

## **HYBRIDS, RIGHTS AND THEIR PROLIFERATION**

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### **Introduction**

Working out the concept of rights is a complicated business, which at least keeps philosophers occupied. Not so long ago, one of us would have been denied the right to vote, on the grounds of her gender. Yet now, at the turn of the millennium, she is far from sure that we have come very far on the question of women's rights. And if women, or minorities, or anyone else who is human can sometimes be denied rights, then how much more likely that non-humans will be?

Yet extending the concept of rights to non-human animals is increasingly being taken seriously. It is debated in academic journals, and forms the basis for a growing activism. The publication of books arguing in favour of extending rights to at least some animals has proliferated.<sup>1</sup> But the idea also has its critics. Some criticisms come from those who simply wish to keep nonhuman animals out of any moral or political agenda.<sup>2</sup>

The starting point of this article is the critique of the idea of rights, from the perspective of those who are animal advocates<sup>3</sup>; in particular, we start from the premise that the concept of 'rights' is too rooted in idealisation of the individual and autonomy. Such idealisation can be found in claims about nonhuman animals. But, we would argue, this marginalises any concept of relationality. In discussing relationality, we aim to address the ways in which relations between human and nonhuman animals are embedded in broader networks of inter-relations (that range from the evolutionary to the local and cultural). Those relations are also a product of the heterogeneous forms of communication between individual human and animal, especially in the case of companion animals.

We want, however, to do more than simply acknowledge relationality; we also want to suggest that it can serve as another basis for warranting, advocating, particular positive relationships with animals. That is to say, we aim to provide a narrative - contrasted to that of 'rights' - that prioritises our interrelations with animals in such a way that to harm 'them' would be to harm 'ourselves'. So, while we might be sympathetic to studies of the human-animal relationship, we would see these as assuming from the outset discrete humans and animals, whereas we are aiming to reach a position where we can 'assume at outset' the relationality of humans and animals.<sup>4</sup>

What we want to pursue here is the question of relationality. Other authors have noted the importance of relationships and contexts. Ted Benton for example, argues that the social context of both human and nonhuman cannot be ignored, while Freya Matthews insists that we recognise the commensality of humans and nonhumans.<sup>5</sup> We, Matthews points out, need animal company; but nature - animals- can benefit from our company, too. This is not to deny the existence of appalling abuses of animals, she argues, but rather acknowledges the mutuality of many human/animal interactions. Similarly Barbara Noske<sup>6</sup> argues that our society is partly based on its relation to, and exploitation of, animals. In this paper, we draw upon a quite different literature: we turn to recent work in the sociology of scientific knowledge as a starting point. In particular, we draw on the work of Bruno Latour, and his analyses of 'hybrids'.<sup>7</sup> We extend this idea to thinking about two examples of human relationship and communication with companion animals - with dogs, and with horses. These relationships, we argue, can be thought about as instances of hybrids, a concept that sees them as more than the sum of the parts. We argue that thinking in terms of hybrids of human/nonhuman can be useful in enabling us to move beyond some of the problems of individualism that beset debates about rights.

In doing so, we are not making claims for all nonhuman animals (although others might wish to extend the analysis further); indeed, we offer this paper very much as a preliminary exploration. Nor are we seeking to undermine the spirit of animal rights philosophy. On the contrary, we are committed to it, but do not find it enough.

## Right is Wrong?

There have been a number of critics of the philosophy of animal rights - indeed, of the concept of rights more generally. Perhaps one of the strongest criticisms is that notions of rights rely on a profound separation and individuality, as well as prioritising rationality. Benton<sup>8</sup> notes, for instance, the basis of our understanding, and the idealisation of certain rights in the eighteenth century. He points out that while freedom from arrest, and freedom of association were specified, the rights of health, bodily integrity, nutrition, and so on, were not. This was, moreover, the period of history when our modern separation of nature from culture was consolidated; it was the sphere of the 'natural' that was omitted from these idealised rights - the needs of the body, and the nonhuman world.

