and Jean Liébault.

Through a close reading of this corpus, I advance three principal arguments. Firstly, the selected works do not reveal any singular or unified concept of 'the animal/ animals'; they instead reflect diverse interpretations of animal nature and interspecies relationships. Secondly, their perceptions of animal nature were largely shaped by a persisting sense of doubt. The authors studied here predominantly assert that human knowledge is finite and fallible. Given the incomprehensibility of animal life, they instead interpret animals' corporeal gestures empathetically and through careful observation. Finally, their speculative interpretations influence diverse theories, attitudes and practices of care. The works examined here reveal care to be a complex, fluid and reciprocal endeavour through which animals and humans alike care for one another. This thesis ultimately offers critical insight into how these central concepts informed one another and contributed to a distinct mode of perceiving and living alongside animals in early modern France that was centred around an attitude and practice of care.

Declaration

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The Author

Lucy Neat-Ward is currently a doctoral candidate at the University of Manchester. During her time at Manchester, Lucy presented at the second biannual conference for the *British Animal Studies Network (BASN)* in 2019 with a paper titled '"A Natural Tale": *Le Peuple Migrateur* (Winged Migration) and Affective Responses to the Representation of Avian Migration'. In 2021, she was awarded Fellowship of the Advance HE Academy (FHEA).

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Introduction

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In his discussion on the concept of instinct, Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle (1657 - 1757) recounts a visit he once made to Nicolas Malebranche (1638 - 1715). As the two philosophers strolled through the Oratory of the Rue Saint-Honoré, a pregnant dog entered the room.[1] She affectionately rubbed herself against Malebranche's legs before settling at his feet. After a few futile attempts to encourage her to move, he gave her a forceful kick. The dog yelped in pain, eliciting a concerned cry from Fontenelle whilst Malebranche coldly replied: 'ne savez-vous pas bien que cela ne sent point?'

The question posed by Malebranche and Fontenelle's response illustrate three core themes that are the focus of this study. The first two pertain to what has been termed the "animal question", or how authors in early modern France perceived animals and believed they ought to be treated. Could animals think, feel, communicate or care? How were they similar to or different from humans? How ought we to think about our relationships with them and should we morally care for and about them? Such ontological and ethical questions are at stake in the encounter between Malebranche, Fontenelle and the dog. Their different responses to Malebranche's actions indicate a tension in their perceptions of the animal and how they believe she ought to be treated. Malebranche regards the dog as an object - signalled by the impersonal pronoun 'cela' - that is devoid of all sensation and so he deems it permissible to kick her. Fontenelle's cry suggests that he neither condones Malebranche's actions nor perceives the dog as an unfeeling object. Their contrasting responses reveal that, in early modern France, questions on animal nature and their treatment remained contentious and unresolved.

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[1] Nicolas Charles Joseph Trublet, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de la vie et des ouvrages de Mr. de Fontenelle. Tirés de Mercure de France 1756, 1757 et 1758*, 2nd edn (Amsterdam: Marc Michel Rey, 1759), p. 115.

This uncertainty concerning animal nature is the third core theme of this study. The authors discussed here frequently expressed doubt or refrained from drawing definitive conclusions about what animals' lives might be like. They grappled with the epistemological questions of how, or even whether, we could obtain true and certain knowledge of animal and human nature. They instead observed animals' outward behaviours and interpreted what they might mean, even though their insights into animal life remained partial, provisional and speculative in nature. Returning to our tale, Malebranche does not affirmatively state that the dog is an unfeeling object, but presents an opposing perspective to Fontenelle in the question he poses. Neither philosopher can claim their perception of this animal as ontological truth and we - as readers - are caught in the uncertainty between their differing interpretations.

The present study examines how authors in early modern France addressed these three central questions through a textual analysis of their perceptions of animals, ideas on care and responses to doubt. I advance three principal arguments. Firstly, I argue that no singular or unified concept of 'the animal/ animals' emerged in early modern France. There arose diverse interpretations of animal nature and the animal-human (or interspecies) relationship, although certain common perceptions emerge between authors. Secondly, I argue that a fundamental doubt - and, in certain cases, contact with philosophical scepticism - significantly shaped authors' representations of animals. Although the Cartesian school of thought made definitive ontological assertions, most of the authors examined here accepted that human knowledge was neither infinite nor infallible, specifically in relation to animals. In the face of such uncertainty, they pursued interpretative forms of reading through careful observation of animals' corporeal gestures and empathetic comparisons with their own experiences. Such conjectural interpretations enabled writers to speculate on the possibilities of animal life. Finally, I contend that such speculative readings of physical and textual gestures - and the perceptions of animals they generated - intersected with attitudes and practices of care. The authors examined here adopt a corresponding stance to that on animal nature and refrain from establishing any normative definition of care. In their works, care occurs within a highly complex, fluid and mutual interspecies relationship which unites a theoretical framework, an emotional attitude and practical labour.

1.1 Methodology and Corpus

This thesis examines selected texts from early modern France (c.1550 - 1750) and analyses their perceptions of nonhuman animals, responses of care and the fundamental doubt they express.[2] Although material cultures and features accompanying the texts - such as woodcuts - undoubtedly shaped early modern representations and interactions with animals, they are not my primary concern here. Close reading and textual analysis instead explore the coalescing conversations surrounding animal nature and care in early modern France. I reveal the epistemological approaches towards the "animal question" underpinning these works and the speculative forms of reading that French authors elaborated in response to such inherent uncertainty. The principal contribution of this study lies in establishing connections between care, perceptions of animals and responses to doubt through a systematic analysis of my corpus and the place of these works within wider discourses on animals in early modern France.

A significant methodological question arose early in my analysis: how should we define care?[3] The conceptual complexity of care itself was confounded by the fact that French does not possess a direct translation of this term. Current francophone theorists typically employ the Anglicism 'le care'. This term - and the conceptual and ethical framework it accompanies - was not available to early modern authors and this presented a challenge in identifying care when reading their texts. My method was inspired by Eric Méchoulan and his recent investigation of the connections between reading and care in *Lire avec soin* (2017). Méchoulan encourages the reader to approach texts with 'une attention soucieuse' and to read them 'à l'instar de l'ami' who is curious about the possibilities that written works might reveal to us.[4] Through such a careful and curious reading of my corpus, I explored the possibilities of care expressed by early modern authors and care's manifestations in the different contexts of their works. Whilst some ideas bore similarities to those of the present-day ethics of care, others remained distinct to the

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[2] I here employ the term 'nonhuman animals' to recognise that humans can similarly be classified as animals. Henceforth, I use the term 'animal(s)' to refer to nonhuman animals, unless otherwise specified. Please see section 1.3.2 for my definition of 'early modern'.

[3] The conceptual challenges and definitions of care are examined in greater depth in section 1.2.2 below.

[4] Éric Méchoulan, *Lire avec soin: Amitié, justice et médias,* Perspectives du care ed. by Fabienne Brugère and Claude Gautier, 3 vols (Lyon: ENS Éditions, 2017-2018), I (2017), p. 47 and p. 141.

temporal, social, cultural and economic climate of early modern France. My analysis was further supported by a linguistic and corporeal lexicon of care. In the absence of a direct translation, I approached care through the following cluster of terms captured in the dictionaries of César-Pierre Richelet (1680) and Antoine Furetière (1690): *soin/ soigner; concerne; se soucier de; garde/ garder; s'occuper de;* and *être attaché à*.[5] Although other synonyms do exist, I focused on these terms as they reflected the complex and multi-faceted nature of care in early modern France and its coexistence alongside other concepts and emotional responses. This cluster of synonyms provided the broad brushstrokes through which I could determine more implicit attitudes, corporeal gestures and practical acts of care. Identifying and comparing such manifestations revealed the specific understanding of interspecies care in early modern France that is the focus of this study.

The body of my analysis concentrates on philosophical, literary and agricultural works spanning the period from 1550 to 1750. The second chapter examines excerpts from Michel de Montaigne's (1533 - 1592) *Essais,* written between 1572 and 1590, and notably his *Apologie de Raymond Sebond.* The third considers the works and correspondence of René Descartes, focusing on his ideas on animals in the *Discours de la Méthode* (1637), *Méditations Métaphysiques* (1641) and *Principes de la Philosophie* (1644). The fourth chapter studies the diverse manners in which Descartes' metaphysics was reinterpreted by contemporary and subsequent thinkers. I examine Nicolas Malebranche's *De la recherche de la vérité* (1647), Antoine Dilly's *De l'âme des bêtes* (1676) and Jean Darmanson's *La bête transformée en machine* (1684) to argue that the beast-machine doctrine primarily arose through the reinterpretation of Descartes' theory of animal automatism by Cartesian thinkers. I also consider alternative readings of Descartes' metaphysics in early modern France. I examine how his theories of substance dualism and automatism were reformulated alongside other theological and theoretical frameworks in Guillaume-Hyacinthe Bougeant's *Amusement philosophique sur le langage des bêtes* (1739), as well as in Marin Cureau de

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[5] Antoine Furetière, *Dictionnaire Universel, contenant généralement tous les mots françois, tant vieux que modernes, et les termes de toutes les sciences et des arts. Divisée en trois tomes,* (La Haye: A et R Leers, 1690). César Pierre Richelet, *Dictionnaire françois: contenant les mots et les choses, plusieurs nouvelles remarques sur la langue française, ses expressions propres, figurées et burlesques, la prononciation des mots les plus difficiles, le régime des verbes: avec les termes les plus connues des arts et des sciences; le tout tiré de l'usage et des bons auteurs de la langue française,* (Genève: J.H Widerhold, 1680).

la Chambre's essay 'Quelle est la connaissance des bêtes?' (1645) and his subsequent *Traité sur la connaissance des bêtes* (1647). The fifth chapter pursues this line of inquiry by investigating how Madeleine de Scudéry reads Descartes and Cartesian ideas alongside other coalescing intellectual frameworks and her own affective relationships with her chameleon companions in her *Histoire de deux caméléons* (1668). The sixth and final chapter examines similar perceptions of animal nature and interspecies relationships of care in early modern agriculture in Charles Estienne and Jean Liébault's *Agriculture, et Maison Rustique* (1564) and Olivier de Serres' *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture* (1600).

My study pursues thematic connections across this corpus. A chronological approach may have risked portraying conversations on animal nature and care as evolving in a linear fashion or according to a teleological narrative. Debates surrounding the "animal question" in early modern France instead developed through a continual ebb and flow of ideas and it is this coalescence of discourses that my thematic approach seeks to capture. The three core themes of perceptions of animals, the nature of care and responses to doubt unite each of the works selected, though the ideas they express may differ. My study is simultaneously structured by a gradual move from philosophical debates to authors who describe actual and practical encounters with animals in the closing two chapters. I thereby seek to contextualise the discussions of the opening chapters against the very real and quotidian relationships of early moderns with their animals.

The objective of this study - to offer a systematic analysis of the three thematic connections - is evident in the breadth of the works selected. The diversity of my corpus itself points towards the pertinent and pervasive nature of the "animal question" and its implications in terms of care in early modern France. Indeed, the themes explored in this study abounded across a variety of textual material. This included shorter treatises and pamphlets on animal care, natural histories, accounts of vivisection experiments or La Fontaine's *Fables,* together with the proliferation of other works in the fable tradition during this era.

The works studied here have been selected according to four principal criteria. The first is that they either explicitly advance ideas on animal nature or reveal such perceptions implicitly

through discussing specific interspecies relationships, as in the case of Madeleine de Scudéry and the agricultural manuals. Secondly, they are written by influential figures or are works that proved influential in early modern France. Whilst many of the authors featured have since been the focus of considerable critical commentary, an additional aim of this study was to offer new lines of inquiry and so my third core criterion was breadth. I selected certain works which have received little critical attention - especially within anglophone accounts - but which nevertheless occupied a significant place in the evolving debates in early modern France. The addition of such lesser-known works contextualises and furthers the analysis of my corpus as a whole, opening new directions for future study.

The final criterion is that the works examined here discuss actual, identifiable animals rather than mythical, legendary or monstrous species. Bestiaries such as those of French surgeon Ambroise Paré (c.1510 - 1590) remained popular in early modern France and the creatures they contained similarly contributed to perceptions of animal and human nature. This study is, however, concerned with how authors perceived the animals with whom they could actually interact. Although many discuss 'the animal' or 'animals' in more general terms, those authors that distinguish between species typically mention dogs, cats, horses, cattle, pigs, sheep or birds. These are species with whom those living in early modern France had daily physical contact, whether in their homes, on the street, on farmlands, in the woods or on their plates. Others speak of more exotic species - among them lions, elephants, primates, peacocks and chameleons - that were beginning to be transported to France from abroad and written about by early modern authors, namely in natural historical works. Whilst I concentrate on how early moderns perceived animals in broad terms, I shall attend to any significant differences between their interpretations and treatment of distinct species where this is relevant.

1.2 Significance

My study is situated between two core intellectual traditions: animal studies and care ethics. These approaches have been the focus of increasing attention since the 1970s, resulting in an extensive and continually growing body of works. However, inquiries into the possible

intersections between these traditions - such as the collaborative efforts of American feminist scholars Josephine Donovan and Carol J. Adams - are still only beginning to emerge. The current thesis follows existing trajectories established by these traditions. I simultaneously pursue alternative lines of inquiry which emphasise the roles of reading, animal response and doubt in our caring interactions with other species. My intention here is two-fold. I advance intersections which are emerging between animal studies and care ethics, whilst situating such discussions within the distinct temporal and cultural framework of early modern France.

1.2.1 Animal Studies

Animal studies is a growing interdisciplinary field which examines our cultural representations of animals and the animal-human relationship. It initially developed out of the Animal Rights and Liberation movements in the 1970s and the publication of seminal works by Australian moral philosopher Peter Singer and American animal rights theorist Tom Regan. Their works established sentience as a basic criterion for moral concern and advocated equal consideration for the interests of animals.[6] The questions surrounding the moral rights of animals raised by Singer and Regan have since inspired diverse responses. The Critical Animal Studies (CAS) movement has gathered momentum since the millennium and combines academic research with political engagement and activism.[7] The current thesis is not, however, militant in nature and situates itself within the domain of animal studies.

Animal studies scholars draw upon various theoretical approaches in analysing cultural and historical representations of animals, among them Continental philosophy, Marxist theory, feminism, posthumanism or queer theory. The present study focuses on the philosophical

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[6] Tom Regan, 'The Case for Animal Rights', in *Animal Rights and Human Obligations,* ed. by Tom Regan and Peter Singer, 2nd edn (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1989), pp. 105-114 (p. 106 and pp. 111-112). Tom Regan, *Defending Animal Rights* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), p. 4. Peter Singer, 'All Animals Are Equal', in *Animal Rights and Human Obligations,* ed. by Tom Regan and Peter Singer, 2nd edn (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1989), pp. 73-86 (p. 78). Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation* (London: Pimlico, 1995), pp. 2-4.

[7] Nik Taylor and Richard Twine, 'Introduction: Locating the 'critical' in critical animal studies', in *The Rise of Critical Animal Studies: From the margins to the centre,* ed. by Nik Taylor and Richard Twine (Oxon & New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 1-15 (p. 1).

discussions surrounding the "animal question" and interspecies relationships which run like a thread throughout its selected texts. My analysis is therefore informed by the philosophical frameworks employed within animal studies, namely those of Jacques Derrida, Donna Haraway, Giorgio Agamben, Gilles Deleuze and Bruno Latour. Whilst their ideas and theoretical approaches differ, common themes emerge in their thought, three of which are of notable interest for this study: the animal-human boundary, alternative modes of being and questions of animal communication and response.

Agamben, Deleuze, Latour, Derrida and Haraway all reformulate the notions of 'the human', 'the animal' and the relationships between them in various manners.[8] Their analyses reveal that such concepts are primarily cultural and linguistic constructs, resulting in what Derrida terms the 'le théâtre insensé [the deranged theatrics]' of erecting the homogenising categories of '*the* human' or '*the* animal' (original emphasis).[9] Their works demonstrate that Western philosophy has predominantly established the animal-human boundary through a negative dialectics. Such an 'inclusion-exclusion mechanism', as Agamben terms it, defines humanity through a negation of its intrinsic animality.[10] This not only creates a separation between the categories of 'the human' and 'the animal', but engenders an asymmetrical relationship within which animals are conceived as inferior or somehow lacking by comparison.

The philosophers mentioned here concur that there are far deeper connections between animals and humans than Western thought has historically allowed.[11] Their works reconceptualise such interspecies relationships, albeit in different manners. Agamben resituates the

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[8] Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal,* trans. by Kevin Attell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 36. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia,* trans. by Brian Massumi (London & New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), p. 277. Jacques Derrida, *L'animal que donc je suis*, (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 2006), p. 28. Donna J. Haraway, *When Species Meet,* ed. by Cary Wolfe, Posthumanities, 65 vols (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 2007-2021), III (2008), pp. 16-18. Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern,* trans. by Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), p. 10.

[9] Derrida, *L'animal,* pp. 28-29.

[10] Agamben, *The Open,* p. 37.

[11] Agamben, *The Open*, p. 12. Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP,* p. 277. Derrida, *L'animal,* pp. 27-28. Haraway, *Species*, p. 42.

animal-human boundary, rather than dismantling it entirely. He regards 'the human' as a site of internal conflict between our humanity and intrinsic animality, which calls for constant policing if we are to assure our continued existence as distinctly 'human'.[12] Latour and Deleuze adopt a different approach and recognise a more transformative and hybridising potential in interspecies relationships. For Latour, animals and humans are agents who participate in complex 'actor-networks' in which they continually and mutually transform one another.[13] Deleuze similarly reconceives the passages between animals and humans in a more fluid and hybrid manner through his concept of 'becomings'.[14] He envisages a process in which beings enter into liminal spaces of proximity and indiscernibility where they transform one another through the circulation of affects.[15] His 'becomings' are continuous and fluctuating processes, such that they resist any static or singular definition of 'the human' or 'the animal'.

Derrida and Haraway's reconceptualisations of interspecies relationships introduce the second core theme: alternative modes of being. Derrida recognises the inherent fluidity and transformative potential of humans' relationships with animals. He maintains, though, that there are significant differences between them and even among animal species. In response, he elaborates what he terms *la limitotrophie* - or the logic of the limit - which no longer regards boundaries as static or definitive.[16] Derrida redefines limits as permeable, dynamic and generative and so his thought allows for border-crossings, hybridising encounters and the continual reformulation of boundaries. Through his *limitotrophie*, Derrida gestures towards an alternative mode of existence alongside animals which he terms *l'être avec*.[17] This 'being with' animals rejects an existence structured around boundary lines or which functions according to an exclusionary logic. Derrida instead refocuses our attention on interspecies connections and on a humanity that exists and evolves alongside animals.

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[12] Agamben, *The Open*, p. 12 and p. 69.

[13] Latour, *Modern*, p. 121. Chris Pearson, 'Beyond 'resistance': rethinking nonhuman agency for a 'more-than-human' world', *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire*, 22 (2015), 709-725 (pp. 711-712).

[14] Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP,* p. 283.

[15] Felicity J. Colman, 'Affect', in *The Deleuze Dictionary: Revised Edition,* ed. by Adrian Parr, 2nd edn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 11-14 (p. 11). Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 280.

[16] Derrida, *L'animal,* pp. 50-51.

[17] Ibid, pp. 27-28.

Haraway's work is similarly concerned with multispecies encounters in spaces where clear boundaries dissolve and she envisages an alternative mode of being. Her concept of 'autre-mondialisation' - or 'other-worldings' - considers the nature of our interactions with other animals and nonhuman beings.[18] For Haraway, such 'other-worldings' are reciprocal processes of 'becoming with' through which animals and humans shape one another 'in layers of reciprocating complexity'.[19] Given such mutual transformations, she asserts that humans fundamentally 'become' alongside and in relation to various animal 'others', whom she terms companion species.[20] Our physical, biological and affective contact with such species in turn 'ramifies and shapes accountability' towards them.[21] For Haraway, then, our lived encounters with companion species motivate our quotidian acts of care.

In elaborating alternative modes of being or becoming, Derrida and Haraway reflect on the final core question of animal response and interspecies communication. Derrida's analysis reveals how Western philosophy has traditionally conceptualised animals as mute in contrast to a human being endowed with language and speech. He challenges this view and asserts that, when considering interspecies communication, it ought not be a matter of whether animals can speak. The central question is whether they can *respond* and whether we, as humans, can comprehend what they are communicating to us.[22] It is in this regard that Derrida emphasises the significance of utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham's (1748 - 1832) question of whether animals can suffer.[23] Bentham reorients our attention away from the capacities that we believe animals may or may not possess, including language. Focusing on the ability to suffer enables animals to respond, as Derrida argues that signs of their suffering - such as the pain, panic or terror to which humans are witnesses - are beyond reasonable doubt.[24] The complex questions surrounding animal response are at the heart of the infamous encounter in which Derrida stands

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[18] Haraway, *Species*, p. 3.

[19] Haraway, *Species*, p. 42.

[20] Ibid, pp. 16-17.

[21] Haraway, *Species*, p. 36.

[22] Derrida, *L'animal*, pp. 24-26.

[23] Ibid, p. 48.

[24] Derrida, *L'animal*, p. 49.

nude before his cat. This feline responds to him, imploring him to let her out.[25] Derrida reflects that what is at stake in their encounter are the questions of whether he can understand what his cat means and whether he knows how to respond in kind to her request.

Haraway's alternative mode of being raises similar questions surrounding the possibilities of interspecies communication. She regards other-worldings as a form of embodied conversation between companion species - which she terms a 'dance of relating' - in which suffering is no longer the decisive issue.[26] The questions of *how* animals respond to one another and to us, and whether we know how to appropriately reply, are of greater importance for Haraway. She reconsiders Derrida's encounter with his cat and criticises him for failing in the 'simple obligation of companion species'.[27] Haraway argues that Derrida simply employs his cat as a platform for philosophical reflection and does not consider her as a living and communicative being; he consequently fails to truly connect with his feline companion, nor does he respond to her specific invitation to care about what *she* is thinking, feeling and experiencing.[28] Haraway's thought thereby constitutes an extension of Derrida's question of animal response. She now makes it a matter of whether humans can recognise the invitation to communicate that lies implicit in the animal's response and whether we know how to appropriately engage with the actual animal before us.

The current study expands on the broader trajectories in animal studies established by Derrida and Haraway through considering the responses of early modern French authors to the three central themes identified above. The following chapters examine how writers perceived animals, humans and the possibilities for corporeal communication between them. I simultaneously consider how such perceptions influenced the ways they interacted with animals. I propose that their works reveal a form of interspecies living - or being alongside animals - that was based on mutual relationships, attitudes and acts of care.

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[25] Derrida, *L'animal*, p. 26.

[26] Haraway, *Species*, pp. 25-26.

[27] Ibid, p. 20.

[28] Haraway, *Species*, p. 20.

This thesis equally contributes to the steadily increasing number of studies on the cultural representations of animals in early modern Europe that have emerged over the last decade. Edited volumes, including Pia F. Cuneo's *Animals and Early Modern Identity* (2017) or Katherine M. Quinsey's *Animals and humans: sensibility and representation, 1650-1820* (2017), collate analyses on an array of species in early modern literature, art, philosophy, theology, natural histories, menageries, animal husbandry and material culture across Europe. Nathaniel Wolloch's *Subjugated Animals: Animals and Anthropocentrism in Early Modern European Culture* (2017) offers another dimension in investigating the representations of animals in popular science, the theriophilic tradition and debates on extraterrestrial life in early modern Europe. Laurie Shannon's *The Accommodated Animal: Cosmopolity in Shakespearean Locales* (2013) explores how Descartes' thought intervened in what she terms the existing 'creaturely dispensation'.[29] This dispensation constituted a kind of 'cosmic belonging' in 16th-century hexameral and natural-historical traditions, which recognised cross-species connections rather than a binaristic animal-human divide.[30] Shannon explores how 16th-century authors drew upon interspecies comparisons to frame animal-human relationships in terms of polity and to place animals 'within the scope of justice and span of political imagination'.[31] Her work crucially reveals a tradition which accommodated the presence of the animal in cultural production and took account of animals' interests and viewpoints, thereby conceiving them as actors and stakeholders in a realm of cosmic belonging.[32]

Though fewer specific studies on France exist, the last decade has witnessed significant growth in this area. Catharine Randall's *The Wisdom of Animals: Creatureliness in early modern French spirituality* (2014) posits what she terms a 'theology of creatureliness' in early modern France.[33] Her study examines how authors writing in Catholic and Protestant traditions from the 14th century onwards regard animals as possessing knowledge and wisdom which surpass that of

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[29] Laurie Shannon, *The Accommodated Animal: Cosmopolity in Shakespearean Locales* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), p. 2.

[30] Shannon, *Accommodated Animal*, p. 2.

[31] Ibid, p. 3.

[32] Shannon, *Accommodated Animal*, p. 18 and p. 28.

[33] Catharine Randall, *The Wisdom of Animals: Creatureliness in early modern French spirituality* (Paris: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014), p. 8.

humans, but from which they might learn in turn.[34] She argues that animals - and the natural world more broadly - became a vehicle for knowledge of human nature during the Renaissance, given our 'creaturely commonality' and the belief in a shared *anima* between animals and humans.[35] Louisa MacKenzie and Stephen Posthumus' edited volume, *French Thinking about Animals* (2015), explores the array of responses which 'la question animale' has inspired in French and Francophone societies, activist agendas and intellectual history.[36] The volume thereby seeks to present the diversity of an emerging French animal studies to an anglophone readership, whilst simultaneously focusing on the intersections between theory and practice.[37]

Peter Sahlins' recent work - *1668: The Year of the Animal in France* (2017) - begins to provide a more comprehensive overview of the "animal question" in late seventeenth-century France. Sahlins explores expressions of Louis XIV's absolutism in the structure of the Versailles menagerie, in literary accounts and in royal tapestries. His study offers critical insight into the representations of animals in natural history, physiognomy and in the debates surrounding contemporary xenotransfusion experiments. Sahlins' work thereby makes a decisive contribution to animal studies within the context of early modern France. His analysis remains limited, however, to the particular temporal moment around 1668 and to the representations of the social, cultural and intellectual elite of France.

The present study both furthers the work of Sahlins in analysing representations of animals across philosophical and literary works in early modern France and begins to address the lacunae identified above. I firstly trace discussions surrounding animals and care throughout a wider temporal window. Pursuing such debates from 1550 to 1750 allowed me to examine how ideas on animals and care either persisted, were reformulated or were abandoned as conversations evolved, ebbed and flowed. The following four chapters thus follow a similar path to Sahlins' study. They consider works produced by and for an intellectual, social and cultural

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[34] Randall, *Creatureliness'*, pp. 3-4.

[35] Ibid, p. 8 and p. 12.

[36] Louisa MacKenzie and Stephen Posthumus (eds), *French Thinking about Animals,* The Animal Turn, ed. by Linda Kalof, 10 vols (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2011-2021), IV (2015), p. xv.

[37] MacKenzie and Posthumus, *French Thinking,* p. xv.

elite, focusing on philosophical and literary texts. The sixth chapter begins to redress this balance through an analysis of animals in farming manuals and agriculture, a domain in which the majority of the early modern French populace was engaged. This final chapter places the philosophical discussions of its predecessors within the context of early moderns' physical and daily caring relationships with animals. It combines the strands which emerge throughout the thesis and culminates in a reflection on the distinct understanding of care within early modern France.

1.2.2 Care

Care is a complex, multi-faceted and continually evolving concept. The past few decades have witnessed an increasing interest in the ethical potential of care and in its applicability to our relationships with other animals. Many animal ethicists and organisations continue to support the utilitarian and rights-based theories of Singer and Regan. Yet their approaches have received growing criticism for still regarding experimentation or killing animals as morally permissible under certain conditions. American philosopher Martha Nussbaum has charged rights-based theories with setting the bar of moral concern too low. She argues that their minimum threshold of sentience only ensures the basic need of a life free from suffering, without affording consideration to animals' wider range of moral interests.[38] Both anglophone and francophone opponents of such rights-based approaches are steadily turning towards alternative traditions, especially justice, virtue and care ethics.

Martha Nussbaum's capabilities approach and Corine Pelluchon's ethics of vulnerability adopt virtue ethics approaches in considering our moral responsibilities towards animals. They expand the scope of moral concern beyond a minimum threshold of sentience. Nussbaum and Pelluchon take account of a greater range of species-specific needs and abilities - including opportunities for emotional attachments or play - to support animals in leading dignified lives and flourishing as the kind of being they are.[39] Their approaches thereby function according to a multi-faceted concept of care. Pelluchon and Nussbaum envisage care as an emotional response

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[38] Martha C. Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 361.

[39] Nussbaum, *Frontiers*, p. 381.

that is bound up with compassion and the belief that an animal is suffering in a way that seriously impedes their moral interests.[40] In addition, care entails a moral attitude, an interest in other beings and a concern for their well-being. Such emotional responses and caring attitudes finally translate into action, with care as a form of 'targeted helping' which seeks to address another's needs.[41] Given our caring interactions with others, Nussbaum and Pelluchon reject the concept of an autonomous moral subject - prevalent in rights-based theory and contractualism - in favour of a relational moral subject who acknowledges their proximity, responsibility and interdependency on others.[42]

Pelluchon elaborates on this relational moral subject and the mechanisms of care in uniting the concepts of vulnerability, responsibility and consideration in her ethics. In her view, we come to perceive ourselves and other animals as vulnerable beings through experiencing 'la passivité du vivant', or the susceptibility of our bodies to external events and others' actions.[43] Through this shared experience of vulnerability, we realise that we exist in relation to other beings on whom we depend and towards whom we carry responsibilities.[44] Accepting our responsibilities and attending to another's moral interests in turn leads to an 'élargissement' of the subject, who acknowledges their membership within a community of living, embodied and vulnerable beings.[45] Although inscribed in different ethical traditions, Nussbaum and Pelluchon's approaches share certain similarities with the ethics of care, namely through their multi-faceted concept of care and the notion of a relational moral subject.

The ethics of care tradition developed concurrently with the Animal Rights Movement in the 1970s and was first established through the work of feminist ethicist and psychologist Carol Gilligan. Gilligan identified an alternative 'feminine' moral attitude which perceived human

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[40] Martha C. Nussbaum, *Political Emotions: Why Love Matters for Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), pp. 142-143. Nussbaum, *Frontiers,* p. 409. Corine Pelluchon, *Eléments pour une éthique de la vulnérabilité: les hommes, les animaux, la nature* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2011), pp. 210-211.

[41] Nussbaum, *Political Emotions*, p. 148.

[42] Nussbaum, *Frontiers*, p. 351. Corine Pelluchon, *Réparons le monde: Humains, animaux, nature* (Paris: Éditions Payot & Rivages, 2020), p. 90.

[43] Corine Pelluchon, *Éthique de la considération* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2018), pp. 122-123.

[44] Ibid, p. 123.

[45] Pelluchon, *Réparons*, p. 70.

society as an intricate web of relationships created and sustained through activities of care.[46] Her ethical framework was subsequently developed by anglophone scholars, among them Virginia Held, Joan Tronto, Eva Feder Kittay and Josephine Donovan.[47] Although its initial iterations focused on care within human relationships, theorists are increasingly considering how this ethics could extend to our interactions with animals, such as in the collaborative works of Donovan and Adams.[48] In recent decades, French and francophone theorists have demonstrated a heightened interest in the ethics of care and have provided new directions for its development.

The ethics of care remains a diverse and pluralised tradition. There is currently little consensus on exactly what care does or ought to mean, though theorists typically share some basic underlying assumptions. The ethics of care envisages the moral subject in relational terms and maintains that our responsibilities towards others arise from our mutual dependencies, relationships and shared interests.[49] Care is once more a multi-faceted concept which combines a theoretical framework, an emotional response and practical labour. For Held, Tronto and Donovan, acts of care are motivated by a distinct caring attitude which comprises other emotional responses such as concern, sympathy or empathy.[50] Where compassion featured in

[46] Carol Gilligan, *In a different voice: psychological theory and women's development* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 29-30.

[47] Josephine Donovan, 'Attention to suffering: a feminist caring ethic for the treatment of animals', *Journal of social philosophy*, 27 (1996), 81-102. Virginia Held, *The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, Global* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). Eva Feder Kittay, *Love's labor: essays on women, equality and dependency* (New York & London: Routledge, 1999). Joan C. Tronto, *Moral Boundaries: a political argument for an ethic of care* (London & New York: Routledge, 1993).

[48] Josephine Donovan and Carol J. Adams (eds), *The feminist care tradition in animal ethics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), p. 3.

[49] Annette Baier, *Moral Prejudices: Essays on Ethics* (London & Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), pp. 24-25. Josephine Donovan, 'Animal rights and feminist theory', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society,* 15 (1990), 350-375 (p. 358). Held, *Ethics of Care,* p. 10. Daryl Koehn, *Rethinking Feminist Ethics: Care, Trust and Empathy* (London & New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 5-6. Brian Luke, 'Justice, Caring and Animal Liberation', *Between the Species,* 8 (1992), 100-108 (p. 106). Michael Slote, *Morals from Motives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 64-65.

[50] Donovan, 'Attention to Suffering', p. 81. Josephine Donovan, 'Feminism and the Treatment of Animals: From Care to Dialogue', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society,* 31 (2006), 305-329 (p. 324). Josephine

Nussbaum and Pelluchon's approaches, though, the ethics of care typically draws a distinction between compassion and care.[51] Held regards compassion as a more distanced emotion which is felt for someone by another.[52] By contrast, care entails a more interpersonal relationship between caregiver and the subject of care, as it is grounded in their interdependencies and shared interests.

The concept of care elaborated above is generally shared by the French and francophone ethics of care tradition. At the same time, though, theorists such as Fabienne Brugère, Sandra Laugier and Pascale Molinier have proposed alternative lines of inquiry. Their works offer a closer analysis of the social, political and economic dimensions of care and its labours.[53] Whilst French theorists similarly conceptualise care as both a practical labour and an emotional attitude, they advance a different interpretation of care's mechanisms. As Laugier writes, a caring attitude does not always or necessarily motivate acts of care.[54] Instead, she proposes that the quotidian labours of care - and the sustained interaction between caregiver and the subject of care that this entails - provide opportunities for the accompanying moral attitude to develop and flourish.[55] The French tradition equally pursues a more sustained examination of the intersections between care, vulnerability and (inter)dependency. In a similar vein to Pelluchon's work, Brugère, Laugier and Molinier regard all corporeal beings as vulnerable and mutually reliant on the care of others.[56] In their view, such experiences of vulnerability and requiring or giving care are universal to all living and embodied beings. Brugère proposes that such shared

Donovan, *The Aesthetics of Care: On the Literary Treatment of Animals* (London & New York: Bloomsbury, 2016), p. 6. Held, *Ethics of Care*, p. 11. Tronto, *Moral Boundaries*, p. 103.

[51] Donovan and Adams, *Feminist care tradition*, p. 14.

[52] Held, *Ethics of Care,* p. 34.

[53] Fabienne Brugère, *L'éthique du «care»,* ed. by Paul Angoulvent, Que sais-je, MMMCMIII, 4th edn (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2021), pp. 4-5. Pascale Molinier, Sandra Laugier and Patricia Paperman (eds), *Qu'est-ce que le* care? *Souci des autres, sensibilité, responsabilité* (Paris: Éditions Payot & Rivages, 2009), p. 18.

[54] Sandra Laugier, 'Le sujet du *care*: vulnérabilité et expression ordinaire', in Pascale Molinier, Sandra Laugier and Patricia Paperman (eds), *Qu'est-ce que le* care? *Souci des autres, sensibilité, responsabilité* (Paris: Éditions Payot & Rivages, 2009), pp. 159-200 (p. 160).

[55] Laugier, 'Sujet du care', p. 160.

[56] Brugère, *L'éthique du care*, p. 48. Laugier, 'Sujet du care', p. 163. Molinier, Laugier and Paperman, *Qu'est-ce que le care?,* p. 25.

experiences provide the impetus to envisage more caring social, political and economic modes of living that are centred around our shared interests.[57]

The concept of care employed in the present study is in part influenced by the work of Pelluchon and the ethics of care tradition and pursues some of the distinct directions elaborated by its francophone theorists. My conceptual framework has at the same time been shaped by a careful reading of my corpus and the diverse manifestations of care expressed within the early modern texts. My concept of care comprises five central components. Firstly, care entails practical labour which responds to the needs of another who is vulnerable. A caring action may be a singular event, but more often involves repetitive, constant or even quotidian labour. This kind of active and sustained intervention in another's life is accompanied by a particular caring attitude, which is the second component in my concept of care. A caring attitude could entail an emotional involvement or identification with another, a curiosity about their experiences and interests or a concern for their well-being.

Thirdly, attitudes and practical acts occur within reciprocal relationships of care that are predicated on shared experiences, interests and interdependencies between caregiver and the subject of care. In such mutual interactions, care fourthly comprises a reflexive and reflective form of reading - or interpreting - others' experiences. This process of careful reading can apply to textual material, but also extends to the ways in which we speculatively interpret others' gestures, corporeal behaviours and expressions. The insights that we obtain can in turn inform caring actions, attitudes and relationships. It is in this respect that relationships of care finally comprise a mutual dialogue in which those concerned increasingly learn to comprehend and respond to one another through acts of care. With regards to interspecies relationships, we come to know, comprehend and respond to other animals through our caring interactions and vice versa. Care becomes a means of interspecies communication and response. The five central components elaborated here are by no means discrete. They instead represent complex, dynamic and coalescing mechanisms of care which function in collaboration.

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[57] Brugère, *L'éthique du care*, p. 50.

The above concept of care and its manifestations in early modern France are the focus of the present study. Following the work of Pelluchon and the ethics of care tradition, though, I recognise that care rarely occurs in isolation. I shall accordingly consider how it interacts with other salient concepts - including vulnerability, dependency, sympathy or empathy - within my corpus. However, an important distinction ought to be made here between care and compassion. My study will not be concerned with the latter for two reasons. Firstly, the ethics of care tradition regards compassion as a more distanced emotion in contrast to the mutual and reciprocal engagements that characterise caring relationships. Secondly, I maintain that care and compassion also remained distinct concepts in early modern France. In her recent work, *Compassion's Edge* (2017), Katherine Ibbett argues that compassion was grounded in a 'differentiating and distancing structure' in early modern France.[58] This structure sought to reinforce divides between the person feeling compassion, whom she terms the 'compassionator', and the object of their compassion; it is in this respect that compassion had an 'edge'.[59] The compassionator remained an external and enclosed observer who did not reach out to others and who did not intervene in their lives.[60]

Whilst reading remains a central activity to both early modern compassion and care, Ibbett's work elucidates the specificities of compassion - particularly among human subjects - within a distinct cultural, religious, political and temporal framework. The distancing mechanisms of compassion in early modern France differ from the interdependent, reciprocal and involved relationships of care. Whereas compassion maintained boundaries, care in early modern France focused on connection and being in the thick of it. The present thesis thus explores how authors elaborated distinct modes of interspecies living that were grounded in relationships of interdependency and care between animals and humans alike.

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[58] Katherine Ibbett, *Compassion's Edge: fellow-feeling and its limits in early modern France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), p. 3.

[59] Ibbett, *Compassion's Edge,* p. 1 and p. 3.

[60] Ibid, pp. 3-4.

1.3 Terms and Methods

1.3.1 Animals

I here employ the term 'animals' to refer to the real and varied species with whom those living in early modern France had the opportunity to interact. The authors of my corpus did not share any single perception of animals and our understanding remains similarly fluid today. Indeed, as Derrida argues, the terms 'animal' and 'human' are themselves linguistic constructs.[61] Language and its connotations nevertheless influence and evolve alongside our thought. The various terms employed by early modern authors to refer to animals therefore merit brief consideration.

Early modern French had three principal terms to refer to animals, as elucidated in the dictionaries of Richelet and Furetière: 'animal/ animaux', 'bête(s)' and 'brute(s)'.[62] 'Animal' referred to a living creature capable of movement and physical sensation. Although it typically denoted nonhuman species, it could be applied to humans in a neutral sense, provided they were termed 'animaux raisonnables'. Underlying this term was the assumption that animals were distinguishable from humans on the basis of reason. Connotations of animal irrationality were common to all three French terms, which could be used pejoratively to refer to humans who appeared 'sot', 'base' and 'ridicule' or who were preoccupied with sensual and carnal pleasures. As opposed to the more neutral 'animal', 'bête' primarily denoted nonhuman animals and could only be applied to humans in a derisive manner. In the entries of both Richelet and Furetière, 'bête' carries stronger connotations of irrationality and referred to animals that were perceived to be without reason. Finally, 'brute' once more referred to animals that were 'sans raison'. It conceived animals in opposition to rational human beings and carried additional connotations of animals' physicality or 'brute' force.

Whilst the three terms vary in their applicability to humans and their pejorative force, the assumption that animals are without reason unites them all. It suggests a fundamental bias within the language employed by early modern authors, according to which animals were irrational beings distinct from humans. The following chapters will consider the theories of

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[61] Derrida, *L'animal*, p. 43.

[62] Furetière, *Dictionnaire Universel* and Richelet, *Dictionnaire françois,* entries for 'animal', 'bête' and 'brute'.

early modern authors who support this view, but will also demonstrate that such attitudes were far from unanimous.

When referring to individual animals throughout this study, I have consciously employed the gendered personal pronouns 'he' or 'she', rather than the impersonal 'it'. Throughout my corpus, animals are overwhelmingly perceived as distinct living, feeling, emotional and caring beings. The boundaries between animal and human nature equally emerge as porous given interspecies connections in the form of shared capacities and relationships. In referring to creatures as 'he' or 'she', I sought to reflect the perceptions of animals encountered in the early modern texts. In many instances, the grammatical gender in French signified biological sex. In instances where grammatical gender was ambiguous, I chose to refer to the animal(s) in question using the female 'she' or 'her'. Historically and to this day, care is a heavily gendered activity, with much caring labour falling onto female animals and humans alike. My preference for female pronouns thereby seeks to recentre the feminine in care ethics and animal studies and to resist the often inherent impulse we have to assume a masculine gender for the animals we encounter in our daily lives.

1.3.2 Early Modern

The term 'early modern' was developed by historians in the last century and expands on an earlier - and increasingly problematic - tripartite division of European history into the ancient, medieval and modern periods. 'Early modern' approximately refers to the period between the onset of the Renaissance or Columbus' first exploration and the French Revolution in 1789.[63] It is, however, a definition born of hindsight and predicated on a rather teleological vision of historical development.[64] Rather than considering this period in its own terms, there is a tendency to regard its intellectual, cultural, political and socioeconomic developments as leading towards either the predetermined end point of the French Revolution or some abstract notion of 'modernity' that had not yet been reached.

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[63] Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Early Modern Europe, 1450-1789,* The Cambridge History of Europe, II, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 2.
[64] Euan Cameron (ed), *Early Modern Europe: An Oxford History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p.xvii. Wiesner-Hanks, *Early Modern Europe*, pp. 7-8.

Research in medieval and early modern studies has increasingly demonstrated that this term is a historical construct and that any definitive start or end points are rather arbitrary.[65] Processes or ideas that have traditionally been regarded as markers of 'modernity' - such as attempts to reform the Church or exploration and contact with other cultures - have roots which predate the early modern period.[66] 'Early modern' is furthermore a Eurocentric intellectual construct that is often imposed on the history of disparate groups, individuals and specific developments. This can risk perpetuating problematic power structures, specifically those at stake in colonial histories.

I here employ the term 'early modern' for heuristic purposes, whilst recognising that it can at times be a problematic construct. The authors I gather under this term originate from diverse intellectual, social, gendered, economic and political backgrounds; as such, their approaches to the core questions of animals, doubt and care do differ. Yet there remain significant thematic connections between their perspectives which justify gathering them under the collective term 'early modern'. I therefore use this term as a collective and temporal marker to identify texts in the period between 1550 and 1750, though the boundaries remain porous at each end.

1.3.3 Quotations

When quoting from early modern works in this study, I have endeavoured to remain as faithful to the original texts as possible. The cited passages are taken directly from the source texts and only spelling and typography have been modernised for ease of reading. As languages change over time, though, there are a few instances in which greater differences in meaning have arisen between early modern and present-day usage. On such occasions, I have signalled the original term by the use of *[sic]* or provided an equivalent in modern French in brackets.

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[65] Cameron, *Early Modern Europe*, p. xvii. Wiesner-Hanks, *Early Modern Europe,* p. 2.
[66] Wiesner-Hanks, *Early Modern Europe*, p. 7.

1.4 The Dog Carer

The core themes of this study hold a very personal interest due to my own caring relationships with animals. Whilst such experiences will be familiar to anyone who shares their home with a companion animal, they hold a unique significance for me as a disabled scholar waiting to be partnered with a "dog carer". The crucial work of our assistance animals is becoming increasingly recognised and even remunerated in the UK, with some dogs receiving a weekly Carer's Allowance. For me, working alongside various dogs during the application process truly brought the symbiotic animal-human relationship and the reciprocal nature of care to life. This thesis is grounded in theoretical frameworks and close reading, but has also been written against the very real background of caring and being cared for by an animal. Such experiences were as pertinent for the early modern authors in this study as they remain for us today.

2

Animals, Speculation and Care in Montaigne's *Essais*

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The questions of what an animal is, how we perceive them and the nature of our relationships to them have attracted attention since Aristotle and continue to generate differing, and sometimes contradictory, responses to this day. The intense debate surrounding the "animal question" in early modern France occurred amidst a time of great intellectual ferment and coalescing philosophical, scientific, cultural and theological discourses. The multitude of theories on animal nature partly arose from and occurred against the turbulent background of the religious, philosophical and political upheavals that followed the Lutheran Reformation and the French Wars of Religion (1562-1598). The resultant shifts in, and questioning of, theological systems encouraged a concomitant reevaluation of existing secular, philosophical and cultural beliefs about animal and human nature.

The rediscovery of ancient sources simultaneously led to a resurgence of scepticism during the early modern era.[1] Scepticism became an increasingly pertinent school of thought in response to the epistemological concerns raised during the Renaissance. Not only was there an intensified quest to comprehend human - and, by extension, animal - nature, early modern philosophers were also confronted with the question of how to establish truth amidst a rapidly and continually increasing amount of scientific knowledge. Scepticism proved a fruitful method to investigate these pressing epistemological questions throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Michel de Montaigne (1533 - 1592) engaged with both the "animal question" and epistemological concerns in his longest essay, the *Apologie de Raymond Sebond*. He received a humanist education at the Collège de Guyenne in Bordeaux before entering public office at the Court of Périgueux.

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[1] Luciano Floridi, 'The diffusion of Sextus Empiricus' works in the Renaissance', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 56 (1995), 63-85 (p. 65). Gianni Paganini and José R. Maia Neto (eds), *Renaissance Scepticisms* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2009), p. 2.

Montaigne's principal philosophical work, the *Essais,* comprises three volumes of essays which present his reflections on an array of themes. He composed the *Essais* following his retirement from public life around 1570-71 and continued writing until his death in 1592. The first edition contained two volumes and was published in 1580, with two further editions appearing in 1588 and posthumously in 1595.[2]

Montaigne's thought in the *Essais* - and in the *Apologie* specifically - lies at the intersection of multiple discourses including scepticism and the tradition of theriophilia, the belief that animals possessed thought and feeling and were as rational, happy or moral as humans. He became a pivotal figure in this tradition, which experienced a resurgence following the publication of his works. Theriophilia later became a core foundation upon which men and women resisted the Cartesian beast-machine doctrine. Excerpts of Montaigne's *Essais* were often invoked by those who opposed the idea of the animal-machine, including Marin Cureau de la Chambre and Madeleine de Scudéry.[3] Montaigne also elaborated a distinct form of scepticism in the *Apologie* and his wider *Essais*. This pursued the most probable and plausible explanations of phenomena and similarly influenced the approaches of later seventeenth-century thinkers towards the questions of animal nature and the reliability of human knowledge.

His engagement with contemporary intellectual and cultural discourses aside, the *Essais* were a deeply personal work for Montaigne. He described his oeuvre as 'la peinture de moi', a work of self-portraiture in which the writer as subject is portrayed through his personal reflections.[4] The human subject he paints is neither static nor definitive. Such a 'mind in motion' is captured through the very composition of the essays, which frequently resist logical development. Montaigne's works are instead characterised by the evolving thought processes through which he guides his readers.[5] Michel Jeanneret posits that such a fluid approach to writing is

[2] The publication of the 1595 edition was not supervised by Montaigne. His adoptive daughter, Marie de Gournay, edited his remaining written manuscripts and published the edition posthumously.

[3] The Cartesian beast-machine and thought of Marin Cureau de la Chambre will be examined in chapter four, whilst Scudéry's work will be examined in chapter five of the present study.

[4] Pierre Villey, *Les Essais de Michel de Montaigne, 1533-1592* (Paris: Nizet, 1961), p. 10.

[5] Michel Jeanneret, *Perpetual Motion: Transforming Shapes in the Renaissance from da Vinci to Montaigne*, trans. by Nidra Poller (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001), p. 236.

intimately connected with the act of self-portraiture; it enables Montaigne to capture the constant transformation of the human mind as well as the discontinuity and illogic which can characterise our thought.[6] Over the various editions of the *Essais*, Montaigne frequently returned to his work to make corrections and additions. The *Essais* were always an incomplete work in progress for him, just like the transforming and living subject they sought to capture.[7]

Montaigne's view of the world as a realm of constant flux intersects with his scepticism and his perceptions of animal and human nature. The view that Montaigne envisages a homogenous continuity between animals and humans has gained particular currency in traditional scholarly interpretations, such as that of Pierre Villey.[8] Montaigne does believe that animals possess many faculties in common with humans - among them reason, thought, consciousness and sentience - and so the *Apologie* appears to endorse such interspecies continuity and parity on a cursory reading.

Montaigne's basis for attributing faculties to animals does not, however, lie in some homogenous continuity between animals and humans. Although interspecies connections are fundamental to his worldview, accounts to date have tended to obscure his interest in animal specificity and alterity. Such interpretations - including those of Pierre Villey, Craig Brush and Michel Jeanneret - predominantly regard Montaigne's interspecies comparisons as a vehicle for his arguments about human nature. In the *Apologie*, though, animals are equally perceived as distinct beings with their own natures, experiences or needs and who warrant close and careful attention for Montaigne.

The current chapter examines how Montaigne presents his perceptions of animals and interspecies connections to his reader in the *Essais*, focusing on the intersections with his scepticism and the concept of care. My analysis comprises two sections. The first considers how Montaigne employs sceptic arguments to question whether human reason can provide true or certain knowledge and to challenge assumptions of human superiority and specificity. His

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[6] Jeanneret, *Perpetual Motion*, p. 274.
[7] Ibid, p. 237.
[8] Hassan Melehy, 'Montaigne and Ethics: The Case of Animals', *L'esprit créateur*, 46 (2006), 96-107 (p. 96).

critique is based on numerous comparisons with animals to demonstrate that faculties such as reason or emotion are not exclusive to humankind. Montaigne's sceptic inquiry thereby reveals his perceptions of animals and interspecies relationships to the reader. He employs *exempla* to support his opinions about animal nature, although he does not definitively impose any single interpretation. My analysis scrutinises how Montaigne utilises such strategies to establish his perception of animals as beings who are both intimately connected with and distinct from humans and whose experiences may even remain incomprehensible.

It might be objected, however, that Montaigne restricts the possibilities for interspecies connection if animals' experiences remain uncertain or beyond human comprehension. His works consequently raise significant questions concerning interspecies communication, animal response and comprehension. I explore such questions in the second section and propose that Montaigne elaborates a reflexive practice of reading which I term empathetical speculation. His method attunes the reader to animals' communicative gestures and their potential meanings through interpreting them with empathy. It calls on the reader to identify with the animal in question and to imaginatively project their possible internal experiences and emotions based on what can be inferred from their outward gestures. Such a practice enables the reader to obtain partial and provisional knowledge, even though this can only remain speculative in nature. Despite its uncertainty, Montaigne's empathetical speculation foregrounds how such knowledge can inform our emotional and practical responses to other animals, especially where this calls for various acts of care.

I ultimately demonstrate that Montaigne elaborates a distinct form of scepticism that is connected with his consideration of the "animal question". In doing so, he establishes significant interspecies connections and draws the reader's attention to the importance of humans' mutual relationships with animals. At the same time, he consistently respects animal specificity and alterity. His thought advances from a place of doubt which resists imposing definitive, anthropomorphic or anthropocentric interpretations onto animals. Montaigne alternatively elaborates a practice of reading - grounded in corporeal gestures - which informs human interactions with animals and which is intertwined with a multi-faceted concept of care.

Through employing rhetorical and reflexive strategies, Montaigne attunes his reader to the possibilities of interspecies connections, animal nature and care.

2.1 Shifting Worlds: Scepticism, Animals and Interspecies Connections

Montaigne's perceptions of the world and animal-human connections intersect with his scepticism in the *Essais*. He resists dogmatically asserting his own judgements and opinions, nor does he explicitly attempt to establish a philosophical doctrine. Such sceptic tenets of his thought converge in the *Apologie de Raymond Sebond,* which was purportedly written in defence of Sebond's *Theologia Naturalis* (1434 - 1436).[9] Raymond Sebond (c.1385 - 1436) was a Renaissance scholar from Catalonia. His *Theologia* maintained that humans could discover the truth about themselves and God through applying their power of reason to the two 'books' of His creation, which comprised the Bible and Nature.[10] Sebond proposed that humans were superior to animals due to their unique faculties such as reason, which he considered marks of God's preference and purpose.[11]

Montaigne translated the *Theologia* into French in 1569 - supposedly on the request of his dying father - and Sebond's work later became the subject of the *Apologie*.[12] For many readers, Montaigne's defence appears rather questionable; he contradicts several of Sebond's basic premises, two of which are of prime interest here.[13] Montaigne firstly adopts the position of a sceptic and challenges the ability of human reason to offer true and certain knowledge. He undermines Sebond's claim that reason is an adequate basis for (Catholic) faith and human

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[9] Richard Popkin, *The History of Scepticism: From Savonarole to Bayle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 47.

