

Of Mice and Men

Of Mice and Men:
Animals in Human Culture

Edited by

Nandita Batra and Vartan Messier

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INTRODUCTION

OF MICE AND MEN:
THE APORIA OF THE HUMAN-ANIMAL
(DIS) CONTINUUM

NANDITA BATRA AND VARTAN P. MESSIER

But Mousie, thou are no thy-lane,
In proving foresight may be vain:
The best laid schemes o' Mice an' Men,
Gang aft agley,
An' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain,
For promis'd joy!
Still, thou art blest, compar'd wi' me!
The present only toucheth thee:
But Och! I backward cast my e'e,
On prospects drear!
An' forward, tho' I canna see,
I guess an' fear!
—Robert Burns, “To a Mouse”

Robert Burns's eighteenth-century poem “To a Mouse” encapsulates the contradiction between continuity and separation that is the crux of human location of the animal. “The best laid schemes o' mice an' men/Gang aft agley,”¹ the speaker bemoans in Scots dialect, lapsing into standard English as he proceeds to assert his intellectual superiority —albeit cast as “ill fortune”—over the evicted Mouse. “Still, thou art blest, compar'd wi' me!/ The present only toucheth thee: /But Och! I backward cast my e'e, /On prospects drear! /An' forward, tho' I canna see, I guess an' fear,” indicate that the speaker isolates hindsight and foresight as the two qualities that define humanity and “the burden of the past” carried exclusively by humans.

¹ Go oft awry

This liminal location may be traced to the conceptual aporia towards the human-animal continuum that is part of our cultural inheritance. At one end, the monotheistic religions of the Abrahamic tradition encapsulate a polarized view of the human-animal relationship: humans have a soul, non-human animals do not. The demarcatory boundaries introduced by Judeo-Christianity have been particularly problematic, especially in their assumption that Man alone—not even Woman—had been made in God’s image. Man’s dominion over beast could be considered a divine sanction, granted twice: once to Adam and once to Noah.² While the exact interpretation of the commandment prohibiting killing varies, commentators have pointed out that not only would “Thou shalt not murder” be a better translation than “Thou shalt not kill,” it also appears to be corroborated by other verses that explicitly permit the killing of animals and the eating of meat, at least to Noah.³

Despite the grant of dominion and food, Leviticus and Deuteronomy impose a number of strictures on what animals may or may not be eaten, in addition to the method of their slaughter, but the compassion urged towards animals does not blur the line between human and animal.⁴ Acknowledging that Judaism “accepts a hierarchical scheme to creation,” Roberta Kalechofsky points out that although “hierarchy did not exclude feelings of loving kinship” compassion does not include boundary crossing: “With respect to animals the rule might be stated as kinship yes, reverence no” (Waldau and Patton 92).

Like other Abrahamic faiths, Islam considers non-human animals inferior to humans and expressly permits the eating of meat although it applies a strict code of dietary proscription. Dogs are often considered unclean in Islamic *hadith*, while carrion and swine are explicitly deemed unclean and may not be eaten, and neither may other creatures considered unclean. Only certain types of birds may be eaten: birds of prey and songbirds are forbidden. However regardless of the permission to eat meat, Islamic teachings strongly promote compassion in all treatment of animals and, as Richard Foltz has pointed out, scholars suggest that animals also have a soul and will be resurrected on the Day of Judgement (Waldau 151). Detailed prohibitions of cruelty to animals are found in the Quran as well as in *hadith* literature, and as James L. Wescoat Jr. has shown, humans who are kind to animals are rewarded in heaven while those who

² Genesis 1:26-28; Genesis 9: 2-3

³ Genesis 9:3

⁴ Mary Douglas famously questioned the grounds for the proscriptions in Mosaic dietary laws, arguing that prohibitions were placed on animals on account of their liminal status rather than actual uncleanness (51-71).

are cruel are punished. In addition, animals share the right to thirst with humans in Islam (Wolch and Emmel 259-279).

In so far as the Abrahamic religions may be classified as a unit, all three grant humans dominion over animals but all recommend—to varying degrees—that compassion be shown. In addition, certain cultural motifs are common to all. The snake is a symbol of evil and deceit, and readers might remember that in Genesis it is the serpent who tempts Eve and not Satan. For this act the serpent was cursed by God: “And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life. And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Genesis 3: 14-15). The Abrahamic religions share this negative view of the serpent. An additional feature of Islam is that although in principle the depiction of figures is prohibited in Islam, lions, tigers deer and especially birds have often been seen in the secular Islamic art of certain regions and periods, while snakes, as well as bats and lizards, have been deemed despicable in the hadith and have not been represented in artistic traditions.

Mainstream Western views of animals come not only from the Judeo-Christian axis of the Abrahamic religions but also from Hellenism. Greek thought characterized by Aristotle, Socrates, Plato, and the Pre-Socratics permits both an anthropocentric view of the universe as well as the notion of continuity between all living things. Pre-Socratic thinkers acknowledged the differences between humans and animals but not in the manner that later thinkers did. Although they posited the superiority of humans over animals, they established an epistemological background of continuity by drawing kinship lines between the two. For instance, Pythagoras’ notion of metempsychosis—the idea that the soul went through several stages of embodiment from various animal to human forms—implicitly promoted the idea that one ought to be kind to an animal as it could potentially be inhabited by a kindred soul. Pythagoras’ theory of metempsychosis linked human and animal souls in transmigration and therefore blurred the dualism prevalent in much Hellenic thought. This notion of kinship between humans and animals has been also promoted by modern-day defenders of animal rights, who, Gary Steiner argues, were anticipated by the pre-Socratics: “What is remarkable, and crucial about the pre-Socratic background is that it anticipates all the appeals made by later Western thinkers to the need to rethink our relationship to animals in a way that does better justice to animals. Even more remarkable is the fact that later critics of anthropocentrism sometimes mistakenly assume that they

themselves were the first to conceive of animals as our kin” (52).