Additionally, Benton reminds us of the ways that notions of rights tend to obscure 'the social-relational preconditions' for the emergence of the 'human individual' as bearer of rights, and with particular qualities, attributes and abilities 'in virtue of which they are held to have inherent value'.<sup>9</sup> 'Rights', resting as they do upon some version of individualism, neglect the many ways in which our experiences are situated.<sup>10</sup>

Another point needs to be made. The ideas concerning rights have 'acquired an exaggerated importance as part of the prestige of the public sphere and the masculine, and the emphasis on separation and autonomy, on reason and abstraction'.<sup>11</sup> Separation and autonomy are defined, against others - be they nonhuman animals, an ill-defined 'nature', or particular excluded groups of human others. It is through this process of exclusion against, that feminism becomes linked to environmental and animal causes: women, nature and nonhuman animals can, in different ways and at different times, become others to the story of separation.

Plumwood argues instead for a form of relationality, which, she reminds us, is not the same as the identification with nature sometimes implied in writing about deep ecology (too close an identification may blind us to understanding an other's suffering).<sup>12</sup> Nonhuman animals have their own societies, but they are also - deeply - in relationship with other animal kinds, including humans. In different ways, they are in relationship to

human societies (although there is a world of difference between the 'domestic animals', socialised into human societies, and the relationship of a wild species to humanity).

### **Relations with nonhumans: Introducing Hybrids**

The word 'hybrid' has many meanings. It can denote a deliberately bred cross between, say, two plant species; it might conjure up 'hybrid vigour'. Or, it might carry meanings of illicit mixtures, or something defiled by being less pure.

The sense of 'hybrid' that we use here draws on the notion of hybrid introduced by Bruno Latour, in his work on technoscience. In a recent book, Bruno Latour describes what he considers to be two practices central to modernity. On the one hand, there is 'translation', which 'creates mixtures between entirely new types of beings, hybrids of nature and culture'.<sup>13</sup> On the other, there is also 'purification', the process by which we keep humans separated off from nonhumans. Modern Western culture tends towards the latter, even while busily creating new mixtures (sometimes literally, as in the case of genetically engineered organisms).

One problem with the animal rights position, following Latour, is that the concept of rights, while apparently denying separation from other animal kinds is firmly rooted in it. All it seems to do is to move the goalposts, to allow some kinds of animals onto the pitch. Life, meanwhile, is awfully crowded in the stands and onlookers are policed to stop them invading.

But it is precisely because of that history of purification that the practice of sociology or anthropology has ignored all else but human-human relationships.<sup>14</sup> Not surprisingly then, we are unused to thinking about all the nonhuman things that contribute to our world, forming chains of associations (that are both material and semiotic) with humans and other nonhumans. These are part of our social organisation, behind-the-scenes contributors - though of course 'social' becomes a misnomer in this context for what we see are 'orderings'<sup>15</sup> made up of heterogeneous elements. Expanding on this idea, Bruno Latour makes the point that

We are never faced with objects or social relations, we are faced with chains which are associations of humans (H) and nonhumans (NH). No-one has ever seen a social relation by itself...nor a technical relation...Instead we are always faced with chains which look like this H-NH-H-NH-H-NH...<sup>16</sup>

The 'nonhuman' here may mean a technical artefact; thus, our communication with you, the reader, depends upon technological relationships, a complex array of computers, software, and international institutions. But, we want to argue, 'nonhuman' can also mean nonhuman animals.

Breaking the boundaries of what counts as human usually results in a rush to demonstrate the ways in which animals are not rational, are not self-aware, are not intelligent, and so on. Separating ourselves off from 'nature' characterises the modern period, Latour argues. But the study of society or culture has itself developed out of that separation, and it specifically excludes all nonhuman influence - be that inanimate or animate. Animals, plants, technical artefacts - all belong to the realm of the nonsocial; they can be left to be studied by people (scientists) who themselves deny the existence of the social in the descriptions they themselves make of the nonsocial. Yet isn't the existence of 'society' itself crossing the boundary, depending as it does on much more than merely human-human relationships?