[10] Mireille Habert, *Montaigne, traducteur de la Théologie Naturelle. Plaisantes et sainctes imaginations* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2010), p. 21. Ann Hartle, *Montaigne and the Origins of Modern Philosophy* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2013), p. 40.

[11] Craig Brush, *Montaigne and Bayle: Variations on the Theme of Scepticism* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966), p. 64. Raymond Sebond, *La Théologie Naturelle de Raymond Sebon, traduicte nouvellement en français par messire Michel, Seigneur de Montaigne, Chevalier de l'ordre du Roy, & Gentil-homme ordinaire de sa chambre* (Paris: Guillaume Chaudière, 1581), pp. 6-7.

[12] Hartle, *Montaigne,* p. 36.

[13] Brush, *Montaigne and Bayle,* p. 66 and p. 72.

knowledge of God. Montaigne secondly opposes Sebond's premise of human specificity and superiority by resituating humanity within the wider realm of creation.[14] Whilst his defence of the *Theologia* is rather paradoxical, then, Montaigne's *Apologie* both evinces his scepticism and contains his most sustained examination of the "animal question" in the *Essais*. Such convergence suggests that his scepticism is intrinsically connected with his perceptions of animal nature and interspecies relationships.

We might here pause to question what it meant for Montaigne to be a sceptic at this time and how this informed his views on the possibility of human knowledge. Gianni Paganini and José R. Maia Neto propose that there can be no fixed or static definition of scepticism, given that various forms arose and evolved from diverse philosophical, religious and cultural contexts in early modern Europe.[15] Despite such variations, scepticism in early modern Europe primarily drew upon two ancient schools of thought: Academic scepticism and Pyrrhonian scepticism. Both schools pursued the most probable explanations of phenomena through a process of argument and counter-argument, but they assumed different stances on the nature of truth.[16] Academic sceptics maintained that true and certain knowledge lay beyond human comprehension, although there remained degrees of possibility and plausibility upon which we could construct our beliefs. Pyrrhonian sceptics, by contrast, contended that it was still possible to uncover the truth of things and so continued to pursue knowledge. They nevertheless accepted that human perception could be illusory and contradictory. If presented with equally likely contradictions, they chose to suspend judgement. It is in this regard that Pyrrhonism claimed to be a practical way of life, for it required active inquiry in the hope of leading to *eudaimonia* (human flourishing).[17] Both branches of scepticism exerted an influence on

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[14] Villey, *Les Essais*, p. 70.

[15] Paganini and Neto, *Renaissance Scepticisms*, p. 7.

[16] Lorenzo Casini, 'Self-Knowledge, Scepticism and the Quest for a New Method: Juan Luis Vives on Cognition and the Impossibility of Perfect Knowledge', in *Renaissance Scepticisms,* ed. by Gianni Paganini and José R. Maia Neto (Dordrecht: Springer, 2009), pp. 33-60 (p. 40).

[17] David R. Hiley, 'The Politics of Skepticism: Reading Montaigne', *History of Philosophy Quarterly,* 9 (1992), 379-399 (p. 383). Gisela Striker, *Essays on Hellenistic Epistemology and Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 193.

philosophical thought in early modern Europe, although thinkers did not overly distinguish between the Academic and Pyrrhonian schools.

Over the last century, scholars have proposed diverse intellectual histories of scepticism(s) in early modern Europe and in Montaigne's work. Pierre Villey examined the chronology of the *Essais* and claimed to have identified the particular influences upon Montaigne at the time of each essay's composition. Villey thereby stratified the *Essais* into different layers of intellectual influence, including periods when Montaigne was much inspired by Stoic, sceptical or Epicurean thought. According to Villey's stratification, the *Apologie* was written at the height of Montaigne's engagement with Pyrrhonian scepticism, following the contemporaneous rediscovery and translation of the works of Sextus Empiricus (c.160 AD - c.210 AD). Richard Popkin later perpetuated the view of Montaigne as a predominantly Pyrrhonian sceptic in his study of the humanist revival of scepticism in early modern Europe. He situates Montaigne as a central figure in this 16th century revival of ancient scepticism.[18] Popkin identifies the period between 1572 and 1576 - the time of the *Apologie's* composition - as a heightened 'crise pyrrhonienne' during which Montaigne was heavily influenced by the writings of Sextus Empiricus.[19]

In recent years, however, Popkin's study has faced growing criticism. Emmanuel Naya argues that Popkin's approach reduces the rediscovery of scepticism in the 16th century to the rediscovery of Sextus Empiricus; Popkin thereby fails to take account of the internal diversity of 16th century scepticism, which was far from a unified intellectual movement.[20] Naya and André Tournon alternatively regard early modern scepticism as a complex phenomenon which comprised 'a specific philosophical process linked to a specific ethical doctrine'.[21] Thinkers during the 16th century accumulated and incorporated diverse fragments of ancient texts into their own works.[22] They did not consider scepticism as the purview of ancient thinkers alone,

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[18] Popkin, *History of Scepticism*, p. 44.

[19] Ibid, p. 47.

[20] Emmanuel Naya, 'Renaissance Pyrrhonism: A Relative Phenomenon', in *Renaissance Scepticisms*, ed. by Gianni Paganini and José R. Maia Neto (Dordrecht: Springer, 2009), pp. 15-32 (pp. 17-18 and p. 23).

[21] Naya, 'Renaissance Pyrrhonism', p. 19.

[22] Ibid, p. 20.

but instead employed it as an intellectual tool with modern applications.[23] Tournon regards Montaigne as one such thinker who pursued scepticism as a form of intellectual questing in his inquiry for truth, given that he was suspicious of the 'dogmas and ideological postulates' within his own culture.[24] Naya and Tournon emphasise how Montaigne subsequently subjects his thought to a self-reflexive critique in the *Essais* to arrive at his own judgements.[25] He is cognisant that a suspension of judgement and questioning of assumptions are the beginning, rather than an end-point, of his inquiry.[26] In the *Essais*, then, Montaigne's sceptical inquiry constitutes an ongoing philosophical and intellectual process. In my view, it would be reductive to categorise Montaigne's scepticism within one school of thought alone, as Villey and Popkin have a tendency to do. Montaigne's sceptical inquiry is more akin to an intellectual questing concerned with the limits of human comprehension; the *Essais* explore what, how or even whether we can know with certainty.

Throughout the *Apologie*, Montaigne persistently questions the perceived limits of human reason and various other core faculties. He claims that - despite the 'faiblesse de leur raison' - presumptuousness has led humans to deceive themselves regarding the extent and certainty of their knowledge:

> [...] de toutes les vanités, la plus vaine c'est l'homme ; que l'homme qui présume de son savoir, ne sait pas encore que c'est que savoir, et que l'homme, qui n'est rien, s'il pense être quelque chose, se séduit soi-même et se trompe?[27]

Montaigne proposes that humans have vainly assumed their knowledge to be certain and infallible. He even doubts whether humans are truly what they believe themselves to be or whether vanity has once more deceived them. Such human presumption is problematic on two accounts for Montaigne. Firstly, it lies in opposition to the ontological and epistemological uncertainty he identifies in questioning the scope of human reason. As such, presumption can

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[23] Naya, 'Renaissance Pyrrhonism', p. 22 and p. 31.

[24] André Tournon, 'Self-Interpretation in Montaigne's *Essais*', *Yale French Studies*, 64 (1983), 51-72 (p. 52).

[25] Naya, 'Renaissance Pyrrhonism', p. 28. Tournon, 'Self-Interpretation', p. 52 and p. 62.

[26] Naya, 'Renaissance Pyrrhonism', p. 30.

[27] Michel de Montaigne, *Apologie de Raymond Sebond* (Paris: GF Flammarion, 2005), p. 56.

lead humans to erroneously believe they know things as true and certain which in fact they do not or cannot know. The second issue lies in the impact of vanity on humans' relationships to and with other animal and human beings. Montaigne suggests that presumptuousness has altered humans' perceptions of themselves and other beings and has disturbed their relationships with animals specifically. Vanity has contributed to a doctrine of specificity and superiority through which humans purport to separate themselves from 'la presse des autres créatures' on the (erroneous) assumption that they possess certain advantages over animals.[28]

It is through 'la presse' – this swarm of beings – that we first encounter Montaigne's vision of interspecies relationships. The word 'presse' suggests more than mere cohabitation. It calls to mind a multitude or swarm of beings who coexist and shape one another. Montaigne's sceptic arguments against human reason and vanity occur within the context of such an interspecies realm in the *Apologie*. The animal-human connections he envisages lend themselves to comparisons through which he challenges the presumed exclusivity of reason and other faculties to humans:

> Considérons donc pour cette heure l'homme seul [...] Qu'il me fasse entendre par l'effort de son discours, sur quels fondements il a bâti ces grands avantages qu'il pense avoir sur les autres créatures. Qui lui a persuadé que ce branle admirable de la voûte céleste, la lumière éternelle de ces flambeaux roulant si fièrement sur sa tête, les mouvements épouvantables de cette mer infinie, soient établis et se continuent tant de siècles pour sa commodité et pour son service?[29]

Montaigne examines what has led humans to vainly believe that they possess any 'grands avantages' over other creatures or that the world has been created solely 'pour sa commodité et pour son service'. The verb 'penser' casts doubt both upon the certainty or exclusivity of such 'avantages' and upon the faculty of reason itself. It implicitly questions whether these are actual and verifiable advantages which can be deduced via human reason or whether they are simply illusory marks of superiority which arise from human presumption. Montaigne implies that such 'avantages' are human constructs which *may* be true, but which may equally be illusions of human vanity.

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[28] Montaigne, *Apologie*, p. 61.
[29] Montaigne, *Apologie*, p. 57.

Montaigne proceeds to emphasise that such presumptuousness bears consequences for the other animals with whom we share our lives. In his view, vanity leads humans down blind alleys, especially if they believe or claim things that in reality they might not and cannot know. With regards to animals, such assumptions erect a false dichotomy which separates humans from the remainder of living creatures. Montaigne, by contrast, opposes this questionable human exceptionalism and reestablishes the contiguity of animals and humans through the interspecies connections he identifies.

Pierre Villey, Philippe Desan and Craig Brush have studied Montaigne's opposition to human exceptionalism. Their analyses reveal how his scepticism destabilises human reason and limits its ability to offer true and certain knowledge.[30] Yet Villey, Desan and Brush's accounts obscure an equally significant factor in the *Apologie*. They overlook how Montaigne's view of the world as an interspecies realm of perpetual flux converges with his scepticism to challenge human presumption, specificity and superiority. Where the *Apologie* has featured in their analyses, they largely focus on the later sections in which Montaigne's scepticism and attack on human reason approach their conclusion. The opening section – in which he establishes significant animal-human connections – has received comparatively little attention or is seen at most as a preamble to his later arguments. Craig Brush cursorily treats Montaigne's discussion of animals and humans in this manner. He argues that the purpose of the opening section is simply to introduce themes which Montaigne treats more seriously and with greater force in subsequent sections of the *Apologie*.[31]

If Montaigne's scepticism is considered in conjunction with his thought on animals, the *Apologie's* opening sections assume renewed significance. Montaigne here outlines the framework of interspecies connections through which he brings the exclusivity of human reason and its claims to ontological certainty into question. There are various argumentative strategies which he could employ to draw interspecies comparisons and thereby challenge human

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[30] Brush, *Montaigne and Bayle*, p. 71. Philippe Desan, *Montaigne: Les formes du monde et de l'esprit* (Paris: Presses de l'Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2008), p. 12. Villey, *Les Essais*, p. 69.

[31] Brush, *Montaigne and Bayle*, p. 77.

specificity and superiority. One possible approach would be to detract from humans' abilities and so draw them down a hierarchy to the presumed inferior level of animals. There are, however, significant issues with such a strategy of detraction. It would firstly be counter-intuitive for Montaigne to degrade humans in such a manner, given that he seeks to challenge this very hierarchy of human superiority and animal inferiority. The strategy of detraction further lacks concern or empathy for animals and humans alike. Not only does it assume that animals are inferior to their human counterparts, it also detracts from humans' unique abilities. It would therefore be problematic for Montaigne to adopt this strategy of detraction, as it perpetuates the very model of human superiority that he opposes.

An alternative argumentative strategy would be to accept the faculties attributed to humans – such as reason, language or self-consciousness – but to oppose their presumed exclusivity. Such an approach places animals and humans in parity based on their shared capacities. Whilst there may still be species or individual specificities, these are now differences of degree or form rather than kind. Such a strategy of comparison does not necessarily rest upon a hierarchical structure, but reorients our attention towards shared interspecies connections. The comparative approach is arguably more benevolent in this regard, for it does not detract from either animals or humans. It acknowledges significant similarities between them, whilst still respecting their specificity and alterity.

Montaigne adopts such a comparative strategy in the *Apologie* and, in doing so, reorients his reader's attention towards humans' shared connections with animals:

> J'ai dit tout ceci pour maintenir cette ressemblance qu'il y a aux choses humaines, et pour nous ramener et joindre au nombre. Nous ne sommes ni au-dessus, ni au-dessous du reste: tout ce qui est sous le Ciel, dit le sage, court une loi et fortune pareille [...] Il y a quelque différence, il y a des ordres et des degrés; mais c'est sous le visage d'une même nature.[32]

Montaigne employs interspecies connections to resituate humans within the wider realm of creation and his animal-human comparisons no longer rest upon a logic of human

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[32] George Boas, *The Happy Beast in French Thought of the Seventeenth Century* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1933), p. 9. Montaigne, *Apologie,* p. 70.

exceptionalism. He asserts that - although there may be fundamental differences between them - all creatures existing 'sous le Ciel' share a common nature. His envisaged interspecies connections in the *Apologie* are noteworthy in two regards. Firstly, Montaigne does not perpetuate a problematic hierarchical framework of human superiority. He alternatively perceives animals and humans as existing 'ni au-dessus, ni au-dessous' one another, but in contiguity and parity. Secondly, he portrays his interspecies realm as one of 'fluxion [flux], muance [mouvement] et variation perpétuelle' where there is little consistency.[33] Such constant variation of life is woven into the very fabric of the *Essais* and also reflects Montaigne as a subject in constant motion.[34]

Montaigne's interspecies 'presse' nevertheless raises the question of how, or in what manners, he perceives animals and humans to be connected. He considers numerous shared commonalities throughout the *Apologie*, many of which pertain to the faculties he deems animals and humans to possess based on observations of their behaviour. These include certain capacities which had previously been held as specific to humanity. In his consideration of reason, for instance, Montaigne addresses the argument that animals act purely by instinct or some form of 'inclination naturelle'. He cites the similarities he observes between animal and human behaviour to counter such claims:

> Je dis donc, pour revenir à mon propos, qu'il n'y a point d'apparence d'estimer que les bêtes fassent par inclination naturelle et forcée les mêmes choses que nous faisons par notre choix et industrie. Nous devons conclure de pareils effets pareilles facultés, et confesser par conséquent que ce même discours, cette même voie, que nous tenons à ouvrir, c'est aussi celle des animaux.[35]

Montaigne's perception of animal faculties is grounded in his observation of their actions and an argument from analogy. In the above case of reason, he contemplates the correlation between animals' external behaviours and human actions conducted through 'notre choix et industrie'. He subsequently asserts that 'nous devons conclure de pareils effets pareilles facultés'; given the observable similarity between animal behaviours and reasoned human actions, it is probable

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[33] Montaigne, *Apologie*, p. 276.

[34] Jeanneret, *Perpetual Motion*, p. 274.

[35] Montaigne, *Apologie*, p. 71.

that animals also possess 'ce même discours'. Montaigne interprets various animal gestures in such a manner to propose that they likely possess many of the same faculties as humans, thereby opposing claims of specificity and superiority.

Montaigne's animal-human analogies comprise a distinct practice of reading, or interpretation, in the *Apologie*. He draws some of his evidence of animal behaviour from his own and others' recorded encounters. More frequently, though, Montaigne cites classical *exempla* which discuss animals' actions and interspecies relationships. The practice of *exemplarité,* which was popular in early modern France, entailed referring to and commenting on passages from Greek or Roman works in one's own writing.[36] Montaigne was not uncritical of this prevailing scholastic practice. He denounced schoolmasters who simply instructed their students to utilise existing *exempla* without developing their own ideas from them.[37] Yet writing completely outside of this tradition remained inconceivable in intellectual spheres in sixteenth-century France. Montaigne accordingly treads a distinct path in relation to such *exempla* in his *Essais.* He draws upon classical works – sometimes citing his source, though often not – whilst critically reinterpreting them for his own argumentative ends.[38] His readings of *exempla* on animal behaviours thus reinforce the numerous and diverse interspecies connections he envisages. It would be difficult to capture all such connections within the limited scope of the present chapter. Three salient shared faculties nevertheless emerge in the *Apologie,* which are worthy of closer examination: reason, emotion and communication.

Montaigne draws on one account of the inhabitants of Thrace, who were attempting to safely cross a frozen river, to support his view that animals are capable of reasoned thought. The villagers released a fox before them, from whose actions they could assess the thickness and relative risk of the ice:

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[36] Michel Jeanneret, 'The Vagaries of Exemplarity: Distortion or Dismissal?', *Journal of the History of Ideas,* 59 (1998), 565-579 (p. 574). John D. Lyons, *Exemplum: The Rhetoric of Example in Early Modern France and Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 8-9.

[37] Jeanneret, *Perpetual Motion*, pp. 254-255.

[38] Jeanneret, 'Vagaries of Exemplarity', p. 577.

[...] le renard, de quoi se servent les habitants de la Thrace quand ils veulent entreprendre de passer par-dessus la glace quelque rivière gelée et le lâchent devant eux pour cet effet, quand nous le verrions au bord de l'eau approcher son oreille bien près de la glace, pour sentir s'il orra [entendre] d'une longue ou d'une voisine distance bruire l'eau courant au-dessous, et selon qu'il trouve par là qu'il y a plus ou moins d'épaisseur en la glace, se reculer ou s'avancer, n'aurions-nous pas raison de juger qu'il lui passe par la tête ce même discours qu'il ferait en la notre.[39]

The villagers of Thrace - and Montaigne - contemplate the fox's actions of listening to the flow of water, assessing the depth and safety of the ice and subsequently deciding whether to cross or withdraw from the river. Montaigne interprets such a chain of actions as a vulpine display of rational deliberation, comparable to that which a human might make in considering the safety of the frozen river. Given such comparability, he asserts that 'ce même discours [raisonnement]' occurs within the fox's mind and that he accordingly possesses some form of reason.

Montaigne makes a similar deduction from the tale of a dog at a three-way crossroads, taken from Sextus Empiricus' *Hypotyposes pyrrhoniennes*. The canine appears to deliberate which road to take, moving between the options before him:

[...] considérant les mouvements du chien qui, se rencontrant en un carrefour à trois chemins, ou à la quête de son maître qu'il a égaré, ou à la poursuite de quelque proie qui fuit devant lui, va essayant l'un chemin après l'autre, et, après s'être assuré des deux et n'y avoir trouvé la trace de ce qu'il cherche, s'élance dans le troisième sans marchander [hésiter], il est contraint de confesser qu'en ce chien-là un tel discours [raisonnement] se passe: « J'ai suivi jusques a ce carrefour mon maître à la trace; il faut nécessairement qu'il passe par l'un de ces trois chemins; ce n'est ni par celui-ci, ni par celui-là; il faut donc infailliblement qu'il passe par cet autre »; et que, s'assurant par cette conclusion et discours, il ne se sert plus de son sentiment au troisième chemin, ni ne le sonde plus, ains [mais] s'y laisse emporter par la force de la raison.[40]

Montaigne recounts how the dog investigates each of the routes available and imaginatively projects his potential reasoning process. Having not discovered any trace along the first two

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[39] Montaigne, *Apologie,* p. 72.

[40] Montaigne, *Apologie*, p. 76.

roads, the dog deduces through his 'raisonnement' that his human companion must have travelled down the third and final path, the one upon which he then embarks. Montaigne carefully considers the dog's outward behaviours and once again compares them to those which humans may make in undertaking a similar deliberation. He concludes that the canine most likely came to his decision 'par la force de la raison' in a similar manner to how a human might. In his discussions of the fox and the dog, then, Montaigne implies that where animals' observable actions are comparable to those of humans, they should be attributed to the same cause: in this instance, both animals and humans appear to share forms of rational deliberation. Montaigne thereby advances his project of challenging human presumption and specificity by resituating humanity within a wider set of species that are capable of reason.

Beyond reason, Montaigne maintains that animals and humans share a capacity for emotional states. Examples of animal emotion proliferate throughout the *Apologie* and range from anger and fear to joy, love, guilt and affection. Montaigne employs *exempla* to support his views, such as in the case of two grieving dogs which he cites:

> Hircanus, le chien du roi Lisimachus, son maître mort, demeura obstiné sur son lit sans vouloir boire ni manger; et le jour qu'on en brûla le corps, il prit sa course et se jeta dans le feu, où il fut brûlé. Comme fit aussi le chien d'un nommé Pyrrhus, car il ne bougea de dessus le lit de son maître depuis qu'il fut mort; et, quand on l'emporta, il se laissa enlever quant et lui, et finalement se lança dans le bûcher où on brûlait le corps de son maître.[41]

Both Hircanus and the dog of Pyrrhus refuse to leave their deceased human companions and even follow the funeral processions before jumping onto the pyres. Montaigne interprets such actions as signs of the canines' deep 'amitié', 'sympathie' and 'affection' for their human counterparts. He perceives their ultimate act of perishing alongside their companions as an expression of the dogs' extreme grief and mourning. Montaigne's approach to reading - and reinterpreting - classical *exempla* ultimately emerges through his discussion of the fox, the dog at the crossroads and the two grieving canines outlined above. He reframes such accounts, incorporates them into his own discussion and speculates on the potential and most probable

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[41] Montaigne, *Apologie*, p. 87.

meanings of the animal behaviours they present. He critically reads such *exempla* alongside his personal reflections and so subtly moulds them to support his own perceptions of animal reason or emotion.

Montaigne's speculative interpretations of reason or emotion suggest that he does not definitively attribute such faculties to animals, as has often been assumed. Nor should he be charged with anthropomorphism, as he does not impose human forms of such faculties onto diverse animal species. Montaigne's resistance to anthropomorphism can be seen in his approach to animals' potential emotional states and his interpretation of canine grief above; although the animals may demonstrate comparable emotions to humans, they do not necessarily experience or express them in the same manner. The two dogs feel a similar sorrow to humans following the loss of a loved one, but they convey this in a distinct canine manner. Whilst humans may grieve through organised practices of mourning, Montaigne interprets the dogs' actions of throwing themselves onto the burning pyres as a specific expression of their canine grief. Such careful speculation on animal behaviours is at the same time integral to Montaigne's scepticism. He implicitly challenges the reliability of human knowledge in leaving open the possibility of how much can be known about animal nature and experience. To definitively attribute a certain faculty or form thereof to animals – and potentially anthropomorphise them in the process – would undermine his core project.

A final salient shared faculty lies in animals' probable ability to communicate. There are numerous instances of animal communication in the *Apologie*, such as in one account drawn from Plutarch. Montaigne considers the apparent communication amongst a colony of ants based on their observable actions. The insects appear to converse in undertaking various communal tasks:

> Il vit, dit-il, des fourmis partir de leur fourmilière portant le corps d'un fourmi mort vers une autre fourmilière, de laquelle plusieurs autres fourmis leur vinrent au devant, comme pour parler à eux; et, après avoir été ensemble quelque pièce [temps], ceux-ci s'en retournèrent pour consulter, pensez, avec leurs concitoyens, et firent ainsi deux ou trois voyages pour la difficulté de la capitulation [...] Voilà l'interprétation que Cléanthe y donne, témoignant par là que celles qui

n'ont point de voix, ne laissent pas d'avoir pratique et communication mutuelle, de laquelle c'est notre défaut que nous ne soyons participants.[42]

The passage details how individuals from different anthills assemble, carrying their deceased 'concitoyens', as if to converse ('comme pour parler'). Following the interpretation of Cléanthe, Montaigne proposes that the ants' highly regimented and collaborative behaviour attests to ('témoigner') the possibility that they possess a 'pratique et communication mutuelle'. The ants' communicative ability is significant on two accounts. Montaigne firstly regards the insects as capable of mutual communication, even though this may not occur through the same form of oral or linguistic communication ('voix') as humans. Nor is the ants' communicative system necessarily apparent to us and may even lie beyond human comprehension altogether. Montaigne's reading acknowledges that - although animals and humans share significant connections - there remain essential differences between them, such as their respective forms of communication. He takes account of animal specificity and alterity, as he considers the ants to possess a unique means of communication which remains incomprehensible to humans.

The second noteworthy point lies in the verb 'témoigner', meaning to demonstrate ('faire voir'), discover, attest to or witness.[43] The ants' corporeal actions demonstrate a possible communicative ability to which Montaigne and we as readers bear witness. Speculation, practices of reading and care crucially begin to converge in this act of witnessing. Montaigne's observations of animal behaviour stem from an interest in other beings and an underlying assumption that they are deserving of our interest, concern and care. His subsequent attempt to comprehend their actions rests upon careful and meticulous observation. Such attention is careful both in terms of paying close attention to the ants' specific corporeal gestures and in speculatively or cautiously comparing them to his own human experiences.[44] Montaigne's reading of *exempla* emphasises the importance of care in observing and speculating on animals' possible natures and intersects with his scepticism. His focus on observable evidence implicitly reminds the reader of the limits of human sight in both a physical and a more abstract sense. We

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[42] Montaigne, *Apologie*, p. 83.

[43] Richelet, *Dictionnaire françois,* entries for 'témoin', 'témoignage' and 'témoigner'.

[44] The concept of care within Montaigne's thought and the forms of care he envisages are discussed in greater depth in section 2.2 below.

are restricted to what we can physically see of animal behaviour, but we are also bound to the phenomenological experience of being human. The *Apologie* reminds us that we will only ever be external observers who can at best speculate on animal experience. In his interpretations of *exempla*, then, Montaigne does not attribute faculties to animals with absolute certainty. He either speculates on such possibilities through posing questions or presents evidence from which his readers are encouraged to infer their own conclusions.

With regards to humans' limited perspective, Montaigne returns to his sceptic project and questions whether we can ever comprehend animal nature in its entirety or with certainty. He considers a playful interaction with his own cat to serve as an example:

> Comment connaît-il [l'homme], par l'effort de son intelligence, les branles [mouvements] internes et secrets des animaux? [...] Quand je me joue à ma chatte, qui sait si elle passe son temps de moi plus que je ne sais d'elle?[45]

Montaigne's rhetorical questions imply that humans cannot know animals' phenomenological experiences with any certainty despite the 'effort de son intelligence' and reason. His infamous encounter with his cat emphasises such incomprehensibility. In the process of playing with his feline companion, Montaigne questions what her experience may be like. Does she also perceive their shared encounter as play and derive enjoyment from it? Or does she experience their interaction in a different manner altogether? Montaigne is essentially raising the question of who is playing with whom. He concludes that there is no definitive answer here, as he cannot be sure of the cat's perceptions or internal experiences, regardless of their shared affectionate relationship. His speculation and ultimate refusal to posit definitive judgements on animal nature are therefore intimately connected with his continual sceptic questioning of the limits of human knowledge.

Montaigne's scepticism and speculation persist in the second core aspect of his interspecies realm identified above: its state of perpetual motion. We have already seen that there can be little certainty in this world where everything is constantly changing. Yet such perpetual motion

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[45] Montaigne, *Apologie*, p. 61.

poses a critical issue: how are we, as scholars, to respond to such inconsistency or capture the fluid developments of Montaigne's ideas? The work of Pierre Villey has long influenced scholarship in this vein. Villey attempts to resolve the inconsistencies of the *Essais* through recourse to their chronological composition.[46] Through identifying when each essay was likely composed, he purports to distinguish various layers of meaning and influence within Montaigne's works at distinct temporal moments.

Villey's chronological stratification nevertheless risks imposing an artificial structure and coherence upon Montaigne's thought, which is inconsistent by nature. Michel Jeanneret has more recently sought to embrace such fluctuations as an integral part of the *Essais*. Jeanneret argues that a conceptualisation of the world as a realm of constant transformation was prominent during the period in which Montaigne was writing.[47] Humans were perceived as existing among a sphere of terrestrial beings, all of whom were subject to such flux. Jeanneret consequently reads the *Essais* as an attempt to capture such perpetual motion. The inconsistencies and seemingly wandering thoughts of Montaigne's oeuvre reflect the constant transformation of the human subject.[48] Through his reticence to assert definitive judgements, Montaigne constructs a space of uncertainty and inconsistency. The reader is encouraged to actively engage in this transformative process by interpreting Montaigne's ideas anew; through these acts of reading, the *Essais* themselves are perpetually changing akin to a living organism.[49]

Jeanneret's reading crucially acknowledges that the fluctuations of Montaigne's work mirror the processes of becoming which the human subject undergoes. Humans are not, however, alone in experiencing such constant flux in Montaigne's *Essais* or in the early modern worldview. Jeanneret's interpretation thus risks isolating the human subject in motion. By contrast, Montaigne's fluctuating world remains an interspecies realm in which all beings - and the relationships between them - are continually changing. I shall therefore follow Jeanneret's lead

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[46] Brush, *Montaigne and Bayle*, p. 35.

[47] Jeanneret, *Perpetual Motion*, pp. 1-2.

[48] Ibid, p. 236.

[49] Jeanneret, *Perpetual Motion*, p. 257.

and embrace the inconsistency of Montaigne's work, whilst also extending this to his perceptions of animals and interspecies connections.

Montaigne's mutable interspecies connections both generate another level of uncertainty and ontological instability within the *Essais* and reflect the inconsistency of animal life and animal-human encounters. The shared interspecies faculties that Montaigne envisages are in perpetual flux. Both animal and human languages, for instance, are continually evolving and pose innumerable possibilities for communication or incomprehension. Other forms of interspecies connections - such as bonds of mutual dependency or of care, affection, empathy and love - are also subject to transformation. Montaigne's *Essais* consequently reveal that humans' relationships with animals, and their ideas on animal nature, are far from static.

The instability of the *Essais*, the world and interspecies connections once more intersect with Montaigne's scepticism. His continually shifting world contributes to the destabilisation of human reason and knowledge, as it becomes doubtful whether we can deduce anything with certainty from one moment to the next. The ontological status of humans is similarly cast into doubt, given that there are no static or certain categories in Montaigne's *Essais*. Humanity and other living beings now emerge as radically unstable on account of the 'variation perpétuelle' of existence.[50] Despite the fluidity and instability of this world, though, Montaigne still believes that humans can and ought to pursue knowledge. As he models in the *Apologie*, it is possible to obtain some fragmentary and speculative understanding, provided that we acknowledge human limitations. His scepticism entails more than simply questioning human presumption or its claims to ontological certainty. It reveals interspecies connections and their very inconsistency, the inescapable exteriority of the human observer and the incomprehensibility of many aspects of animal life.

Montaigne's interspecies connections and his scepticism pose a critical dilemma, though: if humans cannot know anything about animals' experiences for certain, how are they to interact with or act towards them? On one hand, Montaigne actively believes that animals and humans

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[50] Montaigne, *Apologie*, p. 276.

have significant faculties in common, even if he cannot definitively claim as much. Such interspecies connections serve as a basis for speculation, as seen in the examples cited above. On the other hand, Montaigne respects animal specificity and alterity and recognises that their experience is distinct and often beyond human comprehension. Humans' limited ability to decipher animals' corporeal actions risks restricting their potential for interspecies communication and relationships. Such limitations in turn pose issues for humans' ability to act appropriately towards animals, especially where this concerns a suitable moral response.

Montaigne does not leave such significant questions unaddressed. We have already begun to examine how he pursues speculative knowledge of animals in the *Apologie* through a process of observation and interpretation. Montaigne equally recognises that humans cannot simply cease to act or step back from participating in relationships with animals, even in the face of uncertainty. In the interspecies realm he envisages, our actions inevitably carry consequences for the other beings with whom our lives are intertwined. For Montaigne, then, such relationships call on humans to engage with others and to consider the potential beneficial or inimical impacts of their actions. We have already touched on his underlying assumption that animals are beings to whom humans ought to carefully attend and to whom we ought to become attuned. Such consideration brings us back to the question of how humans ought to act towards, or care for, animals in the face of doubt. Montaigne responds to such contentions by pursuing empathetical and speculative interpretations of animals' corporeal gestures. His empathetical speculation is intrinsically connected with a practical response of care about and for the animals with whom we interact and so reveals the possibilities of care within his *Essais*.

2.2 Finding Paths Forward: Empathetical Speculation and Care

In response to the incomprehensibility of animal life, Montaigne elaborates a form of reading that I term empathetical speculation. It advances from the assumption that significant interspecies connections can offer insight into animal life. Empathetical speculation pursues partial and provisional knowledge of animal experience and comprises three principal stages. Firstly, Montaigne carefully observes an animal's corporeal actions and gestures, as we began to

see in the examples cited above. He then reads such gestures reflexively, drawing empathetical comparisons with his own human experiences or emotions, and subsequently infers their potential meanings. Lastly, Montaigne's method requires the reader to act on their speculative interpretations and respond to the animal with care, whether in terms of caution and close attention, an emotional response or through practical acts of care. I shall begin by considering the mechanisms and assumptions underlying Montaigne's empathetical speculation, before examining various instances within his texts and how they attune his reader to the possibilities of care.

We might, however, pause to ask what the terms 'empathy' and 'speculation' mean with regards to Montaigne's practice of reading. We have already encountered his speculative approach to epistemological and ontological questions in the previous section. In contemplating the possibilities of animal nature, Montaigne proceeds without presumption or preconceived notions. He does not assume that humans can know or comprehend animal experience in its entirety. His speculation accordingly pursues the most probable explanations of animal nature based upon careful observation of their behaviours and his subsequent deliberation.

Turning to the second term, empathy - in its present-day usage - is a deeply interdisciplinary concept with numerous definitions; I shall here focus on its epistemic and phenomenological dimensions. As an epistemic means of obtaining knowledge of other beings, empathy has predominantly been conceived as a cognitive, affective and imaginative process. We come to simulate another's mental states through this process and experience an emotional response to their situation, whilst still differentiating between self and other.[51] Such empathetical processes begin with the observation of another's corporeal gestures, which the subject recognises as

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[51] C. Daniel Batson, 'These Things called Empathy: Eight Related but Distinct Phenomena', in *The Social Neuroscience of Empathy*, ed. by Jean Decety and William John Ickes, Social Neuroscience Series, ed. by John T. Cacioppo and Gary G. Berntson, 6 vols (Cambridge, MA & London: The MIT Press, 2002-2011), V (2009), pp. 3-15 (p. 5). Amy Coplan, 'Understanding Empathy: Its Features and Effects', in *Empathy: Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives*, ed. by Amy Coplan and Peter Goldie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 3-18 (pp. 5-6). Stephen Darwall, 'Empathy, Sympathy, Care', *Philosophical Studies*, 89 (1998), 261-282 (p. 263). Martin L. Hoffman, *Empathy and Moral Development: Implications for Caring and Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 4. Tania Singer and Claus Lamm, 'The Social Neuroscience of Empathy', *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1156 (2009), 81-96 (p. 82).

bearing similarities to their own. The subject then imaginatively projects the other's potential conscious, sensory and emotional experiences based on their interpretation of such corporeal gestures. Empathy enables the subject to gain knowledge of others' experiences and connect emotionally with this other. As such, it is often intrinsically connected with concern for another and can lead the subject to care about or for their well-being.

In the sense outlined above, empathy is a relatively modern concept which has gained currency in ethics, epistemology and behavioural sciences since the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Prior to this, early modern thinkers such as Montaigne would have typically used 'sympathie' (sympathy) to refer to empathy-related phenomena. Furetière defines 'sympathie' as a sharing of 'qualités naturelles, d'humeurs, ou de tempérament', capturing the kind of empathetical resonance or imitation central to the modern definitions outlined above.[52] Sympathy has since come to denote a more detached recognition of another's experience or suffering and does not require the subject to imaginatively share in the other's emotions.[53] This does not, however, reflect Montaigne's method of reading, which entails a more imaginative identification with the other's experience and emotional states. Although potentially anachronistic, then, I use 'empathy' for heuristic purposes to capture the epistemic and phenomenological process at work in Montaigne's practice of reading.

Montaigne's empathetical speculation is therefore a way of interpreting physical gestures in our interactions with animals, but can equally apply to written or literary accounts. Within both contexts, animals' corporeal gestures contain a considerable communicative potential. Even species which do not produce vocalisations – such as the ants in Plutarch – can communicate, as Montaigne proposes that 'leurs mouvements discourent et traitent'.[54] Despite behavioural similarities, though, animal nature or 'language' remains distinct and is often not directly comprehensible to humans. As Montaigne states:

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[52] Furetière, *Dictionnaire Universel*, entries for 'sympathie' and its verb form 'sympathiser'.

[53] Darwall, 'Empathy', p. 263. Shaun Nichols, *Sentimental Rules: On the Natural Foundations of Moral Judgement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 54-55. Singer and Lamm, 'Neuroscience of Empathy', p. 84.

[54] Montaigne, *Apologie*, p. 62.

> [...] Elles [les bêtes] ont plusieurs conditions qui se rapportent aux nôtres; de celles-là par comparaisons nous pouvons tirer quelque conjecture ; mais de ce qu'elles ont [de] particulier, que savons-nous [ce] que c'est ?[55]

Montaigne's practice of reading does not resolve such uncertainties. He speculatively compares animal and human behaviour and interprets such resemblances to 'tirer quelque conjecture' as to animals' potential experiences. When it comes to 'ce que [les bêtes] ont de particulier', though, animal life is frequently incommunicable to humans due to its inherent specificity and alterity. It is in this regard that Montaigne's empathetical speculation offers some means of interpreting animal gestures and experience in the face of doubt.

Montaigne's practice of reading relies upon the interpretation of non-verbal and non-linguistic gestures between animals and humans. Such signs constitute a form of 'parler' or communication. Animals may employ their corporeal 'espèce de parole' to convey their experiences to one another and to 'se plaindre, se réjouir, s'entr'appeler au secours, se convier à l'amour'; Montaigne subsequently concludes that animals 'parlent bien à nous, et nous à elles', establishing the possibility for mutual interspecies communication.[56] Whilst animal behaviours contain a communicative potential, though, careful observation can only capture *what* an animal is doing. Montaigne seeks insight into animals' internal experiences and the feelings or thoughts which might motivate their outward actions. His approach must thus delve deeper into their potential phenomenological experiences.

The second step in this process calls on Montaigne to speculate on animals' corporeal gestures and offer possible interpretations of their internal experiences. His conjectural interspecies comparisons emerge from an empathetical impulse; he imaginatively projects the animal's potential sensations or feelings based on comparisons with his own experiences. His approach here once more differs in essence from anthropomorphism, in which human experiences or characteristics are projected onto animals. Montaigne instead infers from observable evidence, empathetically compares it to his own human experience and imaginatively speculates on what

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[55] Montaigne, *Apologie,* p. 82.

[56] Montaigne, *Apologie*, p. 69.

the animal's distinct experience *might* be. There is in this process a notable "taking care", as Montaigne proceeds cautiously, thoroughly explores animal experiences and respects their specificity or alterity where appropriate.

Guillemette Bolens' recent theory of kinesic intelligence may aid us in elucidating the processes at work in the first two steps of Montaigne's empathetical speculation. Bolens' theory is centred on the concept of embodied cognition, the premise that humans' cognitive representations are grounded in their corporeal experiences and states.[57] She proposes that voluntary and involuntary bodily expressions constitute an integral part of communication. They convey 'kinesis information' from which we learn about the world we inhabit and the other beings with whom we engage in intersubjective encounters.[58] Given humans' own embodied experience and memory, we are able to infer the potential sensations another may be experiencing from their corporeal gestures and the kinesic signals they communicate.[59] This process of inference simultaneously comprises an act of empathy whereby the observer imagines what such sensations may feel like within their own body.[60] Kinesic intelligence depends upon inference from observable gestures as well as an imaginative and empathetical projection of another's experience. Such intelligence applies not only to our physical encounters for Bolens, but is equally valuable as a theoretical tool when reading corporeal gestures in literary works and visual art.[61] Kinesic intelligence is in essence an active, intersubjective and speculative exploration into the corporeal and phenomenological experience of another.

The core principles of kinesic intelligence and embodied cognition may help to analyse the processes at work in Montaigne's empathetical speculation. His method of reading similarly presupposes intersubjective and communicative encounters with other species and is based on the premise that animals' corporeal gestures convey meaningful information. Montaigne closely attends to such bodily expressions in the *exempla* and the other accounts he presents. In doing

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[57] Guillemette Bolens, *The Style of Gestures: Embodiment and Cognition in Literary Narrative* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2012), p. 5 and p. 13.

[58] Bolens, *Style of Gestures*, pp. 2-3.

[59] Ibid, p. 3.

[60] Bolens, *Style of Gestures*, p. 6.

[61] Ibid, p. 2 and p. 12.

so, he encourages his reader to become increasingly attuned to the complexity, subtlety and potential specificity of animals' movements. He proceeds by speculating on the possible meanings of such communicative gestures and kinesic signals through empathetical acts of comparison. Montaigne invites his reader to draw upon their existing kinesic memory and knowledge to empathise with the animal in question by imaginatively projecting their sensations and emotions - such as suffering, pain or fear - as our own. His method entails an active and speculative exploration into animals' potential corporeal and phenomenological experiences. Montaigne's empathetical speculation is, however, distinct from Bolens' kinesic intelligence in one core aspect. Where Bolens' theory is primarily a means to empathise with another's experience, Montaigne's method contains a crucial imperative to act and to intervene in the life of the other.

The final stage in Montaigne's process requires the reader to act upon their empathetical interpretations and respond to the animal before them through mutual caring interactions. Montaigne speaks of the 'commerce entre elles [les bêtes] et nous' which gives rise to an 'obligation mutuelle' to respond to one another with care, empathy and justice.[62] He accentuates the justice that lies in treating each being with the moral concern they deserve. His empathetical speculation thereby contains a deep ethical imperative which is expressed via diverse acts of care within the *Apologie* and the wider *Essais*. Such care comprises several simultaneous actions. Care may require cautious and thorough attention or affording animals the benefit of the doubt when considering morally relevant faculties. It may equally entail an attitude of care - which deems animals worthy of our interest and concern - or a more emotional relationship with them. Finally, care may comprise physical labour or mutual actions to ensure another's well-being.

Montaigne's empathetical speculation is significant on two accounts. Firstly, it resists anthropomorphic projections of human capacities onto animals. Secondly, Montaigne does not definitively claim that animals possess specific faculties. His empathetical speculation proceeds from a position of uncertainty which remains cognisant of human limitations and so intersects

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[62] Michel de Montaigne, *Les Essais,* ed. by Pierre Villey and Verdun-Léon Saulnier, 3 vols (Lausanne: La Guilde du Livre, 1965), II (1965), p. 435.

with his scepticism. Montaigne's manner of reading accepts that we may never know the 'branles internes' of animals for certain, but observes in their outward behaviours seemingly shared emotional states and a communicative potential. Having examined the underlying assumptions and mechanisms of such empathetical speculation, I shall now turn to its application in Montaigne's texts and to the possibilities of care it entails.

Montaigne often reads animals' actions empathetically and speculatively throughout the *Apologie* and *Essais* and many of these instances relate to animal suffering. Through such situations, he implicitly poses an opportunity for humans to act upon their interpretations of animal gestures or - in other words - to care about the suffering creature and respond in kind. One significant instance lies in a tale drawn from Aulus-Gellius' *Nuits attiques*. A slave, Androdus of Dace, escaped his former master by venturing into a desert. Following his eventual capture, Androdus encounters a lion amidst a fighting pit in Rome and recounts the tale of how he and the lion first met. Montaigne interprets the interspecies encounter between its protagonists anew:

> Entre les autres esclaves qui furent présentés au peuple en ce combat des bêtes, fut un Androdus, de Dace, qui était à un seigneur romain de qualité consulaire. Ce lion, l'ayant aperçu de loin, s'arrêta [...] et puis s'approcha tout doucement, d'une façon molle et paisible, comme pour entrer en reconnaissance avec lui. Cela fait et s'étant assuré de ce qu'il cherchait, il commença à battre de la queue à la mode des chiens [...] c'était un singulier plaisir de voir les caresses et les fêtes qu'ils s'entrefaisaient l'un a l'autre.

> «[...] m'étant embatu sur une caverne cachée et inaccessible, je me jetai dedans. Bientôt après y survint ce lion, ayant une patte sanglante et blessée, tout plaintif et gémissant des douleurs qu'il y souffrait. [...] [le lion] s'approcha tout doucement de moi, me présentant sa patte offensée, et me la montrant comme pour demander secours. [...] je l'essuyai et nettoyai le plus proprement que je pus; lui, se sentant allégé de son mal et soulagé de cette douleur, se prit à reposer et à dormir, ayant toujours sa patte entre mes mains. De là en hors, lui et moi vécûmes ensemble en cette caverne, trois ans entiers, de mêmes viandes; car des bêtes qu'il tuait à sa chasse, il m'en apportait les meilleurs endroits [...] je fus surpris par les soldats qui me menèrent d'Afrique en cette ville à mon maître, lequel soudain me condamna à mort et à être abandonné aux bêtes. Or, à ce que je

vois, ce lion fut aussi pris bientôt après, qui m'a, à cette heure, voulu récompenser du bienfait et guérison qu'il avait reçu de moi.»[63]

Montaigne reads this account through his practice of empathetical speculation. He regards Androdus and the lion's corporeal gestures as a means of communication which gives rise to mutual responses of care between them. Androdus is portrayed as carefully attending to and empathetically interpreting the lion's behaviour. The slave's response is guided by his concern for the animal's suffering, which he infers from the feline's actions. The lion's corporeal gestures remain couched in speculative terms, such as shaking in pain and showing his bloodied paw to Androdus *as if* to ask for aid ('comme pour demander secours').[64] Montaigne and the slave infer that the lion is most probably suffering from his injuries and requires aid, although such actions are left open to alternative interpretations. Androdus' empathetical reading of the lion's gestures, and concern for his suffering, subsequently lead him to care for the animal's well-being. Androdus cares about and for the lion by responding to his request for assistance and tending to his injuries. Speculation, empathy and care ultimately operate in conjunction in the slave's response to the lion.

The process of empathetical speculation forges mutual interspecies connections as well as a means of communication via corporeal gestures. In Montaigne's reading, the lion is equally capable of an empathetical and caring response to Androdus, which the animal conveys through his physical actions. The lion recognises his human companion amidst the Roman fighting pit and their emotional bond is expressed through the joyful wagging of his tail and their mutual 'caresses et fêtes'.[65] The feline appears to recall the 'bienfait et guérison' he received from Androdus and attempts to repay the slave back in kind for his care by sparing him from execution.

Empathy and care are intrinsically connected in Montaigne's reading of the interactions between Androdus and the lion. This is significant on two accounts. Firstly, Montaigne presents

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[63] Montaigne, *Apologie*, pp. 96-97.

[64] Montaigne, *Apologie*, p. 97.

[65] Montaigne, *Apologie*, p. 96.

the lion as capable of emotional states and response, as he had previously with the two grieving canines. There is a certain tenderness and joy in the feline's reunion with Androdus, whom he approaches 'doucement, d'une façon molle et paisible'.[66] There is equally an implicit gratitude in the lion's response to the aid he received for his pain and suffering. He firstly brings Androdus the best portions of his hunt to sustain him, before later saving the slave's life as a form of recompense ('récompenser') for his care.[67] Secondly, the tale addresses the questions of animal communication and response which have often attracted the attention of philosophers and which are of continuing interest to animal behaviour, ethics and philosophy researchers today. This long history of philosophical debate has generated diverse and, at times, opposing theories. Philosophers such as Aristotle, Descartes, Immanuel Kant and later Martin Heidegger have denied 'language' to animals in the sense of the complex communicative abilities they deem unique to humans. Others including Montaigne, Marin Cureau de la Chambre, Guillaume-Hyacinthe Bougeant and more recently Jacques Derrida and Donna Haraway have contended that animals can and indeed do communicate through corporeal gestures or via means which are incomprehensible or imperceptible to humans.

Montaigne's interpretation of Androdus and the lion is similarly concerned with animals' capacity to respond and communicate. The lion's 'gestes parlants' are the principal means through which he conveys his experience to the slave and they initiate a complex chain of interspecies communication. The lion firstly appeals to Androdus for aid by presenting his injured paw. The slave interprets this gesture as a probable indication of the animal's suffering and proceeds to physically attend to his injuries. Finally, the feline responds in kind and conveys his gratitude to Androdus in providing sustenance and rescue. Where such empathetical encounters call for action, both animal and human respond through practical acts of care. Montaigne's interpretation reveals that interspecies interactions often entail a complex web of mutual response which is continually changing as the conversation evolves. In his interspecies realm, animals and humans coexist in a complex network of caring engagements that are numerous, mutable and reciprocal.

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[66] Montaigne, *Apologie*, p. 96.
[67] Ibid, p. 97.

The tale of Androdus and the lion is one of the principal instances of empathetical speculation in the *Apologie.* Montaigne's practice of reading is not, however, limited to this essay alone. Hassan Melehy focuses on a pivotal moment in the preceding essay, *De la Cruauté,* in which Montaigne denounces the cruelty he perceives in hunting and killing animals for sport.[68] Montaigne encourages his reader to respond empathetically to the hypothetical plea of a hunted deer at the end of the chase:

> Et, comme il advient communément que le cerf, se sentant hors d'haleine et de force, n'ayant plus d'autre remède, se rejette et se rend à nous-mêmes qui le poursuivons, nous demandant merci [pitié] par ses larmes.[69]

Montaigne interprets the cornered deer's action of turning to his pursuers with empathy and perceives in this gesture an appeal for pity, concern and mercy. The hunters – and implicitly we as readers – are invited to identify with the deer's distressed emotional state and respond to the animal facing us. Montaigne here guides his reader to infer the animal's likely emotional state from his tears: perhaps the stag experiences fear, distress or a feeling of futility in the face of his exhaustion, his inability to escape and his likely death. This hypothetical encounter directs the reader to consider the moral dimensions of human actions. Although Montaigne refrains from asserting his own beliefs, his presentation of this hypothetical situation invites us to share in his sense of injustice at an animal being killed, specifically one who has engaged us through his tears and implicitly requested us to respond with empathy and care. David Quint examines the rhetorical force of this scene in *De la cruauté* which, in his view, is intended to persuade the reader to the course of clemency not only in interspecies relationships, but in human interactions.[70] Quint argues that the encounter with the deer is directed towards Montaigne's aristocratic readership, given that the hunt was a pursuit exclusive to the nobility.[71] In inviting his reader to empathise with the deer, Montaigne is implicitly critical of the aristocratic 'culture of cruelty and revenge' that prevailed in France following the Wars of Religion.[72] Montaigne's

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[68] Melehy, 'Montaigne and Ethics', p. 99.

[69] Montaigne, *Les Essais*, II, p. 432.

[70] David Quint, *Montaigne and the Quality of Mercy: Ethical and Political Themes in the "Essais"* (Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 42.

[71] Quint, *Montaigne,* p. 45.

[72] Ibid, p. 44.

condemnation of cruel practices - in both human and interspecies relationships - comes to the fore at the close of *De la cruauté,* where he emphasises the general 'devoir d'humanité' that we owe to humans, animals and all living things.[73]

In the tale of Androdus and the lion and in the hypothetical encounter with the deer, Montaigne's empathetical speculation is fundamentally an active form of reading which accepts ontological uncertainty. As such, it represents an attempt to obtain some provisional knowledge of animals' experiences to in turn inform our interactions with them. It is in this respect that his approach contains a deep ethical impulse. Montaigne's interpretations of animal nature are grounded within a distinct emotional engagement with them. He similarly invites us, as readers, to connect empathetically with animals, to attend to their communicative gestures and to imaginatively project their potential experiences as if they were our own. Such an emotional and empathetical engagement in turn calls upon us to act accordingly and to care about the animal other with whom we interact.

For Montaigne, such a response often assumes the form of emotional and practical acts of care. It might entail caring for an animal through action and intervention, as with Androdus tending to the lion's paw. Alternatively, it might call upon us to care about the animal and their distinct lived experience, as in the case of the hunted deer. Through its reflexive and imaginative process, Montaigne's empathetical speculation guides the reader in becoming attuned to both the communicative potential of animal gestures and their possible emotional and phenomenological experiences. It simultaneously attunes the reader to the potential impacts of various human responses to animals, focusing especially on the possibilities of care. Through presenting an array of interspecies interactions such as those examined above, Montaigne illustrates what care can mean.

Care consequently emerges as a central concept within Montaigne's empathetical speculation. The question remains, though, as to what such 'care' entails. Whilst there is no direct French translation of the English 'care', Montaigne at times employs 'soin' or other synonyms such as

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[73] Quint, *Montaigne,* p. 54. Tournon, 'Self-Interpretation', p. 57.

