

The Family Pet

Introduction

PETS ARE EVERYWHERE. In our homes there are millions of pet dogs, cats, gerbils, birds, fish, rabbits, snakes, and monkeys. Our political economy includes a multibillion-dollar service industry that provides veterinary medical care, food, breeding, and assorted paraphernalia.¹

Why do we have such an institution? Pet owners and pet lovers join the pet industry in detailing benefits that pet ownership confers on individual pet owners. Pets, they say, provide pleasure, companionship, and protection, or the feeling of being secure.² Pet owning decreases blood pressure and increases life expectancy for coronary and other patients.³ Pets provide an excuse for exercise and a stimulus to meet people.⁴ They help children to learn gentleness and responsibility; they help young couples to prepare for parenthood; and they give their owners some of the pleasure of having children without some of the responsibility. Pets help people to deal with the loss by death of a friend or relative.⁵ Not least of all, pets are useful in many kinds of psychotherapy and family therapy.⁶

What is it about pets that makes them useful and attractive to human beings in these ways? In this essay I will explore one possible answer to this question. I will suggest that pethood derives its powerful and, at first blush, wholly beneficial aspect from its ability to allow pet owners to experience a relationship ever present in political ideology: the relationship between the distinction of which beings are our familial kin from which are not kin and the distinction of which beings are our species kind from which are not our kind. Pethood allows us as individuals to experience and enjoy that ideologically crucial distinction in a way that is at once comforting and apparently harmless. And, indeed, we generally think of pethood as an innocuous and even trivial institution of "consumer society."⁷ We will see here, however, that the particular idealized articulation of kinship with kind that the traditional institution of pethood helps to perpetuate conceals even from would-be kindly human beings a brutally inhumane political reality.

A pet "is good to think on, if a man would express himself neatly," writes Christopher Smart in his poem, "For I Will Consider My Cat Jeoffrey."⁸ That the individual pet is in some fashion the expressive mirror of its owner is a long-standing commonplace; Barbara Woodhouse (the dog trainer) goes so far as to claim that "we get the animals we deserve."⁹ In this essay, however, I will be

concerned not so much with the neat expression of an individual pet owner by his individual pet as with the general expression of Western familial and national structure in its unique *institution* of pethood. It is a generally accepted doctrine nowadays that “the human/pet relationship, while biologically derived and universal, may also serve a particularized psychopathologic purpose”;¹⁰ I want to discuss here the sexual, familial, and finally social role that the institution of pethood plays in contemporary politics and ideology.

The Kind and Kin of Pets

A little less than kin and more than kind.
—Shakespeare, *Hamlet*¹¹

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines *pet* as “any animal domesticated or tamed kept as a favorite or treated with indulgence.”¹² This is a reasonable preliminary definition of *pet*. And since it passes over, even obscures, certain potentially discomfiting ramifications of what it may mean to *domesticate* animals and to *indulge* them, it is also a socially useful definition. My purpose here is to consider a few potentially disconcerting aspects of the role of pets in our society and to examine anew their sexual, familial, and political function. I shall focus first on the way in which the pet lover generally thinks of the species and the family of his pet.

The kind, or species. The ordinary definition of the family pet as an *animal* tends to obscure the essential demarcation between human beings and other animals since it implies that any animal, including a human being, can be a pet. To put the matter this way is, however, to assume that there *is* an essential interspecies demarcation between human and animal beings, which pet lovers might deny. Pet lovers, after all, “find it difficult to separate people and animals,” as Betty White confesses in her book *Pet-Love*;¹³ they would have it that we humans can sometimes have a special, or super-special, kinship with the particular living being who is a pet of ours.¹⁴

In America today our thinking of pets as human and our treating them as human has many aspects. We feed our pets human food, for example, and celebrate their birthdays.¹⁵ More than half of American pet owners look upon their pets as “almost human”; nine tenths talk to their pets as though they were human,¹⁶ and six hundred pet cemeteries in the United States imitate the burial or cremation service for human beings or bury animals alongside their human owners.¹⁷

For pet lovers, this interspecies transformation of the particular animal into a kind of human being is the familiar rule. (It is the rule also in the legend of Beauty and the Beast, where a friendly monster is metamorphosed into a family

man,¹⁸ and in the Homeric tale of Circe, where men are metamorphosed into domestic animals.)¹⁹ It is also the rule expressed in the typical English pet lover's practice of giving his animal a human name, a practice that suggests that the pet lover regards his pet as though it were human. Indeed, *to pet* means "to treat a human being as an animal."²⁰

The tendency to erase—and, if you want, also to rise above—the ordinary distinction between human and animal beings suggests the first potentially disturbing question raised not only by the ordinary definition of *pet* but also by the institution of pethood itself. "What kind of animal is a pet?" or "As what kind of animal is a pet thought of?" Another way to put the same question is, "What is a human being?"

The kin, or family. Ordinary definitions of *pet* obscure not only what man and animal are but also what is the place of the pet in the family structure. For pet lovers, as for Betty White, "animals have always been a part of [the] family."²¹ The "cade lamb," which is the archetypal pet in the Scottish and English traditions, is a being raised by hand *in* the family; it is a being in the household as well as the house.²²

For many pet lovers, their animals are thus not only surrogate family members that function as children, grandchildren, spouses, or parents,²³ or that are considered to be as important as family members.²⁴ For pet lovers, pets *are* family.

But how can an animal be in my family, or be *thought* of as being in my family? What is my pet's kinship relation to me, or its kind of kinship relation to me?

Bestiality and/or incest. Somehow the family pet is, or is *thought* of, as being familiar enough to be both in the special family, or in humankind, and in the particular consanguineous family.²⁵ If my pet animal is somehow human, or is thought of as being somehow human, and if my pet is *also* somehow in the family, or is thought of as being in the family, then might I not wonder whether I can love or marry my humanoid pet without somehow violating a basic taboo, or somehow *thinking* of violating one?

For all its outlandishness, the preceding question suggests how, at some level, pet love traduces (or transcends) two practices we ordinarily think of as being taboo. One of these practices is bestiality, or interspecies lovemaking, which is an effect of traducing the ordinary interspecies distinctions between human and nonhuman beings, or between kind and non-kind. The other practice is incest, or intrafamilial lovemaking, which is an effect of traducing the ordinary distinction between kin and non-kin.²⁶

Pet love thus toes the line between chaste, or socially sanctioned, attraction (between a human being and a being from inside his species and outside his family) and either bestial attraction (between a human being and an "animal"

being from outside humankind) or incestuous attraction (between a human being and a being from inside the particular kinship family). Or, as I am suggesting, whether we look at it from the viewpoint of the individual or of society, the institution of pethood allows us to toe the line between chaste attraction and both bestiality and incest taken together.

In psychoanalytic and anthropological terms: ontogenetically the pet is a transitional object,²⁷ and phylogenetically it is a totem.²⁸

Puppy love and petting. Connections between kind, kin, and sexuality of the sort we are describing are hinted at throughout ordinary language. Consider, for example, the popular American terms *puppy love* and *petting*. On account of their humorous aspect these symptomatic terms are able, each in its own way, both to conceal and to reveal the bestial and incestuous aspect of pethood.

1) *Puppy love.* One ideological tendency of the institution of pethood is to make such distinctions as that between sexual and nonsexual feelings seem clear and uncontroversial. Thus pet lovers may object to my wanting to discuss the sexual significance of loving pets in that, although pethood may blur the distinction between kind and non-kind (hence the definition of animal love) and also the distinction between kin and non-kin (hence the definition of kin love), yet it does not blur the distinction between sexual and nonsexual love (hence the definition of bestiality and incest). This objection assumes that there *is* such a thing as essentially nonsexual love for a being who both is and is not both kind and kin. Yet even ordinary language belies the assumption of essential difference between such sorts of love. Consider first the term *puppy love*.

Puppy love between human beings, we say ordinarily, is, like calf love, a sentimental and transitory affection between a young boy and girl;²⁹ we say it is, for all practical purposes, asexual. (It is the presumably asexual aspect of puppy love that helps to explain why *puppy love* is usually a term of mild contempt.)³⁰ Puppy love is supposed to be as sexually innocuous as loving a “puppy” in the traditional sense of “a small dog used as a lady’s pet or plaything, a *toy dog*,”³¹ the beloved being in puppy love is much like a *poupée*, or doll (*poupée*, the French term for “doll,” is the etymological source of *puppy*), and also much like a *puppet* (a term cognate with *puppy*).³²

We assume that puppy love is, or should be, just as sexually innocuous as loving a close human kin is, or should be. Put otherwise, we assume that it is no more or less bestial for a human being to love a puppy dog—a being from outside his species—than it is incestuous for a human being to love a human “puppy lover” from inside his consanguineous family.³³ It follows that, if one wishes to avoid or sublimate both literal bestiality *and* literal incest—as who does not?—one way to do so would be to seek out a “snugglepup.”

The term *snugglepup* indicates a pet puppy with whom one snuggles, in the

sense that a child snuggles with its transitional object or that the one half of all the pets in the United States who sleep in the same bed with a member of the family snuggle or are snuggled by their owners.³⁴ *Snugglepup* also indicates a young man with whom one attends petting parties.³⁵ (Sometimes we call such a man a *pet*.) Or, as I am suggesting, *snugglepup* may indicate *both* the beloved animal and the human lover taken together.

The idea of snugglepuppy love, or pet love, is a great commercial success in the contemporary period. It is sold, in its feminine form, as the *Penthouse* “Pet of the Month” and as the *Playboy* “Bunny.”³⁶ (*Playboy*’s humanoid Bunny is a doll-like creature if ever there were one, as unlike a rabbit as a *poupée* is unlike a dog.) Snugglepup love is the commercial ideal of relationship between living beings: for all its apparent sexuality, it is a relationship that is infertile and unthreatening. In the social and sexual institutions represented for us by the Pet and the Bunny, we grown-up human beings dress other human beings to look like animals (or we brand them with the insignia of an animal),³⁷ as though these particular human beings were animals.

2) Petting. We may “doubt if there’s [really] such a thing as puppy love,”³⁸ i.e., love between young human beings that is sexually innocuous. Freudians, after all, doubt whether there is such a thing as asexual love—or even essentially nonincestuous affection—in a human kinship family. Put another way, we may wonder at the simultaneously asexual and sexual significance of *petting* pets. Consider here the term *petting*.

Petting means not only mere patting, “fondling or hugging,”³⁹ but also “sexual embracing” or “petting below the waist.”⁴⁰ Therefore, our petting an animal that we say we love—a being whose kind we distinguish in a commonsense way from our own kind—is, by the definition of *petting* as “sexual embracing,” a kind of bestiality. (It is like being lapped by a lapdog.)⁴¹ Our “petting” the child, sibling, or parent whom we say that we love—a being whose kinship we identify in a commonsense way with our own kinship—is, by the same definition of *petting* as “sexual embracing,” incest.⁴² (We nickname “Pet”—and sometimes also “Beast”—the human beings with whom we are intimate.) And, by the same definition, our “petting” the *family pet*—a being who is at once neither our kind nor our kin and also both our kind and our kin—is both bestiality and incest taken together.

Some students of the various physiological benefits to pet owners of hugging and patting their pets assume, as we might expect, a distinction between “engaged” and “idle” petting. According to them, “idle” petting resembles “the *absent-minded* fondling of a child while attention is focused elsewhere”; idle petting “can provide reverie and relaxation.”⁴³ We may now hypothesize one explanation why it is *absent-minded* fondling or petting of a pet as though it were a child that produces relaxation: such petting allows us to mark and transcend an otherwise absolute and oppressive distinction between kin and non-kin and between kind and non-

kind while at the same time allowing us briefly to blur without shame the distinction between sexual and nonsexual demonstration of affection.