Latour's work rests on actor-network theory. Put briefly, this seeks to map out complex networks of humans and nonhumans. The world of actor-network theory is partly ruled by the generalized 'principle of symmetry' that Bruno Latour and Michel Callon<sup>17</sup> have advocated. In essence, this principle rejects any *a priori* distinctions between the human and the nonhuman, agent and object, the social and the natural or the technological (such distinctions are all too often simply assumed, they point out). Thus, what is to count as 'human' or 'natural' or 'technological' is a matter of struggle between various actors such as scientists, policy makers, lay publics and the like. One relevant example of this would be current debates about the moral status of the great apes;

there is ongoing political struggle over whether they might be 'counted' as animals (part of nature) or at least partly be admitted to the realm of the human.<sup>18</sup>

It is, then, a matter of empirical investigation as to what has emerged as 'natural', 'artificial' or 'cultural'. More recently, Latour has elaborated this view<sup>19</sup> to argue that human and nonhumans alike are interfused with all manner of nonhumans and humans (the network). Such heterogeneity is characteristic of the modern condition (indeed, all conditions). Despite our best modernist efforts at denying the 'exchange of properties' between - that is, purifying - humans and nonhumans, this heterogeneous process of mingling continues apace. What makes this theory different from many others is its insistence that nonhuman - technological and 'natural' - are present in the production of every 'ordering' of relations. We are always comprising hybrids, temporary or less temporary associations with a vast array of nonhumans.

So, if we are to describe a person's relationship to her dog in these terms, then we must speak not only of the human-and-the-dog, but also of the other 'allies' that influence that relationship. Whatever other networks she engages in, Lynda is also 'enrolled' into certain networks by the dogs she lives with. This includes the dogleads and their manufacturers (see below), the producers of dog food, dog beds and canine distemper vaccine, veterinary surgeons - not to mention the resident cat. To put it in terms of hybrids: the hybrid 'Lynda-dog-lead-dog' is constituted through and depends upon these various networks. This, of course, is no different from the production of 'human individuals' who are an effect of those networks that poststructuralists have deconstructed. We shall return to the nature of these networks below.

### **Relationalities and Animals**

There has recently been an upsurge in writing about the 'human-animal relationship'. New books and journals appear, marking this out as a new area of study. That focus is certainly welcome, and makes a refreshing change from the assumption that animals are completely separate from us. Yet, perusing the contents of those journals is sometimes

disappointing. What we find are examples of animals bringing benefits to humans, in hospitals, in our homes, to children, to disabled people. Some articles may tell us of how human contact can benefit animals (usually companion animals); but very few speak of the relationship between the two. In what follows, we will explore two examples in order to explicate this 'relationality'. But before we embark upon this, a little theoretical gloss is in order, if only to clarify what we are attempting to do as we switch registers from the local (personal) interactions between humans and animals to evolutionary relations.

What is a human? The production of humans relies on particular techniques, practices, discourses - what Rose<sup>20</sup> calls 'subjectifying technologies'. These include what Rose refers to as the psy disciplines (psychology, psychiatry, psychotherapy, psychoanalysis), though many other practices and technologies also shape 'the human'. The psy disciplines, for example, help to give coherence to the notion of a unitary individual, as well as contributing to the values and interests that are invested in such a figure.

What we are attempting here, albeit tentatively, is to do something similar for another character - the human-animal hybrid. So, rather than accept the ideas of individualism and rights, we can write a different story, that contributes to a concept of human-nonhuman hybridity. We could begin, for instance, by pointing to how this figure/character/actor is grounded in, and emerges out of, the evolutionary history of domestication, or to various pre- and pro-scriptions regarding how such human/nonhuman hybrids should behave.

If we thus begin by assuming human/animal relationality - or the existence of the hybrid - then we can speak in terms of the co-production and mutual emergence of humans and animals. To discriminate against the latter, becomes akin to discriminating against the former, for these, indeed, cannot be separated. With this overview in mind, let us proceed with storying our hybrid.

**Speaking for - or otherworldly conversations?**

Animal companions, or pets, have long been known to have therapeutic effects upon their owners. In particular, owners claim that 'their animals are sensitive to their (the owners') moods and feelings'.<sup>21</sup> The processes of communication that are evident here are clearly not linguistic, but vocal, visual and tactile. However, animals' lack of linguistic ability may be one of their prime assets in that animals cannot, as a consequence judge, betray or criticise - their feelings for the human are apparently uncontingent. But this intimacy does not preclude humans from 'speaking for' their animal companions. As Sanders notes:

Because the animal is 'mute', caretakers often find themselves in situations in which they must 'speak for' their nonhuman companions. In so doing, they make use of a rich body of knowledge derived from an intimate understanding of the animal-other built up in the course of day-to-day interactional experience. Dog owners commonly give voice to what they perceive to be their animals' mental, emotional, and physical experiences.<sup>22</sup>

Such patterns of 'speaking for' suggests a process of retelling, by humans, of their own and animals' experiences with the aid of more or less familiar stories. But that does not mean we should not take them seriously.