'concerne' or 'souci' in the *Essais*. Taken together, such terms capture several core elements of care - namely its underlying emotional attitude, its concern or interest in another and its practical labour - contained in Montaigne's works. In his 1680 dictionary, Pierre Richelet states that 'concerne' denotes both a concern for another's well-being and the concomitant acts which take care of 'tout ce qui touche les intérêts d'une personne'.[74] He similarly defines 'souci' and 'soin' as a more emotional 'inquiétude d'esprit' which is aroused in relation to someone for or about whom we care. His definitions also capture the 'travail' and 'application' that is often required on the part of the carer, suggesting that care requires practical and perhaps emotional labour.

The multiplicity of terms for 'care' in French reflects the multi-faceted, adaptable and constantly changing nature of this concept. Even today, care is neither a static nor easily defined term. In the context of Montaigne's empathetical speculation, care emerges as a complex and continually evolving concept alongside the protean nature of his interspecies realm. Whilst he occasionally utilises terms to denote such care - namely 'soin', 'souci', 'concerne' - caring interactions are more frequently captured through physical gestures and actions in his works. Montaigne's corporeal communication crucially includes animals as active participants within a caring community. In the *Essais*, then, acts of care are a reciprocal and interspecies endeavour, as with Androdus and the lion. Such an understanding of care is far from unproblematic, though. The question arises as to which animal or human actions are to be considered 'caring' and how care is - or ought to be - defined. Given its complex nature, Montaigne does not offer any definitive or normative definition of care. His thought instead attunes the reader to the possibilities of care and its diverse and potentially fluctuating manifestations within interspecies relationships. The scope of the present examination does not permit us to explore all the nuances of care which Montaigne's work presents. In the remainder of this chapter, I therefore focus on three principal and interconnected manifestations of care within his *Essais*: care as caution, care as interest or concern and care through action.

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[74] Richelet, *Dictionnaire françois,* entries for 'concerne', 'souci' and 'soin'.

An initial possibility of care emerges in Montaigne's speculative approach. He resists dogmatic assertions on animal nature and instead reads the *exempla* of the grieving dogs, the fox of Thrace, the dog at the crossroads and the encounter of Androdus and the lion in a careful and caring manner. His reading is firstly careful in the sense that he closely observes animal gestures and considers their potential meanings meticulously. Montaigne does not impose definitive interpretations onto animals, nor does he interpret such accounts anthropomorphically. Although he infers meaning based on interspecies comparisons, he thoroughly attends to animals' specific behaviours and resists imposing human emotions or experiences onto them where this would be inappropriate; he thereby respects their specificity and alterity. His interpretations proceed with caution to speculate on animals' possible phenomenological experiences, which may bear similarities to or differ completely from those of humans. Montaigne's cautious, thorough and attentive reading remains an integral form of care within his *Essais*.

A second manifestation of care emerges in the caring nature of Montaigne's approach to nonhuman animals. His readings of *exempla* and interspecies encounters are caring in the sense that they entail a concern, or care, for animals and their interests. His empathetical speculation exhibits a particular interest in what animals might be feeling, thinking or experiencing, even whilst accepting that this may remain incomprehensible to humans. His caring method is thus grounded in an attitude which deems animals worthy of our concern and attention in their own right. For Montaigne, care as concern surpasses a desire to simply comprehend or learn about animal nature in general terms. Animals are neither objects of human curiosity nor vehicles for philosophical inquiry into human nature. Montaigne's practice of reading alternatively encompasses a profound care and concern for the animals with whom we interact in emotional interspecies relationships and contains an impulse to get to know the specific animal or animals before us.

Montaigne pursues such a close concern and interest through his process of empathetical speculation, which requires action and effort on the part of the reader. Several of the interspecies encounters within his *Apologie* display such a caring concern for the animal in question. The villagers of Thrace do not merely observe the fox's actions, but desire to

comprehend the 'discours' and deliberations going through her mind; in drawing comparisons with their own experiences, they may in turn identify with their vulpine companion and care about her safety when assessing the frozen river.[75] Androdus does not simply observe and interpret the lion's behaviour when he is ailing with an injured paw. The slave empathises with the animal's suffering and alleviates the lion's pain. Montaigne himself demonstrates such concern in his encounter with his 'petite chatte', as he is interested in how this feline perceives their mutual interaction.[76] Does she share his perceptual experience of play or might play entail something different in feline terms or for his cat specifically? Although Montaigne can never be certain, he attends to his cat's potential experiences as an animal with whom he participates in an affectionate relationship and about whom he cares.

Montaigne's concern requires us to both attend to animals' corporeal gestures and contemplate their potential internal or phenomenological experiences. Such attention constitutes a form of caring about the animal, their experiences and their interests and is intrinsically connected with the final salient form of care in Montaigne's *Essais.* In several of the interspecies encounters detailed in the *Apologie*, concern about animals' experiences frequently generates some form of practical caring response; this is particularly the case where the creature is suffering or where their well-being is threatened in some manner. Montaigne's empathetical speculation encourages the reader to respond to animals with care as beings who are like us and who can suffer in similar manners. His examples appeal to the reader to consider the impacts - both beneficial and detrimental - of human actions upon animals. In cases of suffering, for instance, Montaigne invites the reader to intervene in animals' lives and attempt to alleviate their ailments through practical action.

Caring *about* an animal is therefore accompanied by practical acts of caring *for* them within Montaigne's *Essais.* When the injured lion appeals to Androdus, the slave is called upon to alleviate the animal's suffering as best he can through improvised veterinary treatment. Alternatively, in the hypothetical encounter with the stag, the hunters - and we as readers - are invited to respond to his distress and plea for mercy. Montaigne not only encourages his reader

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[75] Montaigne, *Apologie*, p. 72.

[76] Ibid, p. 61.

to reflect upon the animal's distressed emotional state, but to take pause and reconsider the decision to either end or spare his life. The caring response would be the latter.

Such acts of care are not, however, restricted to the roles of the human as caregiver and the animal as a subject of care. The lion reciprocally cares for Androdus in bringing him sustenance and later sparing his life.[77] The ants in Plutarch care for one another in tending to their deceased companions through apparent practices of mourning.[78] Even the two grieving dogs could be considered as expressing an intense form of care and concern for their human counterparts; their actions are intimately connected to their emotional relationships with their former companions and concern for their state of lifelessness.[79] In the various interactions Montaigne presents, caring actions and relationships assume a multitude of forms, address diverse needs and can fluidly change according to the varying or distinct needs of the beings in question. His *Essais* imply that care cannot be limited to a single act or normative definition. It may be possible, however, to establish some guiding principle through identifying a shared motive or essence of care across such actions. The animal-human interactions in the *Essais*, as discussed above, constitute care on three fundamental levels and comprise an attitude of concern, an emotional relationship and a practical labour expressed through corporeal gestures.

Care is not, then, a purely abstract concept within Montaigne's *Essais*. Whilst it entails a more abstract dimension, care is essentially a physical and practical labour which requires us to actively intervene in the lives of others. Such a concept of care once more intersects with the interspecies connections Montaigne envisages. His thought acknowledges that humans are engaged in very real encounters with animals within 'la presse des autres créatures' from which humanity cannot separate itself.[80] Our lives are inextricably intertwined with those of other creatures, for whom our actions necessarily carry - at times, quite considerable - consequences. Within Montaigne's interspecies realm, such entanglement calls on us to consider our actions and responses empathetically and with care.

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[77] Montaigne, *Apologie*, pp. 95-97.
[78] Ibid, p. 83.
[79] Montaigne, *Apologie*, p. 87.
[80] Montaigne, *Apologie*, p. 61.

Montaigne's empathetical speculation thus encompasses an ethical impulse, an invitation to connect emotionally with another and a call to respond to them with care. His practice of reading and concept of care are connected with his understanding of animals and humans as existing in a web of interspecies encounters, which bear mutual consequences for all involved. The ethical impulse within his works encourages us to intervene in the lives of the animals with whom we share interspecies relationships and to morally respond with care.

2.3 Conclusion

Montaigne responded to significant concerns raised by scepticism and the "animal question", particularly with regards to the (im)possibility of obtaining true or certain knowledge of animal nature. Such questions occupied thinkers for decades and even centuries to come. Montaigne's *Apologie* and *Essais* respond through both a practice of reading - his empathetical speculation - and resultant acts of care as a means of pursuing partial and provisional knowledge of animals in a continually shifting world.

Animals are integral to Montaigne's scepticism in the *Apologie*. They provide him with a point of comparison through which to challenge human presumption, superiority and specificity. Montaigne crucially relocates humanity within an interspecies realm in which animals and humans share significant connections. His thought equally retains a space of open possibility and difference which acknowledges animal specificity and alterity. Aspects of animal life might diverge dramatically or even be completely unintelligible to humans. Montaigne's world is simultaneously one of motion and instability in which interspecies encounters and animal beings are continually transforming. Such perpetual flux destabilises claims to certain or definitive knowledge as the status of animals, humans and the relationships between them is constantly changing.

The incomprehensibility of animal life - and the continual evolution of animal and human nature - raised a core concern that continued to occupy early modern French thinkers: how to

proceed in the face of such doubt and instability? Or, in other words, how are humans to engage in relationships with and act towards animals if they cannot know about their lives with any certainty? Montaigne's response is one of action, comprising his method of empathetical speculation and his multitudinous forms of care.

In his *Apologie* and other *Essais*, Montaigne crucially attunes his reader to the possibilities of both animal nature and of care through rhetorical and reflexive strategies. He adopts rhetorical strategies in presenting numerous instances of animal behaviours and interactions. He encourages his reader to pay close and thorough attention to such gestures, from which they may infer their own conclusions about animal nature. In speculating upon such interspecies connections, though, Montaigne guides his reader towards what he deems the most probable explanations and reinterprets classical *exempla* to substantiate his propositions. In doing so, animals emerge in his works as beings who possess reason, emotion, an ability to communicate and who participate in significant caring relationships.

The rhetorical strategies which present the reader with the possibilities of animal nature do not operate in isolation within Montaigne's writings. They are accompanied by reflexive and subjective processes of reading - namely his empathetical speculation - which further attune the reader to the possibilities of animal nature and of care. Through such empathetical readings, we are invited to care about the animals concerned and about our interspecies relationships with them. Montaigne guides his reader to pay close, cautious and meticulous attention to animals' corporeal gestures. Care equally lies in our interest in animals' well-being and in the subjective and imaginative process required to empathetically infer their potential emotional states and internal experiences. Reflecting upon such concerns may in turn motivate us to practically act and attempt to improve the life of another. Throughout the *Apologie* and the wider *Essais*, then, Montaigne does not definitively tell us anything about animal nature, nor does he instruct us on how to care. He is to a greater extent attuning his reader to such possibilities through rhetorical and reflexive processes. Montaigne thereby reveals a distinct perception of animals as beings who share significant commonalities with humans. His works simultaneously demonstrate how such perceptions shape our interspecies relationships and resultant acts of care.

Montaigne's works begin to point toward significant aspects of our thought and lives alongside animals. His reading of *exempla* demonstrates a fundamental connection between how we interpret animals' gestures or experiences and how we respond to them, especially in relation to the concept of care. Caring about animals often leads to acts of care for them in his *Essais*. At the same time, Montaigne's perception of interspecies connections emphasises the uncertainty, instability and inconsistency which underscores our life alongside and our thought on animals.

Embracing uncertainty, speculation, empathy, connection and care: this is the path taken by Montaigne in the face of doubt. This is not, however, the only path we might tread and nor can we be certain it is the right one, if such a path exists at all. The scepticism central to Montaigne's thought continued to exert an influence on French thinkers throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The uncertain and perpetually transforming nature of interspecies relationships - as emphasised by Montaigne - remained among their core concerns. The persistent scepticism within early modern France subsequently generated diverse responses and prime among them was that of René Descartes. Where Montaigne elaborated a distinct form of scepticism, Descartes purportedly attempted to resolve such extreme doubt once and for all.

3

More than machines:
Descartes' Metaphysics and Thought on Animals

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The previous chapter examined the intersections between Montaigne's scepticism, his perceptions of animals and his concept of care. His thought nevertheless represents only one response to 16th century scepticism. The works of René Descartes (1596 - 1650) constitute another canonical response to doubt in early modern France. Descartes was born into a family of lawyers and entered the newly founded Jesuit college of La Flèche around 1606, where he studied for the following eight years. Although he trained in law, he became a gentleman soldier and travelled throughout Europe. He published several significant works including treatises on geometry, mathematics, astronomy, natural philosophy and metaphysics.

Where Montaigne accepted that true and certain knowledge may lie beyond human reach, Descartes employed a method of radical doubt - first in his *Discours de la Méthode* (1637) and later in the *Méditations Métaphysiques* (1641) - in the hope of finding at least one indubitable truth. Descartes believed to have discovered this in the *cogito*: the rational, self-conscious and thinking human subject. He proceeded to build upon this principle to advance other propositions that he believed to be beyond reasonable doubt. His vast metaphysics posited theories on the existence of God, the nature of the material world, the movement of bodies and the distinction of the human mind and body. Animals and their relationships to humans occupied a central place within his philosophical system, just as they had for Montaigne. Animals similarly provided Descartes with a point of comparison and contrast against humans, although the conclusions he drew varied greatly from those of Montaigne. If animals were without reason, humans were rational. If animals were entirely corporeal beings, then humans possessed an additional immaterial soul. Animals served as a model, according to which human nature could be defined in opposition to animality.

Given such claims about animal nature, Descartes is often regarded as the father of the beast-machine doctrine. This thesis supposedly maintained that animals were nothing more than automata whose movements could be adequately explained through physiological principles alone. John Cottingham has condensed the beast-machine doctrine into seven core theses.[1] According to his summary, the doctrine broadly maintains that animals: are automata; lack rational souls; do not think; are incapable of language; do not possess self-consciousness; do not possess other forms of consciousness; and are devoid of feeling or sensation. The beast-machine thesis is accordingly perceived as erecting an unbridgeable animal-human dichotomy.[2] This view has found considerable traction in scholarly interpretations of Descartes' works and his thought on animals specifically. Leonora Cohen Rosenfield, Katherine Morris, Norman Kemp Smith, Gary Hatfield and Hassan Melehy all maintain that Descartes adhered to a strict animal automatism and reinforced a metaphysical divide between animals and humans.[3] Erica Fudge and Paola Cavalieri have considered the subsequent ethical implications of animal automatism and have been critical of the lasting impact of Descartes' doctrine upon the moral status and treatment of animals in Western thought.[4] I nevertheless challenge this narrative in both the current and subsequent chapters. I maintain that the beast-machine doctrine was not an intrinsic component of Descartes' thought, but was to a greater extent the result of its reinterpretation by Cartesian thinkers. My principal concern here is therefore not with proving or disproving that Descartes adhered to the beast-machine, nor to what extent. I shall instead

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[1] John Cottingham, ''A Brute to the Brutes?': Descartes' Treatment of Animals', *Philosophical Quarterly*, 53 (1978), 551-559 (p. 551).

[2] Erica Fudge, *Brutal Reasoning: Animals, Rationality and Humanity in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), p. 152. Gary Hatfield, *The Routledge Guidebook to Descartes'* Meditations, ed. by Anthony Gottlieb, The Routledge Guides to the Great Books, X (London & New York: Routledge, 2014), p. 139.

[3] Hassan Melehy, 'Silencing the Animals: Montaigne, Descartes, and the Hyperbole of Reason', *symplokē*, 13 (2005), 263-282 (p. 265). Katherine Morris, 'Bête-machines' in *Descartes' Natural Philosophy*, ed. by Stephen Gaukroger, John Schuster and John Sutton (London & New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 401-419 (p. 401). Leonora Cohen Rosenfield, *From Beast-Machine to Man-Machine: The Theme of Animal Souls in French Letters from Descartes to La Mettrie* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940), pp. 48-49. Norman Kemp Smith, *New Studies in the Philosophy of Descartes: Descartes as Pioneer* (London: MacMillan & Co Ltd, 1952), pp. 135-136.

[4] Paola Cavalieri, *The Animal Question: Why Non-Human Animals Deserve Human Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 42-43. Fudge, *Brutal Reasoning*, p. 152.

move away from comparisons with this doctrine to reconsider his thought on animals in his own terms.

Recent decades have seen renewed attempts to reevaluate whether or how far Descartes propounded the beast-machine thesis. Lex Newman and Gary Steiner continue to assert that Descartes expounds this doctrine.[5] They simultaneously attempt to nuance traditional accounts by contextualising his comments on animals within his wider philosophical system.[6] By contrast, John Cottingham and Peter Harrison argue that neither Descartes' views on animal nature nor his theory of animal automatism commit him to the beast-machine doctrine.[7] Thierry Gontier pursues this line of questioning the farthest. Gontier contends that Descartes' mechanistic account of movement does not offer insight into his perceptions of animal nature, for it is solely a physiological description of material bodies.[8] He maintains that Descartes does not erect a definitive animal-human dichotomy as is frequently presumed.[9] In his view, the relationship between the ontological categories of 'animal' and 'human' is far more complex, unstable and hybrid in Descartes' works.

Beyond the beast-machine, Descartes' metaphysics and his response to early modern scepticism have also given rise to diverse interpretations. Traditional accounts, such as that of Harry Frankfurt, maintain that Descartes addressed persistent scepticism through his method of radical doubt; Descartes reevaluates his former beliefs against more exacting criteria for metaphysical certainty in his endeavour to establish more permanent and solid foundations for scientific knowledge.[10] More recent interpretations have conversely questioned how far this

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[5] Lex Newman, 'Unmasking Descartes' Case for the Bête Machine Doctrine', *Canadian Journal of Philosophy,* 31 (2001), 389-425 (p. 389). Gary Steiner, *Anthropocentrism and Its Discontents: The Moral Status of Animals in the History of Western Philosophy* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005), p. 133.

[6] Newman, 'Unmasking Descartes', p. 392. Steiner, *Anthropocentrism*, p. 134.

[7] Cottingham, 'A Brute', p. 551. Peter Harrison, 'Descartes on Animals', *The Philosophical Quarterly,* 42 (1992), 219-227 (p. 220).

[8] Thierry Gontier, *De l'homme à l'animal: Montaigne et Descartes, ou les paradoxes de la philosophie moderne sur la nature des animaux* (Paris: Librairie Philosophie J. Vrin, 1998), p. 162.

[9] Ibid, p. 14 and p. 166.

[10] Harry Frankfurt, *Dreamers, Demons and Madmen: The Defence of Reason in Descartes' Meditations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), p. 22 and p. 28.

standard for metaphysical certainty holds up to scrutiny. David Owens and Margaret Wilson suggest that Descartes distinguishes between metaphysical doubt - with its rather ideal standard for certainty - and the probable conjectures we often rely upon in our daily practical affairs.[11] Both Descartes' theory of animal nature and the roles of doubt and certainty in his metaphysics have generated an array of interpretations. Scholarship to date has tended to treat these two fundamental elements as discrete units. In my view, however, Descartes' attempt to establish a standard for metaphysical certainty is intimately connected with his thought on animal and human nature, such that these two aspects of his philosophy ought to be examined in conjunction.

In the present chapter, I seek to nuance existing scholarly narratives through offering two distinct contributions to accounts of Descartes' thought on animals. The first lies in reevaluating his comments on animal and human nature afresh, away from comparisons with the beast-machine doctrine. My second contribution lies in examining how Descartes' varying perceptions of animal nature intersect with his response to scepticism in seventeenth-century France. I argue that his views on animals are interconnected with the different representational modes of certainty and conjecture in his metaphysics. I do so through undertaking a close and cross-comparative reading of Descartes' principal works - including the *Discours,* the *Méthode* and his *Principes de la Philosophie* - as well as his published correspondence. My analysis pursues the development of his ideas on animal and human nature and the way in which he articulates these views. The present chapter thereby seeks to offer a comprehensive approach to Descartes' writings by summarising the principal findings of my analysis into a cohesive and concise account of his thought on animals.

My analysis is composed of three principal sections. I firstly consider Descartes' response to early modern scepticism. I examine how he elaborates a standard for metaphysical certainty and recognises that this is frequently unattainable in our daily lives. I proceed in the second section to explore how Descartes develops a more conjectural approach which enables his reader to

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[11] David Owens, 'Descartes' Use of Doubt', in *A Companion to Descartes,* ed. by Janet Broughton and John Carriero (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), pp. 164-178 (p. 165). Margaret Dauler Wilson, *Descartes* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978) pp. 41-43.

pursue partial and provisional knowledge to guide their everyday actions. I consequently argue that, whilst Descartes' metaphysical aim may be to provide a standard for certainty, his thought retains a crucial space of doubt and conjecture.

I turn in the final section to consider the implications of Descartes' modes of conjecture and metaphysical certainty for his perceptions of animals. I demonstrate that he must maintain a distinct animal-human dichotomy to support his metaphysical claims on the human *esprit* and *cogito*. Building upon the unattainability of certainty in everyday life, though, Descartes' works reveal that our actual interspecies encounters are more nuanced than such a rigid dichotomy allows. Through examining his works and correspondence, I assert that he does not entirely sever the interspecies connections which occupied a central place within Montaigne's thought. Descartes similarly reads animals' outward behaviours and natures speculatively and, in doing so, considers them capable of forms of thought, emotion, suffering and consciousness. His thought on animals thereby retains a crucial space of conjecture and uncertainty, even whilst in part adhering to his standard for metaphysical truth.

3.1 Responding to Scepticism: Descartes' Standard for Metaphysical Certainty

Accounts to date have often perceived Descartes' works as responding to the scepticism which persisted in early modern France and which we encountered in Montaigne's *Essais*. In his *Discours* and *Méditations,* Descartes states that his objective is to erect a philosophical system based upon true and certain foundations. He proceeds by subjecting his former beliefs to radical doubt in the hope of establishing a more reliable criterion for metaphysical certainty:

> [...] il me fallait entreprendre sérieusement une fois en ma vie de me défaire de toutes les opinions que j'avais reçues jusques alors en ma créance, et commencer tout de nouveau dès les fondements, si je voulais établir quelque chose de ferme et de constant dans les sciences.[12]

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[12] René Descartes, *Méditations métaphysiques: objections et réponses, suivies de quatres lettres*, ed. by Michelle Beyssade and Jean-Marie Beyssade, 3rd edn (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 2011), p. 57.

There is, then, a considerable basis to traditional interpretations of Descartes' philosophical project, according to which the foundation of his epistemological method is the principle that he must suspend or even unlearn his former beliefs. By his own account, his objective is to provide 'quelque chose de ferme et de constant' within the sciences, suggesting that he must establish more solidified and definitive foundations than those which currently exist. Despite his stated intentions, though, Descartes' metaphysics remains more complex than such traditional readings concede. I shall first consider how he presents his metaphysical project and standard of certainty, before examining the role of conjecture within his thought.

In opposition to Academic and Pyrrhonian scepticism, Descartes maintains that true and certain knowledge remains within human reach. He attempts to both establish a revised standard for metaphysical certainty and elaborate an epistemic method to obtain such indubitable knowledge.[13] Descartes proceeds to devise such a method in the *Discours* and the *Méditations* by assuming the role of an epistemic deliberator. He does not explicitly instruct his reader, but instead models 'en quelle sorte j'ai tâché de conduire [ma raison]' and his method of extreme doubt, such that the reader might imitate this when reevaluating their own existing beliefs.[14] Descartes acknowledges that his therapy of doubt will be a challenging endeavour.[15] As he writes to Gassendi, his readers will likely struggle to 'se délivrer de toutes les erreurs dont nous sommes imbus dès notre enfance', given the persistent intellectual, psychological and emotional grasp that our former erroneous beliefs retain upon us.[16] Descartes' comment to Gassendi reiterates the necessity of unlearning our former beliefs. His epistemic method is thus founded upon the principle of *epoché,* the process of suspending judgement until we can either affirm or deny a belief. To achieve his objective, his epistemic method comprises three principal stages. First, he must shake the reader's faith in their former beliefs to justify the need for an

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[13] Owens, 'Use of Doubt', p. 164. Wilson, *Descartes* p. 3. Nicholas Wolterstorff, *John Locke and the Ethics of Belief*, Cambridge Studies in Religion and Critical Thought, ed. by Wayne Proudfoot, Jeffrey L. Stout and Nicholas Wolterstorff, I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 181.

[14] René Descartes, *Discours de la méthode*, ed by. Laurence Renault (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 2000), p. 32. *Méditations*, p. 181.

[15] Frankfurt, *Dreamers,* pp. 29-30. Wilson, *Descartes*, p. 8.

[16] Descartes, *Méditations*, p. 384.

improved standard of certainty. Descartes must then elaborate his revised standard before finally applying it to his beliefs to ascertain which he should accept or reject.

Descartes first defends the need for greater metaphysical certainty by demonstrating how unstable our existing beliefs are. In the first *méditation*, he recounts how his senses have often led him to believe numerous 'fausses opinions' to be true, as material substances are not always 'entièrement telles que nous les apercevons par les sens'.[17] Human perception and the information it imparts about the world around us are therefore deceptive and cannot provide an adequate basis upon which to establish 'quelque chose de ferme et de constant dans les sciences'.[18] Descartes faces similar core concerns to Montaigne in his metaphysical inquiry, namely, the questions of whether we can ever obtain indubitable truth and, if so, how to accomplish this. Whilst Montaigne does not attempt to resolve such uncertainty, Descartes' response is rather different. The unreliable and uncertain nature of his former beliefs leads him to contemplate a revised standard for metaphysical certainty.

In elaborating his revised standard, Descartes first suspends his judgement and resolves to neither accept nor reject any belief until he can be assured of its certainty.[19] He affirms that - to better comprehend 'les choses immatérielles ou métaphysiques' - we ought to distance ourselves from the deceptive and untrustworthy nature of sense perception. Descartes concludes that his revised standard for metaphysical certainty must be constructed upon 'un fonds qui est tout à moi' and so resolves not to accept any proposition as true or certain unless it presents itself 'clairement et distinctement à mon esprit'.[20] He deems something as 'claire' if it is 'présente et manifeste à un esprit attentif', whilst 'distincte' denotes something which is 'tellement précise et

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[17] Descartes, *Méditations*, p. 191.

[18] Descartes, *Méditations*, p. 57.

[19] Descartes, *Méditations*, p. 65.

[20] Descartes, *Méditations*, pp. 57-59 and p. 257. Descartes, *Discours*, p. 45 and pp. 67-68. Frankfurt, *Dreamers*, p. 20.

différente de toutes les autres [choses].'[21] His revised standard for metaphysical certainty thus relies on the power of the human intellect and reason alone.

Descartes can now proceed to the final stage of his epistemic method and evaluate his former beliefs against his criteria of clear and distinct perception, with the aim of finding at least one indubitable truth. He begins with one of his most fundamental beliefs and questions his own nature. Descartes concludes that he cannot be sure that he possesses a corporeal body, as this pertains to the external material world and so could be deceptive. He nevertheless realises that, as long as he is doubting the existence of his body, he can clearly and distinctly conceive of himself as some kind of thinking substance 'qui doute, qui conçoit, qui affirme, qui nie, qui veut, qui imagine aussi, et qui sent.'[22] Descartes' repeated use of 'qui' refers to an indeterminate referent. Other than defining this 'qui' as a 'substance pensante', he does not specify what else the nature of this substance may be. It is the metaphysical certainty of this 'substance pensante' which lies at the heart of Descartes' *cogito*, the dictum that *cogito ergo sum* ('I think therefore I exist').[23] It is in the *cogito* that he purports to have found his single indubitable truth and, with it, a more secure foundation for human knowledge.

The originary truth of the *cogito* ultimately depends upon a process through which the human subject distinguishes itself from the material world as a thinking, immaterial and rational substance which Descartes terms *esprit*. Such a separation between the material and immaterial emanates from his doubt concerning his corporeal body and sense perception. The immaterial and rational mind can be known with metaphysical certainty for Descartes, whilst the existence of material bodies does not fulfil these criteria. His thought thereby erects a series of distinctions between mind and body, immaterial and material or the rational and irrational.

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[21] René Descartes, 'Principes de la philosophie', in *Oeuvres de Descartes,* ed. by Charles Adam and Paul Tannery, 12 vols (Paris: Léopold Cerf, 1897-1913), IX (1904), p. 44. Subsequent references to the *Oeuvres* edited by Adam and Tannery will be referred to using the abbreviation AT, followed by the volume number.

[22] Descartes, *Méditations*, p. 81.

[23] Descartes, *Discours*, p. 66.

The distinction between immaterial mind and material body carries implications for the ontological status which Descartes attributes to humans and animals respectively on account of the properties he ascribes to these two substances. Given his metaphysical arguments regarding the human *esprit*, he must maintain certain distinctions between animals and humans. Descartes believes that humans alone possess an immaterial *esprit* - which can be known clearly, distinctly and with certainty - for they can convey their rational and self-conscious thoughts through (human) language. By contrast, he does not consider that animals can meaningfully communicate with humans and so concludes that they must be without a rational and immaterial *esprit*.[24] Animals are consequently attributed the status of corporeal automata in Descartes' metaphysics in the sense that their movements are governed by physiological processes rather than rational deliberation.

The above account has remained the predominant interpretation of Descartes' metaphysical project and its application to the questions of animal and human nature to date. More recently, though, Descartes scholars have raised critical questions concerning such readings. Margaret Wilson and Nicholas Wolterstoff have reexamined the scope of his standard of metaphysical certainty.[25] They question whether Descartes intended this to apply to all our beliefs or whether he distinguished between metaphysical inquiry and the practicalities of everyday life. David Owens and Margaret Wilson have equally considered Descartes' response to situations in which doubt is unavoidable.[26] They emphasise the importance of conjecture within his philosophical system, as well as the provisional moral code he elaborates to guide the reader whilst undertaking any metaphysical inquiry. Few critics have, however, considered how such conjecture - or a distinction between metaphysical theory and everyday practice - significantly intersects with Descartes' thought on animals. I shall therefore proceed to examine the role of conjecture within Descartes' philosophy, before investigating its intrinsic connection to questions of animal and human nature in the final section of this chapter.

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[24] The implications of Descartes' standard for metaphysical certainty with regards to animals and humans will be discussed in further depth in section 3.3.

[25] Wilson, *Descartes* p. 38. Wolterstoff, *John Locke*, p. 191.

[26] Owens, 'Use of Doubt', p. 172 and p. 175. Wilson, *Descartes*, p. 40.

3.2 Reevaluating Doubt: Descartes and the Role of Conjecture

Close examination of Descartes' metaphysical project in the *Méditations* and the *Discours* suggests that he indeed sought to counter sceptic claims about the unattainability of truth and certainty. However, such an interpretation holds only insofar as it applies to his metaphysical inquiry. Not every proposition will meet Descartes' required criteria for metaphysical certainty, nor is his standard immune to criticism. The question remains as to how, according to Descartes, we ought to respond to those opinions which cannot be known for certain. I shall first consider the issues that Descartes identifies with his metaphysical standard, before examining his proposed response to the resultant uncertainty.

Descartes identifies two principal issues with his metaphysical standard, both of which introduce greater doubt into his philosophical system. The first issue concerns human fallibility and imperfection, whilst the second lies in the distinction he draws between metaphysical inquiry and our everyday lives. Both were topical concerns within early modern France. Questions surrounding the limits and imperfection of human faculties were central for Montaigne, as we have already seen, and in the context of early modern scepticism more broadly. The connections and, at times, incongruities between the ways we think about animal nature and what we experience in our actual encounters with them was an equally pertinent concern.[27]

Descartes firstly accepts that humans are of 'une nature finie' and so are prone to error.[28] As he writes in the *Méditations:*

> [...] il arrive que je me trompe, de ce que la puissance que Dieu m'a donnée pour discerner le vrai d'avec le faux n'est pas en moi infinie.[29]

In comparison to the perfection of the divine, Descartes concedes that his ability to discern truth from falsity is neither infinite nor infallible. He cannot guarantee that his judgements will

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[27] The connections and incongruities between our perceptions of animals and actual encounters with them will be examined in increasing depth over the following three chapters of this study.

[28] Descartes, *Méditations*, p. 201.

[29] Ibid, p. 139.

attain certainty and, in many instances, they will likely be 'fautive et trompeuse'.[30] Humans are limited in this way as their reason often operates in conjunction with other, more fallible, faculties. The *entendement* - comprising reason as well as the faculties of comprehension and perception - can be liable to error for Descartes. Where reason is concerned with logical deductions and first principles, the *entendement* also pertains to the ways we perceive, process and draw conclusions from our experiences. Due to humans' imperfect 'connaissance', we are incapable of perceiving or comprehending things with clarity, certainty or in their entirety.[31] Although reason alone may be capable of leading humans to certainty, Descartes maintains that it is not immune from error, as our powers of reasoning rarely function in isolation.

Such connections between the *entendement* and other faculties can enable humans to make the judgements required for their daily lives, but can equally lead them into error and affect their ability to obtain metaphysical certainty. Descartes affirms that the *volonté* - namely humans' desire to know and understand - can cause them to extend their reason beyond its limited scope. As he writes in his *Principes de la Philosophie:*

> **Principe 35:** [...] l'entendement ne s'étend qu'à ce peu d'objets qui se présentent à lui, et sa connaissance est toujours fort limitée: au lieu que la volonté en quelque sens peut sembler infinie; [...] ce qui est cause que nous la (la volonté) portons ordinairement au delà de ce que nous connaissons clairement et distinctement; et lorsque nous en abusons de la sorte, ce n'est pas merveille s'il nous arrive de nous méprendre.[32]

Descartes states that human reason predominantly attends to things which can be perceived clearly and distinctly and so its scope can appear rather limited. The *volonté,* by contrast, often appears to be infinite. Humans occasionally desire to understand things which in fact lie beyond their comprehension and this can lead them to misuse their reason. Such attempts to apply reason beyond its intended scope result in error. In extreme cases, humans may believe that they know something as metaphysically certain which is in fact dubious or beyond their limited comprehension. In Descartes' analysis of human faculties, then, two sources of error arise. Such

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[30] Descartes, *Méditations,* p. 203 and p. 209.

[31] Descartes, *Méditations,* p. 201.

[32] Descartes, *Principes*, AT, IX, p. 40.

faculties are by nature limited due to the imperfect condition of humanity and this fallibility is compounded by humans' misuse of their abilities.

The second core issue with Descartes' standard for certainty lies in the intersections and distinctions he draws between metaphysical inquiry and the practicalities of daily life. Whilst Descartes suspends his judgement to undertake more abstract metaphysical deliberation, he admits that humans cannot withdraw from the practicalities of our daily lives - which must continue - in such a manner. He recognises that practical situations sometimes inevitably arise and call upon us to form judgements, even when various factors may mean that we cannot yet be sure whether they are certain or not:

> Et ainsi, les actions de la vie ne souffrant souvent aucun délai, c'est une vérité très certaine que lorsqu'il n'est pas en notre pouvoir de discerner les plus vraies opinions, nous devons suivre les plus probables; et même, qu'encore que nous ne remarquions point davantage de probabilité aux unes qu'aux autres, nous devons néanmoins nous déterminer à quelques-unes.[33]

Descartes concedes that urgent situations often require us to act before we are able to resolve our doubts, such as when we are faced with equally persuasive evidence to believe or disbelieve the proposition in question.[34] Alternatively, we may be required to form judgements when we only have inconclusive evidence to support our opinions.[35] In such instances, it is beyond humans' ability to 'discerner les plus vraies opinions' and obtain metaphysical certainty. Descartes provides a preliminary solution for such situations in which certainty lies beyond human reach. He advises that we should decide upon and firmly follow a course of action, even if we can only base our decisions on the most probable judgements available to us at that moment.[36]

Descartes' thereby distinguishes between his standard for certainty in metaphysical inquiries and the uncertain yet probable judgements we are frequently called upon to make in our

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[33] Descartes, *Discours*, p. 57.

[34] Descartes, *Discours*, p. 57. *Méditations,* pp. 147-149. *Principes,* AT, IX, p. 26.

[35] Owens, 'Use of Doubt', p. 165.

[36] Descartes, *Discours*, p. 57.

everyday lives. Such a distinction suggests that there exist different kinds of doubt within his thought. Descartes asserts that the extreme epistemic form of doubt which we encounter in his metaphysical deliberations should neither be applied directly nor uncritically to 'la conduite de la vie' or our actions in general.[37] Our everyday opinions are not, however, immune from a more generalised form of doubt in Descartes' thought. Indeed, as the above situations of urgency and inconclusive evidence indicate, our opinions are very much prone to doubt for Descartes and may only ever remain probable. Yet this raises a significant question: if even our everyday opinions are subject to doubt, how are humans supposed to act in such an absence of certainty?

Descartes is here faced with comparable questions to those we encountered in Montaigne's *Essais*, as both thinkers question how to pursue knowledge in the face of such pervasive doubt. Descartes does not allow his reader to stagnate in such uncertainty, although his proposed solutions somewhat differ from those of Montaigne. Descartes advocates two principal, interconnected responses. The first lies in elaborating a provisional moral code. The second solution is contained in Descartes' probable conjectures which aim at certainty, even if this remains beyond human reach.

The first solution to the uncertainty of everyday life comprises a temporary set of rules which Descartes terms 'la morale par provision'. He recognises that even someone who is 'irrésolu en ses jugements' - just as Descartes is during his metaphysical inquiries - cannot abstain from daily life and so they must have some means of still being 'résolu en ses actions'.[38] He subsequently elaborates a provisional moral code to guide his actions whilst undertaking his metaphysical deliberation, which entails three principal rules:

> La première était d'obéir aux lois et aux coutumes de mon pays [...] et me gouvernant, en tout autre chose, suivant les opinions les plus modérées, et les plus éloignées de l'excès, qui fussent communément reçues en pratique par les mieux sensés de ceux avec lesquels j'aurais à vivre. [...] Ma seconde maxime était d'être le plus ferme et le plus résolu en mes actions que je pourrais, et de ne suivre pas moins constamment les opinions les plus douteuses, lorsque je m'y serais une

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[37] Descartes, *Principes,* AT, IX, p. 26.

[38] Descartes, *Discours*, p. 149.

fois déterminé, que si elles eussent été très assurées. [...] Ma troisième maxime était [...] de m'accoutumer à croire qu'il n'y a rien qui soit entièrement en notre pouvoir, que nos pensées [...][39]

Descartes first resolves to adopt the laws and customs of the country in which he resides, such that his actions accord with those of his compatriots. He secondly determines to only follow the most moderate opinions and to be as resolute in his beliefs as possible. Given that he can no longer depend upon his own judgements, Descartes maintains that his best option is to follow 'celles [les opinions] des mieux sensés', for this will avoid extremes and excesses of action. He decides to endorse the most probable opinions in the absence of certainty, as he believes that this will pose the least chance of adhering to untrue and uncertain judgements or of committing immoral acts. Finally, Descartes accepts human limitations and asserts that the only things that are entirely within our power are our thoughts.

In developing his provisional code, Descartes is not passively acceding to popular opinion or convention. He is actively and conservatively adopting the opinions or actions he deems most appropriate within the course of his everyday life, whilst still pursuing the possibility of truth and certainty.[40] Descartes' 'morale par provision' may offer some basic guidelines, but it is neither extensive nor entirely unproblematic. It raises several significant questions, among them how we are to determine which opinions are the most reasonable, moderate or probable. It is the question of probability that principally concerns us here. Not only does this concept intersect with Descartes' understanding of doubt, but it is also central to his second solution to the uncertainty of everyday life.

In reevaluating Descartes' philosophy, Harry Frankfurt, Margaret Wilson and Nicholas Wolterstorff have focused on the role of probability and conjecture as well as the distinction between metaphysics and everyday life.[41] They argue that Descartes does not intend for his extreme metaphysical doubt to apply to our everyday opinions; in his *Principes*, he instructs that we ought not employ 'ce doute pour la conduite de nos actions'.[42] Along with Owens, they

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[39] Descartes, *Discours*, pp. 55-58.

[40] Owens, 'Use of Doubt', p. 173.

[41] Frankfurt, *Dreamers,* p. 23. Wilson, *Descartes*, p. 38. Wolterstorff, *John Locke,* p. 192.

[42] Descartes, *Principes*, AT, IX, p. 26.

propose that diverse 'representational states' exist within Descartes' thought which are governed by different normative standards.[43] Belief is one such representational state and depends on metaphysical certainty.[44] Yet, as we have seen, Descartes acknowledges that there are situations in which such metaphysical certainty is unattainable. In my view, an additional representational state of conjecture - governed by the standard of probability rather than certainty - exists within Descartes' thought. Wilson and Wolterstorff draw a similar distinction between metaphysical certainty and the conjectures which govern daily life for Descartes.[45] They assert that he never seriously intended to doubt his most basic and common sense opinions in a metaphysical sense, given his distinction between philosophical thought and life.

I concur to an extent that Descartes does not expect his reader to apply his epistemic method to each of their everyday judgements. As he writes, such doubt is rather hyperbolic and primarily serves his metaphysical agenda:

> J'ai dit, sur la fin de la première Méditation, que des raisons très fortes et mûrement considérées nous pouvaient obliger de douter de toutes les choses que nous n'avions jamais encore assez clairement conçues, parce qu'en cet endroit-là je traitais seulement de ce doute universel dont j'ai souvent dit qu'il était métaphysique, hyperbolique, à n'appliquer en rien à la conduite de la vie.[46]

Descartes acknowledges that his metaphysical doubt is somewhat 'hyperbolique et ridicule' and affirms that it ought not be applied directly to 'la conduite de la vie'.[47] He does not, however, regard such doubt as entirely detached from everyday life. When introducing his epistemic method of radical doubt in the *Discours*, Descartes states that he desires to 'conduire ma vie beaucoup mieux' by establishing more certain foundations for knowledge.[48] This declaration suggests that he does envisage some connection between his metaphysical inquiry and the practicalities of daily life.

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[43] Owens, 'Use of Doubt', p. 165.

[44] Owens, 'Use of Doubt', p. 168. Wolterstorff, *John Locke,* p. 183.

[45] Wilson, *Descartes*, p. 37. Wolterstorff, *John Locke,* p. 191.

[46] Descartes, *Méditations,* p. 472.

[47] Descartes, *Méditations,* p. 211 and p. 472.

[48] Descartes, *Discours*, p. 44.

Descartes' discussion of our 'opinions probables' - or conjectures - offers insight into the connections he envisages between metaphysics and daily life and is integral to his second solution concerning everyday uncertainties. When employing the term 'probable', Descartes is referring neither to the most likely nor the most commonly held opinions. Probability is instead closely connected with his standard for metaphysical certainty. Whilst our 'opinions probables' may not fulfil his criteria for certainty, they continue to aim towards it. As such, they represent the opinions which are *most likely to be true*, even in cases where certainty is unattainable. Although such conjectures are based upon incomplete or uncertain information, Descartes considers them adequate to guide our everyday actions where necessary, including in the absence of certainty.[49]

For Descartes, many of the judgements we are called upon to form, accept and act upon in our daily lives are conjectures. The hypothetical situations above - in which judgements must be made urgently or based upon incomplete and uncertain information - all entail conjectures in the sense that we must act on the most probable opinions available in the moment. Descartes demonstrates the role of such conjectures in the sixth and final *méditation,* in which he reflects upon his metaphysical journey thus far. Despite doubting the existence of his corporeal body and the external material world at the start of his inquiry, he now suggests that he did not seriously mean to doubt such phenomena:

> Enfin, dans la sixième [Méditation] [...] j'y apporte toutes les raisons desquelles on peut conclure l'existence des choses matérielles: non que je les juge fort utiles pour prouver ce qu'elles prouvent, à savoir, qu'il y a un monde, que les hommes ont des corps, et autres choses semblables, qui n'ont jamais été mises en doute par aucun homme de bon sens.[50]

Whilst Descartes' metaphysical project requires him to question the existence of his corporeal body and the material world, he recognises that such experiences have never seriously been doubted 'par aucun homme de bon sens'.[51] Sensory information is neither 'si ferme ni si évidente' as that which we can obtain through the reasoned deliberation of the *esprit*. For Descartes,

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[49] Descartes, *Discours*, p. 57.

[50] Descartes, *Méditations,* pp. 52-53.

[51] Descartes, *Méditations,* pp. 52-53.

though, such uncertainty is no longer sufficient grounds upon which to doubt everything that the senses appear to tell us, nor does he mean for us to reasonably doubt the existence of the world or our bodies.[52] Such propositions represent probable conjectures which are most likely true and certain, even though they do not meet his standard for metaphysical certainty. We implicitly assent to such conjectures to ease the course of our everyday lives. It would be difficult to conduct our daily activities, for instance, without believing in the very physical world in which we exist and act.

Certain belief and probable conjecture are thus significant and interconnected representational states within Descartes' philosophical system. His standard for certainty and process of extreme doubt are primarily applicable to his metaphysical inquiry rather than the concerns of daily life. Such a standard enables Descartes to determine which of his former opinions qualify as metaphysical certainties upon which scientific knowledge can be more firmly grounded. Metaphysics and everyday life nevertheless remain intersecting spheres for Descartes. He recognises that our practical daily judgements can still aim at such a standard of metaphysical certainty to identify the most probable opinions and guide our actions. It is in this regard that Descartes advocates adhering to conjectures in the face of such pervasive uncertainties. The normative standard of probability which governs such conjectures can be applied to the broad range of judgements and opinions we are called on to form in our daily lives.

The representational states of belief and conjecture within Descartes' philosophy carry considerable implications for his perceptions of animal and human nature. In the previous section, we briefly considered how his standard for metaphysical certainty intersects with the distinct ontological statuses he attributes to animals and humans. Animals are corporeal automata which - contrary to humans - lack reason, self-consciousness and meaningful language. Beyond their status as automata, though, Descartes' metaphysical arguments cannot inform us what *kind* of machines animals might be. Are animals simply material bodies without any faculties whatsoever? Or are they machines in a different sense, such that they might possess particular or limited faculties? It is in this regard that Descartes' thought on animals

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[52] Descartes, *Méditations,* p. 187.

and his state of conjecture are intrinsically interconnected and can begin to tell us more about how he conceptualises animal nature.

3.3 Certainty, Conjecture and Animals in Descartes

Descartes' metaphysics has often been associated with an animal-human dichotomy on account of his denial of a rational *esprit* to animals and his assertion that they are automata. It is due to such metaphysical arguments that the beast-machine doctrine associated with Descartes became a prominent topic of debate among his contemporaries and in subsequent scholarly accounts. Here, I challenge such a narrative and propose that the beast-machine doctrine was more a construct of later Cartesianism than an intrinsic component of Descartes' philosophy.[53] Certain aspects of his thought indeed correspond with this doctrine, such as his claim that animal movement can be explained mechanistically or his denial of a rational *esprit* to them. In my view, though, Descartes' thought on animals is far more nuanced, subtle and complex than the assertion that they were little more than machines. When I mention the beast-machine doctrine in the present chapter, then, I do so whilst implicitly questioning its provenance and attribution to Descartes. Recent works have pursued a similar line of inquiry with regards to the beast-machine and typically adopt one of two principal strategies. John Cottingham and Peter Harrison argue that Descartes did not uphold this doctrine in its entirety, if at all.[54] On the other hand, Lex Newman and Gary Steiner propose that Descartes maintained some propositions of the beast-machine thesis, but that his thought on animals extended beyond this doctrine alone.[55] Not only do I question the provenance of the beast-machine doctrine, I simultaneously move away from such comparisons to reevaluate Descartes' thought on animals afresh.

Whilst the studies cited above offer valuable interpretations of Descartes' thought on animals, they are neither entirely unproblematic nor immune from criticism. Gary Steiner has charged Cottingham and Harrison with selectively reading Descartes' work, given that they often rely on

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[53] The impact of Descartes' philosophy and the origins of the beast-machine doctrine will be considered at greater length in the following chapter.

[54] Cottingham, 'A Brute', p. 551. Harrison, 'Descartes on Animals', p. 220.

[55] Newman, 'Unmasking Descartes', p. 389. Steiner, *Anthropocentrism*, p. 134.

brief quotations to support their readings.[56] Such "sound-bites" appear to oppose the beast-machine doctrine when taken in isolation, but assume a different meaning when contextualised within Descartes' wider philosophical system. Cottingham and Harrison's selective approach does not support the argument they advance, namely that Descartes did not uphold the beast-machine doctrine. As we have seen above, though, Descartes does clearly accept some propositions of this doctrine as true and certain. He states unequivocally that animals lack a rational soul or *esprit* in comparison to humans. Despite Cottingham and Harrison's selective sound-bites, Descartes' theory of animal nature is more nuanced than an outright acceptance or rejection of the beast-machine doctrine.

Newman and Steiner have not been subject to such charges of selective reading, as their analyses contextualise Descartes' comments on animal nature within his wider metaphysics. They offer a more nuanced account in this regard and conclude that - whilst Descartes upheld certain propositions of the beast-machine doctrine - he did not support all of its other assertions on animal nature.[57] The interpretations of Cottingham, Harrison, Newman and Steiner nevertheless remain limited and do not capture the complexity of Descartes' thought on animals, as they are all based on the premise that he either accepts or rejects the propositions of the beast-machine doctrine. There is little room for uncertainty or ambiguity in such a reading. By contrast, I propose that the representational state of conjecture intersects with Descartes' theory of animal nature and generates a middle ground which accounts to date have tended to obscure. Whilst Descartes proposes that animals are automata, for instance, it does not necessarily follow that they lack consciousness altogether. In many instances, his comments on animals are more conjectural than the beast-machine doctrine alone. I propose that if we are to comprehend the complexity of Descartes' comments on animal nature, we ought to consider them in conjunction with his concepts of certainty and conjecture, as they are all interconnected aspects of his thought.

I therefore regard the beast-machine doctrine as a problematic critical framework in continuing to examine Descartes' thought on animals. Adhering to such a framework has perpetuated

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[56] Steiner, *Anthropocentrism*, p. 134.

[57] Newman, 'Unmasking Descartes', p. 389. Steiner, *Anthropocentrism,* p. 134.

rather unequivocal interpretations of his philosophy. Even those who attempt to reevaluate his ontology of animals - such as Cottingham, Harrison, Newman and Steiner - predominantly continue to do so within the problematic referential framework of the beast-machine doctrine. In doing so, they lose much by detaching Descartes' comments on animal and human nature from his wider philosophy. As we began to see above, his assertions on animal and human nature are an integral part of his metaphysics and are closely connected with his response to early modern scepticism and his standard for metaphysical certainty. We ought to examine Descartes' theory of animal and human nature as an integral part of his wider metaphysics, beyond the beast-machine alone.

The scope of the current chapter cannot cover the entirety of Descartes' vast philosophical system or the complex connections between his perceptions of animal nature and the role of certainty and conjecture in his thought. I shall attempt, however, to bring a fresh perspective to his thought on animals by distancing my analysis from the referential framework of the beast-machine doctrine. I instead consider how Descartes' standard for metaphysical certainty and the role of conjecture in our daily lives intersect with his thought on animals. I contend that his representational state of conjecture significantly shapes his ideas on animal nature. I shall begin by considering the intersection between Descartes' standard for metaphysical certainty and his thought on animals, before turning to the influence of conjecture.

3.3.1 Metaphysical Certainty and Animals

As we explored above, Descartes' metaphysics relies on certain distinctions between animals and humans. We might question, however, why such an animal-human dichotomy is required at all. Descartes' originary truth of the *cogito* depends on the capacity of the human *esprit* to clearly and distinctly recognise itself as a rational, self-conscious and thinking substance. The *cogito* thus rests on the simultaneous distinctions between material and immaterial substance and between animals and humans to in turn ensure the clear and distinct status of Descartes' self-conscious, rational and immaterial human *esprit*.

Within such a dichotomous model, animals provide Descartes with an opposing ontological category against which to define the human *esprit* and its core essence. Through such

interspecies comparisons, animals are perceived as corporeal beings who are devoid of the immaterial *esprit* required for the *cogito* and so they are also incapable of reason, meaningful communication and self-consciousness. It is upon such grounds that Descartes likens animals to automata, although he by no means asserts that they *are* machines. He is rather stating that their actions can be sufficiently explained through physiological principles - without recourse to any rational substance which might self-consciously guide their actions - just as a machine's movements can be described mechanistically. Humanity is consequently defined as everything which animality is not, thereby enabling Descartes to assure the unique rational, self-conscious and immaterial status of the human *esprit* in contrast to animal automatism.

Throughout his works, Descartes draws on numerous animal species - among them monkeys, parrots and dogs - to exemplify his ontological distinction between animal automata and the human *esprit*. One such instance lies in his hypothetical discussion of a magpie who has been trained to speak upon seeing her mistress in anticipation of some reward, which raises core questions of animal consciousness, language and response:

> [...] si on apprend à une pie à dire bonjour à sa maîtresse lorsqu'elle la voit arriver, ce ne peut être qu'en faisant que la prolation de cette parole devienne le mouvement de quelqu'une de ses passions; à savoir, ce sera un mouvement de l'espérance qu'elle a de manger, si l'on a toujours accoutumé de lui donner quelque friandise lorsqu'elle la dit.[58]

Descartes here distinguishes between what he regards as "true language" and the speech sounds the magpie produces. True language conveys the thoughts or feelings of a rational and self-conscious *esprit*. Humans are capable of such true language, as we can employ words to 'déclarer aux autres nos pensées' or to 'répondre aux sens de tout ce qui se dira en sa présence' and so communicate something meaningful for Descartes.[59] By contrast, he does not deem the magpie's words to fulfil such criteria. He maintains that, in such trained interactions, animals do not act 'par connaissance, mais seulement par la disposition de leurs organes'.[60] In his view,

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[58] René Descartes, 'Descartes au Marquis de Newcastle, [Egmond, 23 Novembre 1646]', AT, IV (1901), pp. 568-577 (p. 574).