From this perspective on the kind and kin of pets, the way to determine rightly the familial and sexual role of pets must go beyond anthropocentric analysis of psychotic or neurotic human-animal relationships, analyses of the kind that we encounter in such studies as Sigmund Freud's "Little Hans" and "Wolf Man," Helen Deutsch's "Chicken Phobia," and Sandor Ferenczi's "Little Chanticleer."⁴⁴ These psychoanalytic studies ignore the institution of pethood except to make it a latter-day totemism. Freud, in *Totem and Taboo*, argues that in zoophobia, or fear of animals, the animal serves to preserve the barrier against incest;⁴⁵ I should argue that it is in zoophilia/zooerasty, or animal love—i.e., in particularized pethood, especially nowadays and in America—that the attempt to avoid incest is more typically made.

The Idea of Universal Kinship

The institution of particular pethood depends upon the individual pet owner having a different relationship to his animal than he has to other animals, or on his distinguishing between his particular family pet and unfamiliar animals in general. This dependence means that pethood generally militates against the idea of *general* interspecies kinship and may even exclude it.⁴⁶ In pethood only family pets are familial kin; only they are human kind.

However, pet love is, in some circumstances, extendable to a brotherly (or, if you will, sisterly) love of all animals universally—to a *kinship with all life*.⁴⁷ Pet love seems to be extendable to universal interspecies love in, for example, the case of the pet love of Chaucer's Prioress, who weeps not only when someone beats her familiar dog but also when an apparently unfamiliar mouse is caught in a trap.⁴⁸ Pet love also seems extendable to universal interspecies love in the case of the pet love of Christopher Smart, a lover of his own cat who writes that animals and birds are, together with himself, "fellow subjects of the eternal King."⁴⁹ For Chaucer's Prioress and for Smart, all humans are essentially children in one Family under God the Parent. And all family pets, or all animals able to become pets (or convertible to the status of pethood), are part of a superhuman kind of family.

One consequence of hypothesizing a universal kinship among specifically human beings is that such kinship makes any act of sexual intercourse between human beings incestuous.⁵⁰ That is one reason why religious celibates such as Chaucer's Prioress shun *all* sexual intercourse as "spiritual incest": religious celibates in the Catholic tradition have rejected their kinship ties with their consanguineous human families and, as "children of adoption" by God, claim that, in their new family, *all* men and women are equally their brothers and sisters and hence equally taboo.⁵¹

If any human being in any society wishes to avoid incest while at the same time avoiding such celibacy as Chaucer's Prioress espouses, then he has to find a sexual partner from outside his family. But if he maintains the traditional Christian hypothesis of universal kinship, according to which "*all ye are brethren*,"⁵² then *all* human beings are from inside his family, and his species and his family are one and the same. It follows from this identity of species with family that if any human being wishes to avoid both incest and celibacy while at the same time maintaining the belief in universal kinship, he must find an extraspecies, or extrafamilial, sexual partner. She or he must find an animal—a Beast—with whom to have sexual relations.

Maybe such a quest for the Beast—or such a flight from incest—is not as bad as it sounds. Is not bestiality better than incest? Or "spiritual bestiality" better than "spiritual incest"? The social anthropologists call the taboo on *incest*, not that on bestiality, the "Law of laws." In "Beauty and the Beast," the heroine leaves her loving kinsman and kisses the Beast.

Excursus on the story of Beauty and the Beast. "Beauty and the Beast" is the beloved and celebrated story of a young maiden, Beauty, whose agreement to marry a fearsome animal, Beast, corresponds to that animal's transformation into a handsome man. Some interpreters of this fairy tale explain away its sexual and bestial aspects by saying that it is a philosophical allegory of the rational soul's journey toward intellectual, or spiritual, love. According to this interpretation, the sensitive Beauty's insight into the spiritual beauty inside the physically animal, hence ugly, Beast precipitates the Beast's physical transformation into a human, hence beautiful, being.⁵³ This reading of the story is reassuring and enlightening, but it does not take into account that, in the story, it is Beauty's *kissing* the Beast—and in some versions of the story her sexual intercourse with the Beast—not her rare *insight* into him, that is the agent of the Beast's transformation from animal to man.

This sexual aspect of "Beauty and the Beast" has made it an attractive text for psychoanalytic criticism, which generally interprets the fairy tale as expressing Beauty's fear of human sexuality and her eventual accommodation to human sexuality at the same time that it explains away its bestial aspect. Thus some analysts say that the story figures a young girl's reaction to a man who requests that she have sex with him, a request that she can understand at first only as a beastly one but that she finally comes to understand as only human.⁵⁴ According to one psychoanalytic elaboration of the tale, the man with animal, or sexual, desires for whom the Beast stands is Beauty's own father; one critic argues that her father's picking the red rose in Beast's garden is a symbol of his desire, conscious or unconscious, to "deflower" Beauty.⁵⁵ The psychoanalytic readings of the story thus claim generally that Beast is any man with sexual desires or that Beast is Beauty's father with sexual desires. Such readings are adequate to the

tale only so long as we grant that Beast is not, at some level, really a beast, or animal. A literal reading of the story in any one of its hundreds of versions shows, however, that Beast is, in the first instance, not a man with ugly animal/sexual desires (which is how the psychoanalysts would have it) but an animal/beast.

“Beauty and the Beast” is, in fact, the most widespread of the “Animal Groom Stories”—a type of folk tale in which the hero or heroine marries an *animal*. In the “Animal Groom Story” the hero or heroine does not marry an ugly man with a beautiful soul, as the proponents of the view that “Beauty and the Beast” is simply an allegorical expression of the rational soul’s journey toward intellectual beauty would have it, nor a man with apparently sexual/ugly desires (as the proponents of the psychoanalytic view would have it), but an animal. “Beauty and the Beast” is ultimately about bestiality and the human family.⁵⁶

Who else is there for Beauty to marry but an animal? All the male human beings in Beauty’s world are her close kin—usually her father and three brothers.⁵⁷ (For her as for some Christians, all men are her kin.) All her men are family, so that, for Beauty, any act of intraspecies sexual intercourse is incestuous. For Beauty, only an act of interspecies sexual intercourse, or of bestiality, can be nonincestuous: only bestiality is chaste.

Consider, as a useful scheme for understanding the metaphorical structures—or species and familial divisions—of the fairy tale, the two interrelated “laws” that Edward Westermarck proposes in his *The History of Human Marriage*. First, Westermarck’s species “law of similarity” has it that we animals, both human and nonhuman, tend to mate with those *like* ourselves; we shy away from sexual intercourse with those outside our species, or from bestiality. Second, Westermarck’s family “law of dissimilarity” has it that we tend to mate with those *unlike* ourselves; we shy away from sexual intercourse inside the family, or from incest.⁵⁸ In the fairy tale, Beauty shies away from sexual intercourse/marriage with the animal that she loves because that animal is so much *unlike* her as to be outside her species, and she shies away from exclusive love with her father because he is so much *like* her as to be inside her immediate family. Throughout the middle section of the fairy tale, Beauty vacillates between living with her loving father and living with her beastly lover; she wavers between incest and bestiality.

Yet Beast, who is the extraspecies animal in Beauty’s life, is, to all intents, the *same* as her father, who is the intrafamilial man—and, essentially, the only man—in Beauty’s life. This identity between the two male beings in Beauty’s life—the one too unlike her, the other too like her—is hinted at in the economic bargain that informs the tale: the deal whereby Beauty’s life is traded to Beast in exchange for, or in behalf of, the life of her father. And the identity between Beast and Father is also hinted at in the two rival “suitors” mortal sicknesses, which compel Beauty to choose between attending to the needs of one or to those of the other, hence to choose between killing one or the other.

In “Beauty and the Beast” father and Beast—or human exogamy and bestial

endogamy—are, for Beauty, one and the same. This conflation of incest and bestiality is the key to understanding the structural significance and widespread popularity of the tale.⁵⁹ It is a conflation that informs even the oldest analogue of the tale, Apuleius' "Tale of Cupid and Psyche." In this Roman story, Psyche/Beauty does not know whether the invisible being with whom she makes love night after night is an animal, a human kinsperson, or a god. It is as though, from Beauty's viewpoint, she might as well be sleeping with anyone or anything, as in a grand masquerade where all beings can or do pass for one another. It is as though Beauty might as well be sleeping with her father or with a great viper—which is what Beauty's sisters tell her she is doing.⁶⁰ In "Cupid and Psyche" it turns out, however, that Psyche is unwittingly not the lover of beast or father but of god (Cupid).⁶¹ Psyche/Beauty is a Roman version of the Christian *sponsa dei*, or bride of God, as if only a god could transcend in one leap both familial boundaries (kinsperson vs. non-kinsperson) and species boundaries (man vs. animal). Like the Beast, Cupid is, in the instant of his transformation, a member of two apparently different species. Beast/Cupid is like the amphibian lover in the "Frog Prince" tales, where the Animal Groom is both aquatic being and land being as well as both animal and man.⁶²

In "Beauty and the Beast," the Beast becomes, in the instant of its osculatory transformation from animal to man, a transitional object between parental and spousal love.⁶³ Only the miraculous transformation of Beast into a human husband allows for the chaste marriage, neither bestial nor incestuous, that gives the fairy tale its edenic or paradisiacal ending. The millennial popularity of "Beauty and the Beast" is attributable to its comedic blending together of human endogamy with bestial exogamy in such a way as to make a human exogamy.

However, the success of Beauty's search for a wholly acceptable being with whom to mate—an intraspecies and extrafamilial one—depends on our granting that there is a real difference of kind between human beings and animal beings. For the difference between incest and bestiality, upon which Beauty's search for the right beast (call him Husband)—and hence also for a chaste marriage—depends, vanishes if we hypothesize not only that all human beings are our kin (the traditional Christian view) but also that all animals are our kind (the view of Saint Francis and some pet lovers). The consequence of this view that all animals are our kind is that the only alternative to absolute celibacy is bestial incest, or incestuous bestiality.

In the same way, the hypothesis of our kinship with animals leads either to vegetarianism or cannibalism, and even the comforting difference between vegetarianism and cannibalism vanishes if we hypothesize a human kinship with vegetables as well as with animals. The consequence of this view is that the only alternative to starvation is cannibalism.

To choose between celibacy and bestiality/incest and also between starvation

and cannibalism is difficult and needful, yet society has imposed its sentence upon us: eat, drink, and be married. For fully socialized human beings—i.e., for civilized adults—the primordially tragic need to choose between such dire alternatives *must* appear comedic.

Kindness and Christendom

Let us backtrack and reconsider, on the one hand, the relationship of the idea of universal animal kinship to the idea of universal human kinship and, on the other hand, the connection of the idea of universal animal kinship with the purported moral obligation to be kind to kin, or to be our brother's keeper.

Universalist and particularist ideology. It is helpful here to put forward, in a heuristic spirit, two types of religious or social ideologies. The first of these I shall call "universalist": a universalist thinker says that all members of humankind are essentially his kin and, in an extended sense, that all members of animalkind are essentially his kin. The other ideology I shall call "particularist": a particularist thinker says that only members of a particular segment of humankind are his kin, and also that there is an essential difference between human beings and animal beings.