Indeed, we would argue that there is a serious problem with a sociology which persistently ignores animal others, for it remains rooted in the persistent dualism of nature and culture. Many animal 'others' are deeply integral to human societies - indeed, as Benton argues<sup>23</sup>, they are partly constitutive of our society in many ways. But understanding this does not mean that we have to objectify them, or even to accord them human status (as seems to be implied in some formulations of rights). Feminist historian of science Donna Haraway, reflecting on these issues, suggests that:

The last thing 'they' (animals) need is human subject status, in whatever cultural-historical form... We need other terms of conversations with animals, a much less respectable undertaking. The point is not new representations, but new practices, other forms of life



rejoining humans and nothumans.<sup>24</sup>

Out of this emerges, Haraway hopes, a new form of human being:

Once the world of subjects and objects is put into question, that paradox concerns the congeries, or curious confederacy, that is the self, as well as selves' relations with others. A promising form of life, conversation defies the autonomization of the self, as well as the objectification of the other.<sup>24</sup>

So, what happens as we engage in those non-linguistic conversations with animal others is a diffusion of the (human) self. The human identity that emerges from these conversations is no longer linear, but is realised through all forms of communication. We want to emphasise that that process must include nonverbal communications, with nonhuman actors.<sup>25</sup>

We might say that animals are mute only if we remain deaf. As Kath Smart has shown<sup>26</sup>, dogbreeders believe themselves to be in conversation with their animals, and sometimes even under scrutiny or surveillance - a perception familiar to anyone who works closely with animals in similar ways. That perception implies an agency, that the dogs are somehow enrolling the humans into the association. The idea that there is co-agency between (some) nonhuman animals and humans is not, of course, new to animal trainers and breeders. But it is not part of the descriptions of the world to be found in academic disciplines; there, the purification of human culture - to which Latour refers - is endemic. Humans have their own society; animals belong to the other side of a heavily policed boundary (within the natural sciences).

But the boundaries tend to break down, as Latour emphasised (see note 7). For example, in contrast to the familiar story that humans 'domesticated' dogs in prehistory, Budiansky<sup>27</sup> contends that animals such as dogs 'chose' us. They were, he suggests, drawn to human communities, to the shelter, food and protection they might offer. In that case, the domestication of dogs 'is an evolutionary phenomenon rather than a human invention'. Dogs, we might say, have a long history of

enrolling humans, just as we have one with them. Both have adapted to each other, and both are (sometimes) in deeply mutual communication. Here, we have a story that crosses the boundary of 'natural science' (evolution, animals) and 'sociology' (human society).

One way in which human-dog communication is manifest occurs when we observe a person 'taking her dog for a walk'. Usually, this involves a technological artefact - the doglead. This object, however, mediates exchanges between the human and dog, and blurs the site of agency. Who is the user - human or dog? Who does the configuring - animal, lead, or human? For example, dogs may have their own agendas; sometimes, these fit with human agendas - sometimes, they do not, as is often the case with Lynda and her three dogs-plus-dogleads. Agency, in that case, is a complicated business.

Dogs, indeed, may resist human desires (witness the reluctance to enter the veterinary surgery, or the desire to jump off the table once there). But even when they cooperate, agency is evident. In other words, dogs may be committed to a certain 'contract' and will bring their 'handlers' into line. But also, the fulfilment and maintenance of the contract is continuously performed through communication, at many levels, between human and dog.

This process of negotiation is partly conducted through the medium of the doglead - especially so in urban areas,<sup>28</sup> where it is the hybrid of human-doglead-dog who must negotiate the tricky terrain. The doglead then permits a mutuality - both human and dog look out for objects or events on the other's behalf. In some cases, the dog's agency is more prominent, as is the case with guide dogs. Stories abound among those working with 'service animals' of the animal acting heroically (leaping under the wheels of a sliding wheelchair, for instance) - agency, indeed.

We turn now to another example - that of human/horse interactions. Again, the popular image is one of humans using and dominating horses (as exemplified in the rather misleading phrase, to break a horse). Partly for that reason, there are some in the animal rights movement who

consider that it is morally wrong to ride horses. But this position again plays down any mutuality.