[59] Descartes, *Discours*, p. 92.

[60] Ibid, p. 92.

animals are incapable of true language, as they cannot consciously compose words or other meaningful signs as humans do to convey their inner thoughts or to respond to others.[61] Descartes concludes that the magpie's "response" depends solely upon the physical stimulus of seeing her mistress, rather than meaningfully communicating the bird's self-conscious thoughts and feelings.[62]

The faculties of reason, self-consciousness and language emerge as intrinsically connected within the above passage and comprise Descartes' core criteria for differentiating animals and humans. The example of the magpie simultaneously reveals two alternative definitions of "language" within Descartes' thought. He concedes that it is physically possible for animals to produce words or vocalisations in response to stimuli which cause 'quelque changement en ses organes'. They possess the organs to speak, as parrots and certain other animals - such as the magpie - can 'proférer des paroles ainsi que nous'.[63] Animals can therefore speak for Descartes, provided that such speech is conceptualised in a limited sense as a series of mechanistically produced sounds.

Animals' physical ability to produce vocalisations is not at issue. Descartes rather perceives them to lack the corequisite faculties of reason and self-consciousness. As he writes to the Marquess of Newcastle:

> [...] car, comme les chiens et quelques autres animaux nous expriment leurs passions, ils nous exprimeraient aussi bien leurs pensées, s'ils en avaient.[...] Ce qui me semble un très fort argument, pour prouver que ce qui fait que les bêtes ne parlent point comme nous, est qu'elles n'ont aucune pensée, et non point que les organes leur manquent.[64]

Given that animals have the physical organs required for speech, Descartes affirms that they would be capable of communicating rational thoughts, provided they possessed any. Based on

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[61] Descartes, *Discours*, p. 92.

[62] The core question of animal response will be discussed in greater depth below in section 3.3.2 and in the following chapters.

[63] Descartes, *Discours*, p. 93.

[64] Descartes, 'Marquis', AT, IV, p. 575.

animals' observable behaviours, though, he does not consider there to be any evidence that their speech sounds are independent of external stimuli, nor do they demonstrate that animals consciously 'pensent ce qu'ils disent'.[65] Animals' speech sounds instead arise solely from their natural and impulsive responses to stimuli for Descartes. His distinction between animal vocalisation and human speech reminds his reader of the latter's superiority in terms of their ability to meaningfully communicate versus animals' perceived lack of language.

Descartes was by no means the first to distinguish between animals and humans on the basis of language, thought and reason. His thought bears similarities to Aristotle's earlier distinction in this vein. In the *Politics*, Aristotle claims that humans are the most political among other animals due to their exclusive possession of reasoned discourse, which he terms *logos*.[66] His subsequent distinctions between animal *phonè* (or voice) and human language primarily concern their respective potential to communicate reasoned thought. For Aristotle, animals have a sensitive soul and so experience pleasurable and painful sensations.[67] Their concomitant possession of voice enables them to directly communicate such momentary and singular sensations so that they might build a political community with a common labour or objective.[68] Animal communication remains limited, though, for they do not share a faculty for intelligence and reason with humans.[69] Aristotle asserts that human language is mediated by *logos*; humans consequently differ from animals in possessing a special linguistic ability to convey their rational thoughts and internal mental experiences to others.[70] Such language serves a moral function as well, for humans can communicate their reasoned moral judgements to one

[65] René Descartes, 'Descartes à Morus, [Egmond, 5 Février 1649]', AT, V (1903), pp. 267-279 (p. 278). *Discours,* p. 93.

[66] Attila Simon, 'Man and Other Political Animals in Aristotle', in *Life After Literature: Perspectives of Biopoetics in Literature and Theory*, ed. by Zoltán Kulcsár-Szabó, Tamás Lénárt, Attila Simon and Roland Végső, Numanities - Arts and Humanities in Progress, ed. by Dario Martinelli, 19 vols (Cham: Springer Nature, 2016-22) XII (2020), pp. 55-66 (pp. 55-57).

[67] William J. Fortenbaugh, 'Aristotle: Animals, Emotion and Moral Virtue', *Arethusa,* 4 (1971), 137-165 (p. 141).

[68] Simon, 'Political Animals', p. 58.

[69] Fortenbaugh, 'Aristotle', p. 142.

[70] Joseph Claude Evans, *Strategies of Deconstruction: Derrida and the Myth of the Voice* (Minneapolis & Oxford: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), p. 148. Simon, 'Political Animals', p. 59.

another.[71] Aristotle ultimately distinguishes between animals' limited ability to convey their immediate physical sensations versus humans' extensive communicative ability to share their inner rational thoughts. Whilst crucial distinctions remain between Aristotle and Descartes' philosophies - such as the theory of a sensitive soul compared to animal automatism - both draw significant distinctions between animals and humans based on their communicative abilities and respective lack or possession of reason.

Descartes maintains an ontological distinction between animals and humans based on their difference in terms of reason, self-consciousness and true language. Such a dichotomy maintains the clear and distinct status of his *cogito* and forms the basis of his comparison of animals to machines which do not think, speak or act with reason. Whilst Descartes maintains such propositions as true and certain, not all of his ideas on animals attain the same level of metaphysical certainty. His very comparison of animals to machines begins to reveal the inherent uncertainty within his thought. As Descartes writes to More, his mechanistic theory is only the most *probable* explanation of animal nature based on his metaphysical conception of the *cogito* and human *esprit*, but he can neither prove nor disprove it with certainty. Indeed, the term automata solely designates an entity which is self-moving. Whilst Descartes maintains that animals do move of their own accord, he cannot definitively explain how they do so or entirely rule out alternative possibilities such as an animating animal soul.

If automatism is only the most probable explanation, Descartes implicitly acknowledges that alternative theories of animal nature exist. He repeatedly recognises, for instance, that his automatistic interpretation runs contrary to what many people commonly believe about animals. As he writes in a letter to Reneri:

> Il est certain que la ressemblance qui est entre la plupart des actions des bêtes et les nôtres nous a donné, dès le commencement de notre vie, tant d'occasions de juger qu'elles agissent par un principe intérieur semblable à celui qui est en nous, c'est-à-dire par le moyen d'une âme qui a des

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[71] Fortenbaugh, 'Aristotle', p. 141.

sentiments et des passions comme les nôtres, que nous sommes tous naturellement préoccupés de cette opinion.[72]

Descartes recognises that, from an early age, many of us believe that animals possess some form of soul which motivates their behaviours due to the similarities we perceive between animal and human actions. He does not reject such alternative explanations altogether and even acknowledges the intellectual and psychological hold they can have upon us, as he did when establishing his standard for metaphysical certainty. Descartes' comments here intersect with the role of certainty, probability and conjecture examined above. To uphold his metaphysical argument, he must maintain that animals are distinct from humans based upon the faculties of reason, self-consciousness and language. Within our everyday lives, though, Descartes recognises that our ideas on animal nature are open to a greater degree of uncertainty and conjecture. As such, his writings explore various possible and probable theories about the kind of machines animals might be, even if they remain speculative.

3.3.2 Probability, Conjecture and Animals

Beyond the ontological animal-human distinction examined above, Descartes does not claim any of his other interpretations of animal nature as true or certain in accordance with his metaphysical standard. Such propositions only attain the status of probable conjectures for Descartes, as he cannot conceive of them clearly or distinctly. This final section considers two principal manners in which his concept of conjecture intersects with his perceptions of animal nature. I shall first examine how Descartes presents his theory of animal automatism as the most probable explanation of their movements; he does not assert his idea of animal machines as truth or certainty, but only as one potential interpretation, albeit it the most persuasive. I then consider what kind of machines animals may be for Descartes through scrutinising his alternative and conjectural theories on their nature. I challenge the narrative of the beast-machine doctrine by demonstrating that his thought on animals is not as equivocal or categorical as has often been assumed. Overall, I seek to show that animals were more than mere machines for Descartes.

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[72] René Descartes, 'Descartes à *** [Reneri], [Mars 1638]', AT, II (1898), pp. 34-47 (p. 39).

In one correspondence with Henry More, Descartes admits that he is doubtful as to whether animal nature can be comprehended in its entirety or with certainty. Although he affirms that animals lack a rational *esprit*, Descartes here concedes that we cannot completely disprove that animals are devoid of other faculties or forms of thought, given that the human mind does not 'reach into their hearts'.[73] He implicitly acknowledges that humans' cognitive and perceptual faculties are of 'une perfection limitée' and can equally be 'fautive et trompeuse'.[74] Given the limits of human comprehension, Descartes can only claim his theory of animal automatism to be the most probable explanation of their actions.[75] He employs an argument from parsimony to support his interpretation. Descartes draws upon animals' observable behaviours and questions whether their actions arise from a conjunction of corporeal movements and an incorporeal mind - as in the case of humans - or from one of these principles alone. He concludes that it is improbable that animals possess an immaterial *esprit,* given that their actions can be adequately explained by physiological principles alone.[76] Such a mechanistic explanation remains probable at best, though, as it does not satisfy Descartes' standard for metaphysical certainty; he can neither clearly nor distinctly conceive that animals are in fact automata due to the limits of human knowledge. He cannot, then, assert with absolute certainty that animals are devoid of all forms of consciousness or thought which might guide their physical actions. The status of automata which Descartes attributes to animals is a probable conjecture based upon the empirical evidence of animals' actions and humans' fallible powers of reason.

Descartes' conjectural theory of animal automatism leaves open the possibility of alternative perceptions of animal nature, given both his lack of certainty and his specific concept of an automaton. In conceding that human knowledge is limited and that not all propositions can attain a standard of metaphysical certainty, Descartes' thought retains a space of uncertainty in which different conjectures about animal nature can arise. In his aforementioned letter to More, he recognises various pervasive and commonly held beliefs about animal nature. In the letter to Reneri, quoted above, Descartes observes that we often become accustomed to believing that

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[73] Descartes, 'Morus', AT, V, pp. 276-277.

[74] Descartes, *Méditations*, pp. 201-203.

[75] Descartes, 'Morus', AT, V, p. 277.

[76] Descartes, 'Morus', AT, V, pp. 276-277.

animals can think and that they possess a soul comparable to that of humans, due to the similarities we observe between animal and human behaviour.[77] By his own admission, Descartes can neither affirm nor reject such possibilities with any certainty. The imperfection of human reason and knowledge leads him to assert that his theory of animal automatism is the most likely to be true, although he cannot entirely discount such alternative interpretations.

The possibility of alternative explanations of animal nature simultaneously depends on the specific sense in which Descartes conceptualises automata. This term requires brief unpacking. Descartes does not maintain that animals *are* machines, as proponents of the beast-machine doctrine often assert. His theory of automatism is rather one component within his wider metaphysical project which seeks to explain an array of natural phenomena mechanistically; his automatism therefore applies to the movement of any material substance, including animal and human bodies. As Descartes writes to the Marquess of Newcastle, discussing animal and human physiology:

> Enfin il n'y a aucune de nos actions extérieures qui puissent assurer ceux qui les examinent que notre corps n'est pas seulement une machine qui se remue de soi-même.[78]

Descartes here reflects on how human movements would likely appear to a hypothetical external observer. He claims that there would be nothing in such observable actions which would contradict the theory that the human body is simply 'une machine qui se remue de soi-même' and which can feel, move or suffer in a comparable way to animals.[79] It is the corporeal composition of animal and human bodies - their multitude of bones, muscles, nerves and arteries - which comprises the central component of his automatistic theory explaining the movements of a material body and its respective organs through physiological principles.[80]

Whilst certain human actions can be explained mechanically, Descartes contends that his automatistic theory remains inadequate when it comes to identifiably reasoned behaviours, such

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[77] Descartes, 'Morus', AT, V, pp. 275-276.

[78] Descartes, 'Marquis', AT, IV, p. 574.

[79] Ibid, p. 574.

[80] Descartes, *Discours,* p. 91.

as the meaningful communication touched on above.[81] Such actions depend on the additional immaterial faculties of the rational and self-conscious human *esprit*.[82] Animals are incapable of such reasoned behaviours for Descartes, though; this provides him with further evidence that they lack an immaterial *esprit* and so can be reduced to their corporeality. Humans, by contrast, are a composite of an automatistic corporeal body and a rational immaterial *esprit*. Such a material-immaterial composite nevertheless points to a significant aspect in Descartes' concept of animal automatism. Although certain aspects of animals' status are rather definitive - such as their lack of a rational *esprit* - their classification as automata does not necessarily prevent them from possessing other, less categorical, immaterial faculties. Indeed, humans' physical status of automata does not preclude them from possessing an array of immaterial faculties. Descartes' theory of automatism thereby contains an intrinsic uncertainty and degree of interpretative liberty. His distinction between corporeal and immaterial substances is perhaps not as rigid or definitive as it first appears. Descartes' categories instead constitute a more fluid spectrum whereby certain immaterial faculties can be attributed to certain material substances.

Descartes' concept of automata carries considerable implications for his perceptions of animal nature. As with human automata, animals' status as machines does not necessarily preclude them from possessing particular immaterial faculties or capacities. Descartes' assertion that his theory of automatism is only ever the most *probable* explanation equally leaves animal nature open to other interpretations and uncertainties. Whilst he denies a rational and self-conscious *esprit* to animals, they are more than just corporeal machines, as there remains a multitude of other faculties which they might possess. Yet such a possibility raises considerable critical questions in examining Descartes' perceptions of animal nature, crucially: what other faculties does he deem animals to possess, to what degree and in what form? Descartes' observations of animal behaviours and his conjectural interpretations are revealing in this regard, as they offer insight into the kind of machines he perceives animals to be. I shall briefly consider some of these possibilities and, in doing so, once more challenge the narrative of the beast-machine. I intend to demonstrate that Descartes' conjectures instead reveal more nuanced and complex perceptions of animal nature. Although he maintains certain crucial distinctions between

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[81] Descartes, 'Marquis', AT, IV, p. 574.
[82] Ibid, p. 574.

animals and humans, his thought does not entirely sever interspecies connections and instead establishes differences of degree or form rather than categorical dichotomies.

Animals may be corporeal automata, but they are by no means entirely unfeeling machines for Descartes. Having conceded that he cannot know their 'hearts and minds' with any certainty, his works contain various conjectures on animal nature and its possibilities. An extensive exploration of the complete array of possible immaterial faculties that Descartes may or may not perceive animals to possess is beyond our scope here. I intend, however, to focus upon four principal interconnected capacities which Descartes contemplates in relation to animals: feeling or sensation, response, consciousness and forms of thought.

Descartes' hypothetical discussion of physical sensation in humans introduces the possibility that such immaterial faculties could also be attributed to animals. He considers the capacities humans might still possess if they were entirely corporeal beings, devoid of the rational and self-conscious *esprit*. Descartes proposes that, in such a case, humans would still feel certain physical sensations due to both internal and external stimuli acting upon their bodies.[83] Such sensations would be purely mechanical processes dependent on the movement of 'animal spirits' and passions within the automatistic human body. Such 'animal spirits' constitute an integral part of his mechanistic theory of movement, which opposes Aristotle's theory of the sensitive soul.[84] Descartes conceptualises corporeal bodies as composed of various organs and physical elements, operating in an automatistic system which acts on input from a rational mind or from physical and corporeal stimuli.[85] As he writes of external physical stimuli:

> [...] comment la lumière, les sons, les odeurs, les goûts, la chaleur, et toutes les autres qualités des
> objets extérieurs y peuvent imprimer diverses idées par l'entremise des sens; comment la faim, la

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[83] Descartes, *Méditations*, p. 201. 'Descartes à Elisabeth, [Egmond, 6 Octobre 1645]', AT, IV, pp. 304-317 (pp. 310-311).

[84] Gary Hatfield, 'The *Passions of the Soul* and Descartes' machine psychology', *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science,* 38 (2007), 1-35 (p. 5).

[85] Melehy, 'Silencing', p. 265.

soif, et les autres passions intérieures, y peuvent aussi envoyer les leurs; [...] distribuant les esprits animaux dans les muscles, faire mouvoir les membres de ce corps en autant de diverses façons.[86]

Descartes proposes that stimuli - such as sounds and tastes, but also sensations such as hunger, thirst or pain - cause 'animal spirits' to flow throughout the human or animal body. The warmth of the heart causes such spirits to flow to the brain, where the pineal gland filters and distributes them throughout the relevant body parts via veins, nerves and muscles. The concentration and various properties of the animal spirits in turn cause corporeal components to inflate or deflate, resulting in movement.[87] Descartes' theory of animal spirits thereby explains corporeal movements mechanistically, even whilst the animal or human in question remains conscious of the sensations generated by hunger, thirst or their other 'passions intérieures'.

Descartes' hypothetical discussion of human corporeal machines could logically be extended to his ideas on animal automata. In lacking the capacity for rational thought, animals are comparable to the human body without an *esprit*. Descartes must therefore concede that animals can feel certain physical sensations just as a human automaton would. He indeed affirms that animals *do* experience various physical sensations, including 'toutes celles qui peuvent être en nous [les hommes] sans que nous y pensions';[88] animals can accordingly feel hunger, thirst, pleasure and even pain.[89] As automata, though, Descartes maintains that animals can only experience those sensations which rely upon 'la disposition de leurs organes' and so they remain incapable of rational or self-conscious reflection upon their experiences.[90]

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[86] Descartes, *Discours*, p. 91.

[87] Erik-Jan Bos, 'Descartes and Regius on the Pineal Gland and the Animal Spirits, and a Letter of Regius on the True Seat of the Soul', in *Descartes and Cartesianism: Essays in Honour of Desmond Clarke,* ed. by Stephen Gaukroger and Catherine Wilson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 95-111 (pp. 96-97). Desmond Clarke, *Descartes' Theory of Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 109. Hatfield, '*Passions',* p. 17.

[88] Descartes, *Discours*, p. 84.

[89] Descartes, *Méditations*, pp. 201-203.

[90] Descartes, *Discours*, p. 94.

The possibility that animals can experience physical sensations intersects with Descartes' concept of soul and the forms thereof he alternately denies or attributes to animals. As we have seen, he explicitly and repeatedly declares that the rational, immortal and self-conscious *esprit* is unique to humanity. Descartes does not, though, deny that animals might possess an alternative form of soul which remains distinct from that of humans. He subsequently attributes a form of corporeal soul to them which he believes is contained within their blood and the *esprits animaux*.[91] Although this may initially appear to resemble Aristotle's sensitive soul - which claimed that a form of mortal soul animated animals' bodies - Descartes is opposed to such a concept. Given his substance dualism, he contends that animals cannot possess any kind of immaterial soul, whether mortal or immortal. Descartes' theory of automatism alternatively explains their movement and responses to stimuli in mechanistic terms, whilst animals' souls solely comprise their corporeal composition and the functioning of the *esprits animaux* within their blood.

Animals' probable ability to experience physical sensation - and the possibility of a corporeal soul - raise additional questions as to how Descartes perceives their nature. One significant question with regard to such faculties is that of animal response: can animals respond to stimuli and, if so, how? The core question remains as to whether Descartes perceives animals to be capable of responding to stimuli in any manner beyond the rational, self-conscious and linguistic responses of which they are incapable. His hypothetical example of the magpie, discussed above, suggests that animals can indeed respond in some manner for Descartes, even if it remains rudimentary in comparison to that of humans.

In his interpretation of the interaction between the magpie and her mistress, the corvid consistently and repeatedly responds to the external stimulus of seeing her mistress by pronouncing the words she has learnt. In doing so, the bird implicitly responds to some internal stimulus through 'le mouvement de quelqu'une de ses passions'.[92] Descartes grants that animals can respond to such *passions* and even convey them to their human companions in some manner. He notes that 'les chiens et quelques autres animaux nous expriment leurs passions' insofar as

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[91] René Descartes, 'Descartes à Plempius, [3 Octobre 1637]', AT, I (1897), pp. 412-431 (pp. 413-414).
[92] Descartes, 'Marquis', AT, IV, p. 574.

such *passions* and sensations depend upon their corporeal nature.[93] Descartes elaborates on animals' ability to respond to internal and external stimuli in his correspondence with Elisabeth of Bohemia. He writes that 'diverses impressions' can form within animals' brains based on the various internal and external stimuli which an object provokes. Such impressions form:

> [...] les unes par les objets extérieurs qui meuvent les sens, les autres par les dispositions intérieures du corps, ou par les vestiges des impressions précédentes qui sont demeurées en la mémoire.[94]

Descartes advances that animals can indeed experience and respond to internal stimuli on account of either their corporeal disposition and due to certain conscious 'impressions précédentes' which he terms memory. Internal stimuli arise from such memory in the case of the magpie; the bird remembers the past experiences of seeing her mistress, of responding through her trained verbal response and of the favourable outcome in receiving some reward. The magpie thereby demonstrates memory of past events and an ability to synthesise them with her current experience to translate them into an appropriate response. Descartes terms such an ability 'ésperance' - or hope - which implies that the bird's temporal awareness also extends into the future as she can anticipate a repeated desirable outcome. The magpie's response to both external and internal stimuli suggests to Descartes that animals most probably possess some form of unifying temporal consciousness which enables them to be aware of, process and respond appropriately to stimuli.

Such temporal awareness is not the extent of animals' potential consciousness for Descartes. Pursuing this line of inquiry, two critical questions arise: what *kind* of consciousness does Descartes envisage for animals and does it bear any similarity to that of humans? We have already seen that he rejects the proposition that animals possess self-consciousness akin to that required for the human *esprit*; animals do not, then, have a sense of being a unified self or subject. Descartes' hypothetical example of the magpie nevertheless leaves open the possibility that animals may possess alternative forms of consciousness.

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[93] Descartes, 'Marquis', AT, IV, p. 575.
[94] Descartes, 'Elisabeth', AT, IV, p. 310.

Descartes' concept of 'la pensée' (thought) and its relation to physical sensation offer insight into the two critical questions posed above concerning animal consciousness. In his final *méditation*, Descartes elaborates on his ideas of mind and body and the interactions between them. He concludes that - although his mind is a distinct substance from his body - he is 'conjoint très étroitement et tellement confondu et mêlé, que je compose comme un seul tout avec lui'.[95] Such a mind-body composite gives rise to 'façons confuses de penser' which involve both a physical sensation in the body and a conscious phenomenological experience. Rational and self-conscious deliberation is only one mode of thought within Descartes' philosophical system. As he writes in his correspondence, he comprehends 'la pensée' to comprise not only 'les opérations de l'âme', but also 'les fonctions de voir, d'ouïr et de se déterminer à un mouvement'.[96] Whilst rational thought may be unique to the human *esprit*, then, another form of thought emerges from the interaction between the consciousness and the material functions and sensations of the body.

Descartes elaborates on such confused modes of thought by discussing the 'sentiments confus' of hunger, thirst and pain:

> [...] lorsque mon corps a besoin de boire ou de manger, je connaîtrais simplement cela même, sans en être averti par des sentiments confus de faim et de soif. Car en effet, tous ces sentiments de faim, de soif, de douleur etc. ne sont autre chose que de certaines façons confuses de penser.[97]

Physical sensations here generate a form of thought which involves the material body and a level of consciousness for Descartes. Within such a process, corporeal sensations are consciously registered, processed and interpreted within animal and human bodies. Descartes does not restrict such confused modes of thought to humans alone. From the similarity of human and animal bodies, he speculates that animals also experience 'quelque pensée jointe à ces organes, ainsi que nous expérimentons en nous'.[98] Descartes asserts that - just as with physical sensation

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[95] Descartes, *Méditations*, pp. 193-195.

[96] Descartes, 'Descartes à ***', AT, II, p. 34.

[97] Descartes, *Méditations*, pp. 193-195.

[98] Descartes, 'Marquis', AT, IV, p. 576.

- animals *might* be capable of such confused thoughts insofar as they rely upon their corporeal organs and processes. It is in this respect that physical sensations arising from 'la lumière, les sons, les goûts, la chaleur et toutes les autres qualités des objets extérieurs' can generate a response from animals in the form of such confused modes of thought.[99] Descartes thereby grants a further level of consciousness to animals. They do not simply react to stimuli in the manner of a machine, but possess a particular temporal and corporeal awareness and level of consciousness, even though this remains distinct from the rational and self-conscious human *esprit.*

Descartes draws on everyday observations of animal behaviours in his exploration of their nature and potential internal processes. He reads such examples speculatively to decide upon what he considers the most probable, or most likely to be certain, interpretation of animal nature. His writings reveal a perception of animals as automata which lack a rational *esprit,* but which *do* feel, have a level of consciousness and can respond to internal or external stimuli. Descartes is nevertheless aware that these are only conjectures and not certainties and so he cannot entirely rule out alternative theories of animal nature. He recognises such limitations of his metaphysical inquiry and admits that - for all his and others' efforts - we might never truly know about animals' lives with any certainty, as this lies beyond human comprehension. It is in this respect that his thought on animals intersects with his metaphysical response to scepticism and standard for certainty, instead operating in a space of doubt and conjecture.

3.4 Conclusion

Descartes' response to scepticism is intimately connected with his theories of animal and human nature. Reading these two facets of his philosophy in tandem, I have here examined how his concepts of metaphysical certainty and conjecture shape what he believes humans can and cannot know about animals. In considering such intersections, I have challenged the dominant narrative which focuses on the beast-machine doctrine and demonstrated that Descartes' perceptions of animals were more complex and contained a greater degree of uncertainty than

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[99] Descartes, *Discours*, p. 91. *Principes*, AT, IX, p. 28.

has often been credited to date. I hereby hope to open new avenues for study which might reposition Descartes within the scholarly narrative surrounding the "animal question" in early modern France.

In addition to his thought on animals, Descartes' philosophical works responded to the core questions raised by early modern scepticism concerning the limitations of human reason to provide true or certain knowledge. His *Méditations* and *Discours* sought to establish a standard for metaphysical certainty in an endeavour to provide firmer foundations for human knowledge. Descartes did not, however, intend for all human beliefs to be measured against such a standard. He acknowledged the impossibility of applying his criteria for metaphysical certainty in everyday situations in which humans must act upon incomplete knowledge or without delay.

In my view, Descartes' philosophy comprises several distinct forms of doubt - or representational states - which are governed by different normative standards. Whilst the state of belief adheres to his standard for metaphysical certainty, conjecture performs an equally important role within his thought and is based upon a standard of probability. Descartes' conjectures accept that metaphysical certainty is sometimes beyond human reach, but also continue to pursue partial and provisional knowledge. In doing so, they aim towards certainty by seeking interpretations of phenomena which are the most probable or likely to be true.

Descartes' representational states of metaphysical certainty and conjecture intersect with his theory of animal nature and considerably shape his perceptions of both animals and humans. He must maintain an animal-human dichotomy - based on his denial of reason, self-consciousness and meaningful language to animals - to remain consistent with his metaphysical arguments on the *cogito*, substance dualism and clear and distinct perception. Descartes therefore states that animals are automata in the sense that their actions can be explained through physiological principles alone and without recourse to a rational and immaterial mind. Beyond their metaphysical status, though, Descartes' thought on animals is more open to doubt and conjecture. Within his ontological framework, it remains possible for animals to possess various immaterial faculties or forms thereof and to be more than purely corporeal machines. Descartes recognises that he cannot claim to know animal nature with certainty. He alternatively observes

their outward behaviours to speculate that they are likely sentient, conscious and responsive beings who possess various confused modes of thought.

Descartes' perceptions of animal nature are thus far more nuanced and uncertain than they have frequently appeared in scholarly accounts to date. His philosophy gained popularity in seventeenth-century France and shaped debates for and against the theory of animal automatism - and its ethical implications for the treatment of animals - for decades to come. Descartes' works principally inspired the development of Cartesianism in early modern France. This philosophical and scientific system perpetuated and expanded on the principal tenets of his thought and has equally been credited with developing the beast-machine doctrine. Descartes' influence in early modern France ought not to be limited to this doctrine alone, though. His works inspired numerous interpretations which both supported and opposed the beast-machine thesis or which employed Descartes' thought alongside other intellectual, cultural and theological frameworks. Such multiple and diverse reinterpretations of Descartes and the beast-machine doctrine in early modern France are deserving of further scrutiny.

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Ripples in the Water:
Interpretations of Montaigne and Descartes

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Descartes' metaphysics and his ideas on animals inspired an array of responses following the *Méditations* and *Discours de la méthode*. Contemporary and later thinkers - such as Nicolas Malebranche or Antoine Arnauld - developed his thought into a distinct doctrine known as Cartesianism, which became one of the dominant intellectual influences in France following Descartes' death in 1650.[1] Early Cartesians were a disparate group of thinkers and did not expound a unified philosophical doctrine. They comprised devout disciples and more critical readers who both admired and attempted to reform Descartes' philosophy. Cartesian thinkers read his works within diverse intellectual, cultural and theological frameworks and thus elaborated philosophies that could be quite different to that of Descartes.

Descartes' theory of animal automatism was subject to significant reinterpretation by Cartesian thinkers. They advanced what became known as the beast-machine doctrine, as elaborated in the previous chapter, which found favour in the *universités* and ecclesiastical circles of the late seventeenth century.[2] The Cartesians remained distinct thinkers with their own theories and concerns. Their reception of Descartes' thought - and his ideas on animals specifically - assumed diverse forms, such that contemporaries and subsequent scholars have questioned

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[1] Francisque Bouillier, *Histoire de la philosophie cartésienne*, 2 vols (Paris: Durand, Libraire, 1854), I (1854), p. 411. Tad M. Schmaltz, 'Introduction', in *Receptions of Descartes: Cartesianism and anti-Cartesianism in early modern Europe*, ed. by Tad M. Schmaltz, Routledge Studies in Seventeenth-Century Philosophy, 8 vols (London & New York: Routledge, 1998-2005), VIII (2005), pp. xii-xviii (p. xii).

[2] Eric Baratay, 'L'Église et la théorie de l'animal machine aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles', *HAL Archive ouverte en Sciences de l'Homme et de la Société* (Paris, 1986), 3-9 (p. 7).

what it meant to be a Cartesian in early modern France.[3] The answer to such a question is far from clear-cut. Various thinkers may alternately be classed as Cartesian or anti-Cartesian, depending on the elements of Descartes' philosophy which are held as essential to this doctrine.

There are few clear divisions between opponents and proponents of Cartesianism in seventeenth-century France, although there have been several attempts to clarify its core identifying components. To rigidly define this school of thought in such a manner perhaps risks anachronism, though, as Cartesianism in early modern France was characterised by a certain flexibility and mutability. Sophie Roux has recently proposed a more fluid approach and argues that there is no single way to trace the demarcations between partisans and opponents of Descartes in seventeenth-century France.[4] She instead suggests that we attend to significant controversies among these thinkers as well as the resemblances and differences between their ideas. Roux identifies the question of animal nature as one such critical debate among Cartesian thinkers in late seventeenth-century France. This view is not confined to later scholarship, but was also recognised by contemporary thinkers. Gabriel Daniel - a French Jesuit historian writing towards the end of the seventeenth century - similarly identified 'la doctrine des Automates' and its application to animals as a 'point essentiel du cartésianisme'.[5] In the period between the 1660s and the 1680s, then, the debate over animal nature constituted a core issue within French Cartesianism. I here employ the term Cartesian in a descriptive, rather than a definitive, manner to refer to early modern thinkers who broadly supported and developed Descartes' theory of animal automatism.

Despite their considerable impact, I argue that Descartes and Cartesianism were not the only influences upon French perceptions of animals in the seventeenth century. Thinkers such as

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[3] Jean-Christophe Bardout, 'The Ambiguities of Malebranche's Cartesianism', in *The Oxford Handbook of Descartes and Cartesianism,* ed. by Steven Nadler, Tad M. Schmaltz and Delphine Antoine-Mahut (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 358-373 (p. 358). Sophie Roux, 'Pour une conception polémique du cartésianisme. Ignace-Gaston Pardies et Antoine Dilly dans la querelle de l'âme des bêtes: Qu'est-ce qu'être cartésien ?', *ENS Editions,* (2013), 315-337 (p. 316).

[4] Roux, 'Conception polémique', p. 320.

[5] Gabriel Daniel, *Suite du voyage du monde de Descartes ou Nouvelles difficultés proposées à l'auteur du Voyage du monde de Descartes, touchant la connaissance des bêtes* (Amsterdam: P. Mortier, 1693), pp. 3-4.

Marin Cureau de la Chambre (1594 - 1669) and Guillaume-Hyacinthe Bougeant (1690 - 1743) opposed the beast-machine doctrine and elaborated their own distinct theories of animal nature, soul and consciousness. They drew upon alternative intellectual frameworks - which I will discuss in this chapter - including Christian theology and Montaigne's ideas on the limitations of human knowledge. Their works are situated in a referential framework where Descartes' metaphysics, the Cartesian beast-machine, Christian theology and Montaigne's doubt converge. Bougeant and Cureau remained active and critical readers of existing philosophies and employed them to advance their own distinctive theories. Their works afford greater and more explicit attention to the potential moral implications of our theories of animal nature and evince an increasing ethical impulse of care towards animals. I propose that Descartes and Montaigne's philosophies were like drops in a lake, interjecting into debates surrounding the "animal question" in early modern France. From these initial drops, their ideas radiated out in the intellectual and cultural climate of France; some ideas faded whilst others were developed and altered as they collided with other ripples around the central questions of animal nature and of care.

The present and following chapters will consider various ripples in greater depth. The current chapter examines how Cartesian thinkers, Guillaume-Hyacinthe Bougeant and Marin Cureau de la Chambre reinterpreted Descartes' metaphysics and Montaigne's doubt alongside other intellectual, cultural and theological frameworks. I demonstrate that - whilst these thinkers drew upon the philosophical frameworks of Descartes and Montaigne - they were simultaneously active and creative readers who developed their own theories of animal nature. I ultimately argue that reinterpretations of Montaigne and Descartes in early modern France occurred in neither a linear nor a chronological fashion. Like ripples on water, they spread in numerous directions, merged and formed new currents. The history of ideas rarely follows an orderly chronological progression and is instead composed of conversations, debates and conflicts which recur over time. I here pursue thematic connections, rather than a chronological progression, to trace these ripples in early modern France. It is for this reason that I examine the works of Bougeant before those of Cureau, although he preceded Bougeant by several decades and wrote contemporaneously with Descartes in the 1630s-1640s. Where Bougeant draws upon the ideas of Cartesian thinkers, I contend that Cureau was not a reactionary to the

Cartesian beast-machine doctrine. His thought was instead part of conversations on animal nature which occurred in conjunction and in reference to Descartes. In pursuing thematic connections, I hope to do justice to the complex ebb and flow of ideas on animal nature and care within early modern France, even where this does not follow a linear chronology.

The following chapter comprises three sections. The first examines how Cartesian reinterpretations of Descartes' metaphysics gave rise to the beast-machine doctrine. I challenge the prevailing scholarly narrative - particularly within anglophone accounts - and contend that the animal machine was more a product of later Cartesianism than an intrinsic component of Descartes' metaphysics. In exploring the origins of the beast-machine, I focus chiefly on how Cartesian thinkers sought to resolve the contentions raised against Descartes' concept of animal soul. In doing so, they read his metaphysics alongside Christian theology and elaborated the beast-machine thesis to protect the immortal and specific nature of the human soul.

The second section considers the work of Guillaume-Hyacinthe Bougeant and his alternative response to the theological contentions identified by Cartesian thinkers. I examine how Bougeant reads Christian theology alongside Cartesian substance dualism to posit a theory of animal soul which is compatible with the immortality and specificity of the human soul, an issue which had been problematic for Cartesian thinkers. I then consider how Bougeant's thought retains a fundamental uncertainty. He questions the limits of human knowledge and perception along similar lines to Montaigne and concludes that animal experience lies beyond complete human comprehension. Bougeant nevertheless maintains that humans can speculate on animals' potential experiences through interpreting their corporeal gestures. Crucially, his work reorients attention onto the importance of emotion in our interactions with animals and the ways we treat them. For Bougeant, it is their probable status as social creatures - who participate in significant emotional and interspecies relationships with humans - which contains a moral impulse to care for the animal companions with whom we share our lives.

In the final section, I explore Marin Cureau de la Chambre's argument for animal consciousness and reason to consider how he employs similar concepts to Descartes, but develops them in a different manner. I demonstrate how Cureau's thought once more expresses a fundamental

doubt concerning animal experience, similarly to Montaigne and Bougeant. In response, he reads animals' corporeal gestures and interprets their communicative vocalisations to speculate on what they may be thinking, feeling and experiencing. Finally, I consider how Cureau affords more explicit attention to the moral implications of the ways humans perceive and interact with animals. Given the uncertainty in his thought, he affords animals "the benefit of the doubt" and advocates a response of concern, caution and care towards them.

4.1 Kicking the Dog: The Cartesian Beast-Machine

Descartes' theory of animal automatism became a hotly debated topic in the French academies and salons from the 1660s onwards and attracted many opponents.[6] Cartesian thinkers sought to strengthen the elements of Descartes' philosophy that were prone to criticism. The beast-machine thesis subsequently arose from the Cartesians' active and critical reading of Descartes' metaphysics alongside other philosophical and theological frameworks. Although this doctrine is still often attributed to Descartes, I once more contend that it was less an intrinsic component of his thought than a result of Cartesian reinterpretations.

The following section considers how intellectual and theological contentions shaped the Cartesian interpretation of Descartes' metaphysics and contributed to the development of the beast-machine doctrine. An examination of all the early modern thinkers who identified as Cartesian is beyond the scope of the present chapter. My analysis shall focus upon three notable thinkers - Nicolas Malebranche, Antoine Dilly and Jean Darmanson - who wrote on Descartes' theory of animal nature and who can be considered Cartesian according to the definition outlined above. They engaged in a dialogue with Descartes' philosophy and wrote influential works in the debate on animal nature in late seventeenth-century France.[7]

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[6] The influence of Descartes' theory of automatism and the Cartesian beast-machine within the seventeenth-century French salons will be considered in the following chapter on Madeleine de Scudéry.

[7] Where I subsequently refer to 'the Cartesians' or 'Cartesian', I do so purely in reference to the thought of Malebranche, Dilly and Darmanson that is under investigation here.

Nicolas Malebranche (1638 - 1715) was a French Oratorian and Catholic priest, born to a prominent Parisian family. He studied theology for three years at the Sorbonne, before entering the Oratory in 1660.[8] Malebranche likely knew of Descartes through certain professors of the order who supported the new philosophy; Cardinal Bérulle, the founder of the order, was a good friend of Descartes.[9] Until his ordainment, though, Malebranche was predominantly taught within the scholastic tradition. He discovered Descartes' *L'Homme* largely by accident whilst visiting a bookshop in 1664, after which he spent the next decade of his life studying Descartes' scientific, mathematical and metaphysical works.[10] Despite this burgeoning interest, Malebranche continued to write within the framework of Catholic theology and his *De la recherche de la vérité* (1674) attempted to synthesise the thought of St Augustine and Descartes.[11] Malebranche's philosophical works and his interpretation of Descartes' metaphysics are thus inseparable from his theological agenda.

In comparison to Malebranche, little is known about either Antoine Dilly (16. - 1676) or Jean Darmanson (1600 - .). Dilly was a Catholic priest at Ambrun who died shortly after the publication of his work. Although little remains of their lives, Dilly's *De l'âme des bêtes* (1676) and Darmanson's *La bête transformée en machine* (1684) were prominent works in the debate surrounding the "animal question" in late seventeenth-century France and were edited, reprinted and translated several times. Dilly and Darmanson sought to defend Descartes' theory of animal automatism and his dualistic metaphysics against his detractors. Malebranche, Dilly and Darmanson's works together span the period from the late 1660s to the 1680s, when the questions of animal nature and soul stood at the heart of Cartesianism. Although they defend Descartes' philosophy, these Cartesian thinkers remain critical readers who wrote within distinct contexts and so their works reveal the influence of other intellectual and theological frameworks.

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[8] Andrew Pyle, *Malebranche* (London & New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 1.

[9] Steven M. Nadler, 'Introduction', in *The Cambridge Companion to Malebranche,* ed. by Steven Nadler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 1-7 (p. 3).

[10] Bardout, 'Ambiguities', pp. 359-360. Pyle, *Malebranche*, p. 2.

[11] Nadler, 'Introduction', p. 1.

Malebranche, Dilly and Darmanson are above all concerned with the theological questions raised by Descartes' metaphysics and his theory of animal nature specifically. The distinctions - and the interactions - that he envisaged between material and immaterial substance carried two considerable implications for the question of animal soul, which Darmanson articulates:

> La première est que, si la bête est capable de connaissance et de passions, il n'y a point de Dieu. La seconde est que, si l'âme de la bête est mortelle, la nôtre [cela de l'homme] n'est pas immortelle.[12]

Darmanson firstly considers the consequences of attributing sensation to animals, which Descartes believes they possess.[13] Darmanson asserts that if animals - who are innocent beings without (original) sin - can feel, God would lead them to suffer without due cause and so would be a 'Dieu cruel et sans justice'.[14] Yet this contradicts the Christian conception of God as a completely good and just being. Darmanson then contemplates the theological implications of Descartes' concepts of animal and human soul. Descartes' denial of an immaterial soul to animals maintains the exceptionalism and immortality of the human soul that are integral to Christian theology. He still attributes a material or corporeal soul to animals, though, which endows them with consciousness and 'confused modes of thought'. It is this material soul which Darmanson regards as problematic within Christian theology, for it raises the critical question of what happens following the death of an animal. Would the soul perish along with the animal? If this were so, what is to prevent the human soul from also being mortal? Alternatively, if the animal soul does endure after death, what - if anything - distinguishes it from human souls? Descartes' theory of substance dualism and his concomitant concepts of animal and human soul thus carried considerable implications within the prevailing Christian theological framework of early modern France.

Descartes had afforded little sustained attention to the theological questions surrounding animal and human souls in his works. It remained to Cartesian thinkers to elaborate and

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[12] Jean Darmanson, *La bête transformée en machine, divisée en deux dissertations prononcées à Amsterdam* ([n.p.]: [n.pub.], 1684), p. 2.

[13] For discussion of Descartes' views on animal nature, see sections 3.3.1 and 3.3.2.

[14] Darmanson, *La bête,* p. 4.

respond to any objections in greater depth.[15] Malebranche, Dilly and Darmanson employ several interconnected arguments in their attempts to reconcile Descartes' metaphysics with Christian theology, four of which are of interest here: a more definitive theory of substance dualism; an argument against animal souls; their reinterpretation of Descartes' concept of animal automatism; and the theological argument from parsimony. I maintain that these four interconnected arguments sought to resolve the theological contentions raised against Descartes' thought on animals and, in doing so, gave rise to the Cartesian beast-machine doctrine.

4.1.1 The Cartesian Interpretation of Substance Dualism and Argument against Animal Soul

Cartesian thinkers firstly interpreted Descartes' substance dualism in a more definitive manner. Whilst Descartes posited a mind-body distinction, he proposed that the human *esprit* was conjoined with the body at the pineal gland and that they closely interacted in certain processes. These human mind-body connections led him to postulate the existence of a corporeal animal soul that was distinct from the human *esprit*. This animal *âme* possessed limited immaterial faculties insofar as they depended upon the body. It was this possibility of a corporeal, conscious and feeling animal soul which raised pressing theological questions for Cartesian thinkers.

Malebranche, Darmanson and Dilly advance a more definitive theory of substance dualism in their attempt to ensure the immortality and specificity of the human soul that was integral to Christian theology. Malebranche now draws a categorical distinction between the material body and the immaterial soul, which he affirms are entirely and diametrically opposed.[16] Darmanson

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[15] Peter Harrison, 'Animal Souls, Metempsychosis and Theodicy in Seventeenth-Century English Thought', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 31 (1993), 519-544 (p. 522). Leonora Cohen Rosenfield, 'Chapitre de l'Histoire de l'Animal-Machine (1645-1749)', *Revue de Littérature Comparée,* 17 (1937), 461-487 (p. 475).

[16] Nicolas Malebranche, *De le recherche de la vérité: où l'on traite de la nature de l'Esprit de l'homme, et de l'usage qu'il en doit faire pour éviter l'erreur dans les Sciences,* 3 vols, 3rd edn (Strasbourg: George André d'Olhopfe, 1677), II, p. 15 and pp. 414-415.

similarly makes an absolute distinction between what he terms 'la substance spirituelle' and 'la substance corporelle'.[17] As Dilly further writes:

> De sorte que je forme deux idées très claires et très différentes pourtant, l'une d'une substance qui pense, c'est-à-dire qui aperçoit, qui juge, qui doute, qui raisonne, qui oit, qui odore, qui voit, qui touche et qui goûte, qui imagine, qui admire, qui veut, qui aime, qui fait, qui désire, qui a de la joie, de la tristesse, de la douleur. L'autre idée que je forme est celle d'une substance longue, large, profonde, impénétrable, divisible, figurable, mobile, capable de repos.[18]

Dilly's concept of substance dualism echoes the criteria of clear and distinct perception that Descartes held as a necessary standard for metaphysical certainty. Malebranche, Darmanson and Dilly each establish an absolute distinction between an immaterial thinking subject and material substance on the grounds that they can be clearly and distinctly perceived as separate from one another. They simultaneously extend the concept of immaterial substance as conceived by Descartes. Whilst it is still 'une substance qui pense', immaterial substance now also encompasses sensation and feeling; these are capacities which Descartes had largely attributed to the corporeal body and its composition of muscles, veins and nerves. By contrast, material substance is now solely concerned with physical properties and movement for Dilly, Darmanson and Malebranche. Whilst immaterial and material substances could coincide - as in the case of the human mind and body - Cartesian thinkers assert a more definitive separation between them than is to be found in Descartes' metaphysics. For Cartesians, material and immaterial substances remain 'deux êtres d'une nature différente' that are 'tellement séparées les unes des autres', such that the properties of one can no longer be attributed to or interact with the other to the same degree they had for Descartes.[19]

The Cartesian interpretation of substance dualism intersected with their theories of animal and human nature, as had also been the case for Descartes. Malebranche, Dilly and Darmanson conceptualise humans as beings with an immaterial *esprit* and corporeal body that are distinct

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[17] Darmanson, *La bête*, p. 45.

[18] Antoine Dilly, *De l'âme des bêtes, ou après avoir démontré la spiritualité de l'âme de l'homme, l'on explique par la seule machine, les actions les plus surprenantes des animaux* (Lyon: Anisson & Posuel, 1676), p. 28.

[19] Darmanson, *La bête,* pp. 37-38. Dilly, *L'âme des bêtes*, p. 29.

from one another, but which can work in unison. Given their more definitive theory of substance dualism, though, animals are now purely corporeal beings who no longer possess sensation or a material soul for Cartesian thinkers. It is in this respect that their understanding of substance dualism - and their concern with denying animals any form of soul - responds to the theological contentions that had been raised against Descartes' metaphysics.

Descartes' possibility of an animal soul with limited immaterial faculties carried significant theological implications, as identified by Darmanson. The primary concern was that the likely mortality of an animal soul posed a threat to the specificity and immortality of the human soul within Christian theology. These questions were of considerable interest to Cartesian thinkers due to their metaphysical and theological significance. Indeed, Dilly states that the principal intention of his work is to discover 's'il y a dans les brutes quelque chose de semblable à ce que nous appelons notre âme'.[20] The Cartesians' theory of substance dualism framed their concept of soul. They no longer distinguished between immaterial and corporeal souls as Descartes had. *Âme* or *esprit* instead referred to an immortal and incorruptible 'substance pensante' that was 'sans étendu' and which was entirely distinct from any material substance in essence.[21] Malebranche, Dilly and Darmanson maintain that - whilst humans' reasoned actions fulfil the criteria for an immaterial soul - animal behaviour does not demonstrate the required rationality; they conclude that there is 'rien qui pense dans les animaux' and so these creatures are devoid of an immaterial, indivisible and 'spirituel' soul.[22] The Cartesian thinkers thus surpass Descartes in denying animals *any* form of soul and, in doing so, address the theological contentions raised against his metaphysics. The soulless animals of Cartesian thought no longer pose a threat to the immortality and specificity of the human soul in Christian orthodoxy.

The Cartesian denial of souls to animals increasingly gained acceptance in ecclesiastical circles in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century France.[23] Their claims were far from unproblematic within the wider intellectual and cultural climate of the period, though. Amidst

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[20] Dilly, *L'âme de bêtes,* p. 6.

[21] Ibid, p. 32.

[22] Dilly, *L'âme de bêtes,* pp. 70-71. Malebranche, *Recherche*, p. 415 and p. 419.

[23] Baratay, 'L'Église', p. 7.

the debate over the "animal question" in France, opponents of animal automatism often appealed to the concept of a soul, particularly in cases where animals' abilities surpassed those of humans. Many drew upon the earlier Aristotelian concept of a sensitive soul, according to which animals were capable of both movement and sensation. Cartesian thinkers faced such objections and were challenged with convincingly explaining animal movement without recourse to a soul. It is in this regard that Cartesian substance dualism - with its purely immaterial soul - contributed towards a reinterpretation of Descartes' automatism that yielded the beast-machine doctrine.

4.1.2 The Beast-Machine Doctrine and Theological Argument from Parsimony

As I argued in the previous chapter, Descartes' automatism was a means of explaining the movement of bodies - both animal and human - through their material composition. His theory did not preclude either animals or humans from possessing immaterial faculties such as forms of thought or consciousness.

The Cartesians' theories of substance dualism and animal soul in turn influence their reinterpretation of Descartes' automatism. Malebranche, Dilly and Darmanson's denial of a rational and immortal soul to animals limits the possibility of attributing other immaterial faculties to them, including consciousness, thought and sensation. Cartesian thinkers instead appeal to the theory of automatism - which depended on material substance alone - to explain animal movement. They thus conceptualise animals as far more mechanistic beings than had been the case for Descartes. Darmanson asserts that animals are incapable of 'le moindre degré de connaissance, de joie, de tristesse, de plaisir, de douleur' or any other 'passion' that we might be inclined to attribute to them.[24] It was similarly inconceivable that 'les bêtes sentent de la douleur ou du plaisir' for Malebranche. His conviction that animals are unfeeling automata leads him to conclude that they:

> [...] mangent sans plaisir, ils crient sans douleur, ils croient sans le savoir; ils ne désirent rien, ils ne craignent rien, ils ne connaissent rien.[25]

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[24] Darmanson, *La bête*, p. 38.

[25] Malebranche, *Recherche*, p. 419.

Malebranche's repeated use of the negatives 'sans' and 'rien' emphasise animals' lack of sensation and carry connotations of their deficit and inferiority in comparison to humans. In this regard, animal movement is no longer simply explicable mechanistically as it had been for Descartes. According to the Cartesian beast-machine doctrine, animals are soulless, unfeeling and unconscious machines that are incapable of rational thought or language. The concept of the animal machine thereby addresses the first theological contention raised against Descartes. If innocent animals are entirely devoid of feeling, they cannot suffer and so the justice of a Christian God can be upheld. Rather than a component of Descartes' thought, then, I propose that it was the Cartesian reinterpretation of his metaphysics and automatism in response to theological concerns which yielded the beast-machine doctrine in early modern France.

Cartesian thinkers believed to have resolved the theological and metaphysical contentions raised against Descartes and their beast-machine doctrine gained popularity in intellectual and scientific spheres in early modern France. Their theory of animal physiology was adopted - although not unanimously - by many contemporary natural historians. The possibility of viewing animals as machines facilitated their experimentation, including dissection and vivisection, and informed their explanations of animal anatomy. The Cartesian beast-machine doctrine was not universally accepted among the intellectual elites of seventeenth-century French society, though, and met with criticism. Malebranche and Dilly addressed the objections of those who held sentimental feelings towards animals or who remained unconvinced of the beast-machine thesis. Their opponents resisted the claim that the absence of an animal soul could be known for certain. They argued that animals' behaviour often appeared to indicate that they were more than purely corporeal machines, especially where their actions seemed to demonstrate reason or exceed human capacities.

Malebranche and Dilly draw upon theological frameworks in their attempts to respond to these criticisms, although the specifics of their arguments differ. Dilly asserts that the theory of automatism can adequately explain even the 'actions surprenantes' of animals that appear to suggest the existence of a soul. Where animal capacities exceed those of humans, he appeals to a divine creator who designed 'des organes dont la machine des animaux est composée' in such a

manner that they can perform even the most surprising feats.[26] Malebranche similarly appeals to divine intervention to explain animals' movements, which he concedes demonstrate a certain 'intelligence'.[27] This 'intelligence' does not arise from animal nature, though. It is instead 'infiniment sage' and 'infiniment puissante' in nature and so any semblance of an (immaterial) animal soul is attributable to a divine creator. Malebranche accordingly maintains that animals do not possess faculties such as reason, consciousness or intelligence in the same manner as humans. He states that any appearance to the contrary originates from an omnipotent God who has the power to make it seem that animals have souls or capacities superior to those of humans. The Cartesian thinkers present a final theological argument from parsimony in response to opponents of the beast-machine doctrine. They question:

> […] si donc les animaux peuvent faire toutes ces choses sans âme […] à quoi bon leur en donner une?[28]

Malebranche and Darmanson affirm that it would be unnecessary and excessive for God to endow animals with souls, given that their movement can be sufficiently explained in mechanistic terms. Human behaviour, by contrast, can only be fully explained by recourse to a rational soul or *substance pensante.* Their reformulation of Descartes' metaphysical concepts is thus comprehensible within the context of the wider theological and intellectual frameworks in which Cartesian thinkers were operating.