Universalist religion, then, posits overtly that there is essentially only *one* human tribe in the world. For believers in such a religion, "All men are my brothers and only animals are others (i.e., only animals are other than familial kin)."

Call Paul the person who said this. Paul's statement *can* mean that all the human beings that "we"—as well as he—ordinarily call human beings are members of one big family. So long as "we" all agree with Paul about which beings are essentially human, this idea of one happy family is pleasant enough. However, Paul, in his claim that all his kind are (also) his kin—or that all humankind are his brothers and sisters—leaves unexplored the question of who are his or our kind, or of what humankind is. More important, the way that Paul sidesteps this question of kind invites us to conclude that *only* his kin are his kind. This conclusion, we shall see, has terrible moral and political consequences.

Paul's statement, "All men are my brothers," recalls a primitive way of talking about ourselves in relation to other families and/or species. For some primitive tribes the word for "human being" and the word for "fellow tribesperson" either are synonymous or are one and the same.⁶⁴ Similarly, Paul's universalist statement *can* turn out to mean, "Only my brothers are human, all others are animals." And this way of articulating the connection between kin and kind separates those whom we might ordinarily call human but who are not in our kinship (tribal) group not only from our kinship but, insofar as we believe that all our kind are our kin, also from our kind.

Particularist religion rules out of order this politically dangerous slide from saying that all humankind are our kin to saying that only brethren are humans and all nonbrethren are only animals. It avoids this pitfall by holding that there is more than one brotherhood, or tribe, of human beings. For particularists there are human brothers and also others who are not, on account of their otherness, less than humankind.

While the universalist view insists that all aliens are animals (it cannot admit the existence of others who are human), the particularist view allows us to *think* of and *treat* some beings from outside one's particular tribe as humans rather than as animals.

Universalist religion thinks of and treats differently than does particularist religion what it thinks of as extratribal beings, i.e., beings from outside the essential kinship group. For universalists all extratribal beings are *ipso facto* also extrafamilial and extraspecies beings, i.e., animals. From "our" viewpoint, of course, the beings that universalists call extraspecies beings *may* be either animal beings or human beings; we would call them human beings, for example, if we and the beings in question were members of another universalist sect or if we were particularists for whom some extratribal beings are human.

Now insofar as the universalists' figuring of universal kinship extends kinship in the essential tribe or family to include not only those beings whom it considers to be human but also those beings whom it considers to be animal—an extension that its theorists sometimes make in order to eliminate the otherwise inevitable problem of distinguishing between human beings and animals—universalists tend to think of and treat beings who are purportedly of a different kin or kind not only as nonhuman but also as nonanimal or as insentient things. Universalist religion thus treats not only alien humans but also animals differently than does particularist religion. The practical moral and political consequences of this difference between universalist and particularist doctrine are far-reaching.

Kindness and cruelty to animals. There are many universalist tribes—groups of human beings for whom all extratribal beings are also essentially nonhuman, or for whom the concept of "human" and that of "fellow tribesperson" are indicated by two synonymous terms or by one and the same term. Examples abound in the European secularist tradition: the French Revolution held out for universal "fraternity," for example, and the English Family of Love claimed that all human beings were their brethren.⁶⁵ More significantly for our purpose of understanding the longest standing aspects of the Judeo-Christian tradition, the official Christian tradition says that Christianity itself is a universalist religion just as that tradition says that Judaism is a particularist religion.⁶⁶

In what follows I shall adopt this possibly inaccurate Christian representation of Christianity and of Judaism as a means to tease out certain practical moral and political implications of universalist and particularist ideologies.⁶⁷ I shall

discuss the largely “secular” and “nationalist” states of Christendom—such states as France and England; their thinking about and treatment of “others” is connected with the primitive ideology that Christianity tends to embrace, whether in official Pauline or unofficial Napoleonic and later guises. For both the “religious” and the “secular” Christian there are, in regard to animals and kinship, two positions in *polar* opposition to each other. 1) Animals are akin to humans; that is, animals are our brothers, hence are to be thought of and treated as if they were members of our species/tribe. In this view we are not the “keepers” of animals but their equals. In holding this view Christianity is what one historian of animal sentimentality calls “the most anthropocentric religion that the world has ever seen.”⁶⁸ 2) Animals are extraspecies *and* extratribal beings, and hence, like all *essentially* nonhuman things, animals are outside the “covenant.”

The position that all living creatures are our brethren is an hypothesis entertained by such Christian thinkers as St. Francis, who preached his doctrine to the birds, and St. Anthony, whose horse, it is said, used to kneel to receive the eucharistic host.⁶⁹ And the universal kinship of all living creatures is a popular notion in secular Christian culture. Thus, one widespread old English Christmas carol—a song celebrating the birth of an extraspecies god as an intraspecies human being—includes the following refrain:

The friendly beasts around him stood:
“Jesus, our brother, kind and good.”⁷⁰

In performing this carol, the members of a chorus of human beings, a species that we define as “speaking animals,” pretend to be members of a choir of “domestic animals that speak” (goats, chickens, sheep, and so on)—as if the caroling humans were animals or the animals were caroling humans. The notion of the animals’ friendship, kindness, and brotherliness to man is pleasant, of course. But it can also be unsettling. For example, universal kinship turns all meat eating into cannibalism—even into incestuous cannibalism, since the flesh that a meat eater devours must come from the body of a “brother,” that is, from the body of a butchered member of one’s *essentially* human family, or, if you prefer, from a member of one’s super-species family. At the very least such kinship as this “Carol of the Beasts” supposes turns all meat eating into cannibalism for him, or for Him, whom the animals call their “kind . . . brother.”

The significance for Christian thought of the analogy between Jesus and the domestic animal—Jesus is part man and part God and the domestic animal is part man and part animal—is hinted by the birthplace that Christians generally assign to Jesus: a stable.⁷¹ There being no proper place among human beings for this extraordinary creature to be born—“no crib for a bed”—Mary gave birth to Jesus “away in a manger.”⁷² Many Christian pet lovers, following or imitating Jesus, wish that they too had been born among animals: “I often think that I

should have been happier," writes Barbara Woodhouse, "born in a stable than at St. Columbia's College."⁷³

The view of *all* God's creatures not only having a place in the choir but also inhabiting the *same* species place in the choir is totalitarian. And since it denies the various animals a place of their own, it often leads to the relegation of animals not to "human beings" but to mere "things," say things to eat. (Instead of saying, "All the animals are our kin," we come to say, "*Only* my kin are animals, the being that I eat is *only* a thing.") Indeed, the second Christian view of animals has it that, insofar as animals are not, like family pets, inside of our *family*—or insofar as they are, unlike family pets, entirely outside of our *species*—animals are, like vegetables and stones, outside the covenant of the law. Christianity, especially in its postmedieval context, thus grants to man virtually limitless dominion over the world of "things," say animals, in which human beings live.⁷⁴

Taken together, these two interconnected views of animals: 1) that animals are akin to humans and therefore part of the covenant and 2) that animals are not akin to humans and therefore not part of the covenant, might be contrasted with the view of animals that informs such a "particularist" religion as Judaism. Judaism allows that there are extraspecies members of the covenant (i.e., non-human members of the covenant) just as it allows that there are extratribal members (i.e., non-Jewish members of the covenant). For Jews, animals and men are both within the covenant, albeit that animals and men inhabit different places in it.

What are the practical consequences of this difference between Christianity and Judaism for the treatment of animals by humans? The doctrines of the Jewish religion, while disclaiming equal kinship between human beings and animals, enjoins humane kindness toward the animals. The commandments of the Jews say, for example, that one should help the ass even of one's enemy when the ass is under its burden,⁷⁵ that one should allow animals to rest on the Sabbath,⁷⁶ that one should not muzzle an ox when it treads out the corn,⁷⁷ and that one should regard highly the life of one's beast.⁷⁸ Christian writers before the modern era usually ignore the biblical passages enjoining specific kindly treatment of animals. Or they interpret them allegorically to refer not to animals but to humans; for example, Christian clergy said that the "muzzled ox" in the passage from Deuteronomy stands for the "inadequately paid clergy."⁷⁹

How some Christian thinkers converted the rules of the Old Testament against being cruel to animals into a license for dominion over them⁸⁰ is as interesting as how some Christians turned the Jewish injunction against physical cannibalism into an endorsement of "spiritual cannibalism" (the Eucharist) or turned the Jewish injunction against physical incest into an endorsement of "spiritual incest" (God as the Father of Himself).⁸¹ Many Christians argued that beasts were not fit parties for taking part in a covenant and therefore could not be part of one.⁸²

Thomas Aquinas presented another argument: “If any passage in holy scriptures seems to forbid us to be cruel to brute animals,” says Thomas, “[it does so] lest, through being cruel to an animal, one becomes cruel to human beings, or because an injury to an animal leads to the temporal hurt of man.”⁸³ Calvin wrote similarly that animals were permitted to rest on the Sabbath only to ensure that their human masters do so.⁸⁴ This Christian view of kindness to animals, a view both Catholic and Protestant, suggests that if we could be sure that cruelty to a species other than our own would do our own species no harm, then cruelty to animals would be permissible. (And what if we were sure that cruelty to another “species,” even annihilation of it, would do our “species” some good . . . ?)

When, in the late eighteenth century, animal sentimentalists in a Christian secularist culture sought scriptural justification for their own feeling that humans should be kind to animals, they could not, generally speaking, find it in the New Testament. The only relevant doctrine they could find in Christendom involved old-fashioned “pagan” customs and political institutions that had long existed in more or less unofficial ideological tension with official Christianity.⁸⁵ Only “un-Christian” customs enjoined a polytheistic awe for zoological and botanical creations. (The *Tannenbaum* of the German tribes is a good example.) Only “un-Christian” political institutions called upon human beings to be kind to creatures outside their own kin or kind group. (Some basically pre-Christian feudal doctrines thus called upon the feudal lord to be kind to his vassals in the same way and in the same words that they called upon the vassal to be kind to his animals.) The doctrines of the Pythagoreans and of the Hindus—that *all* animals have souls equal with ours—might have been useful to the sentimentalists in their search for authority, but these doctrines seemed too outlandish to be persuasive. So the sentimentalists turned for help to the Jewish view that cruelty to animals is wrong *regardless* of how we feel about either the human consequences of cruelty to animals or about the animals’ interspecies equality with us humans.⁸⁶

The sentimentalists cited Hebrew scriptures to their purpose of encouraging kindness to those who are not humankind. But they mistook the complex and balanced Jewish understanding both of stewardship and of kindness to those who are not humankind. They represented Judaism in such a way as to make it appear that the Jewish position on the relationship between humans and animals and on the relationship between one group of animals and another has, like the sentimentalist position, no reference to real individual and political needs. This misrepresentation of Judaism continues among sentimentalists and ecologists to the present day.⁸⁷ Nowadays, indeed, the sentimentalist position has become idealist to the point of wondering whether it might be unkind to eat not only sentient nonhuman beings (animals) but also nonsentient beings (vegetables) and even nonliving beings (rocks).⁸⁸ It is as though, for thoroughgoing sentimentalists, universal human starvation were the only alternative to being inhumane. *Returning to Eden* is their aptly entitled handbook.⁸⁹

The pet as inedible animal. In Judaism the rules of how to be kind to animals are inextricably connected with the rules of how to be cruel. The God of the Pentateuch tells us not only how to tend the animals but which to butcher and how to butcher them. The closeness of the relation in Judaism between being kind to animals and eating them ought not to be underestimated.⁹⁰ One is cruel in such a way as, or in order, to be able to be kind.⁹¹

In this context it is important to emphasize that Christianity, unlike many other religions, does not ban the eating of *any* food: Christianity is essentially an omnivorous ideology.⁹² Indeed, even cannibalism, which is banned absolutely in most other cultures, is sometimes enjoined in Christianity. In the Eucharist, for example, the celebrant eats or says that he eats—in however extraordinary a sense—a being that is not only partly nonhuman, or divine, but also partly human.