Here, the 'hybrid' we might describe consists of human-bridle-horse. Communication between the two living entities takes place partly through the medium of the bridle or halter, and partly kinaesthetically - through movement and its sensing. As with dogs, there is a continuous subtle play of conversation: for horses are large animals and cannot be dominated (even very small ones, like Shetland ponies, can beat puny human strength). They will, however, agree to converse.

Now it is also true that there are many, many instances of abuse by humans - a breaking of the contract, as it were. Such acts may, in part, reflect a belief in domination. But to what extent can humans truly dominate an animal, especially if it is the size of many horses? On the contrary, 'learning to ride' means not only acquiring certain physical skills, but also learning a new, largely tactile, language. Through that means, we can communicate with the horse. But the horse also has agency; it can - easily - refuse to work with us. Certainly, if a horse does not want to go over a jump, it will not - just as it will show agency by resistance if, say, a human mishandles the intervening technology (by grabbing at the reins and hurting the horse's mouth).

There are certainly some among animal rights activists who believe that it is morally wrong to 'make' horses jump obstacles - especially in contexts where there is a risk of injury. There have, as a result, been demonstrations at several international equestrian events. Whatever the merits of their claim, it is somewhat ironic that demonstrations focus on the 'showpiece' events, for it is there that the 'hybrids' are policed most strongly. The literature of the 'horse world' relies on a rhetoric of welfare, in which the horse's needs are paramount.<sup>29</sup> Human-bridle-horse hybrids must follow particular rules, at least in public arenas. To an extent, the horse takes part in this rule-following.

Domestic animals, such as dogs and horses, are socialised into a society. By that we mean not only their own society (the local community of dogs at the breeders, or the horses at the stud), but also into human society.

What we should perhaps be insisting on, indeed, is a notion of a hybrid society, consisting of humans along with nonhumans. Just like a human infant, a young animal must be socialised into that hybrid society: both kinds of infants must 'learn the rules' about other members of society.

Part of the prevailing view that nonhuman animals are domesticated by us is the claim that, underneath the veneer of domestication, there is a 'wild' animal, driven by archaic instincts. This additive view, of the thin veneer of culture overlaying baser wildness, fails to address the social embeddedness of domestic animals. Yet we project our social expectations onto domestic animals, and sometimes they behave accordingly. For example, within the world of 'horse people' (a curiously hybrid phrase, to be sure!), there are many humans who will avoid mares, in the belief that they are less 'trainable'; stallions, too, are often thought to be 'difficult'. Yet - if true - how much of that is due to human expectations and to socialisation? If humans socialise the animal into a role of being 'difficult' (that is, less susceptible to mutual communication), then that is what it will become. So, too, may human children.

Returning to the theme of animal rights, we have argued that one important problem with rights is its emphasis on individuality, rather than relationality. This in turn is deeply entwined with the historically contingent separation of 'nature' from 'culture' in the West. That separation then excludes the place of (at least some) animals in society and culture, and their interests in maintaining that place.

The problems of the ways that animals may be treated today by humans arise in large part from their relegation to the (inferior) world of nature. That is not to say that prior to the modern period, animals were treated well; they were not. But a characteristic of modernity is the deep anxiety to police the boundaries of human culture (or even of Western culture); as Latour puts it (note 7), we are obsessed with purification. One manifestation of this is our constant need in the West to return nonhuman animals to their 'place' in nature. Because of this, we tend to have difficulties with those nonhuman animals whose place is by our sides; are they in nature, or do they belong to culture?

Yet the very same culture so preoccupied with purifying its boundaries also works to transgress them. Science, for example, does both. The practice of science assumes a separation from nature (hence the supposed objective stance, by which scientists claim to 'know' nature, while denying their own cultural contingencies); but simultaneously, it denies separation (evolutionary theory and genetics) and even creates boundary-crossing organisms (hybrids and chimeras abound in the new age of biotechnology).

### **Concluding Remarks**

Our use of the idea of hybrids is deliberate. We are not necessarily advocating a literal interbreeding of people and other animals (which is another debate). Rather, we want to use the concept of hybridity for two related reasons. The first is that the notion of a hybrid implies boundary-crossing and mixing - if not literally, then certainly at a conceptual level. This confounds issues of what is human? or what is animal? or even what is an individual? At the very least, that confounding should help to destabilise that tired old division between nature and culture.