4.1.3 Conclusion

The beast-machine doctrine was ultimately a product of how later Cartesian thinkers reconceptualised Descartes' philosophy in conjunction with Christian theology. Whilst Cartesian thought is diverse and complex, my analysis has revealed four principal interconnected arguments which contributed to the development of the beast-machine doctrine. Malebranche, Dilly and Darmanson develop a more definitive theory of substance dualism, according to which animals are purely corporeal machines who lack sensation, immaterial faculties or any form of soul. The Cartesian beast-machine doctrine thereby arose in response to

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[26] Dilly, *L'âme de bêtes,* p. 78.

[27] Malebranche, *Recherche*, pp. 419-420.

[28] Darmanson, *La bête,* p. 18.

the theological concerns raised against Descartes' metaphysics in late seventeenth-century France. The animal-machine maintained the specificity and immortality of an immaterial human soul, whilst simultaneously ensuring the goodness and justice of a God who did not cause suffering to innocent beings.

The Cartesian beast-machine doctrine rose to popularity in France during the 1660s and remained one of the dominant perceptions of animals in both secular and ecclesiastical circles into the 1680s. Towards the end of the seventeenth century, though, its popularity began to wane in secular opinion.[29] The turn of the century was once more a time of intellectual ferment surrounding the "animal question" in France. Descartes' metaphysics and Christian theology continued to exert an enduring influence, particularly within ecclesiastical circles. Yet this period also saw a resurgence of alternative theories in favour of animal consciousness and sensation. Montaigne's *Apologie* was often employed by opponents of the beast-machine doctrine and his ideas on animals - as well as his scepticism - continued to shape debates in early modern France. The coalescing discourses of Descartes and Montaigne are evident in the work of Guillaume-Hyacinthe Bougeant and in the unique theory of animal consciousness and language that he elaborates.

4.2 Demonic Souls: Guillaume-Hyacinthe Bougeant

Guillaume-Hyacinthe Bougeant (1690 - 1743) was a Jesuit priest who anonymously published his *Amusement philosophique sur le Langage des Bêtes* in 1739. After entering his novitiate in 1706, Bougeant studied philosophy for three years and theology for another four, before eventually professing Jesuit vows in 1724.[30] His interest in contemporary philosophical and scientific ideas earned him a reputation as a 'jesuite non-conformiste' among his peers. The *Amusement* was far

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[29] Baratay, 'L'Église', p. 4.

[30] André Dabezies, 'Érudition et humour: le Père Bougeant (1690-1743)', *Dix-huitième Siècle*, 9 (1977), 259-271 (p. 260).

from his first notable work, as he had previously published several theological treatises under the name of *le père Bougeant*.[31]

The *Amusement* constitutes a particular case among Bougeant's other publications, as indicated by his choice of title. As an 'amusement', he presents this work as an 'occupation légère' intended to entertain rather than a serious philosophical or theological treatise.[32] Bougeant's title is nevertheless somewhat incongruent with the content of his work. Whilst the *Amusement* targeted a more secular audience than his previous publications, his argument remains predominantly theological in nature and contemplates significant ontological and epistemological questions. Bougeant develops a unique case for animal communication, reason and consciousness. He posits that animals are inhabited by fallen angels, or demons, which endow them with such faculties. His work was met with a significant response and accumulated twenty editions across Europe within the first forty years of its publication.[33] Bougeant's theory of animal nature - namely his speculation on animal souls and the possibility of metempsychosis - proved particularly controversial given his Jesuit background; it was perhaps the contentious and potentially heretical nature of his work which led Bougeant to present it as a trivial 'amusement'. The *Amusement* was quickly condemned as a dangerous text for challenging the authority of Church teaching. Bougeant was briefly exiled to La Flèche in 1739, before publishing a retraction of his argument for animal souls in a later edition of his work.[34]

Further to theological controversy, the *Amusement* was written amidst the intellectual ferment surrounding the "animal question" and the circulating philosophies of Descartes, Cartesianism and Montaigne in early modern France. Bougeant reads Descartes and Montaigne alongside one another, whilst drawing upon other philosophical and theological frameworks. He reinterprets and combines various elements of their thought to propose his own unique theory of animal consciousness, language and reason. Bougeant makes a considerable contribution to such

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[31] Dabezies, 'Érudition', pp. 270-271. Geraldine Sheridan, '*Les Amusements d'un Jésuite*: Père Bougeant, Physiognomy and Sensualist Theories', *Australian Journal of French Studies*, 30 (1993), 292-310 (p. 305).

[32] Furetière, *Dictionnaire Universel* and Richelet, *Dictionnaire françois*, entries for 'amusement'.

[33] Dabezies, 'Érudition', p. 268. Swann Paradis, '«Parle et je te baptise!»: De l'âme des bêtes au siècle des Lumières', *Voix plurielles*, 12 (2015), 76-94 (p. 79).

[34] Sheridan, '*Amusements*', p. 293.

debates by placing a moral impetus - grounded in emotional interspecies relationships and mutual acts of care - at the centre of his understanding of animal nature. His thought represents a significant ripple in the reinterpretations of Montaigne and Descartes' thought in early modern France, though one that has received little scholarly attention to date in comparison to Cartesianism.

The following section examines three principal aspects of Bougeant's *Amusement*: his argument for animal consciousness, reason and communication; his reinterpretation of Montaigne and Bougeant's response to doubt; and the moral impetus to care which arises from emotional interspecies relationships. I first examine how Bougeant elaborates a case for animal souls by reinterpreting Cartesian substance dualism in conjunction with Christian theology. In doing so, I consider how he interprets Christian theology - which remained an important intellectual, cultural and religious framework in early modern France - differently in his discussion of animal nature.

Whilst Bougeant claims his theory of animal soul as a likely explanation of their nature, he recognises that humans cannot truly know the specificities of animal experience with any certainty. In the second section, I explore the role of doubt in Bougeant's perceptions of animal nature and posit that he follows a similar line of argumentation to Montaigne in his proposed solution. Having considered Bougeant's perceptions of animal nature in the first two subsections, I turn in the third to examine the moral impetus to care that his work contributes to the debate on animals in early modern France. I demonstrate that this moral impetus depended less on human perceptions of animals than on their shared emotional relationships.

My intention here is two-fold. I firstly demonstrate how Bougeant reinterprets aspects of Descartes, Cartesian philosophy, Christian theology and Montaignian thought and maintain that these diverse frameworks converge in his theory of animal nature. I secondly argue that Bougeant's *Amusement* constitutes a distinct contribution to debates on the "animal question" in early modern France, for he grounds our moral responses in our shared emotional relationships with animals and in our mutual acts of care for one another.

4.2.1 Fallen Angels and Damned Souls: Resolving Metaphysical and Theological Challenges

Bougeant's *Amusement* advances an argument for animal language and he conceptualises such communicative abilities in a similar manner to Descartes. Bougeant regards language as intrinsically connected with reason and consciousness, which depend on an immaterial *esprit*. He asserts that if animals possess such faculties, it must logically follow that they can communicate.[35] In presenting his case for animal language, Bougeant simultaneously tasks himself with demonstrating that animals are conscious and rational beings with some form of immaterial soul. Yet this carried considerable challenges for Christian theology, as previously identified by Cartesian thinkers.[36] Although Bougeant remains cognisant of such concerns, he persists in his ambition to establish a theory of animal soul which is consistent with Christian orthodoxy.[37] He premises his argument by first examining several interconnected metaphysical and theological challenges related to the possibility of an animal soul.

Bougeant's thought in the *Amusement* advances from a Cartesian theory of substance dualism, as outlined above.[38] He is therefore faced with the metaphysical challenge of demonstrating how animals - conceptualised as purely corporeal beings - might possess immaterial souls. Bougeant writes that one solution that has often been advanced is that of a 'substance mitoyenne'; this represented an intermediate state between immaterial and material substance and which possessed qualities of both.[39] Proponents of this view maintained that animals appeared to possess faculties that could not be sufficiently explained by their physical composition. They posited that animals were composed of an intermediate substance, whereby they remained corporeal beings but could possess certain immaterial faculties; such a solution bears conceptual similarities to that of Descartes' corporeal animal soul. Bougeant adheres to a more Cartesian interpretation of substance dualism, though, and so objects that there can be no such 'substance mitoyenne'. He further considers definitions of animal soul as either an immaterial

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[35] Guillaume-Hyacinthe Bougeant, *Amusement philosophique sur le langage des bêtes, suivi de Lettre à Madame la Comtesse D**** (Paris: Gissey, Bordelet & Ganeau, 1739), p. 22.

[36] See sections 4.1 and 4.1.2 above.

[37] Paradis, 'De l'âme des bêtes', p. 80.

[38] See section 4.1.1 above.

[39] Bougeant, *Amusement*, p. 16.

esprit or as corporeal matter to be untenable on metaphysical grounds. Animal souls cannot solely consist of matter, as they would be incapable of the immaterial faculties which Bougeant attributes to them. Nor can animal souls theologically consist of the same immaterial *esprit* as humans. This would threaten both the specificity of the immortal human soul and the justice of God in causing innocent beings to suffer.

Bougeant recognises that the possibility of an animal soul carries a final theological challenge, one which had not been identified by Cartesian thinkers. He states that human souls have a 'devoir de religion', or connection to the divine, which renders them both free and immortal.[40] Attributing such a soul to animals would carry radical implications, such that:

> [...] les bêtes seraient donc une espèce d'homme, ou les hommes une espèce de bêtes.[41]

Bougeant concedes that granting animals an identical soul to humans would be heretical. It would remove any distinction between animals and humans and so threaten the immortality of the human soul and its specific connection to the divine. In response to such theological and metaphysical challenges, Bougeant elaborates a theory of animal soul, language and consciousness by reinterpreting Cartesian substance dualism alongside Christian theology.

Bougeant proceeds from the premise that both reason and emotion lead us to believe that animals possess some form of spiritual soul.[42] We often dismiss this possibility, though, due to the considerable metaphysical and theological consequences identified. Through the façade of an anonymous 'Auteur' participating in a public debate, Bougeant claims that animals are inhabited by the *esprits* of damned souls which endow them with thought, consciousness and sensation.[43] Yet such a union of an immaterial *esprit* with a corporeal animal body would appear to oppose the Cartesian understanding of substance dualism that Bougeant endorses. In his view, this is far from the case. He affirms that 'chaque bête est un diable uni à un corps organisé' - just as human beings can be conceptualised as a union of mind and body - and so his theory

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[40] Bougeant, *Amusement*, p. 18.

[41] Ibid, pp. 13-14.

[42] Bougeant, *Amusement,* pp. 51-52.

[43] Ibid, p. 22 and pp. 36-37.

remains consistent with substance dualism.[44] Having addressed the metaphysical challenges, Bougeant must equally demonstrate that his theory is compatible with Christian theology. His argument must not threaten the justice of God, nor can it oppose the specificity and immortality of the human soul.

Bougeant maintains that his demon argument upholds the goodness and justice of a Christian God. He draws upon the ambiguities in Christian theology concerning the question of whether the punishment of damned souls begins immediately upon the death of their material body or whether it is deferred until the Last Judgement. Bougeant deems the latter possibility more likely and proposes that condemned souls are sentenced to inhabit animal bodies as a form of 'enfer anticipé' until their final judgement.[45] Such souls are subjected to the corporeal limitations of animal bodies and are called upon to serve human beings.[46] Their terrestrial punishment lies in their entrapment in animal bodies, which Bougeant regards as less perfect than those of humans and so which prevent fallen souls from exercising the full extent of their immaterial faculties. This simultaneously endows animals with various immaterial faculties, even if they are less extensive or are imperfect in comparison to those of humans.[47] These damned *esprits* also lack the 'devoir de religion' that is unique to human souls, as they have already been condemned.[48] God cannot, then, be charged with the unjust suffering of innocent beings, but instead justly punishes those who have sinned.

The *Amusement's* demon argument equally claims to protect the immortality and specificity of the human soul. Bougeant's theory may at first appear to pose further theological issues, as he must explain what happens to such immortal demonic souls following the death of the animal body. He responds by reading Cartesian metaphysics alongside the thought of Pythagoras and the Eastern religions of Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism, which maintain that metempsychosis - or the transmigration of the soul upon death - is possible. Such a belief runs

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[44] Bougeant, *Amusement*, p. 50.

[45] Bougeant, *Amusement*, p. 38.

[46] Ibid, pp. 39-40 and pp. 52-53.

[47] Bougeant, *Amusement*, pp. 51-53.

[48] Bougeant, *Amusement,* p. 18 and p. 23.

contrary to Christian teaching, according to which human souls receive one corporeal life on Earth before their eternal judgement. Bougeant states that, whilst metempsychosis is untenable in regards to humans, it can be suitably applied to the demonic animal soul that he envisages.[49] Such condemned souls must continue to suffer an 'enfer anticipé' until the day of judgement and so must remain constantly lodged within an animal body; their transference into a different corporeal prison upon the death of their original one would ensure such continued punishment.[50] Bougeant draws critical distinctions between human and demonic animal souls in adhering to such a theory of metempsychosis and, in doing so, ensures the specificity of the human soul.

Bougeant's demon argument advances a theory of animal soul by reinterpreting Cartesian metaphysics alongside Christian doctrine, thereby responding to the theological and metaphysical challenges contained within such frameworks. He does not, however, claim his demon argument as either a certain or definitive explanation of animal nature. A fundamental doubt occupies a central place in the *Amusement* and surrounds his perceptions of animal being. Bougeant approaches such questions speculatively and can only claim that his ideas on animal soul are a probable theory. Such doubt over the ontological status of animals did not feature in Cartesian philosophy. Bougeant instead draws upon multiple intellectual frameworks beyond Cartesian metaphysics or Christian theology alone. Although he was not a sceptic in an Academic or Pyrrhonian sense, he describes himself as a 'disciple de Montaigne' and attempts to follow 'le sentiment de cet Écrivain' in his perceptions of animal nature.[51] Once again, though, he neither adopts Montaigne's approach nor endorses his perceptions of animals uncritically. Bougeant actively reinterprets elements of Montaigne's thought alongside other intellectual frameworks to shape his own distinct theory of animal nature and interspecies relationships.

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[49] Bougeant, *Amusement,* pp. 56-57.

[50] Ibid, p. 59.

[51] Bougeant, *Amusement*, p. 31 and p. 45.

4.2.2 Animal Specificity: Bougeant's Fundamental Doubt

Bougeant's fundamental doubt emerges in his discussion of the specificities of animal nature and the potential distinctions between species. Similarly to Montaigne, he first questions the extent of human reason and its ability to provide indubitable knowledge. Whilst we can hypothesise about animal experience, Bougeant contends that we can never be certain of 'le comment et le pourquoi'.[52] Speculative interpretations may afford some insight into animal nature in the face of such uncertainty. Given the limitations of human knowledge, though, we can equally become trapped in interminable cycles of superficial and false conjectures.[53]

Bougeant's uncertainty is prominent in relation to the *Amusement*'s titular concern: animal language and communication. He crucially claims that animals can communicate and comprehend one another in a comparable manner to humans. At the same time, he recognises that attributing or denying communicative abilities to animals depends upon the definition of language that we employ. Where this concept is restricted solely to human languages, or where it depends upon other specifically human faculties, animals are denied any capacity for communication. Bougeant asserts that language can denote any means of communication, rather than human linguistic constructs alone.[54] In contrast to Descartes and Cartesian thinkers, he no longer holds reason as a prerequisite for the ability to communicate. In his view, the primary function of animal language is to communicate their experiences and emotions to others.[55] Bougeant's case for animal language accordingly depends on his perception of animals as social beings who convey a range of emotions - including hate, anger, jealousy, joy or love - in their relationships with other animals and humans.

Bougeant does not claim to comprehend the intricacies of animal languages or to know exactly what they are communicating. Two principal factors contribute to his doubt in this regard. The first lies in humans' limited understanding of animal nature and experience. Bougeant acknowledges that - whilst animals and humans share a base ability to communicate - this

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[52] Bougeant, *Amusement*, p. 19.

[53] Ibid, p. 19.

[54] Bougeant, *Amusement*, pp. 64-65.

[55] Bougeant, *Amusement*, p. 99 and pp. 151-152.

might not occur through a common language.[56] The very diversity of animal languages is the second factor which gives rise to Bougeant's doubt. He recognises that animals possess numerous distinct forms of communication, including vocalisations and corporeal gestures. In contemplating animal vocalisation, his thought bears similarities to that of Aristotle, Montaigne and Descartes. Whilst animals may have certain common means of communication, Bougeant emphasises that their languages may also vary according to species, social grouping or even between individuals.[57] A dog, a horse and a bird will all "speak" in different manners. Not only do such differences lead to humans' inability to comprehend animals, they can equally result in inter- and intraspecies miscommunications. Bougeant's work thereby gestures towards the idea that our encounters with other species are not always harmonious, nor are they entirely without conflict or misunderstanding.

The *Amusement* subsequently explores ways in which we might interpret animals' attempts to communicate with us in the face of such uncertainty. In a similar move to Montaigne, Bougeant acknowledges that animals and humans often convey their experiences or emotions to one another through physical or corporeal gestures.[58] He thus affirms that:

> [...] des mines, des gestes et des mouvements [...] sont une espèce de langue très intelligible, et un supplément de l'expression vocale.[59]

Bougeant's speculative approach to animal language and corporeal communication bears certain similarities to Montaigne's empathetical speculation in this regard.[60] For both, such corporeal 'gestes parlants' are the principal means of communication between animals and humans.[61] Bougeant maintains that, with careful attention, humans can speculate on 'la signification de la plupart des phrases' which animals and their bodies might express.[62] Similarly to Montaigne, what is at stake in Bougeant's work is a practice of reading animals' corporeal gestures and

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[56] Bougeant, *Amusement*, pp. 64-65.

[57] Bougeant, *Amusement*, p. 146.

[58] Bougeant, *Amusement*, pp. 64-65.

[59] Bougeant, *Amusement*, p. 128.

[60] See chapter two, section 2.2.

[61] The communicative potential of animal gestures is considered in chapters two, five and six.

[62] Bougeant, *Amusement*, p. 147.

speculatively inferring meaning through kinesic intelligence. It is a process in which a human interlocutor must first carefully attend to the animal's communicative gestures and the context in which they occur. Bougeant then invites us to draw comparisons with our own experiences; by contemplating what we would say or express in similar circumstances, we can infer what animals might be communicating about their own experiences and emotions.[63] Such a process can only ever produce suggestive and speculative interpretations, though, as human knowledge of animals remains limited and imperfect by nature.[64]

Bougeant proceeds to argue that human perception - and the often inadequate information we receive via our senses - can limit our understanding of animal communication. Contemplating birdsong, he affirms that when we hear what we believe to be repeated vocalisations, we often suppose that the birds are communicating the same message to one another. Bougeant challenges such assumptions and proposes that some aspects of birds' audible "language" may remain indiscernible or incomprehensible to us. Despite the many vocalisations we can discern, there are likely 'beaucoup d'autres que nous n'apercevons pas, faute d'entendre leur langue', but which the birds 'remarquent fort bien'.[65] He suggests that all animal species possess such a 'finesse de discernement' in their own languages and so can comprehend the slightest variations which remain imperceptible to humans.[66] Given such limitations, we are led to either falsely speculate or to misinterpret what animals are communicating.

The specificity of animal life is the final contributing factor to Bougeant's uncertainty with regards to animal nature. Although he maintains that humans and animal species share various faculties, he does not believe that the form these faculties assume will necessarily be identical. Such differences between species further render aspects of their experiences incomprehensible and uncertain to humans and other animals. We might question, however, why there should be such distinctions between species at all. In Bougeant's view, such specificity is the result of the differing needs and experiences of animal species. This diversity can once more be observed

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[63] Bougeant, *Amusement,* p. 112.

[64] Ibid, p. 19 and p. 119.

[65] Bougeant, *Amusement,* p. 118.

[66] Bougeant, *Amusement*, p. 119.

with regards to animal communication. Bougeant states that all animal species pursue basic physical needs and so can communicate with others to ensure their survival.[67] He proposes that different species possess their own languages which evolve 'à proportion de leurs besoins' and in relation to their particular social structures.[68] He observes that many animals are highly social beings who cohabit alongside members of their own and other species, as they would be vulnerable beings in isolation; animal species must therefore live and work collaboratively 'pour la conservation et le bien de leur société'.[69] Species cohabit to 's'entre-aider et profiter réciproquement de leurs connaissances, de leurs découvertes et de tous les secours qu'elles peuvent se prêter'.[70] Animals are thus social, communicative and vulnerable beings who mutually depend upon one another's care for their survival.

Bougeant subsequently states that all species possess some means of communication, but that its complexity differs and is proportionate to their specific needs and social structures. Species which lead a more solitary existence or which have fewer needs - such as coral polyps and other similar sea creatures - have less-developed languages than those which regularly interact and depend upon one another for their well-being. He accordingly distinguishes between such solitary species and more social ones, including a great variety of birds. It is perhaps significant that Bougeant employs birds to exemplify the complexity of animal language, as they are audibly present in our daily lives and we often perceive their songs to be a form of communication and expression. Bougeant considers the example of a sparrow who lives within a more complex social structure and who regularly interacts with members of its own and other species to ensure its survival.[71] When pursuing a mate, the male must approach a prospective female and fight off competitors of his own species. Having found a partner, he must attend to her needs as she broods their eggs. Both partners then collaborate in raising and educating their young. Should their young chicks come under attack from another species, they may call for the support of other sparrows in the vicinity.

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[67] Bougeant, *Amusement,* pp. 67-68.

[68] Ibid, pp. 86-88.

[69] Bougeant, *Amusement,* pp. 67-68.

[70] Ibid, p. 89.

[71] Bougeant, *Amusement,* p. 85.

Having carefully observed their interactions, Bougeant speculates that the sparrows have 'mille choses à se dire' in ensuring their survival or in attending to 'les soins et l'éducation de leurs petits'.[72] The sparrows' language serves a practical purpose, but also strengthens their emotional relationships. As social and emotional beings, the sparrows communicate to express their feelings to one another, such as in the 'ferveur de leurs amours'.[73] Bougeant maintains that the sparrows' language will require greater complexity than that of coral polyps, for instance, as their needs and social relationships are more complex and extensive.[74] The sparrows' distinct language may be largely incomprehensible to both humans and other species. Whilst we can speculate on what their corporeal gestures or vocalisations might mean, we may never know with certainty due to the specificity of avian life and experience.

Courtship and parenthood are far from the only relationships which reveal the complexity and specificity of animals' needs and languages for Bougeant. His *Amusement* considers the caring and collaborative interactions of a group of beavers who 'logent dans de petites cabanes de terre qu'ils construisent eux-mêmes' to ensure their safety and well-being.[75] One individual could not construct such an intricate structure and so would be likely to suffer or even perish. Bougeant instead observes how the beavers participate in vast social structures of up to thirty or forty individuals who 'partagent entre eux les travaux nécessaires pour la construction de leur habitation'.[76] In his view, such an 'entreprise si bien suivie et si bien exécutée' could not be accomplished without a complex system of intraspecies communication.[77] He once more claims that the beavers' language evolves in response to their distinct needs and experiences, in this case, the construction of sophisticated habitation and damming systems. The beavers' language and corporeal gestures may be partially comprehensible to other species, including humans, but retains its own incommunicable specificities.

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[72] Bougeant, *Amusement*, p. 84.

[73] Ibid, p. 84.

[74] Bougeant, *Amusement*, p. 84.

[75] Bougeant, *Amusement*, p. 70.

[76] Ibid, p. 70.

[77] Bougeant, *Amusement*, p. 72.

In focusing on animals' corporeal 'gestes parlants' and ways of speculatively reading them, Bougeant's *Amusement* shares certain assumptions and perceptions of animal nature with Montaignian thought. Both regard animals as social and emotional beings who communicate with others to share their experiences. They also maintain that animals' "languages" may remain indiscernible and incomprehensible to humans. This is in part due to the distinct natures of their communicative systems, which may vary between species or social groupings. Bougeant concludes that, due to such specificity, it would be impossible to provide a 'dictionnaire détaillé du langage des bêtes'.[78] At the same time, Montaigne and Bougeant's belief in the incomprehensibility of animal language proceeds from their shared view that human knowledge is intrinsically limited and fallible, such that we cannot know about animals' lives with any certainty. In response to such doubt, they propose similar means of speculating on animals' potential experiences through carefully attending to their corporeal gestures. Although Bougeant was not a sceptic, an inherent uncertainty continues to shape his perceptions of animals, their lives and their experiences.

In elaborating his theory of animal nature, Bougeant draws upon and reinterprets elements from Descartes, Montaigne, Cartesian philosophy and Christian theology alongside one another. His *Amusement* represents a dialogue between diverse discourses surrounding the "animal question" in early modern France. In actively reading and combining such frameworks, Bougeant perceives animals as conscious and thinking beings who are capable of communication, in a similar vein to Montaigne; yet he simultaneously conceptualises a form of animal soul which is compatible with Christian orthodoxy and the metaphysical dualism of Cartesian thought. Whilst Bougeant's animal ontology makes a unique contribution to such debates in early modern France, he is not solely concerned with elaborating a theory of animal nature and experience in the *Amusement*. His work introduces a critical dimension through an increasing moral impetus of care.

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[78] Bougeant, *Amusement,* p. 146.

4.2.3 Against the Beast-Machine: Emotional Relationships and Care

Having elaborated his theory of animal nature, Bougeant recognises that philosophical arguments are not the sole factors which influence our perceptions and treatment of animals. His *Amusement* considers how our emotional relationships and responses to animals shape our interspecies interactions and entail a moral impulse to care. Bougeant's concern with the importance of emotion first emerges in his critique of the Cartesian beast-machine doctrine, which he deems intellectually unconvincing. He argues that this doctrine is also inconsistent with the emotional relationships we often share with animals, which dissuade us that they are machines. He evokes relationships with companion animals, namely dogs, in which both canine and human share an emotional connection.[79] Similarly to Montaigne, Bougeant regards animals' and humans' corporeal 'gestes parlants' - such as their mutual physical caresses - as a means through which they communicate their caring and affectionate relationships.[80] He contrasts such care for our beloved animals against our treatment of machines. Bougeant claims that we would find it emotionally unconvincing to treat a clock like a dog and to affectionately caress it when it strikes the hour because we believe this represents 'un sentiment d'amitié'.[81] He thereby emphasises that it is our mutual emotional relationships, rather than rational arguments, which predominantly influence how we treat the animals with whom we share our lives.

Bougeant's own perception of animals as emotional, vulnerable and caring beings shapes how he conceives humans' relationships with - and treatment of - them. In the cases of the sparrows and beavers above, Bougeant perceives these creatures as emotional, social and vulnerable beings who participate in communicative and caring relationships to ensure their well-being. He observes that similar emotional relationships of dependency often emerge between animals and humans and contain a comparable impulse to mutually care for one another. He again considers our relationships with animal companions - namely dogs, birds and horses – and the close bonds that agricultural labourers share with their animals, all of which develop from mutual emotional connections. Dogs, for instance, appear to express care and affection for their human companions through tender caresses and other corporeal expressions, such as a wagging

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[79] Bougeant, *Amusement,* p. 7.

[80] Ibid, p. 29.

[81] Bougeant, *Amusement,* p. 7.

tail.[82] Through such gestures, we often believe that our animal companions consciously reciprocate the love we show them.[83]

Bougeant's perception of animals as social and affectionate beings in turn informs how he believes we ought to treat them. It is in this regard that the *Amusement* begins to demonstrate a particular moral impulse. In his examples of the sparrows and beavers, Bougeant regards such intraspecies relationships in terms of dependency and vulnerability. These relationships in turn motivate acts of care to ensure the animals' mutual survival and well-being. He similarly considers animal-human relationships as connections of mutual dependency - both in terms of physical needs and a greater emotional vulnerability - which give rise to interspecies acts of care.

Bougeant's discussion of humans' relationships with their canine companions reveals how he conceptualises such interspecies dependencies and how these motivate mutual acts of care. Both animal and human benefit from their shared caring relationship:

> Tout ce qu'il [le chien] vous demandera, c'est un peu de nourriture pour subsister. […] Si vous le laissez seul, il témoignera par ses cris, son désespoir et la crainte qu'il a d'être abandonné sans retour. Si vous le menez à la promenade, il vous remerciera avec mille expressions de joie. S'il voit quelque objet qui l'effraie, il vous le dira par ses gestes et ses aboiements. En un mot parlez-lui de boire, de manger, de dormir, de courir, de folâtrer, de se défendre contre un ennemi, et de défendre en vous son protecteur et son unique appui […][84]

In Bougeant's example, the dog demonstrates a range of emotions - including fear, joy and despair - and communicates these experiences to his human companion through his physical gestures. The dog's communication emphasises the similarities between animal and human experience as he "talks" about the same things a human might, such as his fears, his joys and his needs in life. Both canine and human engage in such emotional encounters and their relationship is one of mutual dependency; they crucially respond to one another through

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[82] Bougeant, *Amusement*, pp. 102-103.
[83] Ibid, p. 8.
[84] Bougeant, *Amusement,* pp. 102-103.

physical acts of care. The dog conveys his needs through his corporeal actions and requests food, shelter and exercise. He equally seeks emotional connection, requesting signs of empathy and reassurance when afraid as well as affection from his human companion in fearing abandonment. The dog reciprocates such care and offers protection to his human companion when they are physically vulnerable to attack. In Bougeant's earlier discussion of human-canine relationships, animal acts of care also extend to emotional support. For instance, both animals and humans can benefit from the mutual 'caresses' and signs of companionship, affection and love that we show to one another.

The interspecies relationships which Bougeant envisages are thus connections of dependency, both physically and emotionally, and shape how he believes animals and humans ought to interact with one another. It is in this regard that a multi-faceted concept of care as an emotional attitude, a mutual relationship and a practical labour occupy a central place in the *Amusement*. Bougeant emphasises that our relationships and our mutual physical and emotional dependencies on animals - as well as our shared experience of vulnerability - motivate our care towards them. Caring responses are by no means limited to human actions, though. Both animal and human can care affectionately about one another and reciprocally care for one another, due to the mutual dependencies upon which such relationships are founded. The *Amusement* thereby places greater emphasis onto the moral impetus contained in humans' actual interactions with animals. For Bougeant, it is their significant shared emotional relationships of vulnerability which motivate mutual acts of care.

4.2.4 Conclusion

The *Amusement* represents a distinct system of thought within the reinterpretations of Montaigne, Descartes and Cartesian thought. Bougeant interprets their philosophies alongside Christian theology to develop a complex theory of animal consciousness and reason, according to which they are inhabited by demonic souls. Whilst contemporary standards judged his work to be heretical, the *Amusement* purports to posit a convincing theory of animal soul and consciousness that is metaphysically consistent with Descartes' substance dualism and theologically compatible with the specificity of the human soul in Christian teaching.

Bougeant's thought simultaneously contains a fundamental uncertainty, for he maintains that we cannot know the specifics of animals' thoughts or feelings with any certainty. He proposes a potential solution to such inherent uncertainty by adopting a similar approach to Montaigne's empathetical speculation, through which careful observation of animals' gestures - combined with animal-human comparisons - offers some means of speculating on their potential experiences.

Further to an ontology of animal being, the *Amusement* contains a distinct moral impulse to care. Bougeant regards animals and humans as social, emotional and vulnerable beings who depend upon practical acts of care from one another. Their mutual concern entails caring *about* one another as well as physical and emotional acts of care *for* another's needs. Bougeant crucially shifts the moral impetus to care away from rational argument. It is now shared emotional relationships which incite animals and humans to care for one another.

Bougeant was far from the only thinker to advance a theory of consciousness, reason and soul - as well as a moral response of care - in the debate surrounding the "animal question". His thought instead represents one particular ripple in the reinterpretations of Montaigne and Descartes in early modern France. During this period, thinkers continued to propose alternative theories of animal nature. Marin Cureau de la Chambre was one such thinker who preceded Bougeant and wrote contemporaneously with Descartes. Cureau opposed animal automatism and so advanced an alternative theory of animal consciousness and reason.

4.3 Consciousness, Concern and Care: Marin Cureau de la Chambre

Marin Cureau de la Chambre was a prominent physician, philosopher and writer in France from the 1630s until his death in 1669. He was born a commoner in the village of Saint-Jean-d'Assé - in modern-day Sarthe - in 1594, though he proceeded to study medicine in Montpellier and later practised in Le Mans.[85] Cureau relocated to Paris after being named 'médecin par quartier du

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[85] Olivier Walusinski, 'Marin Cureau de la Chambre (1594-1669), a 17th century pioneer in neuropsychology', *Revue neurologique,* 174 (2017), 680-668 (p. 681).

roi' in 1632 and treated a number of influential patients during his time there, including Chancellor Séguier, the Cardinals Richelieu and Mazarin and kings Louis XIII and Louis XIV.[86]

Cureau published his first major work on love, the nature of light and the causes of flooding along the Nile. The success of this work launched his literary career and soon gained him an invitation to the salon of Madame de Sablé.[87] Cureau also became acquainted with Descartes and Madeleine de Scudéry and regularly corresponded with them both.[88] His reputation grew with the publication of works upon various scientific topics, including human physiology, light and chiromancy. His choice to write in the French vernacular was well received as a linguistic innovation by Cardinal Richelieu and adopted by other contemporary writers, including Descartes.[89] Cureau's renown as a physician, scientist and author earned him membership to the *Académie Française* in 1634 and the *Académie des Sciences* in 1666.

Cureau's most notable work remains *Les caractères des passions*. First published in 1640, he revised and expanded this work over six successive editions. Whilst the *Caractères* predominantly discussed the nature and causes of human passions, the 1645 volume contained an essay entitled 'Quelle est la connaissance des bêtes?'. Cureau outlined a theory of animal consciousness, reason and soul which he later expanded in his *Traité sur la connaissance des bêtes* (1647). He draws upon similar concepts to Descartes and later Cartesian thinkers, but reads them in a different light to yield a distinct theory of animal consciousness.[90] Whilst Cureau proposes certain ideas about animal nature, though, he maintains that complete and indubitable knowledge is beyond human grasp. In expressing this fundamental doubt, he adopts a similar stance to Montaigne before him and to Bougeant later. In addition to his theory of animal

[86] Solomon Diamond, 'Marin Cureau de la Chambre (1594-1669)', *Journal of the history of behavioural sciences*, 41 (1968), 40-54 (p. 40).

[87] Michel Valentin, 'Les médecins à l'aube de l'Académie française, de Marin Cureau de la Chambre à Jules Pilet de la Mesnardière', *Histoire des sciences médicales*, 20 (1986), 215-227 (pp. 218-220).

[88] Diamond, 'Marin', p. 48. Valentin, 'Médecins', p. 221.

[89] Diamond, 'Marin', p. 41.

[90] Anita Guerrini, 'Animal Bodies and Human Minds: The Anatomy of the Brain and the Analogy of Nature', in *Testimonies: States of Mind and States of the Body in the Early Modern Period*, ed by. Gideon Manning (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020), pp. 103-123 (pp. 110-113).

consciousness, Cureau considers humans' moral treatment of animals and crucially advocates for a response of caution and care.

The following section explores Cureau's theory of animal nature and of care and explores its contact with the thought of Montaigne and Descartes. My analysis is divided into three subsections. The first examines Cureau's argument for animal consciousness and how this opposes Descartes' theory of animal nature. The second section considers how Cureau's theory of animal nature is shaped by a fundamental doubt. His thought bears similarities to that of Montaigne in the face of such uncertainty; Cureau elaborates a method of speculating on animal experience through reading their corporeal gestures and drawing empathetic comparisons with humans. The final section turns to examine the moral scope of his thought, namely how Cureau encourages his reader to respond to animals with concern and care.

4.3.1 Cureau's Argument for Animal Consciousness

Consciousness is a central concept within Cureau's theory of animal nature. Although Descartes denies certain forms of consciousness to animals, he and Cureau conceptualise it along similar lines as part of an interconnected network of faculties which includes reason, judgement and soul. Cureau argues that these faculties are shared between animals and humans - albeit in different forms - and so he reinterprets the concepts employed by Descartes in an alternative manner. To comprehend his case for animal consciousness, we must understand both the connections that he envisages between such faculties and the distinctions he draws between animals and humans.

Cureau firstly asserts that animals - like humans - possess a form of soul, although such souls differ in the respective faculties of which they are capable. He considers animals to possess a material 'âme sensitive' governed by what he terms the *Imagination*. By contrast, humans have this corporeal soul as well as an immaterial 'âme raisonnable' governed by the *Entendement*. The distinction between material animal and immaterial human souls is not dissimilar to that proposed by Descartes. His distinction was one of kind, as animals could not possess immaterial faculties such as reason, language or consciousness given the nature of their corporeal soul. Cureau's distinction is more one of degree; animals and humans can possess certain immaterial

faculties in common, but what differs is the form or the extent to which they can utilise this faculty. For Cureau, the functioning of the *Imagination* and the *Entendement* both depend on consciousness and reason, but they differ in the extent to which they can employ these faculties and in the kind of judgements they can make.

Endowed with *Imagination,* Cureau regards animals as conscious beings who accumulate information from their sensory organs and internal experiences, which he terms *Images*.[91] The *Imagination* then stores and synthesises these *Images* to allow the animal to make sense of its conscious lived experience.[92] For Cureau, the *Imagination* contains a limited capacity for reason and judgement. He poses the example of an animal who has been trained to complete an action by receiving food and affection as a reward and suggests that she repeats this action because she remembers and anticipates a favourable outcome. Conversely, in the *Traité,* he considers an instance in which an animal is fearful because she remembers the blows she has received in the past and anticipates a similar injury in the future. In both passages, Cureau postulates that:

> Il en est de même quand on les flatte et qu'on leur donne à manger après qu'ils ont fait quelque chose, car ils conservent la mémoire des caresses et du traitement qu'ils ont reçus et l'espérance qu'ils ont après d'en recevoir encore de semblables, les excite à faire des memes choses.[93]

> Car puisque la menace présente les fait ressouvenir des coups qu'ils ont reçus aux premières leçons, et que le souvenir de ces coups qui sont passés leur en fait craindre d'autres à venir; il faut que leur Imagination unisse l'Image de la menace avec celle des coups qu'ils ont reçus, et qu'ils joignent ensuite l'Image de ces coups avec celle des autres qu'ils appréhendent.[94]

Both the hopeful and the fearful animal here synthesise an immaterial *Image* - their memories of a reward or of a beating - with their present physical experiences. Cureau perceives the animals as conscious beings who can synthesise these past and present *Images*. Their conscious

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[91] Marin Cureau de la Chambre, 'Quelle est la connaissance des bêtes?', in *Les caractères des passions*, 5 vols (Amsterdam: Antoine Michel, 1658-1663), I-II (1658), pp. 543-599 (p. 552).

[92] Cureau, 'Connaissance', p. 553.

[93] Cureau, 'Connaissance', pp. 565-566.

[94] Marin Cureau de la Chambre, *Traité sur la connaissance des bêtes, où tout ce qui a été dit pour et contre le raisonnement des bêtes est examiné* (Paris: Rocolet, 1647), pp. 186-187.

experiences in turn inform the reasoned judgements they draw about their present and potential future experiences, whether favourable or unfavourable. Such judgements are limited to the situation at hand and consist in determining whether something may be good or bad, or useful or detrimental, to the animal's survival.

Although Cureau does attribute some capacity for reason to animals - contrary to Descartes - it remains limited in scope. Animal judgements differ in degree compared to those of humans for Cureau. Animals can reason on what is beneficial to them, but their judgements are restricted to the particular and corporeal situations necessary for their survival and which are 'propres à la nature de chaque espèce'.[95] Animal reason cannot, then, 's'étend à toutes les choses quelles qu'elles soient'.[96] The ability to form reasoned judgements about universal, abstract and immaterial phenomena is instead the purview of the 'âme raisonnable' and *Entendement* that are uniquely human. Whilst Cureau places animals and humans in continuity in terms of the shared faculties they possess, he simultaneously erects hierarchical distinctions between them which continue along the dividing lines of human superiority and animal inferiority. In terms of their respective reasoning capacities, the *Imagination* is 'inférieure à l'Entendement', which remains a mark of human specificity.[97]

The presence of some form of internal 'discours' and an ability to experience emotions are two additional factors within Cureau's concept of animal reason. He argues that animals must possess some form of reasoned 'discours' to be able to form judgements.[98] Cureau's attribution of 'discours' to animals once more stands in opposition to Descartes' concept of reason, according to which an ability to express one's thoughts is a prerequisite for reason and vice versa. Cureau instead attributes both language and reason to animals. In his view, their reasoned 'discours' does not necessarily need to be expressed to others via human language or even through a vocal form of expression at all; such discourse mainly occurs within an animal or a human's consciousness. The individual may then proceed to express their thought process

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[95] Cureau, 'Connaissance', pp. 559-560 and p. 589.

[96] Cureau, *Traité*, p. 140.

[97] Cureau, *Traité,* p. 140.

[98] Cureau, *Traité,* p. 215 and p. 221.

vocally or linguistically, but this is not a prerequisite of reason.[99] It is with regards to such expression that Cureau's thought differs from that of Bougeant examined above. Bougeant is primarily concerned with animals' outward expressions of emotion or thought, giving little consideration to whether this thought first arises in an animal's consciousness. For Cureau, expression is secondary to thoughts forming in the consciousness. It is an internal conscious 'discours' – possessed by animals and humans alike – which becomes the basis for reason.

Emotion occupies a second central place in Cureau's understanding of animals' reason and their consciousness of 'des choses passées, présentes et à venir'.[100] He proposes that their reasoned judgements are considerably influenced by the 'passions' or emotions which they may experience in relation to present or anticipated events, or which are attached to the *Images* comprising their memories:

> Tout le monde sait et tout le monde voit que les bêtes espèrent, qu'elles craignent, qu'elles désirent, et par conséquent il faut qu'elles connaissent les choses futures, puisque toutes ces passions ne sont excitées que par le bien ou le mal à venir.[101]

In Cureau's view, animals' emotions are intrinsically connected to the judgements they make concerning their anticipated future experiences and can influence whether they are hopeful, fearful or desirous. His discussion of fear and desire elucidates these connections between animal emotion, consciousness and reason. Cureau posits that fear and desire arise less from an event itself and more from the creature's reaction, namely, their perception of the benefit or harm that they believe will ensue.[102] Emotions are generated by the animal's *Imagination* and their conscious synthesising of past, present and possible future experiences. *Images* of past dangers or pain can return to an animal's consciousness, producing 'tous les mêmes effets que la Crainte a coutume de causer'.[103] By comparison, *Images* of something previously beneficial or pleasurable can evoke hope, anticipation and desire. Such emotions in turn influence the

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[99] Cureau, *Traité*, p. 339.

[100] Cureau, *Traité*, p. 149.

[101] Cureau, *Traité*, p. 149.

[102] Cureau, *Traité*, pp. 155-156.

[103] Ibid, p. 158.

judgements an animal makes about objects in their present or future; they may avoid them out of fear or pursue them with desire. Consciousness, reasoned *discours* and emotion thereby emerge as interconnected - and even interdependent - faculties within Cureau's perception of animal nature.

Having elaborated a theory of animal consciousness and reason, Cureau addresses some of the principal contentions raised against him. Pierre Chanet (1603 - 1660) - a Protestant physician and philosopher - strongly opposed Cureau's original essay. Chanet maintained that animals did not act consciously or out of reason, but instead moved mechanistically out of instinct and habit. *L'Instinct* for Chanet was a kind of 'force extérieure' acting upon animals, such that they remained passive objects in their own movement. In response, Cureau proposed an alternative theory of animal instinct without recourse to such mechanistic explanations. He conceptualised instinct as a natural faculty that was common to animals and humans alike and which enabled them to move and act of their own accord.[104] In his view, instinct generates innate *Images* of objects necessary for survival, which in turn motivate animals and humans to pursue such essential objects.[105] Cureau does not deny that animals and humans sometimes act by instinct alone. He nevertheless maintains that instinct often operates in conjunction with reason and consciousness.[106] Instinct may provide an initial *Image* or impetus for action, which animals and humans then employ in the same manner as other kinds of *Images* to inform their judgements. Instinct and reason are compatible in Cureau's view, such that a theory of instinct no longer disproves that animals can act consciously or rationally.

The concept of other faculties that intersect with reason was by no means unique to Cureau's thought in seventeenth-century France; indeed, we also encountered this in Descartes' metaphysics in the previous chapter. Cureau nevertheless shifts the emphasis in his discussion of animal and human faculties in three principal manners. Firstly, it is no longer a case of whether animals definitely possess or lack a certain faculty, such as reason or consciousness. It is instead a question of how far animals might be capable of the faculty concerned or what form

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[104] Cureau, 'Connaissance', pp. 567-568.
[105] Ibid, pp. 574-577.
[106] Cureau, 'Connaissance', pp. 564-566.

it assumes. Cureau thereby erects a hierarchical system of thought in which animals possess consciousness, even though this remains to a more limited and imperfect degree than that of humans. Secondly, it is no longer a question of *what* animals might think or speak, as it was for Descartes. Cureau is more concerned with *how* animals may reason, how they experience past or future events and how they convey their thoughts to others. It is in this respect that he thirdly shifts the concern somewhat away from capacities and onto animal experience. Cureau places little emphasis on whether animals can think or remember, for instance. His works are concerned to a greater extent with considering how animals might remember past events, how they respond emotionally and how this shapes their thoughts, actions or experiences in the present. Whilst he posits a distinct theory of how these mechanisms might work within animals, Cureau only regards this as a probable explanation. In a similar vein to Montaigne and Bougeant, his thought is marked by an inherent uncertainty with regards to animal nature, for he maintains that we cannot know animals' specific experiences or internal *discours* completely or with any certainty. Despite their superiority over animals, then, humans are by no means infinite or infallible for Cureau.

4.3.2 Enduring Doubt and Corporeal Acts of Reading

Cureau's theory of animal nature maintains that their conscious experience, reason and thought differs in comparison to that of humans. Yet this raises further questions regarding the specifics of what such animal experience or thought may comprise. It is in this regard that Cureau's work contains an inherent doubt. He does not claim to know such specificities of animal experience and believes that they lie beyond human perception and comprehension. Indeed, animal life is so obscure to humans that any theorising on what it might be like will necessarily involve conjecture and inference.[107]

Cureau was not alone in expressing uncertainty over animal experience in early modern France and his thought adopts a similar stance to that of Montaigne and of Bougeant after him. Although he was not a sceptic like Montaigne, Cureau questions the limitations of human knowledge. He regards humans as finite and fallible, though he still maintains their superiority

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[107] Cureau, *Traité,* p. 3 and p. 225.

over animals, which Montaigne does not. Whilst Cureau believes that humans may never entirely comprehend animal nature, he maintains that they can speculate on what animals' experiences may be like through reading their corporeal gestures.[108] He thereby adopts a similar approach to Bougeant and to Montaigne's empathetical speculation, considered in the second chapter. For Cureau, the reader must first carefully observe animals' outward behaviours to in turn draw comparisons with their own experience and propose speculative interpretations.

Cureau's speculative form of reading comes to the fore in his discussion of animals' potential reasoning processes, which he infers from their corporeal gestures. He recounts an instance of an animal standing before an item of food, who is seemingly deliberating whether it is safe or beneficial to eat. He speculates on these observable behaviours and imagines the possible internal dialogue occurring within the animal's mind, based upon what his own thoughts may be in a comparable situation. Cureau states that he might consciously reason that: '*ce doux est bon; ce bon peut être mangé; donc ce doux peut être mangé; donc il le faut manger*'.[109] He cannot assert with any certainty that this is what the animal is in fact thinking. In imaginatively projecting himself into the creature's experience – and comparing it to his own human thought processes – he can only speculate on their possible reasoned deliberations.

Cureau similarly speculates on the nature of animals' internal reasoned discourse in the instance of a hunting dog attempting to catch a hare. He proposes the dog's potential reasoning process based on his observable actions, for example, in his attempts to successfully surmount the obstacles he encounters in his pursuit.[110] When his original path becomes blocked, the dog appears to deliberate over alternative options until he decides on a different route. Cureau once more compares the canine's behaviour to that of humans, suggesting that we might likewise consider various alternatives and deliberate on the best or most feasible option. He proposes that - based on the dog's outward gestures of pausing, reflecting and trialling different options - he likely performs a comparable reasoning process to that which 'se passe dans notre Esprit

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[108] Cureau, *Traité*, p. 323 and p. 326 and p. 232.

[109] Cureau, *Traité*, p. 216.

[110] Cureau, *Traité*, p. 221.

quand nous formons quelque dessein'.[111] Cureau does not claim to know the canine's internal *discours* with any certainty, nor that animals' and humans' reasoning processes or the conclusions they draw are identical. In his view, though, the comparability of animal and human behaviour offers convincing and probable evidence from which humans can speculate on animal experience.

Cureau critically recognises that - due to the inherent uncertainty and limitations of human knowledge that he identifies - there may be multiple possible interpretations of animals' corporeal gestures. This ambiguity is reflected in his speculative interpretation of animal pain, distress and surprise. Cureau states that humans often cry out or make 'des plaintes et des gémissements' in various situations, such as when they are experiencing pain, distress, surprise or joy.[112] He compares these human gestures with 'les mouvements' and 'les cris' of animals who are sick, injured or in distressing situations and speculates that they experience similar emotional states of pain, distress or fear to humans.[113] Cureau simultaneously acknowledges that both animals' and humans' corporeal gestures can be ambiguous and misleading, especially when expressing their emotional states. He maintains, for instance, that we can never definitively reduce the barking and 'gémissements' of a dog to a single interpretation of the canine's internal experience. The dog may bark, whine or shake in pain, but could equally be expressing anger, surprise, frustration or even excitement through his gestures and vocalisations.[114] Context may offer clues to guide our attempts to comprehend animal experience. Given the inherent incomprehensibility of animal life and the ambiguity of their corporeal gestures, though, our interpretations of their emotional experiences can only ever remain speculative for Cureau.

Though not as extreme as Montaigne's scepticism, Cureau's thought continues to be shaped by an inherent uncertainty in a similar manner to Bougeant. Where Montaigne and Bougeant accepted that humans could speculate - but that certainty was beyond reach - Cureau adds

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[111] Cureau, *Traité,* p. 221.

[112] Cureau, *Traité,* p. 366.

[113] Cureau, *Traité,* p. 325 and p. 365.

[114] Cureau, *Traité,* p. 325.

another component: humans' assumptions and interpretations will not necessarily be correct. We might misinterpret animals' corporeal gestures because we are uncertain or because there is an inescapable ambiguity in their gestures, such that they can signify more than one thing.

Cureau's theory of animal consciousness, his shift from animal faculties to experience and his acceptance of human fallibility and the possibility of misinterpretation constituted distinct contributions to the debates surrounding the "animal question" in early modern France. These were not, however, his sole contributions. Cureau's works equally afford greater consideration to the moral implications surrounding contemporary debates on animal nature. Although Anita Guerrini maintains that he drew no ethical conclusions about human behaviour towards animals from his theory of consciousness, I contend that this is far from the case. A close reading of his essay and *Traité* reveal a distinct ethical impulse within his thought.[115] As opposed to Bougeant, Cureau was less concerned with the role of humans' emotional interspecies relationships in their treatment of animals. He instead considers how our perceptions of animals influence our responses towards them and the potential moral consequences that this involves. This moral impetus also intersects with the inherent doubt contained within Cureau's thought, as he contemplates how we can be sure we are treating animals morally if we cannot know about their lives or experiences with certainty. His works thereby contain a moral impulse of care and concern towards animals, specifically in the face of an inescapable uncertainty.

4.3.3 A Moral Impetus: Concern and Care

Within his essay and the *Traité*, Cureau considers the potential implications of both his own and other contemporary theories of animal nature. Two interconnected issues were of particular concern to him. He is firstly critical of doctrines of absolute human specificity and superiority due to their potential inimical consequences for how we treat animals. Secondly, Cureau maintains that denying morally significant faculties to animals - including, but not limited to, reason, soul or consciousness - can also result in possible detrimental treatment.

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[115] Guerrini, 'Animal Bodies', p. 114.

Cureau is first concerned with theories of absolute human specificity and superiority on both a metaphysical and a moral level. This might initially seem rather contradictory, as we have already seen that he draws certain hierarchical differences between animals and humans. His criticism of doctrines of absolute human specificity is not, however, hypocritical. Cureau believes that humans are superior to animals in the *degree* to which they can employ shared faculties, such as in the relative reasoning capacities of the *Entendement* versus the *Imagination*. By contrast, he criticises doctrines of *absolute* human specificity which draw more definitive animal-human distinctions and maintain that animals are devoid of certain faculties entirely. Cureau is critical of such absolute doctrines on moral grounds. He argues that this form of human specificity is ethically questionable when it is employed to justify superiority and any treatment which humans deem fitting, including actions which cause harm to animals.[116] He recognises that such beliefs can lead us to erroneously claim certain faculties as marks of human specificity, even though animals may also demonstrate such morally relevant capacities. Absolute doctrines may subsequently result in morally problematic treatment if, for instance, humans were to treat a conscious and sentient animal as if it could neither feel nor suffer.[117] Cureau does not claim that these beliefs automatically result in morally questionable consequences, for it depends on the ends to which such human superiority is employed and the actions this motivates. He asserts that such doctrines often result in a moral injustice with regards to animals, as they deny them morally significant faculties and can be employed to legitimise ethically questionable actions in the name of human specificity and superiority.