In an essentially omnivorous Christian culture the widespread institution-ization of sanctioned pethood in the modern era made a crucial difference to the view of animals and men alike. Christianity had been an omnivorous religion, but in the new order the pet emerged as the one essentially inedible animal. Indeed, one definition of *pet* that tells us about the way that we “indulge” these domestic animals is that they are “the animal or nonhuman beings that cannot, or should not, be eaten.” (It is a definition that, in the Christian context and in the gourmet centers of America and England, where almost all kinds of flesh are sold, may go as far as necessary to specify the kind of “indulgence”—as the *Oxford English Dictionary* calls it—that distinguishes pets from the other animals.) In Christianity, the advent of pethood, or of the institution that made human kind and familial kin out of beings that had theretofore been considered extraspecies and extrafamilial, brought with it the feeling, amply illustrated in the literature, that it would be like ordinary cannibalism to eat a pet.⁹³

That there should be anything at all that it would be wrong to eat was a crucial new position for Christendom. (It is a Protestant position; Roman Catholic churchmen frowned upon pet owning⁹⁴—and also upon the practice of giving to animals “Christian” names, or names “appropriate” to human beings⁹⁵—because such practices tended to confuse the partly human Christ with the partly human Fido, or the Eucharist with pet eating.) And for many decades after the introduction of widespread pethood, the romantic and Victorian Christians treated as identical pet eating and cannibalism; they conflated the new taboo, “Thou shalt not eat a pet”—a taboo that the institution of pethood promulgated—with the old taboo, “Thou shalt not eat a human being”—a taboo that the institution of traditional Christianity had both promulgated (insofar as the human being on the platter is most anyone) and also broken or transcended (insofar as the human being was Christ).

The Christian secularist distinction between what animals may and may not be eaten—a distinction often made entirely on the basis of which individual animals are pets—by no means signifies the same as the Jewish laws of Kashrut.

In Christian families, the eating of the family lamb is a central event, a sacred and profane Crucifixion, or butchering, and a Eucharist, or cannibalism, rolled into one.⁹⁶ In Jewish families, what animal may be eaten is indicated not by its human family (is it somehow part of my consanguineous family?) but rather by its animal species (is it a pig?) and its mode of being butchered (is it drained of blood?).

Eating and sexual intercourse. The anthropologist Edmund Leach, adapting a canonical anthropological thesis that “there is a universal tendency [among human beings] to make ritual and verbal associations between eating and sexual intercourse,” argues that “it is a plausible hypothesis that the way in which animals are categorized with regard to edibility will have some correspondence to the way in which human beings are categorized with regard to sexual intercourse.”⁹⁷ Leach then goes on to find a structural parallel, in the tradition of Lévi-Strauss, between two groups: 1) those beings with whom we are barred from having sexual intercourse; and 2) those beings that we are barred from eating. Though he does not say so, Leach makes two or three far-reaching and, at first blush, common-sense assumptions about these two categories of forbidden things. As we shall see, the anthropology of the pet figures centrally in these assumptions, and Leach tends to mistake its complex role in the structuring of taboos on sexual intercourse and eating.

Leach’s first noteworthy assumption is that only human beings belong in group 1, i.e., in the group of beings with whom we are barred from having sexual relations. This assumption means that, while he considers the taboo on incest (which distinguishes those human beings with whom we may have sexual intercourse from those with whom we may not), he passes over the taboo on bestiality (which distinguishes those animals, if any, with which we may have sexual relations from those with which we may not). Yet there are people for whom sexual intercourse with certain kinds (or species) of more or less familiar (or kin) animals is not absolutely condemned.⁹⁸

Leach’s second noteworthy assumption is that only animals belong in group 2, i.e., in the group of beings that can be divided according to which are edible and which are not edible. This assumption means that, while he considers the taboo on eating animals (which distinguishes those animals we may eat from those we may not), he does not consider the taboo on cannibalism (which distinguishes those human beings, if any, we may eat from those we may not). Yet there are people for whom eating certain human beings is not only allowable but even obligatory.⁹⁹ Ordinary cannibalism, it is said, involves the eating of human flesh; and Catholic Christianity imposes on celebrants the obligation to eat the flesh and blood of a being that is not only part nonhuman (divine) but also part human.

Finally, the principal examples that Leach uses to illustrate group 1 and group 2 contradict an excellent hypothesis of his own about pets. That hypothesis

is that the pet is *not* so much an animal per se as an intermediating being between an animal being and a human being.¹⁰⁰ Leach contradicts this hypothesis when he says that the quintessential example of a being in group 1, i.e., the group of beings with which we may not have sexual intercourse, is a member of our own human family; however, as we have seen, a pet as family member might serve just as well. Similarly he contradicts this hypothesis when he says that the quintessential example of a being in group 2, i.e., the group of beings whom we may not eat, is a pet; however, as we have seen, a human being might serve just as well. If, as Leach's original hypothesis suggests, the pet is an "animal-man," it belongs as well or ill in group 1 as in group 2; a pet is as much or little a being with whom we cannot have sexual intercourse as it is a being whom we cannot eat.

Insofar as we conceive the pet as both human and nonhuman, it stands at the intersection between species (it is my kind and another kind as well). Similarly, insofar as we conceive the pet as being both familial and nonfamilial it stands at the intersection between families (it is my kin and not my kin). The pet thus stands at the focal *chassé-croisé*, or crossing-over point, of the taboo concerning eating with the taboo concerning incest.

We have seen, then, that Leach goes some distance toward establishing a structural "homology," or series of correspondences, between eating and sexual intercourse in terms of animals and human beings. However, what we have discovered so far in this essay on the family pet is that the problematic involving pethood and the relation between human and animal shows itself not as a reassuring and easily comprehended structural *homology* between eating and sexual intercourse—which is the canonical anthropological viewpoint that Leach represents—but as an *identity* of eating with sexual intercourse.

The family pet stands *both* at the borderline between family and nonfamily (i.e., at the borderline between those beings with whom it would be incest to have sexual intercourse and those with whom it would not be incest) *and* at the borderline between animal and nonanimal or between man and non-man (i.e., at the borderline between those beings which may be eaten and those which may not). Pets stand at the intersection of kin and kind.

For a culture where *all* sex is equally taboo or sacred (say insofar as we are all essentially siblings and hence barred from having sexual intercourse with one another) and where all eating is equally taboo or sacred (say insofar as we are essentially omnivores), the institution of pethood is, as we shall see below, an especially sensitive barometer of the way human beings grouped as nations are likely to treat one another.

Kindness and cruelty to humans. Let us reiterate here the Jewish (particularist) and Christian (universalist) viewpoints on kin and kind. The Jewish position is that there are human beings both within and without the Jewish tribe; both

intratribal and extratribal human beings are participants in the covenant, however much the ones within the tribe be “chosen,” say by divine election. The Jewish position is that there are sentient beings both within and without the human species: both intraspecies and extraspecies sentient beings are protected by the law, however much the ones within the human species be “superior” to the others, say by virtue of being speaking animals.

Christianity, on the other hand, does not allow either for extratribal human beings or for extraspecies sentient beings protected by the rule of the covenant. If one is not essentially akin to a Christian, one is not humankind; and, as an animal, one has no *legal* right to be treated kindly; one is exploitable along with vegetables and stones.

The disturbing slide from the extension of kinship to others toward the denial of kindness to others—the slide that we considered in our discussion of kindness and cruelty to animals—occurs not only when we say that we are extending kinship to all extraspecies beings but also when we say, somewhat less grandly, that we are extending kinship to all extratribal human beings in such a way that all human beings become brethren in a single group. For the view that all human beings are members of one tribe can turn into a call for turning purportedly extratribal human beings into things or for dehumanizing them. Sebastian Chamfort said that the motto of the French Revolution, “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity,” really meant, “Be my brother [*frater*] or I will kill you.”¹⁰¹ And the Elizabethan Family of Love, whose doctrine included the notion that all men are brethren, actually said that “whosoever is not of [our] sect, [we] account him as a beast that hath no soul.”¹⁰²

Thus the doctrine of universal intraspecies human kinship can justify treating *all* beings from outside the Christian tribe (i.e., all beings who feel themselves to be, or who are felt to be, nonconvertible to that tribe) as animals in the sense of things. Was it not, in our century, a millennialist Christian movement, albeit in a radical pseudosecular or national socialist guise, that called certain beings—beings from outside what its members took to be the *one* essential tribe or national society of humankind—“merely animal” or “racially inferior.” That movement made the living conditions of those extratribal beings as excremental as it took those of animals to be.¹⁰³ The Nazis, forgive me for putting it this way, tried to turn the Jews and Gypsies into animals; they “petted” them in the slaughterhouses.¹⁰⁴

By the same token the doctrine of universal interspecies kinship can justify treating animals (i.e., those from outside the human species) as human. Hitler anthropomorphized his pet dog—maybe his pet was the one being he “loved”—just as he tried to dehumanize the Jews and Gypsies.

Such terrible, and perhaps also trivial, observations as these about love and the “other” do not really help us to understand the ideology of a totalitarian and tribal nation torturing and attempting to annihilate nonnationals as both extra-

tribal (“We are Aryans, they are Gypsies”) and extraspecies (“We are humans, they are animals”); their being extratribal and extraspecies is not, in any ecological case, a moral or political justification for torturing and annihilating individuals and groups. But such observations do help to understand how it was that Lewis Gomperz, the first secretary for the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) and a Jew, was concerned not so much with individual family pets—a fanatic obsession in the romantic and nationalist period in which he lived and we live—as with animals in general.¹⁰⁵ Gomperz was interested in animals as part of a tolerant covenant that includes in its purview beings tribal, extratribal, and extraspecies.

Romantic utopia. The revolutionary ideology of universal *fraternité*, like the old Christian ideology of universal brotherhood, posits a universal kinship extendable in certain circumstances from one species (that of human beings) to all species. The English intellectuals who visited France during the 1790s, for example, often conceived animals as potential members of a radical egalitarian community. Samuel Taylor Coleridge thus included animals in the plans that he and Robert Southey formulated for their American Pantisocracy. In the human community of Pantisocracy we humans would *all* be brothers and sisters, so that all sexual relations would be incestuous or would be transcendent to mere incest.¹⁰⁶

And how should we describe sexual relations in Pantisocracy if we extend siblinghood to the animals as well as to all humans? As bestial, or as transcendent to mere bestiality.