Hybrids also open up a space, secondly, to think about relationality. Now we have used the term hybrid to emphasise the conjoint nature of the hybrid, and its co-agency. As critics of the nature/culture or nature/nurture dualisms have often bewailed, it is all too easy to invoke some kind of addition (nurture adds onto the nature base), or a simple interaction (A can affect B, which can affect A<sup>30</sup>). But even this can still be split apart - indeed, that splitting is often required by the very methods by which we might study something. So, we might choose to study 'the human/dog relationship' as a function of doggy effects on humans (such as reduction of heart rate if you go patting a dog), or perhaps of human effects on dogs (selective breeding, say).

Yet what is missing from, or played down by, this kind of account is the mutuality; both human and dog become changed, and become more than simple person-plus-dog. By trying to think about this chimerical being as a hybrid, we want to emphasise that 'more than'. Lynda is a part of many

human networks, but also at times comes together with dogs and horses to create temporary hybrids: these, in turn, generate other networks of humans and nonhumans.

One extreme position we have encountered among animal rights activists is the idea that it is wrong to 'keep pets', that the animals should be free to wander and to 'be themselves', that they have intrinsic rights to freedom. But in this specific case - companion animals - such a stance would deny their relationships with humans. It is also based on a highly idealised notion of 'freedom', for who among us humans has such freedom? Aren't we all constrained by, among other things, our relationships with other beings? Invoking individual 'rights' seems to gloss over those constraints, and to ignore the very relationality on which we (and many nonhuman animals) base our social lives.

Now in seeking to emphasise that relationality, we recognise its limitations when it comes to other human uses of animals. We want here to use the idea with regard to companion animals. When it comes to intensive farming, the rhetoric of rights is probably more politically useful; even the more liberal welfare lobby talk about ensuring that certain animal needs are met.

The use of animals in scientific experimentation is another area where to insist on at least some rights may be a useful political strategy. Thus, those involved in reform or working for welfare might argue that laboratory animals have a right to a certain amount of space in their living quarters. Even so, we should remember that the practice of using animals itself seems to require that scientists' separate themselves off from the animals, that they psychologically and culturally deny any relationality. Indeed, on those occasions where laboratory animals become individually incorporated into relationships with people (as 'lab pets', say), then they usually are 'saved' from the experiments.<sup>31</sup>

Much modern theorising about evolution seems to stress individuality (or even to shift it onto selfish genes). Thus, despite the appeal of Darwin's ideas to those of us who see kindred spirits in the nonhuman world, we inherit a cultural tendency towards atomism. Yet there are also

evolutionary theorists who do not see such atomism in the natural world, who emphasise instead the co-evolution of ecologically interrelated species.<sup>32</sup> Rather than seeing individual species or populations as rather passively adapted to a (largely inert) environment, this reformulation insists on mapping out the networks of interrelationships and effects. Indeed, an animal's or a species' environment is constituted by other organisms, including humans - hybrids aplenty.

And there, to return to Val Plumwood's analysis of ideas of nature, lies the difficulty at the heart of rights theory. For while we might speak of the 'rights' of animal A to roam free 'around its environment', that is to ignore the 'rights' of other organisms. To take the oft-used example, whose rights should we then heed, the sheep or the wolf?

We have borrowed here from the concepts of hybridity and actor-networks, developed in the literature on sociology of scientific knowledge. Their relevance to a discussion of our relationship to animals is twofold - they explicitly problematise the separation of nature from culture, and they relocate humans individuals back into networks of other actors including nonhumans. Whether we speak of events over evolutionary time, or seek to describe human relationships with (certain) animals now, any rhetoric of individualism is limited.

Instead, we must try to develop a relational framework, and to develop an ethical stance from that. It is not necessarily in the best interests of companion animals (at least) to talk of their individual 'rights to roam free' (where?). Nor is it necessarily to deny them some intrinsic freedom to follow their instincts - a belief which maintains the notion that nonhuman animals are 'in nature' in ways that we are not.

Once we think in terms of hybrids between culturally specific humans, nonhuman nature, and even technical artefacts (this, it should be noted, could include ecosystems), then perhaps we can develop a language of interests that apply to the hybrid. Among other things, hybrids are conjoint entities: they are not simply one entity sitting alongside another. As a consequence, hurting one part of a hybrid hurts the rest.<sup>33</sup> Perhaps this move will not always work to protect the interest of either humans or

nonhumans.<sup>34</sup> But, we want to insist, seeing individuals as bearers of atomistic rights does not work well either, not least because it ignores our collective social networks.