Having opposed doctrines of absolute specificity, Cureau contemplates the moral implications of his own thought and of the questions raised by his fundamental doubt. He regards animals as conscious, rational and emotional beings who deserve a level of moral concern. He questions, though, how exactly we ought to treat animals if we can neither comprehend their experience in its entirety, nor with any certainty. This question is confounded by the ambiguity he identifies in animals' corporeal gestures and communicative vocalisations; as Cureau notes, the barking of a dog may alternatively be a sign of pain, joy or surprise.[118] The ethical impetus of his thought

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[116] Cureau, *Traité,* pp. 7-8.

[117] Cureau, *Traité,* p. 8.

[118] Cureau, *Traité,* p. 375.

emerges in his response to these questions. Cureau maintains that - given the limitations of human knowledge - we cannot definitively claim either way that animals possess or lack morally salient faculties or in what form. This uncertainty nevertheless carries moral implications for animals. Cureau states that if we disregard animals' potential experiences or continue to treat them as if they lack morally salient faculties, we risk committing a moral injustice in denying them 'un bien qui leur appartient aussi bien qu'à lui [l'homme]'.[119] Given this uncertainty, he instead advocates for a moral response which demonstrates greater concern, caution and care towards animals. Cureau crucially proposes that where there is doubt over whether animals possess morally relevant faculties - including reason, consciousness or emotion - it is preferable to assume that they do. Responding in this manner demonstrates a concern for animals and care both in the sense of proceeding with caution and in ensuring that animals receive the appropriate moral treatment.

In Cureau's view, humans ought to show concern and care for animals. This entails both caring *about* animals' potential experiences - as well as how they differ from those of humans - and caring *for* them through responding appropriately to their potential moral status and needs. Amidst the uncertainty which shapes his thought, Cureau implicitly recognises that matters of morality, particularly in interspecies interactions, are rarely simple or straight-forward. We might not know for certain what an animal is experiencing when we are called upon to act, nor can we be certain that our moral response is the correct one, if such an option even exists. Doubt and ambiguity are instead integral components of humans' lived encounters with and moral responses to animals. It is in responding to uncertainty through concern, caution and care that Cureau's thought contains a considerable ethical impulse with regards to human treatment of animals.

4.3.4 Conclusion

Through his theory of animal consciousness, Cureau offers a distinct contribution to discourses surrounding the "animal question" in seventeenth-century France. He conceptualises animals as conscious, rational and emotional beings who possess a corporeal soul; his thought thereby

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[119] Cureau, *Traité,* p. 8.

contains points of contact with Descartes' metaphysics, but his works were not written in response to the later Cartesian beast-machine doctrine. Although Cureau proposes that faculties such as reason and consciousness are common to animals and humans, he perpetuates hierarchical distinctions between them on the grounds that humans are capable of more abstract and universal forms of reason. However, he only ever regards his theory as a probable explanation of animal consciousness and experience. Cureau's thought continues to be shaped by a fundamental doubt and - like Montaigne before him and Bougeant afterwards - he does not claim to know the specifics of animal experience. He nevertheless maintains that humans can speculate on what animal experience may be like through reading and interpreting their corporeal gestures and vocalisations.

Beyond his theory of animal nature and his fundamental doubt, Cureau's works crucially contain a distinct moral impetus to care. Unlike the other thinkers examined thus far in this study, he explicitly considers the moral implications of his own and others' perceptions of animal nature. He strongly opposes doctrines of absolute human specificity based on their possible morally questionable consequences for animals. The alternative response to animals that Cureau proposes instead accounts for the limitations of human knowledge and the uncertainty of animal nature. Given such doubt, he advocates affording animals the benefit of the doubt - so to speak - and treating them with caution, concern and care. Although Cureau by no means posits a fully elaborated moral system, his thought contains a significant ethical impulse to care for the animals whom we encounter in our lives.

4.4 Conclusion

In elaborating their theories of animal nature and of care, thinkers such as the Cartesians, Bougeant and Cureau did not operate in a void. The works of Descartes and Montaigne continued to shape the core terms of discussions around the "animal question" in early modern France. At the same time, seventeenth-century thinkers were critical readers who approached the "animal question" from diverse intellectual, cultural and theological backgrounds. They drew upon, elaborated or opposed the ideas of Descartes and Montaigne and generated their

own distinct theories of animal nature in seventeenth-century France. Cartesian thinkers and Bougeant demonstrated a concern with the theological implications raised by both Descartes' metaphysics and alternative theories of animal soul. Bougeant and Cureau contributed a further dimension to contemporary debates in affording more explicit attention to the moral status of animals. Although they approached the question of humans' treatment of animals from different perspectives, both authors focus on the moral impetus of care contained in humans' emotional relationships and the concern we feel towards animals.

The questions and theories raised by Descartes and Montaigne continued to occupy a central place in the ongoing debates concerning animal nature in early modern France. Their works were akin to drops of water in a lake, producing ripples which spread, merged and transformed into new waves of ideas. The present chapter has primarily focused upon such ripples within intellectual and ecclesiastical spheres. Yet the works of the Cartesian thinkers, Bougeant and Cureau were far from the only ripples in the ongoing debates surrounding the "animal question" in early modern France. Debates evolved in the more secular spheres of the seventeenth-century salons and the works which emanated from them, such as in the case of Madeleine de Scudéry.

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Caring Chameleons and Kaleidoscopic Readings:
Madeleine de Scudéry's *Histoire de deux caméléons*

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In seventeenth-century France, the salons of Paris performed a significant role in disseminating and debating the philosophical ideas of the day. Salon-goers congregated to discuss literary works and pressing philosophical questions or participated in parlour games, the art of conversation and other *amusements*.[1] The Parisian salons contributed to the shaping of social relations between the different genders and social classes of France.[2] Both men and women could actively participate in these spheres where the aristocracy and the rising bourgeoisie convened. Seventeenth-century salons were not simply spheres of *préciosité* or sociability, though, contrary to contemporary and subsequent criticisms.[3] Salon-goers participated in debates on current epistemological, ontological, social and political questions.[4] Their predominantly female hostesses published vast novels, poetry anthologies and collections of philosophical *conversations*. The *salonnières* considerably moulded France's literary canon and the salons enabled them to have a stake in intellectual and cultural matters, beyond the male-dominated spaces of the formal *Académies*. Despite their influence, the contributions of

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[1] Faith E. Beasley, 'Changing the Conversation: Repositioning the French Seventeenth-Century Salon', *L'Esprit créateur,* 60 (2020), 34-46 (p. 35). Line Cottegnies, 'Jeux littéraires en France et en Angleterre au XVIIe siècle - des salons parisiens à Aphra Behn', *Études épistémè,* 39 (2021), 1-21 (p. 1).

[2] Anne E. Duggan, 'Lovers, Salon and State: La Carte de Tendre and the Mapping of Socio-Political Relations', *Dalhousie French Studies*, 36 (1996), 15-22 (p. 17). Stephen D. Kale, *French Salons: High Society and Political Sociability from the Old Regime to the Revolution of 1848* (Baltimore & London: John Hopkins University Press, 2004), pp. 2-3. Peter Sahlins, *1668: Year of the Animal in France* (New York: Zone Books, 2017), p. 96.

[3] Faith E. Beasley, *Salons, History and the Creation of 17th Century France: Mastering Memory* (London & New York: Routledge, 2017), p. 2. Anne E. Duggan, *Salonnières, Furies and Fairies: The Politics of Genre and Cultural Change in Absolutist France,* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005), p. 13. Sahlins, *Year of the Animal,* p. 98.

[4] Laura Burch, 'Madeleine de Scudery: peut-on parler de femme philosophe?', *Revue philosophique de la France a l'Etranger,* 203 (2013), 361-375 (p. 364).

the *salonnières* have long been marginalised and the philosophical impact of their work little discussed.[5]

Madeleine de Scudéry (1607 - 1701) was a prominent figure in late seventeenth-century French society and salon culture. Her renowned Saturday salon attracted an array of Parisian elites, including Madame de Lafayette, Marin Cureau de la Chambre and Catherine Descartes, niece to the acclaimed philosopher. Scudéry's literary career began with publishing romance novels under the pseudonym of Sappho. She later published volumes of *Conversations* drawn from debates on the contemporary philosophical, ethical, social and political questions discussed in her salon. The influential reputation of her gatherings and her prolific literary career brought Scudéry praise and recognition. She was awarded the *Académie Française*'s first literary prize in 1671 for her essay, 'Discours de la gloire'. With praise, though, came criticism. Molière satirised Scudéry and the *salonnières* in his comedy, *Les Précieuses ridicules* (1659), and her stylised romances were the target of Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux's parodies. Contemporary critics refuted her intellectual contributions. Although they recognised Scudéry's participation in philosophical debates, they contended that no definitive or well-elaborated epistemology emerged from either her salon discussions or her published works.[6]

Scudéry captured the diverse perspectives and intellectual discourses of early modern France in her volumes of *Conversations*. The literary form of the conversation itself merits brief consideration. The genre originated from the dialogues of Plato, which presented discussions on moral or philosophical issues between various interlocutors. The art of conversation and its accompanying literary genre remained popular throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Both men and women could participate in this art and it constituted the principal activity of the famous Parisian *salons*, which attracted many of France's greatest writers and thinkers.[7] Scudéry's conversations were drawn from the debates, critical readings and discussions which sustained her salon gatherings and are filtered through her own authorial

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[5] Beasley, *Salons*, p. 5. Burch, 'Femme philosophe', p. 363. Duggan, *Salonnières,* p. 15.

[6] Burch, 'Femme philosophe', p. 363.

[7] Stephen Miller, *Conversation: A History of a Declining Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 71-72.

lens. Her published conversations engage the reader as an interlocutor and the mediating factor is now the material object of the book, rather than the physical space of the salon. Scudéry's literary conversation thereby calls for an active and responsive reading from us, just as participation in discussion was required of the salon-goer. As readers, we are encouraged to reflect upon the question at hand and to formulate our own response, continuing the conversation beyond the covers of the book.

Amidst the intellectual ferment of the salons, one issue particularly captured Scudéry's attention: the "animal question" and the Cartesian beast-machine doctrine. Her love for animals is well-documented and Scudéry cared for numerous creatures throughout her life, whom she later immortalised in her poetry and prose.[8] Her corresponding interest in animal consciousness, rationality and sentience spanned her literary career.[9] As the Cartesian beast-machine thesis gained popularity in intellectual circles and the *Académies* during the 1660s, Scudéry launched debates on Cartesian animal automatism within her salon and was forthcoming in her criticism. Her salon attracted sympathetic allies including Marin Cureau de la Chambre and Catherine Descartes and soon became a 'bastion of resistance' against the Cartesian beast-machine.[10]

The *Histoire de deux caméléons*, contained in the *Conversations*, represents Scudéry's most sustained written engagement with questions of epistemology, ontology and Cartesian animal automatism. She documents the lives of two chameleons gifted into her care by the French consul in Alexandria and accompanies her account with a series of eulogising poems. Her work is more than a narrative of the reptiles' lives, though. She chronicles her care for the chameleons alongside her reflections on contemporary epistemological and ontological questions of animal nature. Her *Histoire* equally contains an implicit statement on the social, political and intellectual status of women in seventeenth-century France; though prohibited from the

[8] Erica Harth, *Cartesian Women: Versions and Subversions of Rational Discourse in the Old Regime* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 100. Sahlins, *Year of the Animal*, p. 301.

[9] Anne E. Duggan, 'Madeleine de Scudéry's Animal Sublime, or Of Chameleons', *Ecozon,* 7 (2016), 27-41 (p. 38).

[10] Duggan, 'Animal Sublime', p. 29. Harth, *Cartesian Women,* p. 66. Sahlins, *Year of the Animal,* p. 277.

academies, women significantly shaped contemporary debates through their salons and publications.

The *Histoire* provides Scudéry with an intellectual space to challenge the beast-machine doctrine and engage in the debates surrounding the "animal question". She adopts a unique approach to those considered in previous chapters, for she neither advances her own ontology of animal nature nor adopts a speculative form of reading. Scudéry instead approaches her chameleons and the "animal question" through what I term kaleidoscopic reading. She rarely adheres to one single interpretation but, like the figure of the chameleon itself, constantly transitions between different representations of her reptilian companions. Scudéry thereby conveys transient and diverse perceptions of the chameleons - akin to the constantly shifting and fragmented images in a kaleidoscope - through her reading of narrative accounts, poetry, mythology, philosophy, natural history and ethology. Her readings focus on minutiae and the intricate details of the chameleons' bodies and movements, from which she draws her own broader conclusions about animal nature. Scudéry equally discusses her own lived experiences with the two reptiles and her emotional responses act as a conduit for the ways in which she perceives and comes to understand the chameleons. Her kaleidoscopic reading ultimately reflects both the perpetual flux of animal life and the continually changing nature of the ways in which we perceive and interact with animals.

Scudéry's transient perceptions and her kaleidoscopic reading of different discourses are reflected in the dual structure and meaning of 'histoire'. The opening section of her work comprises a literary ethology.[11] It details her careful observations in the manner of an ethology, whilst also capturing her narrative of the chameleons' lives and her fluctuating perceptions of their natures. The second section is a literary cycle of poems contributed by her salon-goers. Many praise their hostess or eulogise her chameleons through creating narratives reminiscent of poetic romances or the literature of the *précieuses*.[12] Scudéry's text is a 'histoire' in the sense of an observational account of the chameleons, akin to a natural history. At the same time, it

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[11] Sahlins, *Year of the Animal*, p. 278.

[12] Ibid, p. 278.

remains a fictionalised narrative of their lives, written within a distinct framework of literary convention and tradition.

The *Histoire* thus constitutes a rich and complex text which allows us to explore the diverse ways we perceive the creatures with whom we share our lives. It would be difficult to capture such complexity within the limited scope of a single chapter. My analysis shall focus on the first - literary ethology - section of the *Histoire*, whilst selectively drawing upon the poems where appropriate. First, I will examine Scudéry's opposition to the beast-machine doctrine. I consider how she challenges the claims to ontological certainty of both Cartesian thought and natural history through employing their approaches to advance her own interpretations of the chameleons. I build on this in the second section and consider how Scudéry juxtaposes, combines and reshapes various discourses to formulate her own readings. I propose that her *Histoire* implicitly challenges the idea that any single discourse can lead to true and certain knowledge of animal nature. Her kaleidoscopic readings both gesture towards the complexity and fluidity of our thought on animals and offer diverse fragments of knowledge which shape how Scudéry perceives and engages with her chameleons.

Scudéry's kaleidoscopic reading is not the only way in which she pursues knowledge of animal nature. Her interspecies relationships with the two chameleons simultaneously shape how she perceives and interacts with them. In the third section, I examine how her lived encounters inform her perceptions of the chameleons. Her experience of living alongside the reptiles reveals the flexible, unstable and protean nature of animal life. It is equally through her interspecies relationships that Scudéry comes to regard the chameleons as conscious, seeing and responsive beings with their own distinct interests. In the final section, I explore how she responds to her chameleons - and to their changing needs - through both an emotional attitude and practical acts of care. In the *Histoire*, care is grounded in the shared interspecies relationship between Scudéry and her chameleons and emerges as a flexible, reciprocal and multi-faceted response. The significance of the *Histoire* primarily lies in how Scudéry foregrounds the role of our lived interspecies encounters in shaping how we think about animals, how we interact with them and how we care for them.

5.1 Animal Encounters: Challenging the Beast-Machine

One of the principal contributions of the *Histoire* to contemporary debates lies in its resistance to Cartesian animal automatism. Leonora Cohen Rosenfield attributes Scudéry's rejection of the beast-machine doctrine to her 'feminine sentimentality' and her recorded sympathetic and caring responses towards animals.[13] Although sentimental feelings may contribute to Scudéry's opposition, I contend that this was not her sole motivation. Her objection to the beast-machine doctrine lay in its consequences for animals and in the way it reduced them to objects for human observation and use. Whilst Scudéry occasionally refutes the principles of Cartesian animal automatism directly, her opposition is often more subtle. Her resistance lies in how she reads, or interprets, the epistemological approaches of Cartesianism and natural history to demonstrate that they are but one way of perceiving animal nature among many others and, as such, cannot lay claim to truth or certainty.

To contest the beast-machine, Scudéry draws upon Descartes' physiological principles and the empirical methods of seventeenth-century natural history in her observations. The *Histoire* imitates an ethological study in meticulously detailing the minutiae of the chameleons' movements and physiological features. She counts the reptiles' tiny claws and rather anthropomorphically likens them to human 'doigts'.[14] Scudéry notes the intricate movements of their eyes and the numerous 'lignes ou de petites moulures' inscribed on their eyelids.[15] She records every element of the chameleons' colour-changing patterns and mannerisms, which she believes correspond to each reptile's different emotional states.[16] Although Scudéry initially appears to imitate the empiricism of contemporary natural history, her descriptions are not objective and nor does she explain the chameleons' movements in purely mechanistic terms. It is as if she is dissecting the two reptiles through her descriptions, which retain a literary quality.

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[13] Rosenfield, *Beast-Machine,* p. 201.

[14] Madeleine de Scudéry, 'Histoire de deux caméléons', in *Nouvelles conversations de morale dédiées au Roi* (Paris: Sébastien Mabre-Cramoisy, 1668), pp. 496-597 (pp. 503-504).

[15] Scudéry, 'Histoire', pp. 504-505.

[16] Ibid, p. 511.

Through metaphor and analogy, she begins to present her own emotional responses to the chameleons and allows her reader to fantasise about these fascinating creatures.

Scudéry proceeds to employ the tools of empirical observation to reveal how they can lead to different ways of perceiving the chameleons, rather than ontological truth. Her fluctuation between diverse discourses - and their perceptions of animal nature - poses an additional challenge to the Cartesian beast-machine doctrine. Scudéry's descriptions of the chameleons reveal that mechanistic explanations are not as certain or indubitable as Cartesians may believe them to be and that there are other, equally plausible, ways of understanding animal nature. For instance, she reads the slow movement of the chameleon's legs as an example of his stateliness, grace and intention:

> Cet animal a le marcher lent, grave et majestueux. Il ne pose jamais son pied sans avoir considéré auparavant où il le place.[17]

A Cartesian would likely explain the chameleon's movements through recourse to mechanical processes, as we have seen in the previous two chapters. Scudéry offers an alternative reading in which the reptile's physiological movements become evidence of animal consciousness and intention. In her view, his movements are majestic and full of gravitas. As readers, we come to imagine the chameleon as akin to a monarch - particularly through the connotations of 'majestueux' - whose steps assume an almost processional flavour as he consciously, carefully and strategically considers his next movements. Scudéry's reading and the images it conjures convey her sense of awe and elevate her chameleons to beings worthy of her close and careful attention. Her interpretation of the reptile's movements as an instance of his agency stands in opposition to the beast-machine doctrine. The chameleon is far from a mechanistic being to Scudéry and instead demonstrates agency and intention through his slow, considered walk. Whilst her reference to the animal's 'pied' - rather than his paw or claw - might initially seem anthropomorphic, her choice of language humanises the reptile; we once more imagine the chameleon as a king, or figure of power, who will not act without careful deliberation. This physiological connection subtly opposes the beast-machine through presenting the chameleon

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[17] Scudéry, 'Histoire', pp. 503-504.

as more akin to a human than a mechanical object. The physiological and the empirical thus coexist alongside the majestic for Scudéry, offering a distinct and equally valid interpretation of the chameleon's nature.

Another instance in which Scudéry employs - and reinterprets - Cartesian physiology and the methods of empirical science lies in her description of the 'machine' of the chameleon's eye. She details her observations during the actual post-mortem examination of the male that was conducted at the *Académie Royale*. Dissection and vivisection were increasingly common practices in natural history and empirical science in seventeenth-century France. Underlying these practices was the assumption that careful and objective observation could advance human knowledge of animal nature. Animals accordingly became objects of observation and experimentation. Cartesian anatomy lent itself to such experiments, particularly if animals could be regarded as machines for the natural historian to deconstruct and discover their inner workings. The natural historians within the academies, such as Claude Perrault, often employed Cartesian anatomical principles in their attempts to explain the internal bodily mechanisms of animal species.

Whilst Scudéry appears to imitate the principles of empiricism and Cartesian anatomy in describing the workings of the 'petites machines des yeux', her descriptive dissection offers an alternative interpretation and focuses on the aesthetic beauty of the chameleon's eye:

> Telles sont ces petites et merveilleuses machines des yeux de cet animal, si différentes des yeux de tous les autres animaux [...] ce fut la plus belle chose du monde. Tout le corps de l'œil parut comme une perle parfaite en rondeur, en blancheur et en lustre.[18]

Scudéry concentrates on the minute details of the reptile's eye, presenting her observations through metaphor, simile and superlatives. She conjures an image of the eye as a perfect pearl, brilliant white and shining; her comparison to a precious gemstone imbues the eye with immense value, reflected by her use of the superlative to describe this ocular pearl as 'la plus belle chose du monde'. Her rich description not only allows the reader to imagine the

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[18] Scudéry, *Histoire*, pp. 537-538.

chameleon's anatomy, but also invites us to share Scudéry's way of seeing this creature and its beauty. Although she describes the chameleon's eye as a 'petite machine' - bringing to mind Cartesian anatomy - it is a marvellous machine for her. The figure of the chameleon's eye is significant in this regard. Her *Histoire* emphasises that there are numerous different discourses which shape the ways in which we perceive animal nature. What some may see as an explicable physiological mechanism, Scudéry reads as a marvellous, fantastic and precious machine.

Empirical science and Cartesian philosophy thus constitute two different ways of comprehending animals within the *Histoire*. Scudéry's work gestures towards the limitations of these approaches, though, and implicitly challenges their claims to ontological truth and certainty. Her observations of the chameleons' movements and anatomy - drawn from her actual encounters with them - situate both how she perceives the two reptiles and how she interprets Cartesian and natural historical accounts. Through blending these different approaches, the *Histoire* reveals that the ways in which we perceive animals are plural, diverse and protean; they are continually evolving in response to the inherent flux of animal nature, our interspecies encounters and of the philosophical, scientific and cultural discourses which frame our thought. At the heart of her work, then, lie implicit epistemological and ontological questions about how we construct our knowledge of animals and how, or even whether, we ought to categorise species in any way. The diverse and transient perceptions of chameleon nature examined thus far suggest that Scudéry does not consider there to exist a single or indubitable ontological truth. The *Histoire* does not explicitly engage with philosophical scepticism or the doubt surrounding animal nature examined in the previous three chapters. Scudéry nevertheless shares their fundamental epistemological concerns pertaining to human knowledge of animal nature. It is in the *Histoire* that we encounter her complex and nuanced responses to such questions.

5.2 Kaleidoscopic Readings and Resisting Categorisation: Shifting Perceptions of Chameleon Nature

Scudéry responds to the epistemological questions raised in the *Histoire* through her kaleidoscopic reading. In adopting this approach, she reads widely and flexibly across various

discourses. Scudéry explores their differing perceptions of animal nature and combines these transient readings to form her own ideas about her chameleons. Her kaleidoscopic reading in the *Histoire* means that - akin to the animal that is its subject - her work resists rigid categorisation within a single genre. As we have seen, though, Scudéry's meticulous and extensive observations initially seem to perpetuate an empiricist view of animals as objects of scientific curiosity, knowable through careful study. It is in this regard that Peter Sahlins considers her 'unadorned observations' and the *Histoire* in general to be 'clearly informed by the concerns of the naturalist'.[19] His analysis reveals how convention and propriety in early modern French society limited the possibilities for women to participate in scientific discourse, particularly as they were restricted from the *Académies*. Along with Erica Harth, Sahlins argues that the *Histoire* was intended to demonstrate Scudéry's understanding of both the 'spirit of the Cartesian method' and contemporary empirical science with its 'standard of objective observation'.[20] They maintain that her careful and detailed observations correspond to the scientific and philosophical methods prevalent in 1660s France, such that the *Histoire* constitutes a literary ethology.[21]

Sahlins and Harth offer an important contribution to scholarship on the *Histoire* in analysing two prominent discourses at work in the text. Their interpretations nevertheless remain rather reductive and selective. Sahlins and Harth devote little attention to the literary quality of Scudéry's ethological study, nor do they consider her discussion of different perceptions of the chameleons. Her apparent conformity with Cartesian and empirical principles in the *Histoire* ought not be taken at face value. As seen in the previous section, Scudéry employs the observational tools of empirical science alongside other perceptions of animal nature, including her own responses to the two chameleons. Observation is not the key to objective or scientific knowledge in the *Histoire*, but is a conduit for Scudéry's fluctuating, more emotional and highly personal ways of "knowing" her chameleons.

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[19] Sahlins, *Year of the Animal,* p. 295.

[20] Harth, *Cartesian Women,* p. 100. Sahlins, *Year of the Animal,* p. 295.

[21] Sahlins, *Year of the Animal*, p. 278.

Whilst I concur that the *Histoire* demonstrates an understanding of Cartesian method and empirical science, I propose that the principal contribution of this text to contemporary debates on the "animal question" lies in Scudéry's kaleidoscopic reading. Her transient and fluctuating perceptions of the chameleons resist rigid or static categorisations of animal nature; they thereby reflect the perpetual flux of animal life as well as the very real and flexible ways we think about animals. Her interpretations of animal nature are by no means limited to Cartesian anatomy or empirical natural history. Literary narrative, myth, symbolism and exoticism offer her alternative ways of coming to know animal and chameleon nature. The *Histoire* is more than a purely subjective account of her chameleons' lives, then, for Scudéry reveals the tensions and syntheses in the ways we read and perceive animals.

Scudéry's seemingly empirical observations of her chameleons reveal her fascination, awe and care over the course of the *Histoire*. She frequently references the caring actions she bestows upon her reptiles as well as the extreme 'soin et exactitude' with which she documents their behaviours, polychromatic changes, physical characteristics and diets.[22] Her meticulous descriptions demonstrate an increasing interest in her two chameleons and a desire to know about their lives and experiences. Scudéry notes, for instance, that the male and female differ in size and in the dynamic patterns of their colourings.[23] The female is 'beaucoup plus dorée et plus vive en couleur', whilst the male predominantly assumes forms of grey tinged with yellow and brown.[24] She details at length their distinct polychromatic changes alongside their apparent emotional states, their physical positions, the level of sunlight and even the ambient temperature conditions. Both reptiles are paler in the early morning dew, becoming ever more vibrant 'à mesure que le Soleil s'élevait'.[25] Depending on such fluctuating conditions, her chameleons alternately become 'tout couverts des plus belles taches du monde' or remain a dull greyish brown.[26] They turn a frosty white when overwhelmed by the cold - so different to their native climate - and only return to a pale yellow hours after the climatic shock.

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[22] Scudéry, 'Histoire', p. 499.
[23] Ibid, p. 502.
[24] Scudéry, 'Histoire', p. 511.
[25] Ibid, p. 511.
[26] Scudéry, 'Histoire', p. 512.

These vivid polychromatic transformations count among the 'tant de choses singulières' about the chameleons which fascinate Scudéry, who continues her descriptive dissection.[27] Metaphors and analogies convey the beauty and magnificence she perceives in the two reptiles as well as the wonder they inspire. Their unique tongues are described 'comme une feuille de rose', evoking delicateness and a traditional trope of beauty, femininity and even romance.[28] Superlatives continue to pepper her descriptions and she claims that there were never two reptiles 'plus jolis que les miens étaient', almost elevating the chameleons to the status of the sublime.[29] The literary features of the *Histoire* serve two primary functions. They reveal how Scudéry perceives her chameleons, whilst also painting a vivid picture from which we - as readers - might imagine the two reptiles through her eyes, in all their polychromatic glory.

The evocative metaphors and imagery present in the *Histoire* were a central feature of the literary movement of *préciosité* in seventeenth-century France. The genre arose from salon culture and was predominantly practised by women, including Madeleine de Scudéry, the Marquise de Rambouillet and Madame de Sévigné.[30] The *précieuses* - as they became known - pursued a linguistic purity and refinement which would surpass everyday language to capture their idealised vision of romantic love.[31] The women of the salons sought greater equality and participation in their choice of marriage partner, an enterprise in which their literary endeavours performed an integral role. The object of their poems was often to gain the esteem of another and seduce them through a demonstration of literary skill. As a code of conduct between the genders, Joan DeJean has argued that the *précieuses* of seventeenth-century France were engaged in a feminist movement through which women sought greater equality and

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[27] Scudéry, 'Histoire', p. 502.

[28] Ibid, p. 508.

[29] Scudéry, 'Histoire, p. 535.

[30] Joan DeJean, *Tender Geographies: Women and the Origins of the Novel in France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 51.

[31] Fabienne Gheysens, *Baroque, Préciosité et Burlesque: Quand l'instabilité s'empare des lettres françaises*, 50.MINUTES.FR - Mouvements littéraires, 7 vols (Auderghem: Lemaitre Publishing, 2015), I (2015), p. 17.

autonomy over their bodies.[32] Whilst gender relations were an important subject for the women of the salons, *préciosité* was a predominantly literary-linguistic movement which focused on human emotion and motivation.[33] In capturing the intensity of such emotions, the literature of the *précieuses* was often associated with a linguistic excess and rich imagery. Metaphor was prevalent in their works and many of the new metaphorical expressions invented continue to be widely used in the French language to this day.[34] Scudéry's *Carte de Tendre*, for instance, presents several metaphors for love and gender relations which gained currency in the works of the *précieuses.*[35]

The accompanying cycle of poems to Scudéry's *Histoire* draws upon several of the tropes employed by the *précieuses* and offers different representations of her reptilian companions, whilst still reflecting a sense of wonder and fascination. The figure of the chameleon itself inspires an array of continually changing interpretations. The opening cycle of poems - composed of three *chants* - describes the male chameleon as 'un Animal aussi galant que rare' who possesses 'plein de charmes', like a masculine hero we might encounter in one of the romances of the *précieuses*.[36] The *chants* are equally rather exoticising in their portrayal of this creature; he is described as a 'bel étranger' from the exotic and distant land of Africa, who traverses the seas 'au bout de l'Univers' like an intrepid explorer.[37] The chameleon remains an intriguing and mysterious figure throughout the cycle. Due to his fantastic and inexplicable colour-changing ability, the reptile is likened to a 'rare enchanteur' and a talented 'magicien'.[38] His almost magical qualities inspire awe upon his arrival in France and all of Paris is 'charmé de ce noble Animal'.[39] The three *chants* reveal romanticising and exoticising readings of this

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[32] Joan DeJean, '1654: The Salons, "Preciosity" and the Sphere of Women's Influence', in *A New History of French Literature*, ed. by Denis Hollier and R. Howard Bloch (Cambridge, MA & London: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 297-302 (p. 302).

[33] Joan DeJean, 'Preciosity', in *The New Oxford Companion to Literature in French,* ed. by Peter France (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 189 (p. 189). *Tender Geographies,* p. 51.

[34] DeJean, 'Preciosity', p. 189.

[35] Gheysens, *Baroque,* p. 24.

[36] Scudéry, 'Histoire', p. 542 and p. 569.

[37] Ibid, pp. 542-543.

[38] Scudéry, 'Histoire', p. 557.

[39] Scudéry, 'Histoire', p. 542.

creature. Indeed, the chameleon fluidly transitions between multiple figures in the *chants* - from romantic hero to courageous explorer and exotic magician - reflecting the veritable colour-changing nature of the species. These diverse figures do not feel contradictory or mutually exclusive within the context of the poem, though, as the chameleon is not reduced to a single or definitive representation. It is in this respect that the fluctuating reptilian figure of the poems compliments Scudéry's kaleidoscopic reading in the *Histoire* and gestures towards the ways in which our perceptions of other animals can greatly, rapidly and fluidly change from one moment to the next.

No element of the chameleon's anatomy or behaviour is immune from Scudéry's fascination and descriptive dissection in the main body of the *Histoire*. Even their pupils and eyelids become incomparable sources of beauty:

> Cet animal est le seul au monde dont la paupière suive tous les mouvements de la prunelle. Cette paupière [...] était ornée de lignes ou de petites moulures en forme de petits cercles qui changeaient comme le reste du corps [...] Cette paupière, qui est comme une tunique qui couvre l'œil de cet animal, laisse un petit trou rond par où l'on voit une petite prunelle brillante et noire tout ensemble environnée d'un petit cercle d'or le plus beau du monde.[40]

Scudéry once more employs figurative language to convey the chameleon's beautiful physiology to the reader. Combined with the semantic field related to jewelry or precious stones, it allows the reader to fantasise about the incomparable qualities of this creature. In Scudéry's reading, the chameleon's eyelid becomes a polychromatic tunic with a 'petite prunelle brillante' that is surrounded by the most beautiful golden lines. Her gaze does not objectify the animal as an object of study, measurement or classification to expand human knowledge. Her reading of the reptile's eye as a stunning jewel conveys her fascination and is inspired by her curiosity in the creatures with whom she shares an interspecies relationship. Her interpretation thereby interrupts the empiricist's objectifying gaze by regarding the chameleons as beings worthy of care and attention.

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[40] Scudéry, 'Histoire', pp. 505-506.

Beyond Scudéry's enthrallment with her reptilian companions, chameleons held a particular fascination in the early modern imagination and remained allegorical figures during this period. Like the chameleon itself, symbolic representations were prone to change and fluctuation. This creature could be a figure of moral purity, as one myth perpetuated in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* claimed that they survived on air alone.[41] Early modern authors also employed the chameleon as an allegorical figure for the hypocrisy and inconstancy of a sycophantic courtier on account of their polychromatic changes.[42] Beyond their mythological and symbolic representations, they were fascinating and curious creatures for early moderns. Whilst they were not entirely unknown to those living in Renaissance Europe - as the animals of the New World were - chameleons remained exotic creatures who hailed from distant lands. Thorough scientific examinations of their behaviours and physiology remained scarce and debate persisted among natural historians over how this creature ought to be classified. It was namely through the works of Scudéry and natural historian Claude Perrault that people's lived encounters with these reptiles first began to be described at length within European literature.

Although mythology and empiricism now seem quite divergent discourses, the distinctions between them were more fluid within the early modern imagination. The chameleon is a prime example. This creature was an exotic animal 'laden with myth and symbolism' and increasingly became an object of scientific curiosity in early modern France, sparked by the dissection of the chameleon from Louis XIV's royal menagerie.[43] Natural historians did not, however, avoid mythological or symbolic interpretations in their works. Claude Perrault actively engaged with prominent myths of the chameleon in his natural histories, drawing upon his empirical observations to disprove such accounts.

Scudéry contemplates various mythological accounts in the *Histoire*. The myth that chameleons survive on air alone particularly captures her attention. In his *Mémoires*, Perrault attempts to refute this belief through recounting his dissection of the reptile's stomach, an organ intended

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[41] David Thatcher, 'Shakespeare and Shelley's Chameleons', *ANQ*, 13 (2000), 18-21 (p. 19).

[42] Duggan, 'Animal Sublime', p. 29.

[43] Sahlins, *Year of the Animal*, p. 278.

for the consumption of food.[44] Scudéry does not immediately dismiss this possibility, but considers Perrault's argument alongside her own and others' observations of her two chameleons, which in her view support the mythological account:

> [...] l'air qui est leur aliment ordinaire [...] pendant tout ce temps-là, ni le Capitaine du vaisseau, ni lui [M. le Marquis de Peruys] ne leur ont jamais vus ni prendre, ni chercher nul autre aliment que l'air'[45]

> [...] enfin je ne lui ai rien vu manger, et je suis persuadée que l'air et les rayons du Soleil sont leur véritable nourriture.[46]

The ethological dimension of the *Histoire* comes to the forefront in the above passage. Scudéry compares her own observations against those of the sea captain and the Marquis to draw conclusions about the chameleons' nature and behaviours. None concerned witnessed the chameleons consuming food. Scudéry deems this persuasive evidence against Perrault's claim. Although she employs the same tools of empirical observation, her reading focuses on her perceptions of the chameleons in response to mythological and symbolic accounts. The reptile is not bound to the earthly act of consumption as other creatures are, but instead seems to ascend to the level of the sublime. In Scudéry's view, the chameleons' alimentary abstinence is evidence of their moral purity and 'douceur', leading her to perceive them as divine beings who would never commit a harmful act.[47] In the above passage, she selectively reads the information available to her from multiple sources - among them mythology, natural history, eye-witness accounts and her own observations - to inform how she perceives the two reptiles. Myth and symbolism shape her reading of the chameleons as wondrous and moral beings, whilst it is empirical science that provides her with the observational tools to gather evidence in support of this view. Her perception of them as almost divine beings is influenced by her own emotional

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[44] Sahlins, *Year of the Animal,* p. 281.

[45] Scudéry, 'Histoire', pp. 499-500.

[46] Ibid, pp. 520-521.

[47] Scudéry, 'Histoire', p. 520.

responses and her actual interactions with the two chameleons, through which she comes to regard them as morally pure, 'douce' and caring creatures.[48]

Scudéry does not solely present views on the chameleons drawn from her own reading and experience. She simultaneously invites active participation from the reader of the *Histoire* as an interlocutor in the conversation. On such occasions, she presents us with a range of evidence upon which we are to base our own interpretation. The myth that chameleons can survive on air alone constitutes such a case. Scudéry does not definitively confirm whether they survive without food, despite the seemingly persuasive evidence of her own and others' observations. She suspends her judgement when commenting on the female chameleon's final excrement before her death:

> Cela [l'excrément] était sans odeur et assez ferme, et ne contredit pas que l'air est la plus naturelle nourriture du Caméléon [...] Quoi qu'il en soit, je ne décide rien; je dis simplement ce que j'ai vu.[49]

The *Histoire* again assumes the tone of an ethology. Scudéry contemplates her observations and initially presents them as further evidence in support of the mythological account; there is nothing in the chameleon's firm and odourless excrement that contradicts the proposition that they live on air alone. Yet she still suspends her judgement on the matter. She reminds us of the literary nature of the text in stating that her role, as narrator, is to simply state what she has seen. Amidst the diverse perceptions that the *Histoire* presents, Scudéry both refuses to categorise the chameleons and leaves the conversation open to the reader. Like the author herself, we too must read the evidence before us - both textual and corporeal - and form our own impression of these creatures. In such self-reflexive moments, Scudéry refuses to decide anything or impose any single interpretation, for she recognises that we all participate in fluctuating, speculative and personal acts of reading.

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[48] The perceived caring nature of Scudéry's chameleon will be discussed in greater depth in sections 5.3 and 5.4 below.

[49] Scudéry, 'Histoire', p. 529.

A significant connection emerges between Scudéry and the figure of the chameleon in these self-reflexive moments. In suspending her judgement and refusing to statically define her two reptiles, Scudéry equally refuses to categorise herself as a thinker or author. As she writes in the opening to the *Histoire:*

> [...] je ne mêlerai point d'en parler ni en Médecin, ni en Philosophe, je n'en ai pas la capacité. Je dirai simplement ce que j'ai remarqué avec beaucoup de soin et d'exactitude.[50]

The discourses represented by the figures of the 'Medécin' and 'Philosophe' indeed inform Scudéry's perceptions of her chameleons, as we have seen. We might ask, then, why she makes this remark. There are three salient interpretations of this comment. Firstly, Scudéry makes an implicit statement on gender politics within early modern France. As the *Histoire* demonstrates, she clearly possesses the intellectual 'capacité' to comprehend and contribute to philosophical or scientific discourses. As a woman, though, she lacks the social and cultural opportunity to formally participate in such debates. Secondly, Scudéry's stated approach is to simply record what she observes and so her *Histoire* is situated outside of any single discipline or discourse. Whilst her position as a woman may constrain her in some ways, she retains a distinct intellectual freedom and creativity; this allows Scudéry to fluidly transition between different interpretations of the chameleons - and present her own personal and more emotional responses to the two creatures - without having to decide upon a single ontological truth. Finally, Scudéry states that she will simply record her observations without speaking about her chameleons as either a 'Médecin' or a 'Philosophe'. Her opening remark assumes a similar tone to her suspension of judgement above, where she claims that she will say 'simplement ce que j'ai vu' and sets a precedent for the remainder of the *Histoire*.[51] Scudéry's kaleidoscopic readings present transient and differing perceptions of animal nature, rather than adopting one single approach. In doing so, she refuses to categorise her chameleons definitively or statically.

Through Scudéry's suspension of judgement and her kaleidoscopic readings, the *Histoire* disturbs the desire to classify animals that underlies the epistemological approaches of

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[50] Scudéry, 'Histoire', p. 499.

[51] Scudéry, 'Histoire', p. 529.

empiricism and natural history and challenges their claims to ontological truth. The thought of Jacques Derrida might aid us in examining the core epistemological questions at stake in Scudéry's work. Derrida challenges philosophical discourses which categorise animals or purport to erect definitive boundaries, such as that between animals and humans. He denounces the underlying assumptions of such systems, including the priority they afford to the human subject. In his view, this presumed priority can lead us to feel that we have power over animals and that we can categorise them or morally treat them as we see fit. Derrida regards this impulse to classify animals - based upon supposed human priority - as a means of retaining power and policing the animal-human boundary that we often assume to be fixed and stable.

Derrida conversely questions whether humans have such a right to categorise animals. He maintains that our classifications of humans and animal species are largely linguistic and conceptual constructs. He exposes three crucial ontological, epistemological and ethical problems which arise from this impulse to classify. Firstly, Derrida demonstrates how discourses which prioritise the human subject rest on the problematic assumption that stable and definitive categories of 'human' or 'animal' exist. This is far from the case, however, as animal and human life is in perpetual flux. Beyond the issue of instability, he questions what he sees as the 'deranged theatrics ('le théâtre insensé')' involved in the homogenising categories of 'human' or 'animal'.[52] Such classifications obscure the very diversity and specificity of animal species and individual beings.

Derrida secondly draws attention to the human impulse to categorise animals. He questions why we feel such a need to classify by species, genus or other identifiable features through drawing comparisons and distinctions between animals; such an epistemological approach was characteristic of early modern and later natural history. Derrida contends that such a desire to classify can be traced through philosophy to Descartes and subsequent philosophers' attempts to posit a stable and definitive human subject in opposition to 'le tout autre qu'ils *appellent* "animal"' (original emphasis).[53] This is a futile endeavour for Derrida, not least because animal and human life is by nature unstable. He maintains that we cannot know animals - including

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[52] Derrida, *L'animal,* pp. 28-29.

[53] Derrida, *L'animal*, p. 30.

their phenomenological experiences, thoughts, sensations or emotions - with any certainty. We can only speculate, as Derrida does with his cat.[54] His solution to the instability and unknowability of animal nature lies in what he terms *la limitotrophie* or the logic of the limit.[55] In response to the organic and fluctuating nature of animal life, he redefines limits as permeable, dynamic and multiple. Derridean limits allow for border crossings and hybridity, rather than erecting rigid or definitive categories. His *limitotrophie* instead accounts for the 'abyssal limit ('la limite abyssale')' of what we term 'human' or 'animal', in that such categories are by nature unstable and impossible to conclusively define.[56]

The final core problem that Derrida identifies with such classifications is that they rarely reflect our actual interactions with animals. His resistance to the impulse to categorise is implicit in his encounter with his 'petite chatte'. Derrida insists that this interaction does not represent a philosophical encounter with 'the animal', nor is his cat representative or an 'ambassadeur' for the entire feline species; it is an actual physical encounter between himself and his particular feline companion.[57] He emphasises the specificity of *his* cat and so highlights the fact that - in our interspecies encounters - we rarely conceptualise animals as universal or uniform beings who conform to an abstract philosophical construct of 'the animal'. We engage with them as distinct beings with their own features, behaviours, relationships and emotions. For Derrida, abstract categorisations obscure the very real, empathetic and particularistic ways we engage with the animals with whom we share our lives.

Scudéry's *Histoire* similarly disturbs the desire to categorise animal nature that Derrida identifies, for she refuses to definitively classify her chameleons. In early modern France, debate remained over how these creatures ought to be classified in works of natural history.[58] One prominent theory, taken from the ancient world, contended that they were reptiles. Perrault had supported this view in his *Mémoires* since chameleons lay eggs like other known reptiles. An

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54 Derrida, *L'animal*, p. 20.

55 Ibid, p. 51.

56 Derrida, *L'animal*, p. 30.

57 Derrida, *L'animal*, p. 26.

58 Sahlins, *Year of the Animal*, p. 286.

alternative theory claimed that they were more akin to birds in their behaviour, given that they spend much of their lives clinging to the branches of trees. Scudéry carefully considers these alternate possibilities. She strongly opposes Perrault's classification based on the dissimilarity of her chameleons' movements to those of other reptiles:

> C'est à tort que quelques-uns l'ont appelé reptile. Il ne touche jamais du ventre en terre, ni en marchant, ni même en dormant, s'appuyant sur ses pieds et sur sa queue.[59]

Given that her chameleons do not slither along the ground, Scudéry refuses to categorise them as reptilian because she deems this classification dubious. She equally refuses to pass a definitive judgement on whether they ought to be classified as avian. Her two creatures thereby come to inhabit an undefinable and liminal space of their own within the *Histoire*. She likens the shape of their heads to that of 'un poisson qu'on appelle Rouget en Normandie, et Gournaut en Provence'.[60] Their delicate tongues are described as 'une petite trompe d'Eléphant'.[61] The chameleons are not, however, solely compared to other animal species. As we have already seen, the *Histoire* portrays them through an array of human figures, from the romantic lover to the exotic magician. Scudéry's description of their physiological attributes also blurs any distinction with humans, for she compares the form and musculature of their legs, arms and feet to human corporeal features.[62] Despite these similarities, there remains something distinctly and uniquely *chameleon* about these two creatures. For Scudéry, this is epitomised in their polychromatic changes and their extraordinary ability to move their eyes asynchronously and in any direction.[63] The chameleons of the *Histoire* ultimately escape the human desire to definitively know or categorise them. Scudéry's response embodies Derridean *limitotrophie*, for the two chameleons fluidly transition between multiple transient perceptions and permeate different categories of being.

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[59] Scudéry, 'Histoire', p. 503.

[60] Scudéry, 'Histoire', p. 502.

[61] Ibid, p. 509.

[62] Scudéry, 'Histoire', p. 503.

[63] Ibid, p. 506.

The chameleons thereby enable Scudéry to respond to the epistemological and ontological concerns at the heart of the *Histoire.* The question of whether true or certain knowledge of animal nature was possible led many of the authors examined in the previous three chapters to doubt and philosophical scepticism, among them Montaigne and Cureau. Scudéry was acquainted with this sceptic response. Her venture into philosophy began with reading Montaigne, whose works later became a topic of her salon discussions. Although not a sceptic in the same sense as Montaigne, Scudéry similarly doubts whether indubitable or complete knowledge of animal nature can be obtained by humans. In contrast to Montaigne, Cureau and Bougeant, though, her *Histoire* does not express this doubt explicitly. Scudéry addresses such epistemological questions indirectly through her kaleidoscopic reading and transitioning between different ways of perceiving or "knowing" her chameleons.

These kaleidoscopic readings address epistemological questions in the *Histoire* and reveal the transience and flux in the ways we think about animals. Although ontological truth may lie beyond reach, the continual fluctuations in the portrayal of the chameleons appear to constitute a form or a conduit to knowledge. Through exploring different perceptions of her reptiles, Scudéry pursues provisional insights into their lives which evolve alongside the chameleons themselves and which escape any homogenising, static or definitive categorisation. The chameleon becomes a symbolic figure in the *Histoire*, representing the inconsistency of animal life, the inherent flux in the ways we perceive animal nature and Scudéry's refusal to categorise herself or her chameleons.

Despite her refusal to classify the chameleons - and her challenge to claims of ontological truth and certainty - Scudéry still regards her chameleons as distinct individuals and endeavours to learn about them through her kaleidoscopic readings and fluctuating perceptions. Like Derrida and his cat, though, her two reptilian companions are identifiable on a more personal level as *Scudéry's* chameleons, incomparable to any others. In addition to the different representations she explores, then, the two reptiles are creatures about whom Scudéry can learn through their shared experiences and interspecies relationships.

5.3 Complexity and Inconsistency: Interspecies Relationships

The *Histoire* records Madeleine de Scudéry's burgeoning relationships with her two beloved chameleons and especially with the male, whom she affectionately names Méléon. Her interspecies encounters comprise an alternative means by which she comes to know her specific chameleons. The insights Scudéry gains from their interactions not only shape her perceptions of the two reptiles, but also the ways she responds to them as beings worthy of her close attention and her care. Her lived encounters alongside her adored chameleons thus inform her understanding of care in the *Histoire*.

Scudéry articulates her interspecies encounters, as well as the relationships between her chameleons, in a highly emotive manner. When describing the interactions between the male and female chameleon, for instance, she reads their gestures as a sign of their close friendship and romantic love:

> Je remarquais une amitié extrême entre eux, et jamais le moindre chagrin. Ils étaient toujours l'un auprès de l'autre; si l'un changeant de place, l'autre le suivait. Ils se tenaient toujours l'un l'autre avec quelqu'une de leurs petites mains.[64]

Scudéry reads the chameleons' proximity as a sign of their 'amitié extrême' and interprets their corporeal gesture of holding hands as an indication of their affection and intimacy. The two reptilian lovers seem inseparable. If one changes position then the other pursues, almost as if the separation were too much to bear. Whilst Scudéry's reading is again rather anthropomorphic, she recognises the possibility of shared animal-human emotional experiences such as love and affection. Her anthropomorphism thereby constitutes another way through which she comes to "know" her chameleons and speculate on their internal experiences. Anthropomorphism still remains contentious in animal studies and animal behavioural science today. However, anthropologist Véronique Servais argues that anthropomorphism constitutes a significant mechanism through which humans recognise animal mental qualities in shared

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[64] Scudéry, 'Histoire', p. 515.

interactions and thus comprehend their experiences.[65] Byron Breedlove and Paul Arguin contend that anthropomorphism is an inevitable consequence of humans' proximity - biologically, physically and emotionally - to animals.[66] Indeed, many who share their homes with companion animals often inadvertently anthropomorphise their behaviours and apparent emotions. Scudéry reads the chameleons' outward behaviours in this manner and imbues them with a capacity for emotion, friendship, love and care for one another.

The accompanying poem cycle to the *Histoire* similarly portrays an emotional and anthropomorphic relationship, although the romance here occurs between the male chameleon and a human lover. The poetic representation parodies the kind of romance we might encounter in the literature of the *précieuses* or in the fable tradition which was popular in seventeenth-century France. The second *chant* portrays the male as a once promiscuous lover, transformed into a chameleon as punishment for his inconstancy. Having travelled to France, the reptile encounters the captivating Palmis - a figure who represents Scudéry - and resolves to be faithful. The chameleon's behaviour and his relationship with Palmis are described in highly emotive terms and bear similarities to the lover-like relationship that Scudéry perceives between her actual reptiles. The interactions of the human and reptilian lover in the poem are so 'plein[s] de tendresse' that they render the chameleon entirely 'ému de [mon] bonheur.'[67] Palmis is likened to a muse who inspires the reptile to express his intense love for her through the vivid polychromatic changes of his body, as if he were a magnificent artist.[68] When Palmis leaves Paris for a brief journey, the chameleon cannot bear the separation, apparently akin to Scudéry's own reptiles; his heart becomes seized by 'langueur' and he sadly pines after his departed lover.[69] The portrayal of the lovers in the *chant* adheres to poetic tropes and the excessive and emotive language mirrors that employed by the *précieuses* and by Scudéry within the main body of the

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[65] Véronique Servais, 'Anthropomorphism in Human-Animal Interactions: A Pragmatist View', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9 (2018), 1-10 (p. 9).

[66] Byron Breedlove and Paul M. Arguin, 'Anthropomorphism to Zoonoses: Two Inevitable Consequences of Human-Animal Relationships', *Emerging Infectious Diseases*, 21 (2015), 2282-2283 (p. 2283).

[67] Scudéry, 'Histoire', pp. 552-553.

[68] Ibid, pp. 558-559.

[69] Scudéry, 'Histoire', pp. 557-562.

Histoire. It crucially imbues the character of the chameleon with a capacity for emotion, love and care, though here in an interspecies relationship with a human lover.

In addition to love and affection, Scudéry perceives the male chameleon as experiencing intense grief and intentionally attempting to end his own life following the death of his female companion. She once more recounts his behaviour in a rather anthropomorphic language of love and emotion:

> Le Caméléon fut si surpris et si affligé de voir mourir sa Caméléone, qu'il monta avec grande hâte et avec transport au haut du châssis, d'où il retomba jusqu'à trois fois [...] je flattais fort le Caméléon pour le consoler. Il fut deux ou trois jours fort triste et fort abattu.[70]

Scudéry's draws upon human emotion in her reading of Méléon's actions. The possessive of 'sa Caméléone' reflects the intense and intimate relationship that she perceives between the two reptilian lovers, such that Méléon becomes 'affligé', 'triste' and 'abattu' following his companion's death. Scudéry interprets his repeated action of climbing and falling as a suicide attempt motivated by his extreme grief, as if he truly cannot go on without her. The suicidal attempts of a grief-stricken lover would not seem out of place in a romantic novel, such as those published by Scudéry herself. Indeed, in the aforementioned cycle of poems, Palmis' reptilian lover suffers a 'mort affreuse' by falling from a window to his beloved's feet.[71] His death is not motivated by grief over a lost lover, but is caused by his haste and zealousness to be reunited with Palmis after their brief and apparently unbearable separation. Scudéry does not seem to regard such anthropomorphism as an imposition of human emotions onto animals. For her, it is a means of reading the chameleons' corporeal gestures based on her emotional and empathetic connections with them and the insights she obtains from their shared relationships.