Although Plato believed that humans should avoid any comparisons with animals—equating irrationality in humans with that of animals and urging humans to control their animal tendencies (their ‘instincts’ for food and sex)—his concept of metempsychosis also posits the mobility of the soul between animal and human bodies. Nonetheless, without ascribing a fundamental difference to human beings—merely one of degree—for Plato the movement is mostly upward, from animal to human form and not vice versa, establishing a clear hierarchy between the two. Likewise, Aristotle, albeit one of the first thinkers to theorize the axioms of dualism, ascribed in *De Anima* the feeding principle *anima nutritiva* to all living beings—human, animal, and vegetable—but *anima sensitiva*, the principle of sensation, only to humans and animals. Although *anima rationalis* was a human faculty, this was essentially a distilled form of *anima sensitiva*, and all living beings shared the common bond of *anima*, the life principle (Noske 44). This commonality can be seen in the Hellenic pantheon, which is replete with animals, both real and fantastical and goes far beyond the merely decorative. Noting the association of various animals with their respective deities, such as the owl with Athena and the peacock with Hera, Yves Bonnefoy and Wendy Doniger assert that “animals certainly had semantic value in the mythological discourse of the Greeks,” pointing out that “the use of certain species as attributes of various gods constitutes the most obvious example of the bestiary” (128).

Nevertheless, scholastic Aristotelianism in its Christianized interpretation by Augustine and the medieval Schoolmen—especially Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas—who “synthesized Greek views of the natural world—Platonic and Aristotelian—with Christian theology” (Corbey 22), augmented the division between human and animal. As Steiner puts it, this “subordination of animals to the interests of human beings” and “denial of direct moral obligations to animals” are based on beliefs that “persist virtually unmodified in the Renaissance thought of Martin Luther” (116). It is this denial that prompted ecologist Lynn White, Jr. in 1967 to describe Christianity in its Western form as “the most anthropocentric religion the world has ever seen” (White 1205). The rebuke did not go unchallenged, however, and Donald Worster, among others, has drawn attention to the leanings of “left-wing” Protestantism as well as the assumption of accountability inherent in the Christian concept of stewardship that undermine the anthropocentric exploitation attributed to Christianity by White (Worster 187-88).

In contrast to mainstream Western views, which have displayed a tendency to regard human and animal in a dichotomous relationship,

Eastern religions and philosophies have often seen the relationship as a continuum – albeit a continuum that is not free of hierarchy. Animals hold a prominent place in all Eastern religions. Although by no means a unitary religious belief, most varieties of Hindu thought hold shared beliefs about animals. Unlike Buddhism and Jainism, Vedic Hinduism is not predicated on the notion of *ahimsa* (non-violence).⁵ The earlier Vedic and Brahmanical texts suggest that animal sacrifice was practiced and beef was not prohibited, but many texts reveal an ambivalence towards meat consumption, suggesting that it was only sanctified by sacrifice (194-201). The exact date and motivation for the ban on cow slaughter is debated, with most evidence regarding the date pointing to the Gupta period, circa the 5th century A.D. In general it can be said that after the Gupta period animal sacrifice was rare but not unknown⁶ and increasingly acquired only symbolic practice. Edward Bryant explains that despite the textual indications of animals being ritualistically sacrificed and eaten during the Vedic age, “preliminary signs of tension or unease with such slaughter are occasionally encountered even in the earlier Vedic period” (Waldau and Patton 195). This tension would eventually lead to the transition from perceiving animals as objects to animals as subjects in the later periods (196), which was fuelled by revisionist authors who reinterpreted the sacrificial scriptures of the Vedic texts (202). Bryant sees the social respect associated with the spread of vegetarianism as evidence of the success of the revisionists (Waldau and Patton 202).

Through its exchange with Jainism and perhaps Buddhism (see below), the concept of *ahimsa* has seeped into Hindu thought. Perhaps for that reason, vegetarianism has been widespread since then among followers of Hinduism. In particular, the cow is sacred and beef is not eaten by most Hindus. The snake and monkey are also venerated, and temples dedicated to them are dotted all over the sub-continent.

Several Hindu deities take the form of animals, such as Hanuman (monkey), while others went through incarnations as animals: Vishnu underwent incarnations as a fish, a tortoise, and a boar before incarnating as *Narasimha*, or half-man half-lion, before his incarnations as a human dwarf, a human forest dweller to, eventually, his seventh, eighth, and ninth incarnations as Lord Rama, Lord Balarama, and Lord Krishna

⁵ Literally *Himsa* means violence and therefore while *Ahimsa* is, literally, “non-violence” it connotes abstention from killing any living thing. The extent to which it implies a total prohibition on any form of life-taking varies not only among Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism but even within the various scriptures of Hinduism.

⁶ For example the *asvamedha* and *rajasuya* sacrifices.

respectively. Several other Hindu deities have totemic relationships with animals: Shiva with the bull, as well as the snake (a positive symbol of fertility and infinity), while Ganesha has an elephant head. In principle humans and non-human animals are not distinct. All life forms have the capability of achieving consciousness, but nonetheless animals have a lower ontological status to humans, (being reborn as an animal is less rewarding than being reborn as a human).

The earliest extant depiction of animals in South Asia is the iconic unicorn-bull from the Indus Valley Civilization from Harappa dating back to the third millennium BC, but animals are ubiquitous in Hindu art and sculpture, appearing both naturalistically and symbolically. As Wendy Doniger points out, they occupy four worlds in Hindu thought: nature, the human world, the divine world and the world of fantasy (Snead 3). Thus they appear in all four dimensions in art, sharing a particular relationship with the gods because both guard the human world. Emphasizing the multivalence of animals as symbols in Hindu art, Doniger notes that as vehicles they do more than simply “carry” the god physically: they also carry the god’s characteristics. Therefore “the bandicoot shares Ganesha’s nimbleness of wit and ability to get past any obstacle” while “the bull expresses something of [Shiva’s] own nature—the virility and power of Shiva as god of the phallus—while also expressing the god’s ambivalent relationship to that nature” (Snead 8).

Buddhism, which was both an offshoot of and reaction against Vedic Hinduism, has a much stronger emphasis on *ahimsa* than Hinduism does. Often claimed to be a “psychology” rather than a religion, Buddhism’s greatest punishments for himsa are internal (in the form of inner suffering) rather than external. Killing a human thus incurs greater suffering than killing an ant and is therefore more reprehensible. Like Hinduism, Buddhism believes that humans may be re-born as animals and hence the recognition of spiritual kinship between humans and non-human animals is strong, but in Buddhism all forms of animal sacrifice are forbidden.