Coleridge makes the extension of kinship from man to animal not only in the case of his particular family cat (a familial rather than a species extension) but also in the case of less familiar animals. In one version of his poem “To a Young Ass,” for example, he writes:

I hail thee [the ass] *Brother*—spite of the fool’s scorn!
And fain would take thee with me, in the *Dell*
Of Peace and mild *Equality* to dwell¹⁰⁷

The *Dell* of interspecies Equality where Coleridge would live together with his animal *Brother* is the same *Dell* that he seeks in his poem “Pantisocracy”:

I seek the cottaged *dell*
Where Virtue calm with careless step may stray¹⁰⁸

And one version of “To a Young Ass” makes explicit the link between interspecies Equality and the Pantisocratic community for which Coleridge yearns:

I hail thee *Brother*—spite of the fool’s scorn!
And fain would take thee with me, in the *Dell*
Where *high-soul’d* Pantisocracy shall dwell¹⁰⁹

For some people, the reason that we should be kind to such an animal as an ass is that it is protected by the law. For others, the reason might be that a particular ass has been kindly toward us. (An animal's having been good to us is the reason that God in the Old Testament puts into the mouth of Balaam's *ass*, whom Balaam would kill with a sword: "Am I not your ass, upon which you have ridden all your life long and to this day? Was I ever accustomed to do so to you?"¹¹⁰) But for Coleridge, as for Saint Francis, the reason that a man should be kind to an ass is that an ass is kindred with us in a universal interspecies siblinghood.

In the Pantisocracy of universal interspecies brotherhood that Coleridge idealizes, all sexual intercourse verges on bestiality (or transcends mere bestiality, since animals are his kin, hence his kind). This way of conceiving the matter is outrageous, except perhaps for saints and children. But the matter is restatable as well in other terms: insofar as the animals are my brothers and sisters in a pantisocracy, all flesh eating verges on cannibalism or transcends it.

In Pantisocracy, and in any other community that believes in universal brotherhood, all sexual intercourse verges on the incestuous *and* the bestial. Can one avoid physical incest and bestiality through "spiritualizing" kinship distinctions and species distinctions by "raising" them high above the physical? To use Coleridge's term, how *high-soul'd* must be one's kindredship with an ass in order to imagine oneself loving it in a wholly chaste, or nonincestuous and nonbestial, way? In a way that is not, even unconsciously, physical bestiality or incest? One solution to this problem that, in a Pantisocracy of universal kin and kind, all sexual relations verge on being incestuous and/or bestial, would be an *absolute* spiritualization of love—a spiritualization of the kind that Coleridge sometimes imagines in terms of "kindred *minds*."¹¹¹ Such a spiritualization of love becomes, in practice, a religious celibacy of the sort promulgated in the Catholic Orders. Interspecies equality, for which we say such religious celibates as Saint Francis stood, leads to a "spiritual" kind of bestiality, and intrafamilial equality, for which Saint Francis also stood, leads to a "spiritual" kind of incest.¹¹²

Celibacy was the solution of Saint Francis to the problem that universal interspecies kinship makes all lovemaking at once bestial and incestuous. But celibacy was anathema to the Protestant Coleridge. And since there is no other way of solving this problem of universal interspecies kinship, Coleridge attempts to dissolve the problem by means of a joke. "To a Young Ass," for example, avoids confronting directly the sexual and nutritional problems involved in hypothesizing an interspecies equality by means of its apparently nonsensical ending. In the closing lines of "To a Young Ass" Coleridge says that, in Pantisocracy, the

Rats shall mess with Terriers hand-in-glove,
And Mice with Pussy's Whiskers sport in Love.¹¹³

Ernest Hartley Coleridge, the poet's grandson, assures us that the poet "mean[s this ending] . . . to have [no] meaning."¹¹⁴ Yet what kind of "messaging," or "sport-

ing in Love,” is this? Is it like the love in Shakespeare’s *Timon of Athens* between the *misanthropic* Timon and the vegetable root that Timon must decide either to eat, in order that he might continue to live, or *not* to eat, in order that he might die?¹¹⁵ Coleridge bypasses the problem that, in an interspecies Pantisocracy, where all are kin, it would mean starvation for the terriers not to eat the rats, their natural food, and that it would be incest for the pussy to sport in love with the mice. Universal interspecies siblinghood, which makes *any* ass my brother, turns *all* flesh eating into cannibalism just as surely as universal intrafamilial siblinghood, which *philanthropically* makes *any* human being my familiar sibling, turns all sexual intercourse into incest. The effect of giving all God’s creatures the *same* “place in the choir”¹¹⁶ is thus either universal celibacy and starvation or bestiality/incest and cannibalism.

Conclusion

In England “by 1700 . . . the symptoms of obsessive [animal] pet-keeping were [already] in evidence.”¹¹⁷ In America in the 1980s the number of pets far exceeds that of children, and the human/animal pet bond has been presented to us, as we have seen, as an almost universal panacea for psychological and sociological ills.

Pets are especially useful to us here in America, in the age of the small, “nuclear” family, because this age puts unique pressures on the kinship structure of the family. In the past, there were family slaves, nursemaids, servants, mistresses, and domestic working animals who provided safety valves for large extended families, families that perhaps needed such safety valves less than our smaller families do. The general disappearance of such metakinship institutions as domestic servants has left a lacuna that pets often fill.¹¹⁸

Maybe pets provide a better safety valve than meta-kin of our own kind: one can love a pet more uninhibitedly than one can love a slave, nursemaid, or servant, precisely because in itself the taboo on bestiality (with the pet insofar as it is not a member of the human species) tends to make the taboo on incest (with the pet insofar as it is a member of the family), which we might generally desire, unthinkable. The taboo on bestiality thus makes unnecessary an even more repressive explicit taboo on incest.¹¹⁹ Fleeing the human for the animal and the sexual for the asexual, one comes upon the family pet with a sigh of relief.

The pet thus represents one solution to the incest taboo. But perhaps it represents more. Animals, after all, are not only sociologically totemic and psychologically transitional objects for human beings; they are also somewhat conscious beings like human beings. They are the same and different. Are animals any less wonderful than extraterrestrial beings like “E.T.”? Are the intersubjective barriers to interspecies relationships really greater than the awesome barriers to intraspecies human relationships?

The dominant ideology of our time dismisses this question by claiming that animals as such do not *really* exist. An anthropocentric ideology abetted by the Cartesian view that animals are automata, this ideology regards animals as things to be exploited—say as elements of a smoothly running family, old-age home, or farm, or as moral counterparts to human beings (guinea pigs about whom moralists argue whether their lives as “experimental animals” are too painful for human beings to bear).¹²⁰

To imagine how animals may be, or may be *thought* of, as other than mere things would require a leap of the imagination and a feat of historical scholarship beyond the purview of this essay.¹²¹ Yet it is now clear that we need to reinvestigate several long-standing and influential questions. Did we, for example, look differently upon animals before the advent of an economic system that treats human beings as “living tools?”¹²² Did the disappearance of domestic working animals make for a diminution in our emotional life? Do closer relations with edible animals and with slaughterhouses encourage a more extended hierarchy of living creatures? What is the cultural significance of the Enlightenment view that wild animals cannot be owned as property while working animals can be owned as property? How, if at all, do we own our pets?¹²³

The peculiar institution of pethood generally has the quieting effect of helping to conceal both the sociological urgency of such questions *and* the articulation of kin with kind that underlies modern nationalist and internationalist ideology. Pethood is in itself a relatively kindly and unthreatening institution. Yet the ideology of pethood comes to the rescue of proselytist politics by articulating an idealized *chassé-croisé* between kin and kind. In this way pethood helps to conceal even from would-be kindly human beings the brutally inhumane reality of the doctrine of universal (human) brotherhood.

Family pets are generally mythological beings on the line between human kind and animal kind, or beings thought of as being on the line between. Yet sometimes we *really* cannot tell whether a being is essentially human or animal—say when we were children, or when we shall become extraterrestrial explorers. Sometimes we really cannot tell whether a being is our kind or not our kind, our kin or not our kin; we cannot tell what we are and to whom. If there were no such beings as pets, we would breed them, for ourselves, in the imagination.

Notes

1. The average cost of keeping a pet may suggest the importance that pets must have to their individual owners. A ten-pound cat costs about \$3957 during its lifetime. (This figure does not include the cost of such “extras” as licensing and grooming.) An eighty-pound dog costs \$8353 for its lifetime.

2. Each of these benefits has been studied separately. For protection and security, for example, see J. Sebkova, "Anxiety Levels as Affected by the Presence of a Dog" (Master's thesis, University of Lancaster, England, 1979). For companionship, see Alan M. Beck and Aaron H. Katcher, *Between Pets and People: The Importance of Animal Companionship* (New York, 1983); and the advertizing literature distributed by such marketers of "companion pets" to old-age homes as the Bide-a-Wee Association and the Pet-a-Pet Program.
3. On pet ownership and coronary disease, see Erika Friedmann, et al., "Pet Ownership and Coronary Heart Disease: Patient Survival," *Circulation* 58 (1978): 11–168; and for a general overview of the positive health consequences of pet ownership, see Friedmann, et al., "Health Consequences of Pet Ownership," in William J. Kay, et al., eds., *Pet Loss and Human Bereavement* (Ames, Ia., 1984), 22–30. Several recent essays in *The American Journal of Public Health* suggest that the positive health consequences of pet ownership to individuals have been much overstated.
4. On the use of pets to facilitate interactions among residents of homes for the aged, see S. A. Corson, E. O. Corson, and R. Gunsett, "The Socializing Role of Pet Animals in Nursing Homes: An Experiment in Nonverbal Communication Therapy," in *Society, Stress and Disease*, 4 vols. (Oxford, 1971).
5. The death of a pet is generally the American child's first experience of death, and widows and widowers often make pets their surrogate spouses. See esp. Kay, et al., *Pet Loss*.
6. E. K. Rynearson, "Humans and Pets and Attachment," *British Journal of Psychiatry* 133 (1978): 550–55. See also R. A. Mugford and I. G. McComiskey, "Some Recent Work on the Psychotherapeutic Value of Cage Birds with Old People," in *Pet Animals and Society*, ed. R. S. Anderson (London, 1957); and Phil Arkow, *Pet Therapy: A Study of the Use of Companion Animals in Selected Therapies* (Colorado Springs, 1982). Some psychotherapists suggest that pet ownership may be particularly useful in cases of disturbed children; see Boris M. Levinson, *Pet-Oriented Child Psychotherapy* (Springfield, Ill., 1969); Mary Link, "Helping Emotionally Disturbed Children Cope with Loss of a Pet," in Kay, et al., *Pet Loss*, 82–88; and Link, "Pets and Personality Development," *Psychological Reports* 42 (1978): 1031–38. In the academic press "positive" benefits of pet ownership are stressed by various North American academic and veterinarian institutions; see, for example, Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, *Proceedings of the Canadian Symposium on Pets and Society* (First Symposium, Toronto, 23–25 June 1976; Second Symposium, May 30–June 1, 1979; Third Symposium, 28–30 April 1983).
7. Thus *Time* magazine ("The Great American Pet Mania," *Time*, 23 December 1974, p. 58) reminds us that pets, if they are not considered "as cherished companions worthy of love and protection," can be considered only as "representing the more trivial part of our consumer-oriented society"; cf. Alan M. Beck, "Population Aspects of Animal Mortality," in Kay, et al., *Pet Loss*, 42–48. In a similar vein, Gilles Aillaud writes that "the practice of keeping pets . . . is part of that universal but personal withdrawal into the private small family unit, decorated or furnished with mementoes from the outside world, which is such a distinguishing feature of consumer societies"; "Looking at Animals," in *About Looking*, ed. John Berger (New York, 1981), 12. Yi-fu Tuan, *The Making of Pets* (New Haven, 1984), says that "the making of and maintenance of pets is, after all, a relatively innocuous occupation"; yet Tuan's book focuses generally on the largely unacknowledged cruelty to animals that accompanies the institution of pethood.