Scudéry's emotive representations of her interspecies encounters are significant on several levels. She once more blurs the perceived animal-human boundary as her readings imbue the chameleons with faculties for emotion, agency and intention, which other early modern thinkers

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[70] Scudéry, 'Histoire', p. 516.
[71] Scudéry, 'Histoire', p. 564.

such as Descartes or Cartesians considered unique to humanity. Secondly, many of the discourses explored in the *Histoire* - such as natural history or Cartesian metaphysics - are predicated on rationality. Scudéry instead emphasises that emotion and intuition play a central role in our actual encounters with animals. Her ability to empathise with her chameleons rests on the assumption that they are beings who are like her and who share certain emotional experiences with humans. This provides a common experiential and emotional "vocabulary" through which Scudéry and her reptilian companions can begin to comprehend one another and develop an interspecies relationship. Her interpretations thirdly emphasise Méléon's emotional and internal states as the primary motivators of his actions. She thereby presents an additional challenge to Cartesian thought and the beast-machine doctrine, according to which animals are automata without reason and are incapable of responding in any meaningful manner. Scudéry conversely centres her attention on common emotional experiences as the principal motivators of the chameleons' responses to the other beings and situations they encounter.

Scudéry still does not adhere to a single interpretation alone to offer insight into her chameleons' nature and experiences. Whilst she occasionally reads her encounters with the two reptiles in a highly anthropomorphic manner, she strongly resists such readings elsewhere. She notes, for instance, how other authors argue that the reptile's polychromatic transformations are comparable to a human blush and so arise from the passion of rage:

> Au reste, je n'ai point vue d'apparence que cet animal puisse avoir les passions assez vives, pour croire que ces changements de couleur viennent comme la rougeur au visage de l'homme quand il est en colère [...] On ne peut pas apporter plus de soin à l'observer que j'ai fait durant sept mois, mais je n'ai jamais pu apercevoir de véritable cause au changement de ses couleurs dont mon esprit ait pu être convaincu.[72]

Scudéry employs her own observations to challenge the anthropomorphic reading of the reptile's colour-changing ability and attends instead to the specificity of her chameleons and what she believes their nature to be. She observes that, rather than anger, they were at their most content when they were most colourful. Despite her views, Scudéry refuses to definitively

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[72] Scudéry, 'Histoire', pp. 526-527.

pass judgement. All she can claim is what she has observed during the months that she and her two chameleons have lived alongside one another. Her interpretations of her lived interspecies encounters might initially appear rather inconsistent, despite the care she professes to take in detailing them. Scudéry's readings are at times highly anthropomorphic, whilst at others she emphasises animal specificity. She presents seemingly persuasive evidence that chameleons live on air alone, before suspending her judgement on the issue. She adopts the methods of empirical science, whilst simultaneously challenging this approach and its claims to ontological truth. Given such inconsistency, we might question what Scudéry tells us about animal nature - and the nature of our thought on animals - in the *Histoire*.

It is in regard to such inconsistency that the *Histoire* makes one of its principal contributions to perceptions of animals in early modern France. Scudéry does not make any definitive assertions about animal nature or experience. Her work instead reveals the continually evolving nature of animal life, our understanding of it and our encounters with animals. This flux lies in part in the very complexity and diversity of discourses on animal nature in early modern France. Scudéry employs different - and, at times, seemingly opposing - epistemological approaches, ontologies of animal being and interpretations. Her kaleidoscopic readings are not intended to yield one single or true understanding, but instead selectively draw upon various elements to support her own perceptions of her chameleons. Scudéry thereby reveals an often implicit tendency in our thought to be inconsistent, to alter our opinions and to selectively and creatively combine different elements to bolster our views. The ways we think about animal nature are rarely unified and vary across temporal, geographical, cultural, sociopolitical and intellectual contexts. For instance, employing an empirical framework and regarding animals as objects for the advancement of human knowledge might justify vivisection procedures. Alternatively, reading animals anthropomorphically and considering them capable of emotion supports a view of animals as companions to humans. Both views existed concurrently within early modern thought and persist today. The *Histoire* and Scudéry's kaleidoscopic readings ultimately reflect this very inconsistency and perpetual motion of animal life, interspecies relationships and the evolution of our thought in conjunction with one another.

In addition to this perpetual flux, the concept of care is integral to both Scudéry's interpretations of her chameleons and her actual interactions with them. We have already seen how she emphasises her careful and meticulous observations. Care in a more practical sense considerably shapes how she responds and acts towards these two creatures. Scudéry increasingly cares about the chameleons as their interspecies relationship develops and this shift is reflected in the language of care she employs to articulate their encounters. Despite her numerous and explicit references to 'soin', care is a multi-faceted concept in the *Histoire.* Her encounters with the chameleons - and the way their relationship shapes her understanding - call upon her to care for her reptilian companions and their changing needs. Scudéry takes up this call and her interactions with the two creatures are often articulated through her various forms of care. We might ask, then, why the chameleons are subjects of care and what exactly care means for Scudéry in the *Histoire*.

5.4 Seeing Subjects: An Ethical Imperative to Care

Care is a central concept in the *Histoire* and we have already touched upon some of its manifestations. Scudéry cares about the two chameleons as creatures in whom she is emotionally invested and with whom she shares an interspecies relationship. She equally takes great care over her observations of the two reptiles and her subsequent interpretations of their natures. Two further questions arise with regards to the concept of care in the *Histoire*. Firstly, we have noted the chameleons' transition from fascinating creatures to beings worthy of care and concern. Yet on what basis do the two reptiles become worthy recipients of care for Scudéry? Her emotional interspecies encounters are significant here, as they contribute to her view of the chameleons as beings deserving of her care. Secondly, what exactly does such care entail for Scudéry and how does she express it? Care is neither a purely abstract concept in the *Histoire,* nor part of a method of empirical observation. It entails an emotional response and practical action. This understanding of care intersects with Scudéry's perception of the chameleons' nature, as her acts of care flexibly respond to their evolving needs. Care thereby emerges as a flexible, responsive and practical endeavour within the *Histoire*.

The themes of sight and reading are significant in regard to the concept of care in the *Histoire*. Scudéry's lived encounters, and the evidence she obtains from them, inform how she reads her chameleons' behaviours and comes to see them as beings worthy of her care. As seen above, the two reptiles emerge as conscious, intentional and emotional beings who are capable of responding to one another and to Scudéry. This capacity for response is crucial for Scudéry, as it was for other authors - including Montaigne, Descartes or Cureau - in early modern France. Specifically, it is animals' capacity for response which contains an ethical imperative for Scudéry and calls on her to respond in kind to them. The chameleons of the *Histoire* are thus more than objects of exoticising or objectifying curiosity: they look back and respond.

Throughout the *Histoire*, the chameleons emerge as seeing subjects rather than simply passive objects of Scudéry's observations. She frequently returns to descriptions of the chameleons' eyes - as we encountered above - and provides detailed and intricate descriptions of their anatomy, specificity and beauty. Their eyes are not only of physiological interest to her, though. Scudéry focuses on the chameleons' unique ability to move their eyes in virtually any direction and to independently direct each eye to observe different objects. The reptiles can experience the world in two different ways at once and continually change the focus of their sight. Whilst the chameleons and their sight are symbolic of Scudéry's kaleidoscopic reading, they are simultaneously creatures with whom she interacts. Her close attention to their ocular abilities not only brings the chameleons' physical sight into focus, but also extends to their other forms of sight. Scudéry is curious about their internal vision, or how the two reptiles perceive the world and experience their relationships with one another and with herself.

The *Histoire* acknowledges the possibility that the chameleons are seeing subjects and agents and that the way they perceive the world may differ radically from Scudéry's own (human) perspective. In drawing attention to the reptiles' eyes and sight, she begins to transform them from passive and observable objects into actively seeing subjects. Scudéry often reiterates how her chameleons - and especially Méléon - respond to her calls and attention by turning their gaze and looking at her in such a way that she cannot doubt that 'il m'entendit'.[73] In this

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[73] Scudéry, 'Histoire', p. 517.

corporeal gesture, she considers there to be evidence that the reptiles see 'avec esprit et avec jugement' and respond to her via their gaze.[74] Given his recognition and reciprocity, Scudéry regards Méléon as a conscious seeing subject who engages in a deeply interspecies relationship with her, especially following the death of the female.

Derridean thought once again offers a critical framework to approach Scudéry's perception of her chameleons as seeing subjects, specifically in his encounter with his 'petite chatte'.[75] Derrida recounts his sense of shame standing nude before his feline companion and questions why he should experience this feeling. He comes to the view that his cat is not a passive participant in their interaction. When Derrida's gaze intersects with hers, he becomes aware that he is engaging with another conscious and intentional seeing subject. His feline companion can perceive Derrida as standing nude before her and consciously processes what she apprehends. She responds intentionally through directing her gaze, for Derrida believes that she purposefully looks at his exposed genitals. He not only recognises the cat's physical capacity for sight, but also considers her potential phenomenological experiences. The cat's ability to perceive and consciously process what she apprehends is the source of Derrida's shame; she does not simply see a nude man, but perceives him as *naked* in the very essence of his being. Derrida ultimately concedes that the feline's manner of perceiving and responding to the world might differ from his own human perspective or even lie beyond his comprehension entirely. He no longer approaches the animal as a passive object that is simply seen and observed by the human subject. Although their perspectives may differ, Derrida crucially interacts with his specific cat face-to-face as a seeing subject of equal stature.

A similar mechanism is at work in Scudéry's interaction with Méléon. She implicitly regards the chameleon as a seeing subject with his own distinct perceptual experiences - or ways of seeing the world - through her continual references to his eyes and sight. Scudéry does not purport to know or comprehend his experiences with any certainty, though, and once more suspends her judgement. Similarly to Derrida and his cat, she perceives Méléon as capable of consciously interacting with her and so embraces what their interspecies encounters might reveal about his

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[74] Scudéry, 'Histoire', p. 507.

[75] Derrida, *L'animal*, pp. 18-19.

life and experiences. Scudéry thereby faces Méléon as a subject who sees her, who can respond and who has the agency to choose the manner of his reply.

Méléon's status as a seeing subject - and his capacity for response - not only influences how Scudéry interacts with him, but also constitutes an ethical imperative for her. As a conscious subject in his own right, the chameleon becomes deserving of her care and concern. Scudéry's caring response becomes heightened following the traumatic death of the female chameleon and its impact on Méléon. She increasingly interacts with him through practical acts of care and a deeply caring interspecies relationship develops through their reciprocal responses to one another:

> [...] il vint à m'aimer, à me connaître, à entendre son nom et à distinguer ma voix; de sorte que je puis assurer que ceux qui ont dit que les Caméléons n'entendaient pas, se sont trompés, car j'ai vu clairement que celui-ci m'entendait, me connaissait et distinguait ma voix; et quand je lui disais Méléon, Méléon, venez à moi, s'il était en humeur paresseuse, et qu'il ne voulut pas venir, il tournait les yeux de mon côté d'une manière à ne me permettre pas douter qu'il ne m'entendit.[76]

Scudéry's actions towards Méléon reveal her implicit perception of him as a conscious seeing subject and agent. She anticipates a response when she calls to him and the chameleon decides whether and how to respond. Méléon's responses assume various forms throughout the *Histoire*, from climbing Scudéry's arm, approaching her when called or his more lethargic response of turning his head or just his eyes. His actions demonstrate a capacity for comprehension and response, similarly to Derrida and his cat. It is crucially Méléon's emotional relationship which motivates his actions; he loves and cares back for Scudéry and it is the reciprocity of their emotions which spurs Méléon's response.

It is significant that Méléon's responses remain non-linguistic and non-verbal in nature. Language and the concept of response were controversial questions in early modern France, as we have seen in the preceding three chapters. For Descartes and proponents of the beast-machine doctrine, language was a prerequisite for an animal to meaningfully respond. In

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[76] Scudéry, 'Histoire', p. 517.

the works of Montaigne, Bougeant and Cureau, we encountered alternative non-linguistic methods of communication centred around animals' corporeal gestures. The chameleon's silent actions raise an interesting question. Does Méléon truly respond or does he simply react to the stimulus of hearing Scudéry's voice? Derrida's thought may once more offer valuable insights here, for he draws a critical distinction between reaction and response. In his view, response requires a conscious ability to comprehend what another is communicating to us and to respond *meaningfully* in kind. This response does not, however, need to be expressed linguistically or even vocally to be meaningful. Derrida instead challenges such limited definitions, which have long denied response to animals due to their perceived lack of human language. Response is predominantly non-verbal in Derridean thought and comprises any means which communicates something meaningful to another. This may involve an oral or verbal response, but equally comprises corporeal movements or gestures.

Méléon responds to Scudéry through his corporeal gestures - similarly to the gestural communication we have encountered in Montaigne, Bougeant and Cureau - and so his actions constitute a response in the Derridean sense. As a conscious subject, the chameleon hears and distinguishes Scudéry's calls before responding meaningfully in kind. Méléon consciously chooses how to respond through his various corporeal gestures; he may turn his eyes or head, physically move towards her or climb her arm to demonstrate his comprehension. Combined with the chameleon's status as a seeing subject, it is his capacity for meaningful response which contains a core ethical imperative for Scudéry. She comes to regard Méléon as a conscious and responsive being with his own agency and moral interests, to which she in turn is impelled to respond. Her caring response to the chameleon and to his changing needs is negotiated through their interspecies relationship. Care subsequently assumes two principal forms in her interactions with Méléon: both human and chameleon develop a reciprocal caring and loving bond for one another and Scudéry responds to his needs through flexible and practical acts of care.

Scudéry develops an emotional, empathetic and caring relationship with Méléon through their increasing interactions. She regards her reptilian companion as reciprocating her love and affection:

> [...] et comme je redoublais mes soins pour lui, que je m'accoutumais à le tenir dans ma main, et à le nommer Méléon [...] il vint à m'aimer, à me connaître, à entendre son nom et à distinguer ma voix.[77]

Scudéry empathises with Méléon in his grief and in the common experience between animals and humans of losing a friend or companion. She responds to his distress through her increasing acts of care towards him. Her tender actions of cradling him in her hands and naming him in a hypocoristic manner suggest an empathetic connection. The chameleon is not, however, simply a recipient of Scudéry's care. Her tangible actions strengthen the affectionate bond between them and Méléon reciprocates her care through his own actions towards her. In Scudéry's words, he comes to love her. He affectionately recognises and responds to his name through his corporeal gestures, as seen above. Not only does he come when called, but Scudéry even recounts how - when offered the choice between several people - he would always return to her and show her affection.[78]

The loving and caring connection between Méléon and Scudéry comes to substitute that shared between the male and the deceased female chameleon. Scudéry attends to Méléon and his needs, whilst the chameleon offers platonic love, companionship and physical affection when cradled in her arms. Their deep *amitié*, developed through their constant caring attention, does not seem so far removed from the platonic love and mutual affection that Scudéry praises in her *Carte de Tendre*.[79] Her loving bond with Méléon is also reflected in the accompanying poem cycle of the *Histoire*, in which the relationship between Palmis (Scudéry) and the male chameleon is portrayed as akin to that of lovers. Palmis greets her beloved with such 'tendresse' that he is overcome by his emotion.[80] The reptile reciprocates her affection by raising her to the status of a muse. She inspires the mesmerising polychromatic changes of the corporeal canvas through which he communicates his deep and intense emotions towards her. In both the *Histoire* and the poems, love and care do not solely function in one direction from human to animal. Méléon is

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[77] Scudéry, 'Histoire', pp. 516-517.
[78] Scudéry, 'Histoire', p. 518.
[79] Duggan, 'Lovers, Salon and State', p. 15.
[80] Scudéry, 'Histoire', pp. 552-553.

not a passive recipient of care, but crucially responds to and reciprocates Scudéry's caring attention through his physical actions and the companionship he provides. The *Histoire* thereby echoes the perceptions of animals as reciprocating care that are found in Montaigne, Bougeant and Cureau's works. Rather than hypothetical encounters or textual accounts, though, the *Histoire* details Scudéry's first-hand experiences of living alongside the chameleons and continually negotiating an evolving interspecies relationship. Her reciprocal caring interactions raise several important questions: what does care entail in the *Histoire* and in the context of Scudéry's actual interspecies relationship? How does she care for her chameleons and how does she respond to their nature as living and mutable beings? How do the reptiles care for her and do expressions of care vary between animals and humans?

In the *Histoire*, care is something which continually changes alongside Scudéry's kaleidoscopic readings and alongside the protean nature of animal life and her interspecies relationships. We have already considered care in terms of her meticulous observations, her concern for the chameleons and her emotional relationship with them. Care in the *Histoire* equally comprises the gestures and practical acts which constitute a physical language of care and which lie at the heart of Scudéry's relationships with her chameleons.

Care is a pivotal concept in Scudéry's physical interactions with her chameleons in the *Histoire*. Her loving bond with the two reptiles - and their perceived status as seeing subjects - motivates her to care for them and address their continually changing needs. At the same time, the chameleons reciprocate her care through their corporeal gestures. The reptiles' acts of care are numerous and diverse, from the signs of affection they make when cradled in Scudéry's arms to the movements that seemingly demonstrate their comprehension and companionship. The *Histoire* reveals this shared physical "language of care" which is elaborated and articulated through the acts that animals and humans perform for one another.

Scudéry employs this physical language of care in her interactions with the chameleons and specifically in her responses to their diverse and evolving needs, as seen in the case of Méléon's grief. When one of the reptiles becomes lost in the garden, her 'inquiétude' for the animal's well-being motivates her to search 'soigneusement' and even organise a search party of her

acquaintances until the reptile is safely recovered.[81] Scudéry demonstrates a similar concern for her chameleons' well-being when constructing a habitat for them in her salon. She carefully observes the reptiles' preferences in terms of temperature, air flow or exposure to sunlight and constructs an enclosure with plenty of air and light to simulate such conditions.[82] As the colder months approach - to which the exotic reptiles are not accustomed - Scudéry adjusts her care to their specific physiological needs. She constructs a more 'commode' enclosure with artificial heating in the form of a hot plate to which she attends regularly. She hopes to ensure that the reptiles are kept suitably warm and notes that they respond well to the addition of artificial heating in their enclosure.[83]

Scudéry's practical acts of care extend to the chameleons' social and emotional well-being, both in their relationships with one another and with herself. We have already witnessed this in her actions following the death of the female and Méléon's perceived suicide attempts. Scudéry responds to his apparent extreme grief by doubling her caring efforts in the hope of motivating him back to life. She cradles him lovingly and develops a mutual bond with Méléon - both physically and emotionally - in which he is perceived as reciprocating her caring attention and coming to love her.[84] The care between Scudéry and her chameleons is ultimately expressed through their sustained, reciprocal acts and an emotional bond which is predicated on shared experiences of living alongside one another.

Care lies at the heart of how Scudéry observes, perceives, communicates and responds to her chameleons. She cares about these creatures as beings who fascinate her and whom she desires to know more closely. For Scudéry, though, care is not a purely abstract concept. It is anchored in our actual interspecies relationships and interactions with animals, as well as the ethical imperatives which arise from them. Her encounters with the chameleons demonstrate how we come to care for animals through the emotional relationships we develop and how come to see them as beings worthy of our care. This attitude has the potential to motivate practical actions

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[81] Scudéry, 'Histoire', p. 509.
[82] Ibid, pp. 529-530.
[83] Scudéry, 'Histoire', pp. 529-530.
[84] Scudéry, 'Histoire', pp. 516-517.

to ensure an animal's well-being. Scudéry intervenes to ensure the safety and survival of her chameleons when they become vulnerable. The chameleons, in turn, reciprocate her affection and attention through a shared physical language of care. In their interactions, then, care constitutes a mutual dialogue between Scudéry and her chameleons through which they respond to one another and continually negotiate their interspecies relationship.

5.5 Conclusion

Madeleine de Scudéry indeed challenges the Cartesian beast-machine doctrine, as many scholars have maintained. Yet her *Histoire de deux caméléons* is more than an opposition to animal automatism alone. It is a complex text which fluidly fluctuates between numerous contemporary discourses, epistemological approaches and ontologies of animals in early modern France. The *Histoire* implicitly questions whether, or how, any single discourse can offer true and definitive knowledge of animal nature. Scudéry's kaleidoscopic readings instead offer provisional fragments of knowledge and diverse interpretations of animal nature. Her work simultaneously emphasises the importance of our actual encounters with animals and our interspecies relationships in shaping how we understand them. Through her own interactions with her two chameleons, she comes to regard them as living, emotional and responsive beings who are continually changing. Their status as conscious seeing subjects constitutes an ethical imperative, calling on Scudéry to morally respond in kind to the chameleons and their needs.

For Scudéry, care similarly carries multiple meanings and cannot be definitively or statically defined. Her understanding of care is primarily elaborated within the context of her lived encounters with the two chameleons. Their interactions are shaped through their practical and reciprocal acts of care for one another and through the loving bond which develops between them. Scudéry responds to the chameleons' status as living and mutable beings and her care flexibly adapts to their continually evolving needs. Within the *Histoire*, care emerges as a fluid, reciprocal and mutable relationship which comprises careful attention, an emotional attitude and practical action.

Madeleine de Scudéry was by no means alone in recognising the multi-faceted and fluid nature of care - as well as the continual flux of animal life and interspecies relationships - in early modern France. Those writing on agriculture were similarly concerned with humans' actual relationships with animals and the quotidian, practical labours of care. Their works further gesture towards care as a flexible, reciprocal and constantly evolving concept within interspecies relationships.

6

Material, Corporeal, Collaborative:
Care and Animals in Early Modern Agriculture

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In the previous chapter, Madeleine de Scudéry and her chameleons gestured towards the importance of our interspecies relationships with animals. These actual encounters shape our perceptions and offer a framework within which animals and humans can learn to respond to, and care for, one another. Scudéry's work is one example of how ideas on animals and care in early modern France were informed by authors' physical interspecies encounters. Her interactions with the chameleons serve as a reminder that animals were not simply objects of philosophical reflection, but were physically present throughout the everyday lives of early modern Europeans. A variety of animal produce was consumed or utilised in medicinal remedies, as fertiliser, for light and heating or in clothing and furniture.[1] Animals inhabited the menageries of the rich, were doted on as companions or reviled as pests, were pursued in the hunt or were objects of scientific curiosity in the vivisection theatres of the *Académie Royale*. They laboured alongside their human counterparts in the fields, performed guarding or shepherding duties and, in certain instances, cohabited with agricultural labourers during the winter months. Whilst philosophical treatises and literary works shaped perceptions of animals and care in France, so too did early moderns' actual interactions with animals, whether as a spectacle, as companions or as co-labourers.

Agriculture was a domain in which animals were an integral part of the daily lives of many in early modern France. Contemporary farming practices were accompanied by a burgeoning textual tradition of manuals and treatises which advanced distinct ideas on animals, interspecies interactions and care; their views were concurrently shaped by the relationships with animals that were part and parcel of agricultural life. The present chapter examines two influential

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[1] Olivier de Serres, *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture et ménage des champs,* 3rd edn (Paris: ABR Saugrain, 1605), p. 259.

works from this tradition: Charles Estienne and Jean Liébault's *Agriculture, et Maison Rustique* (c.1564 - often, and henceforth, referred to as *La Maison Rustique*) and Olivier de Serres' *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture* (1600). My analysis advances three principal arguments. I firstly maintain that Estienne, Liébault and de Serres' readings of animal nature are intrinsically connected with their understanding of care. Their interpretations of corporeal behaviours reveal perceptions of animals as sentient, emotional and mutable beings who are also capable of collaborating with other species and humans in acts of care. Whilst the authors of the manuals implicitly accept that we cannot know animals' experiences with any certainty, their interpretations of animal nature inform the more particularistic responses and practical acts of care they recommend. I thereby propose that *La Maison Rustique* and *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture* reveal a distinct praxis of care in which acts of reading and acts of care symbiotically inform one another in an ongoing cycle.

Secondly, I argue that the two manuals reveal an underlying perception of early modern agricultural estates as vast systems of animals and humans which I term interspecies networks of care. These interspecies networks are suggested in the very titles of the manuals. Their authors envisage agricultural estates as a vast household or even a theatre, comprising many different animal and human beings who work together within their shared abode to ensure its ongoing prosperity.[2] *La Maison Rustique* and *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture* focus on the fundamental role of animals' produce and labour in contributing to the proper functioning of large agricultural estates. I examine how such acts reveal a perception of care as a deeply collaborative endeavour between animals, humans and even technological agents. I propose that the collaborative effort of their produce and labour constituted a form of "caring back" through which animals reciprocated the care they received and supported the economic prosperity of the wider estate. I ultimately argue that the two manuals perceive animals within these interspecies networks as agents who collaborated, contributed and cared back through their produce and labour.

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[2] The idea of early modern agricultural estates as "theatres" or networks of actors will be explored in greater depth in section 6.2 below.

Finally, I maintain that care emerges as a complex, flexible and interspecies act in the two manuals. Estienne, Liébault and de Serres conceive animals as individual living beings with their own distinct and changing needs. Care in turn requires the caregiver to adapt and respond to the inconsistency, unpredictability and specificity of animal life. The manuals do not, however, deem care to be unique to humans. They instead perceive animals as emotional and social beings who are capable of caring for one another through their produce, their bodies and their affective relationships. Care advice and acts of care within *La Maison Rustique* and *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture* are thus performed by animals and humans alike and are protean in response to the transient and inconsistent nature of animal life.

6.1.1 Agriculture in Early Modern France

We might ask, however, why consider agriculture in an analysis of the perceptions of animals and care in early modern France? This question is perhaps even more poignant given that the previous four chapters have concentrated on works which are primarily philosophical or literary in nature. *La Maison Rustique* and *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture* represent a repository of distinct ideas on animals and care that were grounded in both a growing intellectual interest in agronomy and in the actual quotidian relationships with animals in early modern agriculture. France remained a predominantly rural and agricultural economy throughout the early modern period.[3] In 1500, an estimated 73% of the population worked in agriculture; this figure represented individuals from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and classes, among them wealthier estate and land owners as well as tenant farmers, sharecroppers and migrant workers.[4] By 1700, 63% of the population were still engaged in farming.[5] A great variety of animal species were also integral to agricultural operations in France and could be seen across all aspects of rural life. Animals

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[3] Philip Benedict, 'More than Market and Manufactory: The Cities of Early Modern France', *French historical studies,* 20 (1997), 511-538 (p. 529). Jack A. Goldstone, 'Demography', in *The Oxford Handbook of the Ancien Régime,* ed. by William Doyle (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 201-218 (p. 207). Philip T. Hoffman, 'Early Modern France, 1450-1700', in *Fiscal Crises, Liberty and Representative Government, 1450-1789,* ed. by Philip T. Hoffman and Kathryn Norberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), pp. 226-252 (p. 226).

[4] Philip T. Hoffman, *Growth in a Traditional Society: The French Countryside, 1450-1815,* The Princeton Economic History of the Western World, ed. by Joel Mokyr, 47 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996-2021), I (1996), p. 13. P. Hoffman, 'Early Modern France', p. 226.

[5] P. Hoffman, 'Early Modern France', p. 226.

laboured and grazed in fields and farmyards, could reside in the homes of labourers and were to be found throughout the streets, woodlands and common grounds surrounding villages.

Historians have traditionally regarded the early modern period as a time of stagnation in French agriculture. The *Annales* school advanced the concept of a rural 'société immobile' composed of subsistence farmers who were hostile to innovation in agricultural techniques.[6] More recently, though, historians have challenged this stagnationist view. Peter Jones and Philip T. Hoffman maintain that French agriculture was highly complex and regionally diverse during the early modern period, a view which is equally expressed by Estienne, Liébault and de Serres.[7] Jones and Hoffman's recent studies reveal that there were greater degrees of migration, social mobility and growth in agricultural productivity in rural communities than the stagnationist view allows and that not all peasant labourers were resistant to innovation and trade.[8] Productivity, economic prosperity, land ownership and farming techniques instead varied across the different class structures and provinces of France.[9] Northern regions were typically engaged in more intensive husbandry and enjoyed high yields of cereal and fodder crops through employing the open-field system.[10] The mountainous and littoral landscapes of the Loire were dedicated to viticulture, whilst those who worked the poorer soils of southern France were largely subsistence farmers who focused on cultivating bread grains.[11]

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[6] Marc Bloch, *Les caractères originaux de l'histoire rurale française,* 2 vols (Paris: Société d'Édition «Les Belles Lettres», 1931), I (1931), pp. 19-20. Peter M. Jones, 'Historiographical Reviews: Recent Work on French Rural History', *The Historical Journal,* 46 (2003), 953-961 (pp. 954-955). Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *The Peasants of Languedoc*, trans. by John Day (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974), pp. 227-228.

[7] Charles Estienne and Jean Liébault, *L'Agriculture et Maison Rustique* (Lyon: Jacques du Puis, 1578), p. 269a. De Serres, *Théâtre d'Agriculture,* p. 81. P. Hoffman, *Growth,* p. 12. Peter M. Jones, 'Agricultural Modernization and the French Revolution', *Journal of Historical Geography,* 16 (1990), 38-50 (pp. 39-40).

[8] Philip T. Hoffman, 'Land Rents and Agricultural Productivity: The Paris Basin, 1450-1789', *The Journal of Economic History,* 51 (1991), 771-805 (pp. 802-803). P. Hoffman, *Growth,* p. 19. Peter M. Jones, 'Agriculture', in *The Oxford Handbook of the Ancien Régime,* ed. by William Doyle (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 236-251 (p. 237).

[9] P. Hoffman, *Growth,* p. 18. Jones, 'Agriculture', p. 240.

[10] Jones, 'Agriculture', pp. 241-242.

[11] Ibid, p. 242.

Land ownership among the peasant classes similarly varied by region. Ownership tended to be higher in the northern and central regions of France, where peasant cultivators owned up to half of the soil surface.[12] Figures were lower in the southern and western regions of subsistence farming, where peasant ownership oscillated around 20% throughout the early modern period.[13] Possession continued to differ among subsections of the lower classes at this time, as alternative forms of land ownership arose in France. Whilst commercial tenant farmers still represented the majority of peasant landowners, sharecropping and annual rents offered increasing opportunities for those previously unable to afford land. Such regional and class differences resulted in a complex and layered rural economy in which land ownership, speculative cultivation, animal husbandry and technical innovation were not unique to the upper echelons of society.[14]

The French rural economy was not completely stagnant during the early modern period, although progress was a slow process of incremental change.[15] One significant innovation of the early modern period lay in more productive ploughing techniques and a move away from fallowing, which was proving increasingly ineffective to feed a growing population.[16] Animals - especially horses, mules and cattle - were essential to the development of more effective ploughing techniques and crop cultivation, both in terms of their physical labour and for the fertilising properties of their manure; such methods proved particularly successful in the northern cereal-growing regions of France.[17] A plethora of animal species performed additional roles in the sustenance and well-being of rural communities. Given the expense of raising livestock, herds and flocks typically belonged to larger estates or were shared among the

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[12] J. Loutchisky, 'Les classes paysannes en France au XVIIIe siècle', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine (1899-1914)*, 15 (1911), 297-323 (p. 299).

[13] Loutchisky, 'Les classes', p. 299.

[14] Jones, 'Agriculture', p. 244.

[15] P. Hoffman, *Growth*, pp. 18-19. Jean Jacquart, 'Immobilisme et catastrophes, 1560-1660', in *Histoire de la France rurale*, ed. by Georges Duby and Armand Wallon, 2nd edn, 4 vols (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1975-1976), II: De 1340 à 1789 (1975), pp. 157-163, (p. 194).

[16] Robert S. DuPlessis, *Transitions to Capitalism in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 59. Marcel Mazoyer and Laurence Roudart, *A History of World Agriculture: From the Neolithic Age to the Current Crisis*, trans. James H. Membrez (London: Earthscan, 2006), p. 314.

[17] Mazoyer and Roudart, *World Agriculture*, p. 314.

inhabitants of rural communities and entrusted to a village herdsman.[18] Caring for animals was accordingly a collaborative endeavour, but one which yielded communal benefits. For the landed gentry and commercial farmers who could afford their own livestock, animals performed vital labour and were a source of meat, edible produce, clothing, furnishings and other luxury items. They were also important commodities which could be bequeathed in wills.[19] For villages with communal herds, animals were integral to their livelihoods. They enabled peasant and tenant farmers to work the lands of estate owners and farm their own small plots for sustenance. Animals were not simply present in the daily activities of agricultural life, but significantly shaped the landscape, economy and livelihoods of the population of early modern France.

6.1.2 Textual Traditions

Alongside innovations in practical methods and technologies, France witnessed a reformulation of ideas on agriculture, animals and their care during the early modern period. Emerging agronomists contributed to a prospering textual tradition and reevaluated the underlying principles of contemporary farming practices.[20] Animal care and husbandry were central topics within their publications, which once more reveal the significant impact of animals on the daily life, diet, health and economy of agricultural communities.[21] Their texts - and the larger manuals specifically - afforded sustained attention to examining a variety of species and how to best care for their needs, including cattle, sheep, oxen, chickens, pigs, goats, horses, dogs, bees and silkworms.

The renewed growth of agricultural works in early modern France was part of a long-standing textual tradition. Renowned Roman authors - including Marcus Terentius Varro, Marcus Porcius Cato and Rutilius Palladius - had composed instructive guides on farming practices,

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[18] Jerome Blum, *The End of the Old Order in Rural Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), pp. 150-151. Paolo Malanima, *Pre-modern European Economy: One Thousand Years, (10th-19th Centuries),* Global Economic History Series, ed. by Maarten Prak and Jan Luiten van Zanden, 17 vols (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2009-2020), V (2009), p. 118.

[19] Erica Fudge, *Quick cattle and dying wishes: people and their animals in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018), p. 56.

[20] G.E. Fussell, 'Ploughs and Ploughing before 1800', *Agricultural History*, 40 (1966), 177-186 (p. 183).

[21] Estienne and Liébault, *Maison Rustique*, p. 158a. De Serres, *d'Agriculture,* p. 258.

husbandry and animal care. Their texts endured as reference works throughout the Middle Ages and reignited scholarly interest in agriculture during the Renaissance due to their increased translation and dissemination. Expanded editions of classical works such as Varro's *Rerum Rusticarum* or Palladius' *De Re Rustica* continued to shape the ideas of early modern authors, who commented on classical works with revised theories on efficacious farming methods.

Early modern authors were concerned with both the daily practicalities of agriculture and the underlying principles which informed these practices. Their works can be broadly separated into two categories: shorter treatises and more comprehensive manuals. Treatises focused on a more limited range of specialised subjects. They rarely reached the same levels of popularity and influence as manuals and so tended not to receive subsequent print runs.[22] Manuals purported to be comprehensive guides on a wider range of agricultural issues. Rather than treating isolated or specialist subjects, they pursued a more holistic approach to agriculture and discussed everything from horticulture to estate management, the duties of household inhabitants and animal care. Manuals often received larger print runs in early modern France and could pass through several editions.[23]

Manuals will therefore be the subject of the present chapter, focusing on Charles Estienne and Jean Liébault's *La Maison Rustique* (c.1564) and Olivier de Serres' *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture* (1600). I have selected these works for three principal reasons. Firstly, they were seminal works within the tradition of agricultural publications in early modern France. Both were frequently cited in other manuals and treatises and their influence endured across several editions. Secondly, these works contain extensive sections on husbandry, or animal care, and encompass a broader range of species than shorter manuals or treatises. They thereby offer a comprehensive overview of the perceptions of animals and their care within this textual tradition. Finally, *La Maison Rustique* and *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture* approach agricultural theory and practice from distinct social, intellectual and practical backgrounds. Whereas Estienne and Liébault mainly drew on existing textual sources, de Serres was involved in practically running an agricultural estate and

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[22] Roger Chartier and Henri-Jean Martin, *Histoire de l'édition française: le livre triomphant, 1660-1830* (Paris: Fayard, 1990), p. 259.

[23] Chartier and Martin, *Histoire,* p. 259.

innovating new techniques. Through analysing their works alongside one another, my aim is twofold. I both explore how the manuals participated in the coalescing discourses on animals and care considered thus far in this study and examine how these works related to agricultural practices in early modern France.

6.1.3 The Manuals and their Authors

La Maison Rustique drew upon Estienne's earlier *Praedium Rusticarum* (1554), which commented on classical and medieval passages on agricultural methods. Liébault provided the vernacular translation a decade later and augmented Estienne's earlier work with observations on contemporary farming methods, home remedies, astrology and even superstitions. *La Maison Rustique* enjoyed at least a century of popularity, with several print runs and three new editions appearing in the first fifty years of its publication.[24] However, neither Estienne nor Liébault were directly engaged in the practical labours of agriculture. Estienne came from an eminent family of printers in Paris, where he trained in medicine and undertook anatomical research.[25] He assumed ownership of the family printing business in 1551 and was awarded the prestigious role of the king's printer, though he became bankrupt a decade later.[26] A native of Dijon, Liébault trained in medicine in Paris, where he met and married Estienne's daughter, Nicole.[27] He primarily published medical treatises and so his work on *La Maison Rustique* was rather unusual. Indeed, it is perhaps due to Estienne and Liébault's inexperience of agriculture that their manual was later criticised for inaccuracies and advice which proved ineffectual in practice.[28]

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[24] Jacquart, 'Immobilisme', p. 195.

[25] Konstantinos Markatos et al., 'Charles Estienne (1504-1564): His Life, Work and Contribution to Anatomy and the First Description of the Canal in the Spinal Cord', *World Neurosurgery,* 100 (2017), 186-189 (p. 186).

[26] Markatos et al., 'Charles Estienne', p. 187.

[27] Louis-Gabriel Michaud, *Biographie universelle ancienne et moderne, ou histoire, par ordre alphabétique, de la vie publique et privée de tous les hommes qui se sont fait remarquer par leurs écrits, leurs actions, leurs talents, leurs vertus ou leurs crimes,* 45 vols (Paris: Madame C. Desplaces, 1843-18..), XXIV: Leibniz-Llewlyn (n.d.), p. 505.

[28] André-Henri Vaschalde, *Olivier de Serres, Seigneur du Pradel: sa vie et ses travaux* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1886), p. 68.

We might question, then, why Estienne and Liébault published *La Maison Rustique*, given their practical inexperience of agriculture. Although we cannot be certain of their motivations, their work may have in part arisen from an intellectual interest. Both trained in medicine at Parisian universities, where agronomy was becoming an increasingly recognised field.[29] Publishing the manual might equally have been a sound business decision at a time when the family's printing venture was struggling economically. With the growing interest in agronomy, *La Maison Rustique* had a captive market of students in Paris, many of whom would later inherit their own estates. Neither the authors' motivations - nor the accuracy of their advice - is my principal concern here, though. My analysis focuses on the intersections between Estienne and Liébault's perceptions of animals and the praxis of care which emerges in *La Maison Rustique*.

Olivier de Serres' later *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture* became the guide to contemporary agricultural practices and animal care. De Serres was an agronomist born to a Protestant family in Villeneuve de Berg, a strategic location which witnessed considerable conflict during the French Wars of Religion (1562 - 1598). As a child, he regularly accompanied his father when visiting the family's estates and demonstrated an interest in agriculture from a young age. De Serres later received a humanist education and trained in law at the university of Valence.[30] He continued to practice his Protestant faith despite the persistent unrest in France. Following his father's death and the renewed religious conflict, de Serres recounts how he found solace in reading works on agricultural techniques and practices.[31] He read extensively into the classical works of Pliny, Virgil, Varro and Caton as well as more contemporary texts, including *La Maison Rustique*.[32]

In contrast to Estienne and Liébault, though, de Serres' interest in agriculture extended beyond his reading of others' works. He found refuge from civil and religious unrest at his family estate of Pradel, where learning to cultivate the land became a matter of survival. De Serres began to innovate new farming practices and Pradel soon became a vast experimentation ground for his

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[29] Markatos et al., 'Charles Estienne', p. 186. Michaud, *Biographie*, vol. XIII, p. 111 and vol. XXIV, p. 505.

[30] Vaschalde, *de Serres*, p. 34.

[31] De Serres, 'Préface', in *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture,* p. ii.

[32] Vaschalde, *de Serres,* p. 65.

ideas. He designed irrigation systems, introduced sharecropping and experimented with the cultivation of silkworms, on which he became a leading authority in France.[33] After three decades, he decided to publish what he had learnt through his 'expérience et pratique' of working the land at Pradel.[34] The resultant *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture* guided the reader on the minutiae of practically every conceivable aspect of agriculture. The text enjoyed immense and immediate popularity and became the leading authority on farming practices in seventeenth-century France; it accumulated nineteen editions between 1600 and 1675, eight of which were published between 1608 and 1617 alone. Given the reception of his work, de Serres has long been regarded as the founding father of modern agronomy in France.[35]

Although written in different contexts, *La Maison Rustique* and *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture* represent two rich and evolving repositories of ideas on animal care in French agriculture. Taken together, they constitute a distinct contribution to the ontological, epistemological and ethical debates surrounding animal nature and care in early modern France that have been the focus of this study thus far. The two manuals are not, however, immune from criticism. *La Maison Rustique* was subject to much criticism from contemporaries for its ineffective advice and was eventually abandoned as a guide to agricultural practice.[36] Both works - in particular de Serres' *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture* - have received growing attention in studies on early modern agronomy, ecology, horticulture, diet and rural history.[37] Studies in these fields nevertheless reduce the manuals to prescriptive "how-to" guides which historians primarily use as sources of information about trends in crop management and economic productivity in early modern agriculture. Where

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[33] Vaschalde, *de Serres*, pp. 65-67.

[34] De Serres, 'Préface', p. i.

[35] Vaschalde, *de Serres*, p. 68.

[36] Vaschalde, *de Serres*, p. 68.

[37] Jean Boulaine, 'Innovations agronomiques d'Olivier de Serres', *Réforme, Humanisme, Renaissance,* 50 (2000), 11-19 (p. 11). Tom Conley, 'Reading Olivier de Serres circa 1600: Between Economy and Ecology', in *Early Modern Écologies: Beyond English Ecocentrism,* ed. by Pauline Goul and Phillip John Usher, Environmental Humanities in Pre-Modern Cultures, ed. by Heide Estes, 4 vols (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017-2021), II (2020), pp. 223-262 (p. 225). Danièle Duport, 'La «science» d'Olivier de Serres et la connaissance du «naturel»', *Réforme, Humanisme, Renaissance,* 50 (2000), 85-95 (p. 85). David Gentilcore, *Food and Health in Early Modern Europe: Diet, Medicine and Society, 1450-1800* (London & New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), p. 59 and pp. 118-120.

animals feature in their analyses, scholars focus exclusively on the economic impact of a limited number of more lucrative species. Renaissance and Animal Studies scholar Erica Fudge has therefore argued that manuals are inadequate sources for historical studies of animal-human interactions in early modern agriculture. She contends that the manuals 'all too often reduced hands-on knowledge to lists' where animals were concerned and that their main purpose was to offer general advice across all species and all aspects of managing an agricultural estate.[38] In Fudge's view, the manuals merely provide 'abstract theorisations' and so obscure the caring relationships between animals and humans that would have been prominent in everyday agricultural life.[39]

The above criticisms are not entirely unfounded. The manuals could risk becoming prescriptive lists of generalised advice, solely concerned with boosting economic productivity. I do not, however, approach *La Maison Rustique* and *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture* as either an agronomist or a historian of early modern agriculture. I instead pursue a close reading to reveal the underlying perceptions of animals and the praxis of care expressed in the manuals. Whilst they do offer advice on the practicalities of farming and husbandry, the two manuals are more than instructive "how-to" guides or prescriptive lists of knowledge. *La Maison Rustique* and *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture* are vast repositories of information which combine practical approaches to animal care with reflections on contemporary ontological, epistemological and moral debates. Their nuanced and detailed chapters ultimately reveal a particular understanding of animal nature as well as a highly fluid and collaborative approach to care.

The following chapter comprises three principal sections. The first examines how the manuals read animals' corporeal gestures and perceive them as living, sentient, intentional and emotional beings who could collaborate with other animals and humans in acts of care. In considering how these perceptions in turn inform care advice, I propose that a cyclical and symbiotic relationship emerges between the act of reading and practical acts of care in the manuals.

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[38] Erica Fudge, 'Farmyard choreographies in early modern England', in *Renaissance Posthumanism*, ed. by Joseph Campana and Scott Maisano (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), pp. 145-166 (pp. 151-152).

[39] Fudge, 'Farmyard choreographies', pp. 151-152.

In the second section, I turn to examine the collaborative nature of care in greater depth. I argue that *La Maison Rustique* and *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture* conceptualise agricultural estates as complex interspecies networks in which animals and humans alike participated to ensure its ongoing prosperity. Through analysing their discussions on produce and labour, I maintain that the authors regard these acts as ways in which animals collaborate and reciprocate care - or care back - within interspecies networks. These acts reveal core characteristics of care within the manuals, namely its collaborative nature and its responsiveness to the continual evolution of animal life.

The final section considers the concept of care in the manuals more closely. Despite their apparent purpose to offer guidance, I assert that neither *La Maison Rustique* nor *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture* conceptualise care in a categorical manner. They instead embrace uncertainty, flux and the inconsistencies of animal and interspecies life. Care accordingly emerges as a fluid, adaptable and continually evolving response. Building upon this concept, I argue that the manuals offer a distinct praxis of care which unites theoretical reading, emotional response and care as a practical labour.

6.1.4 A Note on Terms

La Maison Rustique and *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture* are vast works which encompass numerous topics related to agriculture - among them soil preparation, crop selection and cheese production - as well as cultural references and moral philosophy. As such, these texts do not necessarily correspond to our current concept of a "manual" as an instructive or informative guide. Alongside their advice, de Serres, Estienne and Liébault participate in contemporary discussions on an array of subjects including superstitions, proper household management, gardening, hunting and the rural economy. Their perceptions of animal nature and care equally emerge amidst the growing intellectual and cultural debates surrounding these questions in early modern France. The two texts are not solely concerned with instructing their readers, nor are they restricted to agricultural concerns alone.

Despite the diversity of their contents, the principal concern of *La Maison Rustique* and *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture* remains the proper instruction of their readers in farming practices, horticulture and husbandry. De Serres states that his objective is to guide his reader in learning the rudiments of farming and managing an estate, a sentiment which is similarly endorsed by Estienne and Liébault in their address to the reader.[40] I shall therefore refer to their works as 'agricultural manuals' or 'manuals' for heuristic purposes. At the same time, I shall continue the methodology employed thus far and undertake a close reading of *La Maison Rustique* and *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture*; my concern here is not the efficacy or accuracy of their advice, but their underlying perceptions of animal nature, care and their participation in contemporary debates.

6.2 Reading and Perceiving Animals: The Beginnings of a Praxis of Care

La Maison Rustique and *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture* purported to instruct their readers on all aspects of agriculture, including husbandry or animal care. Estienne and Liébault seek to educate their reader on the efficient management of agricultural estates, a pursuit they deem 'la plus utile et nécessaire à la vie des hommes.'[41] De Serres expresses a similar sentiment and considers it his duty ('devoir') to share the knowledge he has accumulated both through farming his own estate and through carefully ('soigneusement') reading a vast array of agricultural texts, 'tant anciens que modernes'.[42] His *Théâtre d'Agriculture* conveys 'tout ce qu'on doit connaître' to properly cultivate crops, care for animals, manage an estate and to 'vivre commodément avec sa famille.'[43] This holistic approach does not, however, simply guide the reader in their practical endeavours. The manuals' advice on husbandry reveals underlying perceptions of animal nature as well as a symbiotic relationship between the act of reading and responses of care. Alongside philosophical treatises and literary works, then, the agricultural manuals participated in the coalescing debates on the "animal question" in early modern France.

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[40] Estienne and Liébault, *La Maison Rustique,* p. 1a. De Serres, *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture* p. 2.

[41] Estienne and Liébault, *La Maison Rustique,* pp. 1a-1b.

[42] De Serres, 'Préface', p. ii.

[43] Ibid, p. ii.

In their attempt to inform their readers, Estienne, Liébault and de Serres are faced with the familiar epistemological question of how to comprehend animal nature or even whether this is possible. This was a pressing concern with regards to the manuals, whose purpose was to disseminate knowledge. Their authors take what is perhaps a rather unexpected response to this dilemma. Estienne, Liébault and de Serres do not espouse any authoritative assertions on animals' natures or the appropriate care for them. They instead interpret outward behaviours and corporeal gestures to propose possible explanations of animal nature; they thereby adopt a similar method to that pursued by Montaigne, Bougeant, Cureau and Scudéry.

Estienne, Liébault and de Serres' resultant perceptions of animals and their experiences in turn form the basis for the care they advise. Their practice of reading crucially remains responsive to the inconsistency and flux that was characteristic of daily encounters with animals in early modern agriculture. Estienne, Liébault and de Serres acknowledge that animals' gestures, behaviours and relationships can vary greatly over time. This gives rise to continually evolving perceptions of animal nature within the manuals and care advice which differs depending on the specific animal's requirements or the situation at hand. The progression from reading to care is not a unique occurrence, but becomes a recurring cyclical process in the manuals. The act of reading animals' corporeal gestures thereby forms the basis of a distinct response of care within *La Maison Rustique* and *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture*. Reading provides insight into animals' experiences and informs the caring intervention required. Acts of care are then continually adjusted to animals' evolving needs through repeated interpretations of their outward gestures. A close reading of Estienne, Liébault and de Serres' works reveals the symbiotic relationship they envision between acts of reading and care.

The manuals firstly perceive animals as living and sentient beings whose corporeal gestures suggest an experience of pain and suffering. This is evident in a discussion on the castration of young bulls in *La Maison Rustique*. Castration was - and, in some cases, remains - a common practice in agriculture. Estienne and Liébault discuss the impact of the procedure, noting that the young bulls often lose their appetite afterwards. De Serres corroborates this observation and both manuals speculate that the bulls' behavioural changes are a result of their 'grandes

douleurs' and suffering following the painful procedure.[44] Interpreting the calves' behavioural changes is only the initial step in their process of reading, though. Estienne and Liébault's perception of the bulls' sentience and suffering is inseparable from the particular response of care they propose:

> [...] lorsqu'ils seront châtrés, à raison de leur douleur, leur donnera à manger foin coupé menu, et mêlé avec fond *[sic]*, jusqu'à tant qu'ils soient rentrés en leurs appétits accoutumés.[45]

In response to the calves' suffering, Estienne and Liébault propose that the human caregiver intervene and feed the cattle a modified diet until they recover their normal appetites and - it is inferred - their former health. De Serres suggests a similar response and recommends that each calf be nourished 'soigneusement dans l'étable' until they are restored to 'son premier appetit'.[46] The care proposed in both manuals not only responds to the calves' perceived suffering, but also to their implicit status as living and changing beings. For the authors of the manuals, appropriate care is twofold. It firstly requires the reader to continually interpret the bulls' changing pain levels based on their outward behaviours, in this case using their appetites as an indicator of pain or health. The caregiver must then respond flexibly and adjust the care they provide accordingly. The advice proposed by both manuals presupposes a close relationship between the animal and their human caregiver, from which an intimate understanding of each calf and their distinct needs might emerge. Appetites may differ between individuals, or the calves may recover at different rates, and so the reader ought to tailor their care to the distinct and evolving situation of each animal. The authors of the manuals not only perceive the calves as living and sentient beings, but also envisage care as a flexible, responsive and ongoing process to meet their changing needs.

The inconsistency and mutability of animal life is similarly reflected in a passage on the interactions between a shepherd and their flock in *La Maison Rustique*. Estienne and Liébault advise the shepherd to accustom his sheep to two different calls so that the animals might differentiate between the various actions he wishes them to perform:

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[44] De Serres, *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture,* pp. 291-292.

[45] Estienne and Liébault, *La Maison Rustique,* p. 34a.

[46] De Serres, *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture,* p. 292.

Il doit leur accoutumer deux cris, un plaisant et hautain pour les faire aller avant, et pour les appeler un autre cri, afin que les brebis oyant ces deux cris différents, fassent ce que par un chacun d'eux sera commandé.[47]

Estienne and Liébault implicitly perceive the sheep as capable of comprehending the shepherd's request and responding in kind through their movements; their encounter becomes a form of interspecies conversation of question and response that is not dependent on (human) language.[48] The fact that the shepherd accustoms the flock to two distinct calls - which correspond to two different actions - is significant in this regard. The animals possess multiple possibilities for response amongst which they may decide. Estienne and Liébault seem to suggest that the sheep collaborate with the shepherd for the most part, although their responses vary depending on the question posed.[49] This possibility for variation implies that the sheep have a choice in how they respond and that this might not always or necessarily entail collaboration. The flock may misunderstand or even resist the shepherd's command by disregarding it or by performing the opposite action to that required. The sheep are living beings whose relationship with the shepherd is also continually evolving and so the possibility cannot be dismissed that they will encounter tensions, frictions and negotiations. Estienne and Liébault's passage on the sheep is thus significant in two regards. They both draw attention to the inconsistencies and interspecies negotiations which can occur in agricultural life, whilst primarily regarding the sheep as agents who collaborate with the shepherd's commands.

Estienne and Liébault develop this perception of animals as collaborative or resistive agents in a passage discussing the reaction of peacocks to humans' attempts to collect their faeces for a medicinal cure. Their reading reinforces the view that a life alongside animals can be fraught with tensions:

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[47] Estienne and Liébault, *La Maison Rustique,* p. 59a.