The Jātaka tales are a set of 547 tales of the Buddha’s previous lives, many of which were in the form of various animals. Therefore, animals are frequently illustrated in the art and sculpture of regions where Buddhism has flourished. In particular, the snake motif is prominent in the Indian subcontinent—possibly having entered Buddhist iconography through Hinduism—and images of the Buddha protected by a snake are depicted throughout South Asia.

Jainism—the religion practiced by followers of Mahavir Jain, who lived six centuries before Christ—originated in India and is arguably the most emphatic of the animal-human continuum of any belief-system in the

world. With the strongest prohibitions against *himsa* of all Eastern religions, its followers are prohibited from the killing of animal life or potential animal life—including eggs and honey—for food as well as by accident. (Needless to say, hunting is completely prohibited.) Life forms seen by other religions as non-sentient are seen as sentient by Jains, and therefore eating onions and other tubers is also prohibited, as the bulb contains life. Some Jains veil their mouths to avoid accidentally killing bacteria as well, though in keeping with their rejection of anthropocentrism, Jains seldom keep pets. Nevertheless, they have set up animal hospitals all over India. As Christopher Chapple points out, animal tales are frequently used to illustrate a moral teaching in the stories of the Tirtankaras, or great teachers of Jainism (Waldau and Patton 244-5).

Other cultures, while perhaps resisting the dichotomy of East or West, have also given a prominent place to animals in their beliefs and art. The Afro-Caribbean and African American diaspora are replete with numerous motifs from the culture of the African continent (particularly sub-Saharan West Africa), and tales of Anansi the spider-god are present throughout West Africa and the Caribbean. Likewise, Santeria and other Afro-Caribbean syncretic belief-systems have roots in West Africa.

African beliefs go beyond mere reverence and give a prominent place to animals in their cosmogonies, Jacob Kehinde Olumpona notes, concurring with William Bascom's view that the iconic woman holding a chicken "represents the great goddess Oduduwa with her epiphany, the cosmic chicken, the earth-spreader, caught in the act of creation as she set the chicken on the Ile-Ife earth" (Olumpona 7). Showing that "totemic practices" reveal the extent to which "animals play key roles in identity construction of individuals, clans, and ethnic groups" (2), Olumpona has observed that "African religions integrate the human, animal, and sacred spheres of existence into a unified whole" (5).

Animals were also part of the cosmic vision of the Ancient Egyptians. As Gay Robins observes, they had a significant role "in almost every aspect of Egyptian life," as food, as transport, as pets, in farming, in hunting, and in ritualistic sacrifice (170). They were considered to have an afterlife and were therefore often mummified as part of funerary rituals. They were venerated because it was thought that deities would take the form of a specific animal when on earth, and thus reverence paid to an animal was obeisance to a god or goddess. Some particularly esteemed animals were the male cat (associated with Ra), the cow (Hathor), and the falcon (Horus), in addition to other felines and the scarab beetle. Ancient Egypt had several zoomorphic deities, or those with zoomorphic parts. Robins notes, "Wild animals living in the marshes and the desert outside

the ordered area of fields and habitations represented the forces of chaos. The powers of animals that inspired terror, such as the cobra, hippopotamus, and lion, were harnessed for protection against enemies and hostile forces. The wild bull, with which the king was identified, embodied the concepts of strength and male potency” (170).

William Ward has examined the role of some of the most iconic Egyptian animals, such as the scarab beetle and felines. Felines, especially lions, were considered a royal prerogative for hunting, but the lion symbolized the forces of chaos beyond the order of the king, while the domesticated cat did not appear in Egyptian art until the Middle Kingdom. It is the scarab beetle that seems most unique to ancient Egyptian (and adjacent) cultures. As Ward points out, in contrast to Europeans, ancient Egyptians did not see the beetle as a pest. Perhaps because of a mistaken understanding of reproduction, the beetle was considered a symbol of self-engendering, emerging out of the earth as an “immediate symbol of the resurrection of the dead” (Ward 188). Asking why one animal should be so singled out for reverence, he discerns the difference between Western and Ancient Egyptian views of the dung beetle: “Nothing can be less inspiring to us than an army of beetles crawling around a dung-heap. But the Egyptians saw something vitally significant in that very situation. They saw a vision of rebirth into paradise, the resurrection of the soul; they saw the daily rebirth of their most powerful symbol, the sun, as it appears each morning over the eastern horizon” (187).

Ancient Egypt is an example of the exchanges made between other cultures and what is called “the West.” As Ruth Hicks has shown, several Egyptian motifs were incorporated into Greek myth. In addition, elements of other indigenous pantheistic belief-systems—such as those of the Druids, the Celts and the Native Americans—geographically located in the West, have seeped into mainstream Western culture.

While European anthropocentrism and its emphasis on the dualism between human and animal appeared to be the dominant belief of the establishment, the boundaries of demarcation were undermined by the influence of medieval and Renaissance alchemists such as Bruno and Paracelsus, whose theories of natural magic posited an organic view of life. Likewise Celtic and Germanic influences in European jurisprudence granted animals human rights and responsibilities to the extent that animals as well as humans could serve as witnesses to a crime or be executed for crimes (Ritvo 1-2), suggesting a deep-seated belief in the notion of an animal soul.⁷ These beliefs were virtually displaced,

⁷ This seems also to be the case in hunter-gatherer societies, whose systems of kinship included all living things, and who considered animals to have a “spirit”

however, by the hegemony of Enlightenment science, which drove any lingering European pantheism underground, banishing it to the margins of accepted belief. Concurrently, the spread of European colonization carried Enlightenment values far beyond European shores, thus reinforcing and globalizing the hegemony of the Enlightenment European view of animals as the “norm.”

If we see science as a product of culture, the trumping of earlier less dualist beliefs by the so-called Enlightenment is situated in the hegemony of European science and politics. Descartes’ 1637 *Discours de la méthode* was not merely a reinforcement of earlier dualisms. In denying animals not only a soul but even the capacity to feel pain, it far exceeded earlier Abrahamic and Greek dualism in propounding the notorious *bêtemachine* theory that animals were mere bodies, no more than automata. Both human and animal bodies could be considered automata, but speech and the soul separated the human from the animal. The animal body operated purely on mechanical principles, and any sounds made by the animal—including its cries of pain—were the products of its machinery.