We need, to return to Donna Haraway's insights, to develop new forms of conversation with nonhuman others, to explore and celebrate our joint kinship.<sup>35</sup> In so doing, our highly overdeveloped sense of selfhood might begin to diminish; we might even allow a breaching of our boundaries. Lest that sound too anthropocentric, nonhuman animals stand to benefit; for their relationships with less egocentric and territorial humans are likely to be more welcoming and communicative. To speak of their 'rights' seems only to reinforce our own selves and boundaries. Surely they - and we - deserve better than that?

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### **Notes**

1. For example, T. Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights* (Routledge, London, 1983) and B. Rollin, *Animal Rights and Human Morality* (Prometheus Books, Buffalo, 1992).
2. For example, M.P.T. Leahy *Animal Liberation: Putting Animals into Perspective* (Routledge, London, 1991).
3. Which is how we would describe ourselves. This is a position which is sympathetic to the principles of animal rights, while at the same time being critical of some of the assumptions underpinning the concept of rights in general.
4. The term 'animal' covers a huge number of species, of many different kinds. Our focus here is on what are sometimes called 'companion animals', who can enter into relationships with us. For most people, that means certain mammals (such as dogs or cats), and some birds (such as budgerigars). Occasionally, people might claim relationships with other species, such as some reptiles. Rather than repeat this point whenever the word 'animal' appears, we ask that it is taken to mean a specific, restricted, sense of 'animal'.
5. T. Benton, *Natural Relations* (Verso, London, 1993); F. Mathews, 'Living with Animals', *Animal Issues* 1 (1), 1997, pp.4-20.
6. B. Noske, *Humans and Other Animals* (Pluto Press, London, 1989).



7. B. Latour, *We have never been Modern* (Harvester Wheatsheaf, Hemel Hempstead, 1993).
8. See n.5 above.
9. Ibid., p.172.
10. 'The individual', indeed is a construct that postmodernists of many colours have laboured hard to deconstruct. We do not, however, argue for such wholesale deconstruction; indeed the very concept of rights does itself have heuristic and political value.
11. V. Plumwood, 'Nature, Self and Gender: feminism, environmental philosophy and the critique of rationalism', *Hypatia* 6 (1991), p.8.
12. Ibid.
13. See n. 7 above, quotation from p.10.
14. See n. 6.
15. J. Law, *Organizing Modernity* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1994).
16. B. Latour, 'Technology is Society Made Durable' in J. Law ed., *A Sociology of Monsters* (Routledge, London, 1991), p.110.
17. See M. Callon, 'Some elements in a sociology of translation: domestication of the scallops and fishermen at St Brieuc Bay' in J.Law ed., *Power, Action and Belief* (Routledge, London, 1986); M. Callon, 'The sociology of an actor-network: the case of the electric vehicle', in M. Callon, J. Law and A. Rip, eds, *Mapping the dynamics of science and technology* (MacMillan, London, 1986) and B. Latour, *Science in action: how to follow engineers in society* (Open University Press, Milton Keynes, 1987).
18. See P. Cavelieri and W. Kymlicka, 'Expanding the social contract', *Etica & Animali* (Special Issue on the Great Ape Project) 8 (1996), pp.5-33.
19. B. Latour, 'On technical mediation' *The Messenger lectures on the Evolution of Civilization. Working Papers Series* (Institute of Economic Research, Cornell University, 1993) and B. Latour, 'Pragmatogonies: A Mythical Account of How Humans and Nonhumans Swap Properties', *American Behavioral Scientist* 37, (1994), pp.791-808.
20. N. Rose, *Inventing Our Selves: Psychology, Power and Personhood* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996).
21. J. Serpell, *In the company of animals* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1986). Also see C.R. Sanders, 'Perceptions of Intersubjectivity and the Process of 'Speaking-For' in Canine-Human Relationships', Paper presented at the International Conference on *Science and the Human-Animal Relationship*, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, March 5-6, 1992.
22. Ibid., pp.6-7.
23. See note 5.
24. D. Haraway, 'Other Worldly Conversations: Terran Topics; Local Terms', *Science as Culture* 3 ( 1992), pp.86-7.
25. M. Michael, *Constructing Identities*. (Sage, London, 1996).
26. K.R. Smart, 'Resourcing ambivalence: Dogbreeders, animals and the social studies of science'. (1993) Unpublished Ph.D. Manuscript, Lancaster University.
27. S. Budiansky, *The covenant of the wild* (Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London, 1994).
28. In Britain, there are several strands to the legislation that covers the dog (e.g. dogbreeding; rabies; dog abandonment). When it comes to the use of the dog-lead (or