8. Christopher Smart, *The Collected Poems of Christopher Smart*, ed. Norman Callah (London, 1949).
9. Barbara Woodhouse, *Talking to Animals* (New York, 1975), 200; cf. Woodhouse's movie, *Love Me, Love My Dog*, discussed in *ibid.*, 190. The same theme runs current in Ruth Silverman, ed., *The Dog Observed: Photographs 1844–1983* (New York, 1984).
10. E. K. Rynearson, "Pets as Family Members: An Illustrative Case History," *International Journal of Family Psychiatry* 1, no. 2 (1980): 263–68.
11. *Hamlet*, 1.2.65.
12. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "pet."
13. Betty White, with Thomas J. Watson, *Betty White's Pet-Love: How Pets Take Care of Us* (New York, 1983), 246. Cf. Woodhouse's description of her relation to her new puppy Juno: "I called my new puppy Juno, and all the love for dogs I possessed now went to Juno, who from about ten weeks old became almost a human being to me—just as if the spirit of Jyntee [her recently deceased dog] had passed into her [i.e., into Juno]"; *Talking to Animals*, 164. Vicki Hearne, "How to Say 'Fetch!'" *Raritan* 3 (1983): 12, writes of her familiar relationship to her dog Salty that "love, of course, is getting into things," but does not define the precise quality of her love as trainer. See too Hearne's "The Moral Transformation of the Dog, and Other Thoughts on the Animals Among Us," *Harper's* 268, no. 1604 (January 1984): 57–67, also written from the trainer's viewpoint.
14. The ordinary definition of pet as animal assumes not only that the pet is a nonhuman animal but also that the pet owner is a human being. In some cases, however, the pet owner may think of himself as a nonhuman animal or may actually be a nonhuman animal. Consider here the example of the gorilla "Koko" and her pet kitten "All Ball." The psychologist Francine Patterson (*Koko's Kitten* [New York, 1985]) says that Koko "asked for" and received a pet kitten subsequently named "All Ball." (Patterson claims that Koko used sign language in order to make this request and to indicate such humanoid emotions as love and grief.) Patterson assumed a super-special kinship between herself and the gorilla Koko; by the same token, Koko may have assumed a kinship between herself and the kitten All Ball.
15. See Beck and Katcher, *Between Pets and People*, 47, 49.
16. See Jack C. Horn and Jeff Meer, "The Pleasure of Their Company: PT Survey Report on Pets," *Psychology Today* 18, no. 8 (August 1984): 52–59.
17. See Jeff Meer, "Pet Theories: Facts and Figures to Chew On," *Psychology Today* 18, no. 8 (August 1984): 60–67; and "Undertaker for Pets," *New York Times*, 3 March 1981, p. 41. On the ancient custom of burying pets as though they were human kin, see John Pollard, *Birds in Greek Life and Myth* (Plymouth, Eng., 1970), 136.
18. On Beauty and the Beast, see below.
19. For Circe's transformation of Odysseus' companions into domestic pigs, see Homer, *Odyssey*, trans. A. T. Murray, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1924–25), 10:432–35: "Why are you so enamoured of these woes, as to go down to the house of Circe, who will change us all to swine, or wolves, or lions, so that we may guard her great house perforce?"
20. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "pet." For the artful photographer the relationship between man and dog has been of special interest; see, for example, the work of William Wegman and Man Ray.
21. Betty White, *Pet-Love*, 16.
22. According to Samuel Johnson's *A Dictionary of the English Language*, 2 vols. (London, 1775), a *pet* is archetypally "a lamb, or a kid, taken into the house and brought up

- by hand, a *cade* lamb." Synonymous terms are *cosset*, *sock*, *tiddle*, and perhaps also *Anthony pig*. There are few, if any, translational equivalents into other languages, but on the French *animal familier*, see below, note 25.
23. On pets as children, see Ann Cain, "A Study of Pets in the Family System" (Paper presented at the Georgetown Family Symposium, Washington, D.C., 27 October 1978); and Beck and Katcher, *Between Pets and People*, esp. p. 73. On pets as grandchildren, see D. Taylor, "Grandchildren Versus Other Semi-Domesticated Animals," *International Journal of American Linguistics* 27 (1961): 367–70. On pets as idealized mothers, see anthropologist Constance Perin (discussed in Beck and Katcher, *Between Pets and People*, 84–85). And on the general function of pets as surrogate relatives, see D. T. Wessels, Jr., "Family Psychotherapy Methodology: A Model for Veterinarians and Clinicians," 178, in Kay, et al., *Pet Loss*; K. Keddie, "Pathological Mourning After the Death of a Domestic Pet," *British Journal of Psychiatry* 131 (1977): 21–25; and Rynearson, "Humans and Pets and Attachment."
 24. In a recent survey a broad spectrum of Americans were "asked to rate several aspects of their lives in order of how important they were. . . . Five out of six respondents naturally named their immediate families as number one. But so many put pets second and third that, combining the top three ratings, pets ranked right behind friends and relatives, and ahead of the job"; Horn and Meer, "PT Survey," 54.
 25. The example of the dog's relationship to humankind may be instructive. *Canis familiaris* (literally "familiar dog") is Linnaeus' "scientific" name for the group of dogs able to be domesticated by man (i.e., able somehow to join his family or his household) or, if you want, able to domesticate man. Linnaeus' nomenclature suggests that he was classifying animals by their human family or by their familiarity to humans. He thus distinguishes the familiar, faithful dog (*Canis familiaris*) from the wolf and the wild dog, and he subdivides the category of the familiar dog into such varieties as the sheepdog (*Canis domesticus*) and the turnspit. See [Carl von Linné], *The Animal Kingdom, or Zoological System of the Celebrated Sir Charles Linnaeus [Systema naturae]*, trans. Robert Kerr (London, 1792), 129–35; and Keith Vivian Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: A History of Modern Sensibility* (New York, 1983), 56. It is worth noting that, although the French language has no single word to indicate the kind of being that we mean by *pet*—few, if any, languages do—French does bring out the relevant ambiguity of most all pethood in its term *animal familier*, which is the closest translational equivalent in French to the English word *pet*. *Animal familier* means "familiar animal" and "family animal." That is, the French term for "pet" indicates an animal that is at once part of the family's kinship structure and also, like an *animal domestique*, part of its property.
 26. Beck and Katcher, *Between Pets and People*, 73, write that "since the pet has the status of a favored child in the family, sexual exploitation of pets is a kind of incest," and they claim that "zoophilia can be a kind of incest" (77). Yet they seek ultimately to distinguish the one taboo from the other, insisting, for example, that the taboo on bestiality is more "effective" than that on incest and ignoring even the logical connections between species and family boundaries that make both taboos mutually inextricable parts of a single ideological or political whole.
 27. Concerning pets as transitional objects, consider the view of Earnest A. Rappaport, "Zoophily and Zooerasty," *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 38 (1968): 565–66: "The assumption that animal pets . . . allow children to maintain a healthy skepticism in separateness from the universe [an assumption made by Harold F. Searles in *The Non-Human Environment in Normal Development and in Schizophrenia* (New York, 1960)] and

prepares them for future interpersonal relationships is controversial, unless the animal serves only as a transitional object which automatically and in time becomes decatheted before a too intensive identification with the animal has been established.” (On the transitional object in the sense in which Rappaport here uses the term, see D. W. Winnicott, “Transitional Object and Transitional Phenomena: A Study of the First Not-Me Possession,” *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 34 [1953]: 89–99.) The view that animals can play an important role in the transference of affection is not a specifically twentieth-century one; thus Richard Steele, in one of his essays (*Tatler*, 1710, no. 266), writes of a woman’s “transfer[ring] the amorous Passions of her first Years to the Love of Cronies, Pets, and Favorites [a dog, monkey, squirrel, and parrot].”

28. Freud, in his *Totem and Taboo* (1912–13), “observed the similarities between the reactions of children and of primitive men to animals. Among both there is no trace of the common (adult) arrogance towards animals; the child regards the animal as its *equal* and feels more *akin* to the animal in its uninhibited awareness of its needs”; Marcel Heiman, “The Relationship Between Man and Dog,” *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 25 (1956): 582–83. Heiman writes that “the dog may be considered a descendant from a totem animal used by man in his development and useful to him in the process of civilization. . . . The domesticated animal, in particular the dog, is for civilized man what the totem animal was for the primitive” (584).
29. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “puppy.”
30. For an instance of this meaning of *puppy love*, see W. A. Caruthers, *The Kentuckians in New York* (New York, 1834), 1:175: “Oh! it is nothing more than puppy love.” And for *puppy* as an asexual human plaything, see Walter Besant and James Rice, *The Chaplain of the Fleet*, 3 vols. (London, 1881), 1:10: “I was once the pet and plaything of ladies, a sort of lapdog.”
31. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “puppy,” italics mine. According to the dictionary, toy dogs are small dogs “of little value or importance”; *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “toy,” value being used here in the sense in which we say that nonworking animals lack “value.” The breeding of toy dogs marks a new beginning in the history of the interspecies relationship between man and dog.
32. For *puppy/poupée* and *puppy/puppet*, see *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “puppy.”
33. In these terms, an accurate counterpart to *puppy lover*, which suggests a relationship that is at once bestial and not bestial, is *kissin’ cousin*, which suggests the possibility of a relationship that is at once both incestuous and nonincestuous. See Marc Shell, *The End of Kinship* (Stanford, Calif., forthcoming 1987), esp. conclusion.
34. Horn and Meer, “PT Survey,” 58. Alfred C. Kinsey, Wardell B. Pomeroy, and Clyde E. Martin, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (Philadelphia, 1948), report that between 40 and 50 percent of farm boys indicated that they had had sexual activity with animals.
35. “Who will know a generation hence that a snugglepup is a young man who attends petting parties, and that a petting party is a party devoted to hugging?”; George P. Krapp, *The English Language in America* (New York, 1925), 1:117.
36. I refer here to the photographs of scantily clad or nude women featured in *Penthouse* (circulation 3,500,000) and *Playboy* (circulation 4,250,000). *Playboy*’s choice of the word *rabbit* to describe its women may be especially appropriate: an older word for “rabbit” is the English *coney*, from the Latin *cuniculus*. Edmund Leach, “The Animal Category and Verbal Abuse” (in Eric H. Lenneberg, ed., *New Directions in the Study of Language* [Cambridge, 1966]), writes that “the eighteenth-century rabbit was a