Despite the influence of Descartes, dualism—and its accompanying anthropocentrism—were undermined even within the Enlightenment with hypotheses that questioned the immutability of the species. The Linnaean system (*Systema Naturae*, 1735) grouped *Homo sapiens* (“wise Man”) with other mammalian species, and specifically with other primates under the order *Anthropo morpha*. Although Linnaeus was not wholly convinced about the fixity of the genera, he was about the species, and his influence is based on his atemporal stance. Within a few decades, however, the fixity of the Linnaean mode of classification would be superseded by modes in which the immutability of species was no longer a given. While Buffon did not actually acknowledge the mutability of the species he firmly asserted the kinship of humans with other animals in his *Histoire Naturelle* in 1753: “If we once admit that there are families of plants and animals, so that the ass may be of the family of the horse, and that the one may only differ from the other by degeneration from a common ancestor, we might be driven to admit that the ape is of the family of man, that he is but a degenerate man, and that he and man have had a common ancestor”

with which they interacted ritually. Considering the hunter-gatherer societies of North America, Siberia, and Australia, Marcel Hénaff points out that “the relation to the animal world is what could be called a relation of *equality* or (better yet) of mutual gift exchange ... Animals are considered partners with which one must get along” (220). See “Les chasseurs-cueilleurs et l’alliance” in *Le Prix de la vérité. Le don, l’argent, la philosophie*. (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2002. pp. 220-227)

(402-3).⁸ Nevertheless, by 1800 both Erasmus Darwin and Jean Baptiste de Monet (the Chevalier de Lamarck) had anticipated a theory of evolution—arriving at their conclusions independently—but were unable to establish how evolution took place. Erasmus Darwin, basing his conclusions on vestigial organs and the metamorphoses of animals during development, deduced that transmutation of the species took place through the satisfaction of desires and needs, while Lamarck based his theories of transformism on his belief in the inheritance of acquired characters.

Several philosophers throughout Europe had been unconvinced of the *bêtemachine* theory. John Locke had ridiculed Descartes' theory, stating that scientists believed it "only because their work requires it." Mandeville, himself a vegetarian, called Descartes a "vain reasoner" in his "Fable of the Bees." In France both Voltaire and Diderot had voiced their skepticism (Voltaire providing proof of animal intelligence in his article on animals in *Dictionnaire philosophique*), while Rousseau reinforced the idea of kinship between humans and animals in arguing that all the vices and vicissitudes of man find their origin in the notions of society and civilization that create avarice and competition. Postulating the figure of the 'savage,' who resembles the animal and whose needs are physical and moderate because he does not seek to outdo and compete against others sharing his world, Rousseau distinguishes between the two by positing that whereas the latter is solely moved by instinct, the former is capable of free will. Rousseau's *Emile* is a manifesto whose aim is to articulate the conditions under which a human can be raised without the corrupt ideals of the formal education institutionalized by so-called civilized society. Rousseau's idea(l) of naturalness brings humans closer to animals and precludes the possibility of making the latter suffer for the enjoyment of the former. Romantic appeals to a cosmic totality had undermined the ideals of civilization championed by Enlightenment philosophy, which overvalued a certain conception of the 'human' and/or 'humanity' by equating it with reason and progress. Steiner argues that the overwhelming anthropocentrism of the liberalism championed by the Enlightenment not only "*defines* human beings as superior" but also "fails animals precisely where it vindicates human beings" (203). Humanism posits that regardless of whether animals are capable of pain, their suffering counts less than human suffering, because humans are the only beings that

⁸ Buffon's timidity might have stemmed from a desire not to conflict with the Church. Speculations on special mutability were followed by what seems like a disclaimer: "But no! It is certain, from Revelation, that all animals have alike been favoured with the grace of an act of direct creation, and that the first pair of every species issued full formed from the hands of the Creator."

possess rational thought and hence, the capability of moral conduct. Kant never critiques the humanist tradition and duty towards animals is regarded as ‘indirect’ at best. By the 1760s some philosophers had begun to concede the possibility of human-animal continuity by accepting the concept of animal “sagacity” (intelligence). David Hume acknowledged that animals had the power of “experimental reasoning,” while David Hartley attributed the human disbelief in animal rationality to human ignorance of animal communication (Thomas 125). It is in this context that Jeremy Bentham’s famous rejection of empiric discontinuity based on rationality and speech is situated. As he put it, “the question is not, Can they *reason*? nor, Can they *talk*? but, Can they *suffer*?”

Bentham’s own position has been interpreted as not only an invocation of pathos⁹ but a reaction against the prevailing influence of Descartes. While Descartes himself had not insisted on the complete incapacity of animals to experience pain, this, as Andreas-Holger Maehle has shown, was the position taken by his followers, such as Father Nicolas Malebranche and Antoine Arnauld, some of whom interpreted cries of pain as merely the creaking of animal “clockwork.” (No effective anaesthesia, such as chloroform or sulfuric ether, was introduced either into curative or experimental surgery until the middle of the nineteenth century.) Dogs were frequently nailed to laboratory tables to be vivisected for the study of the circulation of blood, a recent discovery (Manning and Serpell 87). It is this specific mind/matter point of demarcation with which Bentham’s focus on sentience therefore takes issue: for him rationality and speech were not the criteria for the award or denial of rights. Several commentators have pointed out the unparalleled attention to kinship with animals that appears in writings of the Romantic period (see Batra, Ferguson, and Perkins, for example), not only reflect but actually produced the changes that led to animal rights. The age is memorable for not only its encomia to flies, mice, donkeys, albatrosses, deer, and nightingales as “brothers” or “fellow mortals” by poets such as Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Barbauld, Southey, Burns, and Keats but for producing Martin’s Act in 1822: “Europe’s first bill prohibiting cruelty to animals in their own right” (Batra 111).