the muzzle), this is covered under a number of Acts. Under the Dog Act 1906, Animal Health Act 1981 and the Environmental Protection Act 1990, there is provision for government officers to seize dogs believed to be stray - this sets up a general context in which dogs should be kept under control. More specific provision is present in the Road Traffic Act 1988. Thus, section 27 (Control of dogs on roads) (1) states: 'A person who causes or permits a dog to be on a designated road without the dog being held on a lead is guilty of an offence'. After the Devil Dog scares of the late 1980s, there was an extension of Crown Court powers, as laid out in the Dogs Act 1871, in relation to the destruction of dangerous dogs and the punishment of owners in the Dangerous Dogs Act 1989. This Act was clarified in the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 in which, over and above prohibitions regarding the ownership of 'fighting' breeds and other specially dangerous dogs, there were provisions made for ensuring that dogs are kept under proper control. Thus, section 3 (1) states: 'if a dog is dangerously out of control in a public place - the owner, and (b) if different, the person for the time being in charge of the dog, is guilty of an offence, or, if the dog while so out of control injures any person, [this constitutes] an aggravated offence, under this subsection'. The point is that such legal conditions are part and parcel of the network in which the human-dog hybrid is embedded, and out of which it emerges.

29. It is, moreover, a welfare rhetoric that allows magazines such as the *British Horse and Hound* to defend the hunting of wildlife by hounds. If foxes (or stags, or minks) were not controlled by organised hunting, one argument runs, they would be subject to all kinds of indiscriminate shooting, gassing etc; this would be cruel.

30. See for example L. Birke, *Women, Feminism and Biology* (Wheatsheaf, Brighton, 1986).

31. See A. Arluke, 'Moral elevation in animal research' in G. Albrecht ed., *Advances in medical sociology* (JAI Press, Greenwich CT, 1990); M. Michael and L. Birke, 'Accounting for Animal Experiments: Credibility and Disreputable 'Others'', *Science, Technology and Human Values* 19 (2) (1994), pp.189-204; M. Michael and L. Birke, 'Animal Experimentation: Enrolling the Core Set', *Social Studies of Science* 24, (1994), pp.81-95.

32. For example, J. Masters, 'Revolutionary Theory: Reinventing our Origin Myths' in L. Birke and R. Hubbard eds, *Reinventing Biology* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1995).

33. This argument, of course, may be read as implying that nonhumans' interests can only be met when the nonhuman is in a human context or relationship; the corollary of that is the implication that the nonhuman has no intrinsic importance or interests outside of that (human-defined) context. We do not believe that - which is why we argue that some use of the concept of rights must remain for now. What we seek to argue, rather is that - for those animals whose lives are deeply entwined with ours - there is a pressing need to understand how to converse with them, to establish greater mutuality. Poor creatures that we are, we humans can do so only from an understanding of our own social engagement with other humans.

34. Indeed, as Kate Soper notes in relation to the relative merits of 'culturalist' versus 'naturalist' arguments in ecopolitics, we should not expect any arguments to lead transparently and unproblematically to 'good politics'. Any such argument can be 'appropriated' by political groups which the originators of those arguments find offensive. Warrants in terms of 'rights' or 'hybrids' will always be subject to such

appropriation. All we have attempted to do here is expand the armoury of arguments. See K. Soper, *What is Nature?* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1995).

35. D. Haraway, *Modest Witness@Second-Millennium.FemaleMan Meets OncoMouse: Feminism and Technoscience* (Routledge, London, 1997). Also see n. 24.

## **Biography**

Lynda Birke is a biologist and feminist associated with the Institute for Women's Studies, University of Lancaster. Her work focuses particularly on feminist studies of science; her published work includes *Women, feminism and biology* (1986), *Tomorrow's Child* (1990, with two others), *Feminism, Animals and Science* (1994), *Reinventing Biology* (1995, edited with Ruth Hubbard) and *Common Science? Women, Science and Knowledge* (1996 with J. Barr).

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