- cunny*, awkwardly close to *cunt*,” and he draws a parallel between a *Playboy* Bunny Club and a London eighteenth-century Cunny House (50).
37. *Playboy* Bunnies are generally “branded” with a bunny-like costume, pendant, tattoo, or similar kind of insignium.
 38. Such doubt is one gist of an article concerning “puppy love” in the *Chicago Tribune*, 24 February 1948, sec. 3, pp. 1–2.
 39. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “pet.”
 40. The phrase *petting below the waist* is defined nicely in Erica Jong’s *Fear of Flying* (New York, 1974). Frederic Morton, *The Art of Courtship* (New York, 1957), 159, writes that “the fiancé holds petting privileges (petting is necking with territorial concessions).”
 41. The breeding of lapdogs (cf. the German *Schosskünderchen*) might make for a special chapter in sexual and cultural history. “The smaller dogs they be,” wrote John Caius in the sixteenth century, “the more pleasure they provoke, as more meet playfellows for mincing mistresses to bear in their bosoms, to keep them company withal in their chambers, to succour with sleep in bed, and nourish with meat at board, to lay in their laps and lick their lips as they ride in wagons”; *Of Englishe Dogges, the Diversities, the Names, the Natures, and the Properties*, trans. Abraham Fleming (n.p., 1880), 21. On women who train dogs to lap their genitalia, see D. Leigh, “The Psychology of the Pet Owner,” *Journal of Small Animal Practice* 7 (1966): 517–31.
 42. The *Athenaeum* of 27 April 1889 (p. 534) contains an instance of this use of the term: “His fatherly affection for his children . . . takes the form of unreasonable petting.”
 43. Friedmann, et al., “Health Consequences,” 26. Cf. Aaron H. Katcher, et al., “Men, Women, and Dogs,” *California Veterinarian* 3, no. 2 (February 1983): 14–17.
 44. For Sigmund Freud, see his “Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy” (1909) and his “From the History of an Infantile Neurosis” (1918), both in *Collected Papers*, ed. Ernest Jones, 5 vols. (New York, 1959), vol. 3. For Helen Deutsch, see her “A Case of Hen Phobia,” in *Psychoanalysis of the Neuroses* (London, 1932). For Sandor Ferenczi, see his “A Little Chanticleer,” in *Sex in Psychoanalysis* (Boston, 1916).
 45. Other relevant psychological literature includes J. M. Schneck, “Zooerasty and Incest Fantasy,” *International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis* 22 (1974): 299–302; Sandford Beryl, “A Patient and Her Cats,” *Psychoanalytic Forum* 1 (1966): 170–76; and various essays cited in the present article.
 46. Richard D. French writes of Francine Power Cobbe, the pet-loving leader of the antivivisectionist movement in the 1870s, thus: “Her dog and her cat are a great deal to her; and it is the idea of *their* suffering which excites her. . . . She is not defending a right inherent in sentient things as such; she is doing a *special* pleading for some of them for which she has a *special* liking”; *Antivivisection and Medical Science in Victorian Society* (Princeton, N.J., 1975), 375, italics mine. For Cobbe, see her *Italics: Brief Notes on Politics, People, and Places in Italy, in 1864* (London, 1864), 443–44.
 47. *Kinship With All Life* is the title of a book by Allen J. Boone that is popular among pet lovers (New York, 1954). Concerning the kinship with all life that some pet owners feel, see also Michael W. Fox, *The Soul of the Wolf* (Boston, 1980).
 48. Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, general prologue, lines 144–49.
 49. Smart, *Collected Poems*, 1:227.
 50. The way in which the determinate position that all men are brothers leads inevitably to the practice of incest or to universal celibacy (as in the Catholic Orders) is one gist of my forthcoming book *The End of Kinship*.
 51. For the history and theology since medieval times of the legal definition of “spiritual incest” as a Brother or Sister having sexual intercourse with anyone at all, see such

- documents as Council of Rome (A.D. 402), can. 1.2, in Carl Joseph von Hefele, *Conciliengeschichte*, 9 vols. (Freiburg-im-Breisgau, 1855–87), 2:87; Pope Gelasius I (A.D. 494), letter to the bishops of Lucania, in Gratian, *Decretum*, A. L. Richter, ed., *Corpus Iuris Canonici*, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1879), causa 27, q. 1, c. 14; Council of Macon (A.D. 585), can. 12, in Hefele, *Conciliengeschichte*, 3:37; Gratian, *Decretum*, causa 30, q. 1, c. 5.10; and Gerard Oesterlé, “Inceste,” in *Dictionnaire de droit canonique*, ed. R. Naz, 7 vols. (Paris, 1953), 5:1297–1314.
52. Matt. 23:8; cf. Gal. 3:26–28.
 53. For an example of this “rational” or “enlightenment” view of the story, see the interpretation of Robert Graves, cited in Iona and Peter Opie, *The Classic Fairy Tales* (New York, 1974), 182–95.
 54. See, for example, Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (New York, 1976); and Jacques Barchilon, “Beauty and the Beast: From Myth to Fairy Tale,” *Psychoanalysis and the Psychoanalytic Review* 46 (1959): 19–29.
 55. See, for example, Thomas Mintz, “The Meaning of the Rose in ‘Beauty and the Beast,’” *Psychoanalytic Review* 56 (1969–70): 617–20.
 56. In Cocteau’s cinematic version of “Beauty and the Beast” (*Belle et Bête*), Beast implies that he is not really an animal, but Beauty insists that he is. “But you *are* an animal!” On the general topos of the animal groom in folk tales, see Lutz Röhrich, *Märchen und Wirklichkeit* (Wiesbaden, 1974).
 57. The version of the story told by Madame Leprince de Beaumont includes three brothers as well as a father and sisters. The 1761 English translation of de Beaumont’s version is included in Opie, *Classic Fairy Tales*, 182–95. In Cocteau’s version of the story, Beauty has an *apparently* exogamous suitor (Avenant) who dies and/or is transformed into a dead Beast at the moment that Beast himself is transformed into a handsome man.
 58. Edward Westermarck, *The History of Human Marriage*, 2nd ed. (London, 1894), chap. 13; and *The History of Human Marriage*, 5th ed., 3 vols. (New York, 1922), 2:37–47.
 59. “I’ll *never* leave you,” says Beauty to her father in Cocteau’s film. And insofar as her father is Beast she never does leave her father.
 60. Psyche’s jealous sisters tell Psyche that, did she but realize it, she was spending her nights with a great serpent; cf. Opie, *Classic Fairy Tales*; W. H. D. Rouse, preface to Apuleius, *Cupid and Psyche and Other Tales from the Golden Ass of Apuleius*, ed. Rouse (London, 1907), xxiv–xxvii; and Erich Neumann, *Amor and Psyche: The Psychic Development of the Feminine: A Commentary on the Tale of Apuleius*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York, 1956), 11. In “Cupid and Psyche” the oracle’s awful pronouncement is: “Nec speres generum mortali stirpe creatum / Sed saevum atque ferum vipereumque malum.”
 61. Yet there are hints of incest in Apuleius’ tale. In his “Cupid and Psyche” the sea mew speaks thus to Venus/Psyche: “And so there has been no pleasure, no joy, no merriment anywhere, but all things lie in rude unkempt neglect; wedlock and true friendship and parents’ love for their children have vanished from the earth; there is one vast disorder, one hateful loathing and foul disregard of all bonds of love”; quoted by Neumann, *Amor and Psyche*, 31.
 62. On the two realms of the amphibian groom as that of land and that of water, see Julius E. Heuschner, *A Psychiatric Study of Myths and Fairy Tales: Their Origin, Meaning, and Usefulness*, 2nd ed., rev. (Springfield, Ill., 1974), 213. For centuries many people believed that tadpoles and frogs were two separate animal species, the individuals

of one species (tadpoles) somehow transforming themselves into those of the other; cf. Bettelheim, *Uses of Enchantment*, 290.

63. Bettelheim, *ibid.*, 199, writes that Beauty, the maiden, “transfers her attachment from father to lover.” Bettelheim argues in the same way that “only marriage made sex permissible, changed it from something animal-like into a bond sanctified by the sacrament of marriage” (283).
64. In some tribes “the contrast between man and not-man provides an analogy for the contrast between society and the outsider”; Mary Douglas, *Implicit Meanings: Essays in Anthropology* (Boston, 1975), 289; cf. Rodney Needham, *Primordial Characters* (Charlottesville, Va., 1978), 5.
65. On this aspect of the French Revolution and the Family of Love, see my *End of Kinship*, esp. introduction.
66. I am not concerned here to work out all implications of the historically controversial model that opposes universalist to particularist ideology or Christian to Jewish doctrine. That Christianity has itself idealized and accepted the doctrine is enough for us here. However, the central fact about kinship in Christianity—that this religion substitutes an apparently extraordinary kinship for an ordinary one—still needs clarification insofar as social anthropologists have generally failed to note the primary role of kinship in Christianity. They generally pass over in silence the Christian debate about kinship in the New Testament (“All ye are brethren,” Matt. 23:8); and they neglect to consider the kinship practices of Christian society as suggested by the Catholic Orders (Brothers and Sisters all), the subgroup comprising the clergy and laity (Parents and Children), and even the bond of kinship between Jesus and both his female progenitor (Mary, who is called the Sister, Wife, Child, and Mother of God) and his male progenitor (the Father who is also the Son). Such practices and dogmas, which I discuss in *The End of Kinship*, affirm as well as deny such ordinary standards of kinship as consanguinity. Seen in this light, Christianity proposes a universalist doctrine that both incorporates and transcends ordinary kinship with an extraordinary unifamilial kinship.

Major New Testament texts relying upon the primacy of spiritual kinship to God as a universal parent who alone makes siblings of all human beings—if not of all living creatures—include Gal. 3:26–28: “For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God. . . . There is neither Jew nor Greek . . . for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” Early Church Fathers who urge Christians to obey to the letter Matt. 23:8 and to call all men their brothers include: Ignatius of Antioch “To the Ephesians” 10.3, in *Patrologiae cursus completus*, Series graeca, ed. J. P. Migne (Paris, 1857–66), 5:653; Clement of Alexandria *Stromata* 7.14.5, in *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte* (Leipzig, 1897–), 3:61; Justinian *Dialogue with Tryphon* 96, in *Patrologiae cursus completus*, Series graeca, 6:704; and Tertullian *Apologeticus* 39.8–9, in *Corpus christianorum*, Series latina (Turnhout, Belg., 1953–).

67. This representation of Christianity and Judaism as particularist and universalist may be inaccurate in two ways at least. First, Christianity, however much it idealizes itself as universalist (“All men are my brothers”), becomes emphatically particularist in practice (“Only my brothers are men”). Indeed, the extremism of the claim to universalism would seem to ensure particularism in practice. Second, the connection between universalism and particularism in Judaism is more complex than the ordinary Christian view of Judaism would allow. On the one hand, Judaism certainly does enjoin several particularist legal doctrines. Thus one rule asks Jews to distinguish between brothers and others when making monetary loans: “Thou shalt not

lend upon usury to thy brother. . . . Unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon usury"; Deut. 23:19–20 (cf. Deut. 28:12 and Lev. 25:35–37). For further discussion on the connection between monetary and sexual generation, see my *Money, Language, and Thought: Literary and Philosophical Economies from the Medieval to the Modern Era* (Berkeley, 1982), chap. 3. But, on the other hand, Judaism also has a powerful universalist tendency in both doctrine and practice. It is the Old Testament that asks, "Have we not all one father? Hath not one God created us?"; Mal. 2:10. It is the Old Testament that moves the architectonic injunction to be your brother's keeper toward an injunction first to love neighbors (Lev. 19:18), then to love strangers dwelling among us (Lev. 19:34), then to love strangers who dwell in strange lands, and finally to love everyone. Hillel and Meir enjoin that one should love all mankind, or all "creatures"; Hillel, Avot 1.12, in Charles Taylor, *Sayings of the Jewish Fathers, Comprising Pirque Aboth in Hebrew and English*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 1897); cf. Hillel, Shabbath 31a, in *The Babylonian Talmud*, ed. I. Epstein (London, 1935–48); Meir, Avot 6.1. See also Sanhedrin 45a, in *Babylonian Talmud*; and Aaron [ben Abraham ben Samuel] ibn Hayyim, *Korban Aharon [Aaron's Offering]* (Venice, 1609; 2nd ed., Dessau, 1742). For further references to Jewish and Christian doctrine, consult my *End of Kinship*, conclusion.