A certain preference for pragmatics over theory informed most debates about the animal-human (dis)continuum in the later nineteenth century. The issues tended to be animal rights rather than the more theoretic ones

⁹ Nevertheless, Jacques Derrida believes that this distinction is not merely an invocation of pathos but is solidly grounded in ontology (Calarco and Atterton 121).

of animal taxonomy and dualism (or lack thereof). The major hallmark of animal taxonomy in the nineteenth century came, of course, from Charles Darwin, whose *Origin of Species* (1859) had been silent about human descent. It was not until his 1871 *The Descent of Man* that he was explicit about the relationship between humans and other primates, a finding that shook the world and that made itself felt in several other discourses. Theories of monogenism and polygenism (on whether various races were actually subspecies) competed and although Darwin himself was a monogenist, his theory of linkage could be seen as reconciling the two, maintaining the hegemony of Europeans at the top of the evolutionary animal ladder.

A close contemporary of Darwin followed his findings at the psychological level by attributing human drives to our animal origins. Freud linked human instincts to animal drives, thus rationalizing Western theological concepts of good and evil and explaining away much of the symbolism of good and evil in Judeo-Christianity. The snake as a symbol of evil, for instance, was for Freud little more than phallic power and sexual urges which the superego had been taught to repress. The combined legacy of Freud and Darwin was pervasive, and modernism—especially art—is overwhelmingly characterized by its view of animal-human continuity. Artists and writers of the early twentieth century explore the animality of humanity and vice versa: the bulls and sharks of Hemingway, Kafka's cockroach, Picasso's bulls and birds, and D.H. Lawrence's snake have all become iconic. Popular biologists, most notably Desmond Morris but also Konrad Lorenz, drew attention to some of these similarities, particularly in the former's bestselling *The Naked Ape*. After the irrefutable kinship between human and non-human animals established by Darwin, animal discourse ceased to question the physical links between the two and shifted to a broader humanism that was somewhat divorced from science.

It is not until Nietzsche's proclamations that "Man must be overcome" and "God is dead" that we witness the first and perhaps most virulent critique of humanism and Judeo-Christian dualism. Influenced by Friedrich Albert Lange's reading of Darwin, Nietzsche envisions the ways in which the concept of humanity and its values inherited from the Enlightenment must come undone. As an "all-too human" animal, man must break from previous norms and "go under," re-embody the animal instincts that Christian morality has suppressed before finally being reborn as a child with the power to create new values for a new human—the "overman." Although Nietzsche does not totally undo the hierarchy between animals, (e.g. between lion and sheep), his views of non-human

animals celebrates in them qualities such as pride and wisdom that humans *ought* to possess, thus destabilizing the traditional hierarchy that situated the latter in a superior position to the former.

Nietzsche's thought-provoking aphorisms only had a later impact on the history of Western philosophy as the generation of thinkers that followed remained entrenched in a humanist ontology. Although Martin Heidegger would eventually argue for a departure from humanist metaphysics in "Letter on Humanism" he remains primarily concerned with the nature of the human existential experience, referring to animals solely as a basis for comparison.¹⁰ Exploring the question of the animal he draws the following distinction between humans, animals, and nonliving beings: the first forms and develops the world, the second is 'world-poor,' while the third is 'worldless.' In other words, he posits that because they do not understand the world in the same terms of a system of significations, animals are 'world-poor' in the ways in which they relate to their environment, which is different from the seemingly 'rich' ways that humans do.¹¹

Similarly, humans remain the foci of Georges Bataille's ontological inquiry, but he perceives animals' relationship to the world differently from Heidegger by characterizing it as one of 'immanence' or 'immediacy.'¹² Bataille argues that although humans may be transcendental beings, they are discontinuous—separated and isolated from each other and cut off from a direct existential relation to their environment—whereas the "immediacy" or "immanence" that characterizes animal life makes them continuous beings: "the animal is in the world like water in water." Their

¹⁰ In *Being in Time* Heidegger famously articulates the concept of *Dasein* a being-in-the-world, -with-others, -towards-death, which only human beings possess. Heidegger distinguishes between humans and animals in the ways in which the former relate to the world around them through language via acts of interpretation and understanding. Insofar as Heidegger situates language at the core of ontological inquiry, his views position him within the lineage of western thought that distinguishes between humans and non-human animals on the basis of the latter's inability to interact with a semiotic system that resembles human language.

¹¹ In *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, a lecture course held in 1929-30 (William McNeill and Nicholas Walker, Trans. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001), Heidegger articulates the following three theses to distinguish between humans, animals, and nonliving beings: "[1.] the stone (material object) is *worldless*: [2.] the animal is *poor in world*; [3.] man is *world-forming*" (177).

¹² See *Theory of Religion* (Trans. Robert Hurley. NY: Zone Books, 1992. pp. 17-27).

existence is not mediated by language and discourse, subjectivity and consciousness, which constructs subordinate and dialectical relationships between a subject and an object; animals have a direct, immediate relation to the world. This notion would be later picked up by posthumanists such as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, as well as Donna Haraway in their view of decentred subjectivities and alternate kinship systems to mark departures from the hegemonic orders of humanist thought.

Unlike other poststructuralists, Derrida's lectures on animals address issues of ethics and responsibility as well as ontology. Considering Bentham's question of "Can they suffer?" to be not merely evocative of pathos but solidly ontological, he argues that animals' lack of language could be considered an ethical issue. Berating the "*bêtise*" of using the singular for "the animal," he attacks the Western tradition's sweeping generalizations about the difference between humans and all non-human animals, or "animality" itself. For him these simplistic generalizations about animals disregard the numerous "immense" differences among animals and the "heterogeneous multiplicity of the living" (*The Animal that* 399), and hence he coins the term "animot" – a term that refers both to animals in the plural as well as the act of language in naming and objectifying animals. Critical of all—from Aristotle and Descartes to Heidegger—who have summed up the essence of animality as the absence of language, he observes that they have defined language in such a way as to make it exclusively human: "Of course if one defines language in such a way that it is reserved for what we call man, what is there to say"? (Eating 116). He is particularly disappointed in Heidegger for perpetuating the binary between humans and animals in the latter's refusal to allow animals into the world of Dasein, castigating it as "carno-phallogocentrism" (Eating 113).