[48] The interaction between the shepherd and the flock once more brings to mind Aristotle's distinction between *logos* and *phonē* and his attribution of 'voice' to animals as a means of communication.

[49] Estienne and Liébault, *La Maison Rustique,* p. 59a.

> Le paon est l'oiseau du plus beau pennage qu'il en soit nul autre, aussi s'en orgueillit si beaucoup, mais il est bien autant mal empiété [...] La fiente de paon est souveraine contre les affections des yeux, si l'on en pouvait trouver; mais le paon est tant envieux du bien de l'homme qui lui-même mange sa fiente de crainte que l'on en trouve.[50]

Although we cannot be certain whether the peacocks are truly resisting human intentions, Estienne and Liébault interpret the birds' act of eating their faeces as a sign of their resistance. They consider the peacock to be especially 'mal empiété' in comparison to other species which do not demonstrate the same kind of opposition. Estienne and Liébault also regard the peacocks as capable of experiencing emotional states and note that the birds' resistance is motivated by their jealousy 'du bien de l'homme'. The peacocks' hostility and resistance remind the reader that moments of incoherency and conflict could occur within agricultural life. Early modern estates were fluid conglomerations - or networks - of disparate beings with their own agencies and so friction and negotiation could arise.[51] The success of such networks depended on their smooth functioning and on the collaboration between their participants, as in the above instance of the shepherd and their flock. Where resistance did occur, networks could easily be threatened with decline or even collapse.

Estienne and Liébault's interpretations gesture towards the complexity of animal agencies within early modern agricultural networks. Through their corporeal actions, the sheep and peacocks have the potential to shape their relationships with humans; both species are deemed capable of intentionally deciding how to respond and of conveying this through their corporeal actions. The alternate possibilities of collaboration and resistance further suggest that neither Estienne nor Liébault perceive animal nature as static. They instead recognise that these agencies are continually changing in conjunction with the flux of animal life and that agricultural networks could at times become fraught with resistance and negotiation. Despite such frictions, the animal-human relationships portrayed in *La Maison Rustique* place greater

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[50] Estienne and Liébault, *La Maison Rustique*, pp. 44a-45b.

[51] Richie Nimmo, 'The Mechanical Calf: On the Making of a Multispecies Machine', in *Making Milk: The Past, Present, and Future of our Primary Food,* ed. by Mathilde Cohen and Yoriko Otomo (London & New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), pp. 81-98 (p. 97). The concept of agricultural networks will be discussed in greater depth in section 6.3 below.

emphasis on the communicative and collaborative nature of interspecies encounters in early modern agriculture.

Thus far, we have focused on animals' physical behaviours and needs. The envy of the peacocks nevertheless points towards a perception of animal emotion within the manuals. De Serres, Estienne and Liébault speculate on an array of shared emotional experiences between animals and humans - including envy but also happiness, fear, grief, hatred, anger, love and joy - as well as how animals may express these states in their own ways through their vocalisations and corporeal gestures. In this regard, the manuals advance similar interpretations of animal emotion to those expressed by Montaigne, Bougeant, Cureau and Scudéry examined in earlier chapters.

Estienne, Liébault and de Serres' interpretations of animal emotion extend across a variety of animal species and combine their own observations alongside existing representations in literary and philosophical works. They recognise that different species do not necessarily experience the same emotions, nor do they express them with the same intensity. Estienne and Liébault portray bees and other insects as particularly emotional creatures, for instance. Their interpretation was potentially shaped by their reading of classical works and by the existing status of bees in literature and philosophy, including in Plato and Aristotle. Bees had long been regarded as rather expressive creatures, in part due to the similarities between apian and contemporary human social structures in being centred around a monarch. Estienne and Liébault build upon such representations in their reading of a colony's actions following deaths within their hive:

> [...] Elles (les abeilles) portent dehors celles qui meurent dedans les ruches : quand leur roi est mort, elles ne le bougent point de sa place, ainsi s'amoncellent l'une sur l'autre autour de lui, semble que le plaignent et lamentent, ainsi qu'elles expriment avec leur murmure et bourdonnement [...].

> [...] Elles deviennent rabides *[sic]* et toutes desséchées, après avoir enduré trop grande chaleur ou froideur. Ce que l'on connait évidement: car l'on voit souvent les unes qui portent hors de leurs

ruches les corps des autres qui sont mortes: les autres sont là-dedans tristes sans faire bruit, comme en deuil public.[52]

Estienne and Liébault attend carefully to the bees' behaviours and infer their grief through empathetically interpreting their corporeal gestures. The bees' actions of gathering around the deceased and creating an audible 'bourdonnement' are implicitly compared to human crying in response to grief. At the same time, though, the passage contains an inherent uncertainty in regards to the bees' internal experiences. Estienne and Liébault couch their reading in speculative terms, for they cannot authoritatively claim that the insects are holding a ceremony to mourn their deceased companions. From their unusual commotion, it *seems* ('semble') that the bees are expressing their sorrow and emotional anguish over their lost companions - as if they were weeping, for instance - and act *as if* ('comme') they are participating in a public act of mourning. Beyond such speculation, the passage reveals a connection between the authors' interpretations of animal behaviours and responses of care. Rather than an interaction with a human caregiver, though, it is here the animals who respond to one another with care. Within their own social structures, the bees mourn their lost companions and collectively tend to their dead with care by carrying them outside the hive. Care and caregiving here emerge as a collaborative endeavour in which animals participate and which is by no means unique to humans.

The above reading of the mourning bees is rather anthropomorphic in attributing human forms of sociability and emotion to them. Estienne and Liébault do not, however, claim that theirs is the only interpretation, nor that it is beyond doubt. In employing speculative terms, they implicitly recognise that there may be alternative interpretations or that animal nature may lie beyond human comprehension entirely. Their anthropomorphic readings nevertheless offer a potential path forward. Estienne and Liébault's anthropomorphism emphasises the bees' grief in response to the deaths of their companions, an emotional experience which is also shared among humans. This common experience in turn enables us, as readers, to empathetically infer the animals' possible emotional states. Whilst a level of doubt persists within the manuals, their

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[52] Estienne and Liébault, *La Maison Rustique,* pp. 160b-163a.

authors continue to speculate on animals' natures and experiences through empathetic and - at times - anthropomorphic acts of reading.

De Serres, Estienne and Liébault's perception of animal emotion extends to their interpretation of animals' relationships with their own and other species. Both *La Maison Rustique* and *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture* discuss parent-child interactions across diverse species and typically describe them in emotional terms as bonds of love, affection and care. De Serres notes, for instance, that female cattle become 'tant amoureuse[s]' over their young and express their affection physically through grooming, feeding and tending to their calf.[53] Caring parental relationships are not, however, restricted by biological or species bonds. De Serres advises human caregivers to nurture and educate young animals where necessary, such as when young cattle or foals have been abandoned by their biological parents. He encourages the reader to build a close relationship with their animal fosterling through tender physical actions. This might include leading the animal 'doucement [...] avec la main', calming them, accustoming them to their caregiver's voice or various other 'doux attraits' intended to engender interspecies bonds of trust, love and care.[54]

Loving and nurturing bonds are not simply a feature of animal-human relationships. As we have already seen, the bees above were perceived as collaborating with one another to care for their dead. Estienne and Liébault observe similar caring relationships between animal foster parents and their adopted young, such as in cases where they are abandoned or orphaned by their biological parents. The authors discuss the results of fostering various species of young birds with castrated cockerels, or capons:

> [...] le (le capon) mettre sous un panier d'osier avec la couvée des petits, et l'y laisser quelque temps, afin qu'il les prenne en amour: si tôt qu'il sera en liberté les élèvera, gardera, conduira et sera plus fol amoureux d'eux que la propre mère.[55]

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[53] De Serres, *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture,* p. 284.

[54] De Serres, *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture,* pp. 292-293 and p. 308.

[55] Estienne and Liébault, *La Maison Rustique,* p. 39a.

Estienne and Liébault again read the capon's actions in a rather anthropomorphic manner. They perceive emotional bonds of love between the birds, expressed through the capon's tender and caring acts in raising his fosterlings, ensuring their safety and attending to their physical needs. The authors' interpretation of his corporeal gestures reinforces their perception of animals as active agents within their own and others' care. The capon attends to his chicks' physical and emotional needs through their mutual loving bond. Indeed, the capon is perceived as so 'fol amoureux' of his young that his love even surpasses the bond that may be felt between 'la propre mère' and her progeny. Neither love nor care are restricted by biological or species ties for Estienne and Liébault.

It ought to be noted, though, that the capon's ability to raise his fosterlings occurs within what I term an interspecies network of care. Adequately caring for the orphaned or abandoned chicks cannot be achieved by the capon alone, but requires collaboration between animals and humans.[56] In *La Maison Rustique*, this collaboration is intrinsically connected with the manual's cyclical process of reading and corresponding acts of care. The human caregiver's decision to place the young birds with a foster parent proceeds from their continual interpretation of the biological mother's actions. The manual advises the reader to pay close and careful attention to each hen's behaviour after the arrival of her chicks:

> Encore faut bien regarder que la poule qui les conduit ne soit saffre *[sic]* et brutive, qu'elle ne les blesse en grattant, & que souvent elle les échauffe [...][57]

Estienne and Liébault encourage their reader to intently observe the hen's behaviour towards her chicks. Injuring them whilst scratching in the dust or failing to keep them warm may be signs of aggression and negligence. These actions might alternatively be attributable to clumsiness, neglect or inexperience on the part of a specific hen. The authors implicitly acknowledge that there may be multiple alternative explanations for seemingly aggressive behaviour, such that we cannot always ascertain animals' experiences or motivations. Close, careful observation ('bien regarder') offers the basis for reasonable speculation on the hens'

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[56] The idea of collaborative care and the concept of interspecies networks will be considered in greater depth in section 6.3 below.

[57] Estienne and Liébault, *La Maison Rustique*, p. 39a.

behaviour. The reader's careful interpretations again inform the practical acts of care that the authors advise and also reveal several core characteristics of care within the manuals. Where the biological mother appears aggressive or neglectful, Estienne and Liébault advise the reader to remove the chicks and place them in the care of foster parents. As with the castrated calves, care once more requires the flexibility to adapt to the continually changing situations and needs of particular animals; for instance, signs of aggression or negligence could develop at any time and require the collaborative intervention of a human caregiver and an animal foster parent. Estienne and Liébault's passages on animal fostering simultaneously reveal their understanding of care as a collaborative endeavour within a complex interspecies network. In the above example, successful care involves both the human caregiver who removes the abandoned or neglected chicks from their biological mother and the capon who assumes the role of a foster parent.

De Serres, Estienne and Liébault's works ultimately reveal perceptions of animals as sentient, responsive and emotional beings through reading their corporeal gestures. Animals are also agents who are capable of intentional resistance and collaboration and who negotiate relationships with other animals and humans. Significantly, though, the manuals recognise that animals are living beings whose experiences and needs fluctuate over time. Alongside their perceptions of animal nature, *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture* and *La Maison Rustique* begin to point towards a symbiotic and cyclical relationship in which continual acts of reading inform responses of care. As we have seen, the authors' interpretations of animals' physical needs, emotions and experiences inform the care advice in their manuals. Given the fluctuating nature of animal life, though, the manuals do not offer precise or definitive instruction to their reader. They instead approach care as flexible and responsive to animals' changing needs and relationships. Whilst they may not provide a normative framework, the manuals begin to capture a distinct essence of care as a constantly evolving relationship between animals and humans. Such an understanding of care will be discussed in greater depth below.

De Serres, Estienne and Liébault's readings of animal nature and interspecies relationships significantly suggest that care is not a uniquely human response. They regard animals as social beings who actively care for others within and across species boundaries and who collaborate in

acts of care, as in the example of animal foster parents above. Care thus appears to be a deeply interspecies and collaborative endeavour in *La Maison Rustique* and *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture*. Collaboration between animals and humans would have been integral to the success of agricultural operations in early modern France, especially in facilitating the essential everyday tasks of physical labour, herding cattle, milking cows or collecting animals produce.[58] Examining the discussions of such tasks in *La Maison Rustique* and *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture* reveals how the authors conceptualise interspecies relationships in agriculture and how they perceive care as a collaborative and reciprocal endeavour.

6.3 Collaborative Care and Interspecies Networks

Whilst *La Maison Rustique* and *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture* are situated within a distinct textual tradition, they were both written in relation to the practice of farming in early modern France and so instruct their reader in the practical management of an agricultural estate. The pertinence of the manuals to the practicalities of farming is prominent in the case of de Serres, whose work arose from the experience of managing his own estate at Pradel. Even a cursory glance at the contents pages of *La Maison Rustique* and *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture* suggest the complexity of such large agricultural estates, whose owners were the target audience of the manuals. De Serres, Estienne and Liébault's advice encompasses a plethora of species, including cattle, sheep, chickens, pigs, goats, horses, dogs, bees and silkworms. The diversity of animal species is reflected in the array of human positions required to efficiently run an estate, amongst them estate owners, cowherds, shepherds, farm labourers, cart drivers, millers, stable hands, housewives and milkmaids.

As the title of de Serres' work suggests, I argue that the manuals conceptualise such estates as akin to vast theatres in which a diverse network of actors - both animal and human - collaborated to perform the daily tasks of agricultural life; I term these interspecies networks of care. The authors of the manuals perceive animals as agents who can care for others and who participate in collaborative and interspecies acts of care. Although my analysis thus far has

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[58] Fudge, 'Farmyard choreographies', p. 158. *Quick cattle,* p. 19 and p. 121 and p. 133.

focused on the physical and emotional aspects of care in interspecies encounters, there remained an important economic aspect to animal care within early modern agriculture. Animals were indeed lucrative commodities, but they were costly to care for. As de Serres writes, the human caregiver ought to ensure that draught animals are 'bien logées en propres étables, là bien nourries', attended to on a daily basis and that any injuries are prevented or promptly treated if the animal is to perform their labour.[59] The care provided to animals constituted a form of investment in terms of time, attention, energy and resources. This investment anticipated a return from animals, namely in the form of reproduction, their labour or their produce.

Estienne, Liébault and de Serres frequently acknowledge the economic importance of animals within an agricultural estate. They regard the rearing of livestock as one of the most 'utile et nécessaire' endeavours of agriculture, for the 'meilleure part du profit' of a farmstead lies in the labour and produce of its animals.[60] They emphasise the importance of animal collaboration - specifically regarding their material produce or physical labour - in ensuring the continued prosperity of an estate. In this context, I propose that the collaborative and cooperative actions of the animals in the manuals constitute a form of caring back within their interspecies networks; animals reciprocated the care they received to mutually ensure the prosperity and well-being of an agricultural estate. It was through their agencies that animals could perform essential tasks and yield a return on initial investments of care. The concepts of animal agency, interspecies networks and caring back therefore provide a framework to examine the nature of care and collaborative interspecies relationships within the manuals, especially in relation to animals' material produce and corporeal labour.

In considering such agencies within early modern agriculture and the manuals, though, we might question how to define agency in relation to animals. Agency is a rather malleable concept with differing definitions in law, sociology, psychology and philosophy. The term broadly denotes the capacity of a being - called an 'actor' or 'agent' - to act and produce results within a particular situation. This concept is central to the Actor-Network Theory (ANT) of

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[59] De Serres, *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture*, p. 84.
[60] Estienne and Liébault, *La Maison Rustique*, p. 158a. De Serres, *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture*, p. 258.

French philosopher and anthropologist Bruno Latour. I shall employ Latourian ANT to frame my analysis of the collaborative relationships and the ways in which animal agents transformed networks through caring back within early modern agriculture. I simultaneously expand upon this critical framework where required to reflect the distinct understanding of animal agency and interspecies networks of care in *La Maison Rustique* and *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture.*

In *We Have Never Been Modern* (1993), Latour is primarily concerned with what he terms the 'Modern Constitution'. This constitution encompasses the supposedly distinct categories - including the animal-human dichotomy - that our society has erected and which are frequently characterised by an asymmetric logic. This logic privileges one pole over another, creating imbalances of relative superiority and inferiority. Latour challenges the Modern Constitution. He maintains that we rarely adhere to such purportedly definitive categories and instead generate intermediate zones by this very act of establishing opposing poles.[61] These liminal zones promote the proliferation of hybrids that such dichotomous categories were intended to abolish.[62]

Latour pursues a more symmetrical realignment by both blurring definitive distinctions between categories, thereby allowing for the proliferation of hybrids, and by regarding nonhumans and humans as connected within what he terms 'actor-networks'. In his view, the decisive factor for agency depends upon whether a being can significantly affect others and transform the wider networks in which they participate.[63] Latourian agency accordingly applies to a broad range of nonhuman agents, including animals, due to their transformative potential. His concept of agency does not require the traditionally anthropocentric corequisites of intentionality or self-consciousness, as his example of Robert Boyle's air pump demonstrates.[64] Latour argues that the apparatus qualifies an agent, as it transformed contemporary scientific networks by proving the existence of the vacuum.[65] As an inanimate object, though, the air

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[61] Latour, *Modern,* p. 39.

[62] Richie Nimmo, 'Animal Cultures, Subjectivity and Knowledge: Symmetrical Reflections beyond the Great Divide', *Society and Animals,* 20 (2012), 173-192 (p. 186).

[63] Pearson, 'Beyond 'resistance'', p. 712.

[64] Ibid, pp. 711-712.

[65] Latour, *Modern*, p. 23.

pump remains incapable of the (free) will or intention often required in traditional anthropocentric concepts of agency.

Latourian ANT offers a valuable critical theory to frame our discussion of animal agency in *La Maison Rustique, Le Théâtre d'Agriculture* and early modern agriculture more broadly. De Serres, Estienne and Liébault regard animals as agents with the ability to significantly transform agricultural networks through their collaboration, labour and produce. Indeed, de Serres asserts that it would be impossible to survive without their labour and that animals have long been 'utile[s] et nécessaire[s] en tous les endroits de la terre'.[66] Whilst animals are perceived as agents in the manuals, Latour's theory ought not be employed uncritically. De Serres, Estienne and Liébault often perceive interspecies relationships and the roles of animals in agriculture in quite different ways to a Latourian perspective. My analysis therefore draws upon ANT to elaborate the key concepts of animal agency and interspecies networks, whilst also attending to the specificities of the manuals and their distinct view of animal agencies. In this vein, it ought to be acknowledged that Latourian ANT can be rather problematic regarding animals. Two criticisms are of interest for our purposes here, namely: the required translation of animal agencies and the residual anthropocentrism of ANT. Firstly, Latour perpetuates hierarchical modes of thought according to which human spokespersons are required to translate nonhuman agencies.[67] Such is the case in the above example of Boyle's vacuum pump. To achieve the greatest impact, human scientists must amplify its agency by testifying to the principles that the pump proves and disseminating them throughout the scientific community. Although nonhumans may be agents for Latour, their agency nevertheless remains secondary to a more influential human agency.

Residual anthropocentrism is the second principal limitation of Latour's ANT, for he conceptualises nonhuman agencies as enclosed within a superior human agency. Such an anthropocentric bias can be witnessed in his discussion of the different practical means through which animal and human agents transform networks, which Latour terms the 'social link'. He defines animals' agency as 'complex' because they can only employ the limited resources of their

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[66] De Serres, *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture,* p. 258.

[67] Latour, *Modern,* p. 29.

bodies, which in turn leads to largely unstable social structures. By contrast, Latour regards human agency as 'complicated' in the sense that they can coopt a more extensive range of resources - including material resources and symbolism - to construct far more stable societies.[68] His 'social link' perpetuates a hierarchical distinction whereby animals can only mobilise networks to a lesser extent than their human counterparts.[69] Rather ironically, he had intended to establish a more symmetrical realignment of human-animal relations, a task in which Richie Nimmo believes that Latour succeeds.[70] It is questionable how far Nimmo's argument holds, though, as Latour constructs alternative anthropocentric asymmetries through his concepts of nonhuman agency and the social link.

Latour's ANT offers both an invaluable and a potentially problematic critical framework; we ought to proceed with care to resist its anthropocentric restrictions and to examine the diverse and specific animal agencies in the manuals. I here build upon ANT to develop my concept of interspecies networks of care in relation to *La Maison Rustique* and *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture*. I propose that the manuals conceptualise agricultural estates as a fluid, transient and highly relational network in which an array of animal and human agents coalesced, collaborated and impacted upon one another through acts of care. Animals were perceived as embodied and active agents who could care back and shape the experiences of other agents through their mutual encounters. These relationships - and the responses of care they entailed - in turn transformed the mutable interspecies networks of which the agents were part. The following subsections examine perceptions of animal agencies and interspecies networks in relation to the two principal manners in which animals were regarded as caring back in the manuals. I here focus on the corporeal agencies of animals' material produce and physical labour to consider how such agencies were intrinsically connected with a flexible and collaborative concept of care.

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[68] Shirley Strum and Bruno Latour, 'Redefining the social link: from baboons to humans', *Social Science Information*, 6 (1987), 783-802 (p. 791).

[69] Strum and Latour, 'Social link', p. 790.

[70] Nimmo, 'Animal Cultures', pp. 185-186.

6.3.1 Material Agencies: Animals and their Produce

In *La Maison Rustique* and *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture*, animals are perceived as caring back for interspecies networks through the material agencies of their produce. The manuals frequently emphasise that the success of an estate largely lies in animals' productive capacity and that 'l'usage de leurs chairs, laitage et peaux' can prove highly profitable.[71] Ensuring and enhancing animals' ability to yield produce would accordingly have been of interest for the manuals' intended readership of estate owners and landed gentry. Purchasing and caring for animals was costly, but could prove a sound investment for those who could afford it. Animals offered an array of produce including meat, milk, eggs, honey, cheese, hides, fats, wool, silk, horn and bone. The manuals advise that produce principally be utilised for the benefit of the estate, such as caring for livestock or in medicinal remedies. For instance, Estienne and Liébault detail how to make a concoction of 'sel ammoniac, cumin et miel broyés ensemble' to treat eye infections in poultry, whilst cattle horn and donkey milk are reputed to be effective remedies against illness in general.[72] They further advise that honey and milk be used to create enriched feeds for sick or injured animals.[73] Using produce to care back for other animals was economically prudent for estate owners. Healthy animals were significant commodities and more likely to be productive, whether in terms of reproduction, their physical labour or the yields of their produce. Agricultural animals equally supplied the raw materials for various industries which transformed their produce into clothing, instruments, household items or even decorative details for furniture.[74]

La Maison Rustique and *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture* recognise that animal produce had a cumulative and wide-ranging impact on agricultural estates. I therefore propose that such produce had its own material agency and was one of the principal ways in which animals cared back within interspecies networks. The manuals simultaneously reveal that the ways in which animals cared back constituted a collective, collaborative and interspecies endeavour. De Serres' discussion of

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[71] Estienne and Liébault, *La Maison Rustique,* p. 158a. De Serres, *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture*, p. 258 and pp. 279-280.

[72] Estienne and Liébault, *La Maison Rustique,* p. 37a and p. 76a. De Serres, *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture,* p. 259.

[73] Estienne and Liébault, *La Maison Rustique,* p. 34a.

[74] De Serres, *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture,* p. 259.

the production of butter and cheese is a prime example. Obtaining sufficient quantities of milk firstly required the collective effort of a 'bon nombre de vaches' who could produce 'du lait en abondance' each day.[75] The second stage of the process called for collaboration between the cattle and a human labourer who milked the cows two to three times a day, depending on the season.[76] Whilst milk could often be utilised directly from the cow, human intervention was required to preserve the produce or transform it into other comestible products. In times of extreme cold, de Serres informs the reader that they must assist in 'l'affermissement du lait par le feu', add certain substances 'pour préserver et cailler le lait' and finally collect and store the resultant butter or cheese.[77] Within his text, dairy produce is the result of the collective and collaborative actions of animals and humans within an interspecies network. This was equally the case for other forms of animal produce such as eggs or honey. It required a flock of chickens or a colony of bees to first yield enough produce, before human collaboration enabled the collection and treatment of produce to transform interspecies networks.

In *La Maison Rustique* and *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture*, animals are perceived as caring back for agricultural networks through their material produce. It could be contended, though, that the transformative impact of their agency was limited, due to the necessary mediation of other human agents. Indeed, de Serres, Estienne and Liébault frequently instruct the reader to gather produce and treat it appropriately - whether in the preparation of medicinal remedies or comestible products - if it is to be put to the greatest effect.[78] The transformative potential of animal produce might appear rather indirect, then, as it is the result of both human intervention into animals' (re-)productive activity and a persistent level of control over animal life.[79] Human control is manifest not only in the collection or treatment of produce, but in the decisions which the manuals invite the reader to make in best employing such resources for the well-being of the estate, whether this is for medicinal remedies, enriched feeds, human consumption or marketable surpluses.

[75] De Serres, *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture*, p. 287.

[76] Ibid, p. 285.

[77] De Serres, *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture*, pp. 286.

[78] Estienne and Liébault, *La Maison Rustique*, pp. 40b-41b and p. 76b. De Serres, *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture*, p. 259 and pp. 355-356.

[79] Nimmo, 'Mechanical Calf', p. 81.

If considered from a Latourian perspective, this mediation could be considered a 'translation' of animals' agencies, as the impact of their produce on interspecies networks is seemingly amplified through human intervention and control. Yet this view risks perpetuating the residual anthropocentrism and hierarchical frameworks within Latourian ANT, particularly if 'translation' is regarded as a sign of human superiority. This anthropocentric interpretation does not, however, correspond to how the interspecies interactions involved in animal produce are perceived within *La Maison Rustique* or *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture.* For their authors, mediation and control do not constitute a form of human superiority. Estienne, Liébault and de Serres alternatively perceive animals and humans as agents of equal standing who collaborate in the daily tasks of agricultural life. Human mediation is instead a sign of the hybridity of animal and human agencies and of the deeply collaborative nature of care within the manuals and their interspecies networks.

Within *La Maison Rustique* and *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture,* material produce performs a critical role in caring back within interspecies networks. Animal agencies nevertheless assume numerous forms within the manuals and do not always rely on human mediation. A second principal way in which animals were regarded as reciprocating care lay in their corporeal agency and the physical labour they performed in early modern agriculture.

6.3.2 Collaborative Care and the Flux of Interspecies Life

As living and embodied beings, animals could directly shape interspecies networks through their corporeality, their physical interactions and their labour. Their ability to contribute to the essential quotidian tasks of agricultural estates once more depended on the care they received. Draught animals - namely cattle, horses or mules - could neither be too large nor too weak to operate equipment and required adequate shelter, nourishment and rest if they were to be most productive.[80]

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[80] De Serres, *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture,* pp. 84-85.

Although animals required an investment of care, *La Maison Rustique* and *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture* emphasise the critical importance of their corporeal and collaborative labour in caring back within an agricultural estate. Draught animals were essential for effective land management and successful crop production, both in terms of working the land through ploughing and through the fertilising properties of their manure which replenished soils.[81] Not only did the resultant crop yields nourish other animals and humans on the estate, but an improving market for grain and more effective ploughing techniques throughout the early modern period made efficient land management an increasingly lucrative venture for estate owners.[82] The manuals detail other essential labour for such endeavours that was performed by draught animals, including the transportation of produce and human workers or the manipulation of millstones to grind grain.[83]

Physical labour was therefore another principal means through which animals cared back by contributing to the ongoing sustenance and prosperity of interspecies networks. As with their produce, collaboration remained integral to the ways in which animals reciprocated care through their corporeal labour. Operating millstones, pulling carts or preparing the soil through ploughing all required a collaborative effort between numerous animals and humans. As de Serres writes, a team of 'bons et puissants boeufs' is essential to undertake the main physical labour of tilling the soil. Even with this animal assistance, though, the task of preparing fields for the sowing of crops still required participation from human labourers to break up 'des mottes de terre endurcies', which neither the plough nor animals' hooves could eradicate.[84] The descriptions of physical labour in the manuals thereby strengthen a perception of care - and the caring back of animals - as a deeply collaborative and interspecies labour.

[81] De Serres, *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture,* p. 258. Mazoyer and Roudart, *World Agriculture,* pp. 319-320.

[82] Ken Albala, *Food in Early Modern Europe,* Food through History, ed. by Robert W. Allen, 5 vols (Westport, CT & London: Greenwood Press, 2003-2007), I (2003), pp. 6-7 and p. 13. Victoria N. Bateman, 'The evolution of markets in early modern Europe, 1350-1800: a study of wheat prices', *The Economic History Review,* 64 (2011), 447-471 (p. 463).

[83] Mazoyer and Roudart, *World Agriculture,* p. 316.

[84] De Serres, *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture,* p. 74.

The instances of animals' corporeal labour in *La Maison Rustique* and *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture* simultaneously reveal the constant change which characterised interspecies networks and begin to point towards the flexible nature of care in the manuals and early modern agriculture. The act of operating a plough, cart or millstone itself required a close and collaborative engagement between a human driver, a piece of technological equipment and a team or a single draught animal - usually horses or oxen - during the time they were yoked together. These animal-human-technology assemblages were characterised by a high degree of displacement, replacement and interchangeability. The animal(s) and the human disengaged from the plough once the labour was completed. The individual animal, the human labourer and the technological participants could also differ each time the assemblage was composed, depending on the required task. Such variability of the plough assemblage is captured by de Serres and reflects the inherent flux of interspecies networks and agricultural life:

> [...] on aperçoit de quelque diversité, soit au bétail de labourage, soit aux outils, soit aux semences, soit au serrer des blés. Ici on laboure la terre avec des boeufs; là avec des chevaux. Ici avec des mulets; là avec des mules et ailleurs avec des ânes. Ici la charrue avec des roues, portant le soc et tirée par quatre, cinq ou six bêtes; là joue le coutre sans roue, traînée par deux seules bêtes.[85]

De Serres' discussion reveals the fluctuating and transient nature of the animal and technological participants in the plough assemblage. This flux was heightened by the fact that effective soil management during the early modern era required several different pieces of ploughing equipment depending on soil condition, terrain and the task at hand. Heavier wheeled ploughs were employed for deep tillage, whilst the harrow performed the lighter work of breaking up soil clods or smoothing the surface of the earth.[86] This variety of equipment in turn necessitated different animal species to manipulate it for maximum efficiency and productivity. Draught horses were better suited to lighter soils which required greater speed and agility, whilst stronger but slower oxen were preferred for heavier labour or more difficult terrain.[87] To be most productive, then, the assemblage of the plough required close collaboration and considerable flexibility between its animal, human and technological participants.

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[85] De Serres, *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture,* p. 81.

[86] Mazoyer and Roudart, *World Agriculture,* p. 265.

[87] Estienne and Liébault, *La Maison Rustique,* p. 75b. Fussell, 'Ploughs', pp. 181-183.

The assemblage of the plough thereby comprises a principal mechanism by which animals cared back for interspecies networks through their corporeal labour and gestures towards several salient characteristics of care and interspecies networks within the manuals. The collaborative nature of care - as well as the inherent flux of interspecies relationships - might nevertheless raise questions about the impact of animals and their ability to care back, as well as the efficacy of the plough assemblage given its transient nature.

It could firstly be contended that animals only have a limited potential to reciprocate care through their corporeal labour, given that their ability to benefit interspecies networks remains dependent on collaborative assemblages such as the plough. Returning to a Latourian perspective, the collaboration with human and technological agencies could once more be deemed a 'translation' of animals' corporeal agency. Estienne, Liébault and de Serres do not regard animal collaboration in this manner, though. They acknowledge that all participants are required to achieve the task of ploughing, but that the corporeal labour of draught animals is the most important component in the success of the collaboration.[88] Humans alone could not operate the ploughing equipment, especially the heavier wheeled ploughs designed to work more dense soils.[89] The corporeal labour of draught animals was also essential to transform static ploughing equipment into a dynamic and functional tool. This perception of animals, and their contribution within collaborations, can be understood along the lines of what Richie Nimmo terms 'obligatory passage points' in his articles on animal agencies and agricultural networks.[90] Nimmo proposes that an agent within an assemblage constitutes an obligatory passage point if all other agents must engage with it to impact upon the wider network. The manuals reflect such a perception of animals as obligatory passage points within the assemblage of the plough. Estienne, Liébault and de Serres assert that the success of the collaborative assemblage - and its essential role in caring back within interspecies networks - cannot be achieved without animals and their corporeal labour.

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[88] Estienne and Liébault, *La Maison Rustique,* p. 158a. De Serres, *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture,* p. 258.

[89] Blum, *Old Order,* p. 148.

[90] Richie Nimmo, 'Biopolitics and Becoming in Animal-Technology Assemblages', *HoST: Journal of History of Science and Technology,* 13 (2019), 118-136 (p. 133).

It might next be questioned whether the transient nature of assemblages was perceived as a limit to their potential to impact on agricultural estates or to reciprocate care. However, neither *La Maison Rustique* nor *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture* regard the transient and fluctuating relationships within interspecies networks in this manner. Variation is instead implicitly accepted as part and parcel of the mutability of agricultural and animal life, as in the instance of the castrated calves above. The fluctuation of the plough assemblage points towards a further significant aspect of care within the manuals: care is flexible and responsive. To work the land most effectively - and thereby have the greatest impact on the ongoing well-being and prosperity of the network - the plough assemblage flexibly responds and adapts its approach to the situation at hand.

We have thus far examined diverse perceptions of animals in *La Maison Rustique* and *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture* and considered how their readings of animal nature informed their care advice. Animals are regarded as beings who collaborate and perform actions which care back within the interspecies network of the agricultural estate. The previous two sections have thereby begun to reveal various manifestations of care within the manuals. Their authors approach care both as a collaborative, fluid and responsive relationship and as a continual cycle from acts of reading to acts of care, and vice versa. The manuals do not, then, purely theorise about care. They are simultaneously concerned with the practical and quotidian labours of care required within agriculture. The question remains as to how *La Maison Rustique* and *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture* envision this translation of care from theoretical advice to practice.

6.4 Care as Praxis: From Theory to Labour

The previous section considered how care in *La Maison Rustique* and *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture* involves collaboration and reciprocity within interspecies networks, as well as flexibility to respond to the inconsistent nature of animal life. The first section examined the symbiotic relationship between the act of reading animals' corporeal gestures and practical interventions of care and argued that this formed a recurring cycle to continually adapt to animals' evolving needs. Combining these two threads, I argue that we encounter a distinct praxis in *La Maison*

Rustique and *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture* in which care - as both theory and an emotional attitude - also comprises a responsive and continually evolving practical labour.

This agricultural praxis of care is a cyclical process which comprises three principal stages. The authors of the manuals first interpret animals' corporeal gestures to infer what their experiences or needs may be; this information serves as the basis upon which they theorise about how we ought to care for animals. De Serres, Estienne and Liébault then advise the reader how to translate their guidance into practical actions to address or remedy animals' needs. The final stage in this praxis is reflective and recurring and intersects with the cycle of reading identified above. The manuals encourage their reader to repeat the process and continually reread animals' gestures to better adjust caring interventions to their evolving and specific needs. Within the context of this praxis, then, *La Maison Rustique* or *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture* do not conceptualise care in prescriptive or definitive terms. The attitudes and acts of care that their authors advocate are instead continually changing and are responsive to the constant flux of animal life.

We might ask, however, how Estienne, Liébault and de Serres envision this praxis in relation to the demands of agricultural life in early modern France. It remained the reader's imperative to extend the practice of reading, the acts of care and the knowledge they acquired beyond the pages of the manuals and to implement them for the benefit of their own estates. Three principal instances in the manuals offer insight into how their authors anticipated a reader might employ this praxis of care in the daily occurrences of agricultural life. They concern the manuals' advice on caring for pregnant cattle, artificially hatching and raising chicks and treating common animal diseases.

The praxis of care can first be witnessed in a passage on pregnant cattle from *La Maison Rustique*. Having identified the cow's pregnancy through her physical changes, Estienne and Liébault do not take a prescriptive approach to care advice. They propose several ways in which a reader might care for an animal in this condition and respond to her pregnancy-related needs if and when they arise. It remains to the reader, though, to flexibly adapt the manuals' advice to

their particular cow's developing pregnancy and to implement acts of care as appropriate.[91] A caring response may entail heightened vigilance on the part of the human caregiver, such as paying greater attention to the expectant mother on her return from pasture in case she becomes unsteady on her feet.[92] Care might equally require more direct intervention, especially if the cow is showing signs of disease, injury or distress; in such instances, Estienne and Liébault advise that the reader 'pamper' the pregnant cow ('il les faudra choyer') - for example, by reserving the best fodder for her - to support her health and that of her unborn calf.[93]

The above acts of care are part of a cycle of reading and response in which care is adjusted to the cow's evolving needs and continues beyond her pregnancy. Estienne and Liébault encourage the reader to continually monitor the cow's condition, her behaviour towards her new-born calf and the quality of her milk so that they might alter their care accordingly. If the cow's milk becomes 'dur comme une pierre' following the birth, the reader is advised to respond to mother and calf through increasing the level of care they provide.[94] Estienne and Liébault's advice on pregnant cattle thereby begins to demonstrate the agricultural praxis of care. *La Maison Rustique* offers guidance as to how we might practically care for an animal in this situation, but it remains to the reader to interpret this guidance with regards to their own animals and then adapt it in a continually evolving process of care.

A second instance of this praxis of care in the manuals emerges in a passage on poultry. Estienne and Liébault detail various strategies to artificially hatch and raise chicks in instances where such intervention is required. The reader must once more continually read animals' corporeal gestures and assess the situation to alter their response of care accordingly. The manual notes that a clutch of eggs can remain with their biological mother if she is attentive.[95] However, a different response may be required if the mother becomes inattentive or even aggressive. The reader is invited to interpret the birds' behaviour continually for signs of

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[91] Estienne and Liébault, *La Maison Rustique*, p. 33b.
[92] Ibid, p. 33b.
[93] Estienne and Liébault, *La Maison Rustique,* p. 33b.
[94] Estienne and Liébault, *La Maison Rustique*, p. 33b.
[95] Estienne and Liébault, *La Maison Rustique,* pp. 38a-38b.

negligence or aggression; this may entail the mother failing to turn her eggs, abandoning her nest or trampling her chicks as she scratches in the dust.[96] The reader is called on to intervene in such situations to ensure that the eggs and chicks receive adequate care.

The various approaches to hatching the eggs reveal both the fluid nature of care as well as the recurring cycle of reading and caring response in the manuals. Estienne and Liébault propose different solutions to the dilemma of aggressive or inattentive mothers, which the reader must again flexibly adapt to their specific interspecies encounters. One suggestion is to place the eggs with a foster parent.[97] If an animal foster parent is unavailable, the eggs can be carefully turned by the human caregiver or kept in the warmth of a temperate oven to simulate a sitting hen.[98] Following such intervention, the chicks will then likely be able to hatch naturally. Should they encounter problems, though, the reader is encouraged to remove pieces of eggshell to prevent the chick from becoming entrapped.[99] Whilst the intention behind such actions remains the same - to ensure that the chicks hatch safely - Estienne and Liébault detail several possible ways to achieve this depending on the specific circumstances. Care is not as simplistic as providing prescriptive instructions that apply to every case, as animal life is by nature inconsistent and continually changing. Each clutch of eggs, even from the same animal, might require different caring approaches. It is in response to such flux that the praxis of care emerges in *La Maison Rustique*. Although Estienne and Liébault offer guidance, the reader must continuously interpret their animals' outward behaviours and respond through an appropriate act of care.

A final core instance of this praxis of care lies in discussions on animal disease. The manuals first detail outward behaviours and corporeal signs that might be markers of disease in animals. This might entail physical symptoms, from visible skin lesions to injuries or even an unusual dampness to the animal's coat.[100] It might equally involve behavioural changes such as shivering, changes in the animal's appetite or desire to suckle or a general malaise.[101] Interpreting

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[96] Estienne and Liébault, *La Maison Rustique,* pp. 38b-39a.

[97] Estienne and Liébault, *La Maison Rustique,* p. 39a.

[98] Estienne and Liébault, *La Maison Rustique*, pp. 38b-39a.

[99] Ibid, p. 39a.

[100] Estienne and Liébault, *La Maison Rustique,* p. 34a.

[101] Ibid, p. 33b.

corporeal gestures once more requires a response of care, as the reader is encouraged to treat the animal's disease until their health is restored. Estienne and Liébault propose various remedies for animal ailments such as rubbing butter into the skin of cattle to resolve painful lesions or treating pestilence and digestive issues in bees with assorted concoctions of honey and liqueurs.[102] As in the passages on pregnant cattle and hatching eggs, the reader is advised to continually monitor animals' behaviours and corporeal changes to infer their reactions to these remedies and make adjustments to their care as required.

The above passages reveal the underlying praxis of care in *La Maison Rustique* and *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture* through which the reader must interpret animals' gestures and needs to continually adjust their practical response of care. The manuals thereby contain a distinct understanding of care. They do not establish a normative framework, nor do they offer prescriptive instructions. Care is instead fluid and responsive to the fluctuating and continually evolving nature of animal life and our interspecies encounters.

6.5 Conclusion

La Maison Rustique and *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture* are far more than "how-to" guides. They draw together diverse perceptions of animal nature and conceptualise agricultural estates as vast interspecies networks in which animals and humans collaborate. At the same time, they reveal a distinct praxis of care and a cyclical process in which acts of reading are translated into practical responses of care.

Animals emerge as living, sentient, emotional, social and intentional beings throughout Estienne, Liébault and de Serres' discussion. They are active participants within the interspecies networks of agricultural estates. Whilst they receive a level of human care, animals also reciprocate and care back through their produce and labour. The manuals do not, then, offer prescriptive advice on how to care for animals or establish a normative framework of care. Through both animal and human instances of care, *La Maison Rustique* and *Le Théâtre*

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[102] Estienne and Liébault, *La Maison Rustique*, p. 34a and p. 160a.

d'Agriculture instead approach care as complex, collaborative, reciprocal and flexible, especially in regard to the flux of animal life. The praxis of care which emerges in the manuals reflects this understanding; through continual acts of reading, care adapts to animals' changing needs. Care is not, then, a purely theoretical pursuit in *La Maison Rustique* and *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture*. Care comprises theory, our interspecies relationships, our emotional responses and our very practical responses to the other animals with whom we share our lives.

7

Conclusion

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The authors who have been the focus of this study do not share a unified concept of either 'the animal'/ 'animals' or of care. Their texts present distinct responses to the "animal question" in early modern France and espouse diverse perceptions of animal nature, many of which are still reflected in the ways we think about and interact with animals today. For Montaigne, animals existed in continuity with humans and engaged in significant social and emotional relationships with them. Cartesian thinkers regarded animals as automata devoid of thought and feeling. Although animals remained distinct from humans, they were not entirely unfeeling machines for Descartes; he instead held them to be capable of limited forms of sensation, thought and consciousness. For Bougeant, animals were conscious, communicative and thinking beings by virtue of their connection with demonic souls. Cureau similarly thought that animals were conscious and rational beings who could communicate via their own, often corporeal, forms of language. Scudéry's text fluctuates between numerous perceptions of her chameleons, from objects of spectacle and scientific curiosity to romanticised and anthropomorphised lovers, or to beloved companions with whom she shares close emotional relationships. For the authors of agricultural manuals, animals were co-labourers and agents who participated in vast agricultural networks. They were simultaneously living and feeling beings who engaged in mutual, social and caring relationships with their other animal and human counterparts.

Recent work in animal studies - notably the studies of Erica Fudge and Peter Sahlins' *1668: The Year of the Animal in France* - have begun exploring some of these evolving perceptions of animals across early modern Europe. The present thesis has furthered this work and expanded it into new dimensions in three respects. Firstly, I have opened different avenues of study in considering the responses of early modern authors to the "animal question", particularly in regard to Descartes. Scholarship to date has tended to perpetuate a view of Descartes as the father of the beast-machine doctrine that gained currency in early modern France. I have here

challenged these narratives to demonstrate that Descartes was not the primary architect of this doctrine, nor did authors across France unanimously accept or perpetuate such views. Rather, they perceived animals in complex and diverse manners, many of which opposed the central tenets of the beast-machine doctrine.

Secondly, I have shed new light on the connections between the act of reading, perceptions of animals and responses to doubt in early modern France. The majority of the authors examined here did not claim to know animal nature with certainty, nor did they elaborate definitive ontologies. They accepted uncertainty and the limitations of our knowledge, often believing that animal nature was incomprehensible to humans. Animal life was not necessarily incommunicable, though. Early modern authors continued to hypothesise about animals' experiences and pursued various methods to empathetically interpret their corporeal gestures and behaviours. Such readings fundamentally shaped how they perceived animals as living, sentient and mutable beings whose experiences were subject to change. Reading - both in terms of textual material and corporeal gestures - is therefore a central practice with regards to how authors perceived animal nature in early modern France.

Finally, the main contribution of this study lies in its analysis of both the interspecies connections envisaged by early modern authors and the intersections between their perceptions of animals and manifestations of care. The texts examined here often view the world as an interspecies realm of perpetual flux, in which animals and humans alike are vulnerable beings who mutually depend on the care of one another. Early modern authors predominantly regard care as an emotional response and as a repetitive and quotidian labour which attends to another's needs. They do not establish a normative framework of care, which instead emerges as a flexible and continually evolving interspecies relationship. Whilst care could emanate from a human caregiver to an animal subject - particularly in response to physical needs and vulnerabilities - the early modern texts more often reveal the labour of care to be a reciprocal, collaborative and interspecies endeavour. Their authors do not solely regard animals as passive recipients of care, but as beings who intervene in our lives and mutually care for us in turn. In this regard, care is intrinsically connected with the above perception of interspecies relationships in the early modern texts. Their authors present us with a vision of human life as

intrinsically connected with those of other animals and nonhuman beings, in which care performs a focal role. They recognise the reciprocal nature of care, as well as the social and emotional relationships which can arise from such acts. Animals and humans ultimately exist in a world of connection, shared vulnerabilities and mutual dependencies in which they collaborate to survive and flourish.

Taken together, early modern perceptions of interspecies living and care offer renewed possibilities for how we think about animals today. The ideas they express surrounding the interconnected nature of animal and human beings, our mutual dependencies and the moral obligation to care for animals are beginning to receive renewed attention in ecological debates, albeit in different formats and contexts. The interspecies world that early modern authors envisaged is not so far removed from the growing environmental consciousness of recent decades and our understanding of the impact that human actions have on other animals, nonhuman beings and ecosystems.

As we proceed to address the current climate crisis, our rediscovery of early modern ideas on interspecies living and care can offer useful frameworks to reevaluate the ways we perceive and treat animals; collaboration, connection and care were as vital for survival for early moderns as they remain today, although the collective challenges they faced differ. Today, pollution, deforestation and habitat destruction from intensive farming have already resulted in the endangerment and extinction of native species. Such loss can yield a detrimental impact upon local and global ecosystems, of which humans are a part. Not only does industrial farming result in the suffering and loss of animal lives, it is also a major global contributor to greenhouse gas emissions.

An understanding of interspecies living and the possibilities of care, obtained from early modern works, nevertheless carries the potential for a more caring response to animals amidst the pressing challenges we face today. There are already glimmers of hope in this regard. Conservation, breeding and repopulation programmes aim to reestablish native habitats and rehabilitate species at risk. The recent COP26 summit has resolved to end deforestation, a major

cause of habitat loss, by 2030.[1] The popularity of flexitarianism, vegetarianism and veganism in recent decades may be indicative of a move towards an increasingly plant-based future. These movements point towards a greater recognition of our shared vulnerabilities and mutual dependencies on other species, as well as the integral role of care in interspecies relationships.

It is the concept of care, examined in this study, which carries the greatest potential to reformulate our relationships with animals. In 2021, the UK government introduced a bill to recognise sentience in vertebrate animals for the first time and require that this is considered during policy formation.[2] Whilst this is a significant step towards a better future for animals, it continues along the trajectory of animal rights theory. As we have seen, though, recognising sentience only provides a basic level of moral concern in ensuring a life free from pain and suffering.[3] We might ask, though, what could our relationships with animals look like if grounded in an emotional and practical response of care, rather than moral rights and obligations?

Nowhere is this question more pressing than in regard to agriculture, and industrial farming specifically, which at present affects billions of animal lives each year. Current intensive production methods cause immense suffering to animals due to inadequate housing, painful procedures without anesthesia, social isolation and inhibiting their ability to pursue natural behaviours. Welfare policies have effected some significant changes in recent years, such as increasing the requirements for cage sizes for battery hens. However, such measures attempt to improve the current situation, rather than considering alternative possibilities for what our relationships with animals could become.

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[1] Georgina Rannard and Francesca Gillett (2 November 2021), 'COP26: World leaders promise to end deforestation by 2030', *BBC News,* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-59088498> [last accessed 16 November 2021] (para 1 of 16).

[2] DEFRA and the Rt. Hon Lord Goldsmith (13 May 2021), 'Animals to be formally recognised as sentient beings in domestic law: Introduction of the Animal Welfare (Sentience) Bill as part of the Government's Action Plan for Animal Welfare',
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/animals-to-be-formally-recognised-as-sentient-beings-in-domestic-law> [last accessed 13 December 2021] (paras 2 and 3 of 14).

[3] See chapter 1, section 1.2.1 for a discussion of the limitations of rights-based theories.

Putting care at the centre of interspecies relationships in agriculture could significantly transform the lives of future animal and human generations. The agroecology movement represents a promising alternative to industrial farming in this regard and has witnessed increasing interest since the millennium.[4] In 2012, the French Ministry of Agriculture launched the *Projet agro-écologique pour la France.* The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) held the first international symposium for agroecology in 2014, with a second following in 2018.

Agroecology aims to develop sustainable, equitable and resilient ways of farming in the face of the growing climate crisis.[5] The movement also shares several common assumptions about our interspecies relationships with the early modern works which have been the focus of this study and with the agricultural manuals in particular. This branch of agriculture regards plants, animals and humans as interconnected and mutually dependent beings within ecosystems.[6] Agroecology further envisages farming practices which work alongside nature, such as utilising animal labour and produce to replenish soils sustainably and encouraging the regeneration of local wildlife.[7] Finally, the health and happiness of animals are paramount to ensuring a 'productive, stable, healthy and sustainable farm' for agroecologists.[8] Whilst its detractors often regard agroecology as a rather idealistic venture, scholars in this field contend that a reevaluation of agricultural production methods has become unavoidable due to intensifying ecological, economic and social crises.[9] Andersen et al. argue that agroecology is more than just a 'technical fix' to the current system of industrial farming; in the past five years, theory and

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[4] Thierry Caquet, Chantal Gascuel and Michèle Tixier-Boichard (eds), *Agroecology: Research for the Transition of Agri-food Systems and Territories* (Versailles: éditions Quæ, 2020), p. 11.

[5] Caquet et al., *Agroecology*, p. 7.

[6] Compassion in World Farming (CIWF) (2021), 'Agroecology: Ecologically-smart Farming', <https://www.ciwf.org.uk/research/solutions-for-humane-and-sustainable-agriculture/agroecology-ecologically-smart-farming/> [last accessed 12 December 2021] (p. 1 of 2). Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) (2018), 'Livestock and agroecology: How they can support the transition towards sustainable food and agriculture', <https://www.fao.org/3/i8926en/I8926EN.pdf> [last accessed 12 December 2021] (p. 1 and p. 9).

[7] CIWF, 'Agroecology', p. 1. FAO, 'Livestock', p. 1 and p. 9.

[8] CIWF, 'Agroecology', p. 1.

[9] Colin R. Anderson, Janneke Bruil, M. Jahi Chappell, Csilla Kiss and Michel P. Pimbert (eds), *Agroecology Now!: Transformations towards more just and sustainable food systems* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), p. 1. Caquet et al., *Agroecology*, p. 7.

practice have converged to yield a transformative framework for a viable, 'more just and sustainable food system' due to the multifunction benefits of agroecology.[10] This movement has the potential to be highly productive, yield highly diverse dietary offerings, support women's empowerment and counter racial capitalism.[11] In their view, the time for agroecology is now.

Integrating an impulse of care alongside the core tenets of agroecology has the potential to inform policies going forward and to create a different future for agricultural animals than the predominant model of industrial farming. In accepting our interconnectedness with other beings and our shared vulnerabilities, such an impulse would simultaneously recognise that we mutually depend on animals, who care back for us in return. A preliminary consideration of a more caring response towards animals in agriculture could entail improved housing with adequate space, light, heat and enrichment, as well as access to open pasture for grazing. Care also ought to be shown towards animals' social and emotional well-being. Respecting their social needs would entail allowing mothers to remain with their young or enabling animals to live in social groupings and pursue intraspecies relationships or play. A more caring response would think consciously about the nature of humans' interactions with agricultural animals and ensure that these are positive experiences without pain or fear, at the very least. Finally, a more caring response would enable agricultural animals to pursue natural and species-specific behaviours - such as grazing, foraging or rooting - so that they might flourish as the kind of beings they are.

A rediscovery of early modern works and the ways they envisage our interactions with animals - as pursued in this study - can provide the impetus for such a reconsideration of our interspecies relationships of care. The early modern works examined here ultimately demonstrate that care is part of our heritage in relation to animals. They invite us to rethink our interconnectedness with other beings and to reconsider the role of care in these relationships on a personal and a global scale, beginning with those creatures who are closest to us: animals.

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[10] Anderson et al., *Agroecology Now!*, pp. 1-2.
[11] Ibid, p. 8.

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