68. Lynn White, Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," *Science* 155 (10 March 1967); reprinted as chap. 5 of White's *Machina ex Deo: Essays in the Dynamism of Western Culture* (Cambridge, Mass., 1968).
69. For Saints Francis and Anthony, see Marcel Viller, et al., *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* (Paris, 1937–82).
70. For the carol, see "Carol of the Beasts," sometimes also called "The Friendly Beasts," in *The Friendly Beasts: An Old English Christmas Carol* (New York, 1981). For this reference, I am indebted to Deborah Slade at Buckingham, Browne, and Nichols Lower School (Cambridge, Mass.).
71. Although "stable" or "manger" is probably an inaccurate translation of the Greek word in the New Testament that tells us where Jesus was born, Christians throughout the world persist in depicting that place as a stable (the fabulous *crèche* scenes are good examples) and in singing about it as a stable.
72. The quotations are taken from the well-known Christmas carol, "Away in a Manger."
73. Woodhouse, *Talking to Animals*, 11.
74. This point is developed by Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, 17–24. There are, of course, factors other than religious doctrine to help explain the particular kind of exploitation of animals that one finds in Christendom.
75. Exod. 23:5, Deut. 22:4.
76. Exod. 23:12.
77. Deut. 25:4.
78. Prov. 12:10: "A righteous man has regard for the life of his beast." Other relevant biblical texts are Num. 22:28, Deut. 22:7, Isa. 1:11, and Jon. 4:11. The passage from the Book of Jonah reads: "And should I [God] not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?"
79. For examples, see Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, 358, n. 7. On pets in general in the ancient world, see Juliet Clutton-Brock, *Domesticated Animals from Early Times* (Austin, Tx., 1981).
80. Genesis 1:26 is a key biblical text in this area: "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea,

and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.' ” See also Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, 17–24.

81. Throughout the historical development of Christian doctrine theologians have focused on the incestuous familial relations among God the Father, God the Son, and Mary. Mary, for example, is considered not only as the mother of God but also as his daughter, mother, and spouse. For an elaboration of this aspect of Christian doctrine, see my *End of Kinship*, esp. introduction and chap. 2.
82. Edward Pococke, *A Commentary on the Prophecy of Hosea* (Oxford, 1685), 95, 97.
83. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles*, trans. English Dominican Fathers (New York, 1924), 3:113.
84. John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Last Four Books of Moses*, ed. Charles Bingham (Edinburgh, 1852–55), 3:56–57.
85. There are some interesting exceptions: the Franciscan document, *Dives and Pauper* (1410), for example, allows flesh eating yet outlaws cruelty, much as the Jewish law codes do; *A Treatise on the Ten Commandments*, ed. Priscilla Heath Barnum (London, 1976–80), 2, 35–36.
86. Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, 154, writes that “the opponents of animal cruelty drew primarily on the doctrine, which they found to be latent in the Old Testament, of man’s stewardship over creation.”
87. Thomas, whose historical scholarship is otherwise quite excellent, is one of those who adopt unquestioningly the sentimentalist Christian view of the Jewish understanding of being cruel and/or kind to animals; *ibid.*
88. Consider here the Fruitarian Movement, whose members claim that human beings should eat only fruit without seeds. The commercially successful fad for buying and caring for stuffed animals and pet rocks (pet rocks sold in the hundreds of thousands during the mid-1970s) suggests how the institution of pethood might enable us to toe the line not only between human animal beings and nonhuman animal beings but also between animate and nonanimate beings.
89. Michael W. Fox, *Returning to Eden: Animal Rights and Human Responsibility* (New York, 1980), presents a typical sentimentalist and idealist attack on “the usual motivational and cognitive approach of scientific inquiry” into the question of animal welfare: Fox criticizes that inquiry for being “based upon Baconian utopianism, Cartesianism, dominionism, and hubris”; Fox, “Pet Animals and Human Well-Being,” in Kay, et al., *Pet Loss*, 16–21.
90. One regulation that interpreters sometimes use to illustrate the connection of kindness (or regard) to animals with Kashrut is the rule that one must not boil a kid in its mother’s milk (Exod. 23:19, 34:26; Deut. 14:21). To boil a kid in its mother’s milk, claim the interpreters, would be “unseemly.” Such unseemliness is said to be one basis of the Jewish prohibition against mixing milk with meat.
91. “I am cruel only to be kind,” says Hamlet; *Hamlet*, 3.4.179.
92. I do not mean to say that all people who are Christians are omnivorous, only that the Christianity that they profess allows them to be omnivorous. Thus a Christian Englishman, when he refuses to eat dog meat, does not do so because of a Christian injunction; a Jewish Englishman, however, when he refuses to eat pork, does so because of a religious injunction. The Christian might say that the flesh he refuses to eat is not food, so he will not eat it; the Jew might say that the flesh he refuses to eat is food, but he will not eat it; cf. Leach, “Animal Category and Verbal Abuse,” 32.

93. Fox, "Pet Animals," 16, writes that "for the British, eating dog is akin perhaps to cannibalism." Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, 117, writes that "Montstuart Elphinstone, in the 1840's, reacted with horror to the Italian habit of cooking robins [which were kept as pets in England]. 'What! Robins! Our household birds! *I would as soon eat a child*'" (italics mine). Cf. George, Lord Lyttelton, *Dialogues of the Dead* (London, 1795), 55.
94. Among the sources here are the regulations set down for the religious celibates of the medieval era. On the ban on pets in the monasteries and nunneries, see Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries* (Cambridge, 1922), 305–7; and Colin Platt, *Medieval Southampton: The Port and Trading Community, A.D. 1000–1600* (London, 1973), 104.
95. In some French societies it is still taboo to give human names to dogs; Claude Lévi-Strauss, "Religion, langue, et histoire: A propos d'un texte inédit de Ferdinand de Saussure," in *Mélanges en l'honneur de Fernand Braudel: Methodologie de l'histoire et des sciences humaines* (Toulouse, 1973), vol. 2. We English-speaking humans are sometimes offended when our fellows give "Christian" names to animals; see, for example, John Taylor, *Wit and Mirth* (1630), 35, in vol. 3 of *Shakespeare Jest-Books: Reprints of the Early and Very Rare Jest-Books Supposed to Have Been Used by Shakespeare*, ed. William Carew Hazlitt, 3 vols. (London, 1864).
96. See Mary Howitt's poem, "The Sale of the Pet Lamb."
97. Leach, "Animal Category and Verbal Abuse," 42–43.
98. By the same token there are people for whom all sexual intercourse with human beings is condemned outright as a species of incest; see, for example, the regulations of the Catholic Orders.
99. In the same way there are peoples for whom eating any animal is forbidden as a kind of cannibalism.
100. Leach, "Animal Category and Verbal Abuse," 45.
101. For Chamfort, see Julien Teppe, *Chamfort: Sa vie, son oeuvre, sa pensée* (Paris, 1950), 53.
102. John Rogers, *The Displaying of an Horrible Secte of Grosse and Wicked Heretiques, Naming Themselves the Familie of Love* ([England], 1578), sig. 1.7.
103. Cf. the thesis of Terrence Des Pres, *The Survivor: An Anatomy of Life in the Camps* (Oxford, 1976), that the Germans tried to turn the Jews into animals in order to make killing them morally acceptable.
104. By "to pet" here I mean "to treat a human being as an animal"; see note 20 above. On the controversial view that Nazism is a kind of millennial Christian sect, see Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium: A History of Popular Religious and Social Movements in Europe from the Eleventh to the Sixteenth Century*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1961).
105. See Lewis Gomperz, *Moral Inquiries on the Situation of Man and of Brutes: On the Crime of Committing Cruelty on Brutes, and of Sacrificing Them to the Purposes of Man, Etc.* (London, 1824). It is worth noting here the opinion that it was a Jewish scholar and teacher, Sherira ben Hananiah, Gaon of Pumbedita (c. 906–1006 A.D.), who wrote the first "defense of animal rights"; introduction to *The Jewish Cat Book: A Different Breed*, ed. Meir Rosenberg (Marblehead, Mass., 1983), iii.
106. For an extended discussion of Utopian Pantisocracy in terms of universal siblinghood and incest (but not bestiality), see my *End of Kinship*, introduction.
107. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1912), 1:74–75.
108. *Ibid.*, 1:68–69.
109. *Ibid.*, 1:74.

110. Num. 22:21–30.
111. In his poem, “On the Prospect of Establishing a Pantisocracy in America,” Coleridge looks forward to dwelling as an absolute equal with “kindred minds.” Although in this poem the “collegial” minds are those of human brothers and sisters, in “To a Young Ass” they are presumed to be those of animals.
112. Despite this “spiritualization,” the incestuous and bestial implication of Francis’s thought helps to explain why the Franciscan Spirituals, who were the most literal-minded followers of Saint Francis, were massacred as “heretics” under the direction of the Roman Catholic pope: though the official church liked the idea that we are all siblings (“All ye are brethren”), it disliked the corollary sexual and familial implications of this idea. Today the Spiritualists’ view of kinship and kind can hardly be understood, much less can it become influential in social reformation. It is therefore meaningless, if pleasant, that in 1980 the pope named Francis the patron saint of “ecology.”
113. Coleridge, *Complete Poetical Works*, 1:75.
114. Ernest Hartley Coleridge, note, in *ibid.*
115. *Timon of Athens*, 4.3.
116. See the Protestant hymn with the refrain, “All God’s creatures / Have a place in the Choir, / Some sing lower, / Some sing higher. . . .”
117. Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, 117.
118. Some researchers might argue in this context that we should delve into the neurotic sexual condition not only of pet owners but also of the pets themselves. See, for example, D. Leigh, “Psychology of the Pet Owner,” 518; and for an overall view of animal neuroses, see Abel Brion and Henri Ey, eds., *Psychiatrie animale* (Paris, 1964).
119. Just as one can apparently flee incestuous petting, or the fear of it, through pet love, so one can flee cannibalism, or the fear of it, by eating the family pet. Just as fondling the familiar (animal) is a means to transcend the incest taboo, so eating the familiar (animal) is a means of transcending the cannibalism taboo.
120. Those who share this ideology dislike the institution of *Playboy* Bunnies and *Penthouse* Pets not so much because this institution reduces human beings (both male and female) *and* animals to “mere” things—which would be the radical position—as because this institution reduces female human beings to “mere” animals. See, for example, Aviva Cantor, “The Club, the Yoke, and the Leash: What We Can Learn From the Way a Culture Treats Animals,” *Ms.*, November 1983.
121. This essay is not about animals. It is about pethood—a human and social institution in which animals happen to play a part. One does not need to be an expert in animal physiology, psychology, and sociology to *begin* to consider the role that a particular group of animals or even things—the ones we call “pets”—play for us humans in our needful attempt to define or express the familial and species boundaries of the world in which we live. Even the question about what animals are “in themselves”—a question whose answer clearly requires expertise in animal physiology, psychology, and sociology—pertains to human institutions and language.
122. “Living tools” is Aristotle’s term in his *Politics* not for working animals but for slaves.
123. William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, new ed., 4 vols. (London, 1813), book 4, chap. 23, says that the Forest and Game Laws were founded on the same “unreasonable” notion of permanent property in wild creatures. On the other hand, Adam Smith, *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, ed. Ronald L. Meek, et al. (Oxford, 1978), 15, says that non-wild living things—crops and herds—were the *earliest* form of private property. There is a long-standing debate about whether animals that are neither “wild” nor “useful” can be property (Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, 112), that is about whether *pets* can be private property.