While Derrida seems to be the exception in toppling humans from the top of the ladder, he only addressed the issue of animals late in his career. Posthumanist thought has consistently aimed to bring about a less hierarchical view in the ways in which humans see other animals. Following Nietzsche, Deleuze aims to reverse Platonism by rejecting not only Mind/Body Dualism but also rejecting the Western metaphysics of Being as a finite and stable entity by deploying the multiple, shifting subjectivities of becoming. In his work with Guattari, Deleuze postulates the concept of "becoming-animal," which can be related to the ways in which posthumans can enter "*zones of proximity or copresence*" (273) with other species, not at the "molar" level of fixed identities—such as "dog" or "human"—but at the affective level of "molecular" multiplicities, wherein the "Body without Organs" enters into a symbiotic relationship

with others (258). Deleuze and Guattari are more concerned with the ontological possibilities that lie at these zones of contact or closeness, beyond the contained and unitary identity formations and formulations of Western metaphysics, than with the question of the animal *per se*. For example, their denigration of pets is reflective of the idea that a “pet” is a fixed entity, which guides the ways in which owners believe they can interact with them. Hence, in their distinction between three kinds of animals, they consider that the first group, comprised of “individuated animals” such as pets, i.e. “my cat, my dog,” are “sentimental Oedipal animals” which “draw us into a narcissistic contemplation” (*Thousand* 265). For these, Deleuze and Guattari have little interest: “*anyone who likes cats or dogs is a fool*” (*Thousand* 265, italics theirs). The second consists of “animals with characteristics or attributes” which are “animals as they are treated in the great divine myths” (*Thousand* 265). In the last group “there are more demonic animals, pack or affect animals that form a multiplicity, a becoming, a population, a tale” (*Thousand* 265).

But what does that mean, the animal as band or pack? Does a band not imply a filiation, bringing us back to the reproduction of given characteristics? How can we conceive of a peopling, a propagation, a becoming that is without filiation or hereditary production? A multiplicity without the unity of an ancestor? It is quite simple; everybody knows it, but it is discussed only in secret. We oppose epidemic to filiation, contagion to heredity, peopling by contagion to sexual reproduction, sexual production. Bands, human or animal, proliferate by contagion, epidemics, battlefields, and catastrophes.” (240-1)

Therefore, for Deleuze and Guattari, every animal is “fundamentally a band, a pack” Although each pack has its “anomalous being,” this anomaly is merely the “phenomenon of bordering,” a privileged site of closeness and proximity, where members form “alliances” that are non-hierarchical and non-hereditary. This multiplicity—borne of contagion and not filiation—is where “human beings affect their becomings-animal,” a rejection of mimesis and metaphor in favor of metamorphosis. “To become animal is to participate in movement,” Deleuze and Guattari note. Becoming-animal is the crossing of the liminal into a world of “absolute deterritorialization,” where there is “no longer anything but movements, vibrations, thresholds in a deserted matter: animals, mice, dogs, apes, cockroaches are distinguished only by this or that threshold, this or that vibration, by the particularly underground tunnel in the rhizome or the burrow” (*Kafka* 12-13). The becoming animal is therefore not constituted by an illusionary essence but by its fluid and shifting associations.

Posthumanists have attempted to blur – or at least question – the line

between Nature and Culture, not only between humans and animals but between nature and technology. As Bruno Latour argues, “Nature and Society are not two distinct poles, but one and the same production of successive states of societies-natures, of collectives” (139). This rejection of binaries is continued by Donna Haraway in her image of the cyborg—or cybernetic organism—and the Oncomouse to dismantle the “maze of dualisms” that humans have created (*Simians* 181). As she puts it:

By the late twentieth century in United States scientific culture, the boundary between human and animal is thoroughly breached. The last beachheads of uniqueness have been polluted if not turned into amusement parks—language tool use, social behaviour, mental events, nothing really convincingly settles the separation of human and animal. And many people no longer feel the need for such a separation; indeed, many branches of feminist culture affirm the pleasure of connection of human and other living creatures. Movements for animal rights are not irrational denials of human uniqueness; they are a clear-sighted recognition of connection across the discredited breach of nature and culture. (Cyborg Manifesto 152-153)

Since then she has developed the image of the “companion species” as another hybrid being after the cyborg in *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness* (2003) and in *When Species Meet* (2008): “the notion of ‘companion species’—knotted from human beings, animals and other organisms, landscapes, and technologies—includes much more than ‘companion animals’”... and “contemplate[s] the interactions of humans with many kinds of critters, especially with those called domestic” (back cover blurb).

In spite of these points of debate, many similarities between the work of Haraway and Deleuze and Guattari are traced by Rosi Braidotti, who points out that all three take “into consideration also the non-human actors in a geopolitical, but also in an eco-philosophical manner” (197). She further notes that “Haraway shares with Deleuze two key features: serious neo-foundational materialism on the one hand and a rigorous theory of relationality on the other” (200). The oncomouse and the becoming-animal are figurations of the posthuman, which promote the decentralized ethos of multiple subjectivities and kinship systems that do not rely on the ways in which the human-animal relation has been oedipalized (201-2). Nonetheless, Braidotti does acknowledge that there is a divergence in their thought:

Both acknowledge that the strength of animals rests on the fact that they are immanent to their territories and environmentally bound, but they

negotiate their next move differently. Donna Haraway moves a step beyond the Oedipal configuration of the culture of familiar pets by proposing a new kinship system that includes ‘companion species’ alongside other siblings and relatives. (203)

This is perhaps what could account for Haraway’s battering of Deleuze and Guattari for their rejection of the individual animal and the pet in their concept of the becoming-animal: “This is a philosophy of the sublime, not the earthly; not the mud; becoming-animal is not an *autre-mondialisation*” (28). In particular, their association of the attribution of love of pets to a sentimentality exemplified in elderly women is not only a “display of misogyny,” it is also an “incuriosity about animals...here covered by the alibi of an anti-Oedipal and anticapitalist project” (30).

This disagreement encapsulates the aporia of the animal-human continuum that our essay addresses, which, we hope indicates the extent to which it affects not merely issues of ontology, but those of economics, nationality, science, religion, art and politics.

For instance, human beings often see the domestication of animals as the point that marks the beginning of civilization. As Sandor Bökönyi defines it, “The essence of domestication is the capture and taming by man of animals of a species with particular behavioural characteristics, their removal from their natural living area and breeding community, and their maintenance under controlled breeding conditions for mutual benefits” (Clutton-Brock 22). Noting that domestication is both a “cultural and biological process and that it can only take place when tamed animals are incorporated into the social structure of the human group and become objects of ownership,” Juliet Clutton-Brock concurs with Bökönyi: “My definition of a domestic animal is ‘one that has been bred in captivity for purposes of human profit to a human community that maintains complete mastery over its breeding, organization of territory and food supply’” (Clutton-Brock 7). Various reports contend as to which the first domesticated animal was: the horse, the sheep or the dog. And the complexities related to domestic animals are closely related to those involving pets – or, as they have been more technically known as, companion animals. What exactly constitutes a companion animal? Does it exclude the question of economic gain? James Serpell points out that the word “pet” refers to an animal kept “primarily for social or emotional reasons rather than for economic purposes,” drawing attention to the emphasis made on this distinction by the fact that the word itself is being superseded by the term “companion animal.” As he puts it, “People value their pets, not because they are necessarily useful, but because they fulfill social and emotional needs comparable though not necessarily identical to

those fulfilled by human companions” (Manning and Serpell 129). Nonetheless, we might ask whether the love felt by a human for a named companion animal is not “truly” love for an animal *per se* but rather a redirection of the type of love felt for a human being? Why are specific animals kept as pets in specific cultures? For example, cats were despised in the West until the nineteenth century – what led to the change? Was it the obsolescence of the cat’s role as a rat hunter in developed societies that led to the cat’s acceptance, or is it simply that modern culture prefers cats to other animals—such as horses, for instance—on account of their appropriateness for modern urban Western living? Is the sterilization of cats (and other pets) a denial of their ‘personhood’ or is it the most humane way to deal with the ‘problem’ of stray animals, especially in cities. Chapter One, *Companionship and Domestication*, addresses a number of these topics.

“Animal Rescue Films and Sarah Orne Jewett’s Stories” by Priscilla Paton examines tales of companionship among children and animals that suggest that the “natural world and the innocent life of animals will redeem the individual and the community.” Animal rescue films “re-write a romance plot” in which lovers overcome obstacles, often featuring an ecovillain in the form of a developer. The child must “seek adult assistance to save the animal and thus must begin to negotiate with human groups” and “there is a dramatic action moment in which the animal proves its heroism by saving the child from the machinations of the ecovillain.” Audiences expect a “feel-good ending with the added bonus of an environmental message.” Paton contrasts these films to Sarah Orne Jewett’s “A White Heron” and “Woodchucks” with the stories anticipating the themes of these films but often showing “that a relationship with animals is restricted or enlarged by social circumstances.” Taylor J. Mitchell’s essay, “Calling ‘Them’ by Treadwell’s Pet Names: Cultural Implications of “Cute” Grizzly Bears,” considers Timothy Treadwell’s narrative of his life with the bears he named and studied from the vantage points of ecofeminism and masculinity studies. She argues that by anthropomorphizing and naming “his” grizzly bears, Treadwell asserted the patriarchal humanist desire to appropriate and dominate the animal-other. In this case, this can not only lead to environmental abuses but can also have dire consequences as it did for Treadwell, who was eventually killed by one of the bears he believed he had developed a close relationship with. Mitchell concludes that Treadwell’s tragic narrative should warn us of the dangers inherent to anthropomorphism and advocates that a certain distance be preserved and respected between humans and wild animals in order for them to strive. Moving from the

wild to one of the oldest animals to be domesticated, Héctor Segarra's essay, "From Babieca to Rocinante: The Portrayal of the Horse in Chivalric Narratives," takes a look at the ways in which the relationship between medieval knights and their horses are portrayed in the *Chanson de Roland*, *El Cantar de Mio Cid*, and *Bevis Hampton* within the broader framework of the role that equine domestication has played in European civilization. Tracing a tradition that "transcended cultural and linguistic barriers across Europe," Segarra first observes that the connection between human and animal is well emphasized in *Chanson de Roland* and *El Cantar de Mio Cid* wherein the horses are praised for their abilities; they mostly acquire significance in relation to the knight. In *Bevis of Hampton*, however, which "presents the zenith of the equestrian culture's adoration of the horse," Arondel, Bevis' steed, while still subservient to his master, is given an ontological consideration comparable to that of humans.

Chapter Two, *Language and Mind*, addresses the way in which language and mind (or apparent lack thereof) have been constructed as the demarcatory barrier between human and non-human animals. While most contemporary thought has rejected the Cartesian *bêtemachine* theory, it has been recently revived by Noam Chomsky in his claim that animals are incapable of "stimulus-free" speech.¹³ Even when the demarcation is not dualistic, the so-called lower rationality and ability to use language of animals compared to humans is often considered proof of their inferiority. This chapter addresses a number of these issues.

Exploring the topic of animal minds in an essay titled "Real Behaviorists Don't Wear Fur," Anderson Brown observes that "the attitudes towards animal mind that we find in professional psychological and philosophical circles today are deeply influenced by tradition mind/body dualism." Noting the differences among behaviorism, cognitivism and evolutionary psychology, he questions the "unacceptably superficial" demand for "*empirical evidence* for animal minds" by some who claim links to scientific behaviorism. Brown contends that behaviorism is actually "an example of *non-reductive materialism*," adding that "the behaviorist extends mental predicates to any being that displays the appropriate behaviors." Next, Clare Callahan's essay "I do not want the judgment of any man: The Unstable Animal-Human Boundary in Linguistics and Kafka's "A Report to an Academy" discusses "*how* representations of animals in a variety of texts undermine or complicate the boundary between animal and human." Callahan uses Kafka's "A Report on the Academy" to highlight the ways in which

¹³ See *Cartesian Linguistics*, New York: Harper and Row, 1966; *Language and Mind*, New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World 1968.

human language is fundamentally distorted and call into question the boundaries between literature and language in scientific reports on apes and language. By surveying two scientific accounts—H. S. Terrace’s “A Report to an Academy, 1980” and E. Sue Savage-Rumbaugh and William M. Fields’ “Linguistic, Cultural, and Cognitive Capacities of Bonobos”—she explores the ways in which human projections of animals are in fact self-reflexive. She argues that because the performativity of language blurs the distinction between literary and non-literary discourses, the linguistic identities that construct the animal-human boundary are also rendered unstable. “Rhetoric and Representation in Popular Science Texts: Uses of Anthropomorphism in Rachel Carson’s *Under the Sea Wind*” by Sarah Perrault explores anthropomorphism in Rachel Carson’s first book, *Under the Sea Wind*. Although anthropomorphism might appear unscientific, Perrault argues that it can be a useful device for nature writers who are engaged in an attempt to de-center our view by firmly placing humans firmly within the natural realm, rather than either outside of or superior to it. Nonetheless, while some writers might use anthropomorphism because it helps offset anthropocentrism, the aim of Perrault is to examine maps out its uses as well as its potential drawbacks by looking at the ways in which Carson’s work relate to the scientific objections to anthropomorphism and the problematic issues of representation that might arise in the usage of anthropomorphic discourse.

This leads to the next important issue: what exactly defines a “pest”? Is any creature that threatens human comfort a pest, or are pests only creatures that threaten human health? Do species typically anthropomorphized and kept as pets (such as dogs and cats) deserve a higher status than those regarded as pests? To what extent should the species be considered more important than the individual when humans deal with animals that threaten humans? For instance, should a rare Siberian tiger be shot if it threatens to attack a human that has viciously teased it? As noted above, Deleuze and Guattari referred to the “Becoming animal” to mark the fluid boundary between human and animal at the molecular rather than the molar level. Chapter III *Becoming Animal, Becoming Human* discusses the fluidity of this boundary, as well as its transgression.

Noting the “crucial” role of the animal in the construction of identity politics, Claire Molloy’s essay “Dreaming of Electric Sheep and Negotiating Animality” examines the way in which the novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* not only “subverts socially constructed categories of animal classification, such as ‘pet,’ ‘food,’ ‘wild’ and ‘domesticated’” but “also appropriates traditional animal metaphors and

binary oppositions to manage the blurring of the ideological margins between human, animal and technology.” She points out that “in the construction of these identities animals play important roles as ideological exemplars that reinforce dominant social hierarchies and discourses, as symbolic objects, and as analogy and metaphor.” Molloy notes that *Do Androids Dream Of Electric Sheep?* creates a discursive space where the constructed boundaries between humans and animals, and conceptions of humanness and otherness are further problematized. Irina Wender describes the animal theme in Coetzee’s novel *Disgrace* as its parasite in her essay “Animality of the Text: Parasitic Narrative and the Aporia of Animal Death in J.M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace*.” Focusing chiefly on the subplot in which David Lurie works at euthanizing dogs in Bev Shaw’s theatre, Wender looks at the way in with the “human created the domos which bred the domestic pet.” She notes the domestic animal’s lack of subjecthood and the way in which the dogs are given a face-to-face encounter with humans before being euthanized. The parasitic event, she contends, “introduces a tearing into the text, defines and identifies, breaks the textual and ethical continuity.” She sees the animal presence as aporetic and transgressive, although it depends on the “larger framework of the human *Disgrace*.”

Noting the paucity of written analyses of animals on television in spite of the interdisciplinary nature of television studies, Patrick West attributes this to television’s anthropocentrism. His essay, titled “Undisciplined Creatures: *CSI: Miami* and the Creativity of the Animal,” uses approaches from film scholar Akira Mizuta Lippitt and psychoanalytic approaches related to the abject from Julia Kristeva, to examine the animal-human relationship in the popular *CSI: Miami* show and to ask whether we are “witnessing, on our televisions, what society is already creating: the ‘becoming animal’ of the human and the ‘becoming human’ of the animal.” He notes that “*CSI: Miami* suggests a fascinating inversion of the human-animal relationship, whereby humans become ‘animalistic’ and animals ‘humanistic.’”

As we have indicated throughout this Introduction, the boundaries between human and animal—whether sharp or blurred—are by no means universal. It would be a generalization to say that all Eastern cultures view the matrix as a continuum rather than a division, particularly because a sharp division between East and West is equally questionable. Chapter IV *Across Cultures* attempts to put together the ways in which non-European cultures (particularly Asian) converge with and diverge from those of mainstream Europe.

Comparing East and West Sheng-mei Ma’s essay “Bugman in

Modernity: To Be *It* in Western Horror and Eastern *Wuwo* (No Self)” investigates the ways in which both cultural traditions have envisioned and represented the epistemological fusion of the lowest and the highest in the animal kingdom, the “bugman”: examining “how bugman is represented as an “injurious pest” in the West and a “beneficial pet” in the East, concluding with “aberrations,” namely, certain texts take on the other culture’s perspective on bugman.” His paper shows that “Whereas the condition of being a ‘bugman’ constitutes existential abyss to the West, the East finds in it blissful egolessness.” Moving to an artist who has arguably had as much influence in Europe and North America as he has in his native Japan, Servanne Woodward’s “Of Animals and Transgression in Kurosawa’s *Dreams*” examines the appearance of animals in various episodes of the film. Noting the influence of No theatre on Kurosawa, she points out that animals are integrated human form in “Sunshine Through the Rain,” mutating from drawings into themselves in “Crows,” and into one another in “The Weeping Demon” even as humans grow bestial horns. This trans-species evolution could be superficially interpreted as interdependence, as we all survive or we all die, but it could also be seen as the transgression of proper boundaries and contracts between species. Through the series of films, we also follow the progress from ancient folktales and traditions (assumedly taught to children) to modern capitalist and westernized Japan (the context for adult activity). Lili Hsieh’s essay “Animality and the Degree Zero of Desire: A Psychoanalytic Reading of the Buddhist Parable “The Story of Du Zicun”” uses Lacan’s examples of the bee’s dance and the chimpanzee in front of a mirror to read a popular Buddhist parable, arguing that Lacanian psychoanalysis and Buddhist thinking share similar ideas of desire and subjectivity. The parable brings to the fore the paradox of desire and attachment in Buddhism by showing Du’s transformations from a wasteful libertine to a determined Buddhist practitioner. Hsieh argues that the failure of Du to achieve the ultimate degree zero of desire can be read productively through psychoanalysis. In particular she asks how to read Du’s fall back to humanity if humanity consists precisely of such a failure and the fall and if psychoanalysis can help to understand the haunting idea of an impossible void. Moreover, as the parable bears a recurring theme of the conflict between kinship and transcendence in the “collective unconscious,” she also ponders whether the story can also assist in articulating cultural differences in some of the fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis.

While some cultures do not share the dualistic worldview of Western mainstream traditions, as we have seen above, the majority still upheld a certain hierarchical order between species. But as we have suggested