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: Pets, they say, provide pleasure, companionship, and protection, or the feeling of being secure.² Owning pets 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 pleasures of having children without some of the responsibility. (From pet dogs and cats, writes Gomperz in *Moral Inquiries* [1824], “mankind may learn maternal, filial, conjugal, and in some cases paternal affections.”)⁵ Pets help people to deal with the death of a friend or relative.⁶ Not least of all, pets are useful in many kinds of psychotherapy and family therapy.⁷

What is it about pets that makes them beneficial in these ways? In this chapter I will explore one possible answer to this question. I will suggest that pethood derives its power from its ability to let pet owners experience a relationship ever-present in political ideology—that between the distinction of those beings who are our (familial) kin from those who are not, on the one hand, and the distinction of those beings who are our (human) kind from those who are not, on the other. Pethood, it would seem, lets us experience and enjoy that crucial distinction in a harm-
less and even comforting way. And, indeed, we generally think of pethood as one of consumer society’s innocuous and even trivial institutions.8 We will see here, however, that the particular idealized articulation of kinship with kind that the contemporary institution of pethood helps to maintain conceals 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 “Of Jeoffry, His Cat.”9 That the individual pet is in some fashion the expressive mirror of its owner is a longstanding commonplace; Barbara Woodhouse, the dog trainer, goes so far as to claim that “we get the animals we deserve.”10 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”;11 I here want to discuss 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.
—Hamlet, 1.2.65

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. And since it passes over, even obscures, certain potentially discomforting ramifications of what it may mean to domesticate animals and to indulge them, it is also a socially useful definition.

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, 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.

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, and in the Homeric tale of Circe, where men are metamorphosed into domestic animals.) Likewise, it is the rule expressed in the typical English pet lover's practice of giving his animal a human name—a practice which suggests that the pet lover regards his pet as though it were human. Indeed, "to pet" can mean "to treat a human being as an animal."

The tendency to erase—and, if you wish, 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 the place of the pet in the family structure is. For pet lovers, as for Betty White, "animals have always been a part of [the] family." The "cadet 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.

For many pet lovers, their animals are thus not only surrogate family members that function as children, grandchildren, spouses, or parents, or that are considered to be as important as family members. Rather, 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 familiar enough to be both in the special family, or in humankind, and in the particular consanguineous family. 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 pethood in its term animal familier, which is the closest equivalent in the language 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. 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 distinctions between human and nonhuman beings, or between kind and nonkind. The other practice is incest, or intrafamilial lovemaking, which is an effect of traducing the ordinary distinction between kin and nonkin.15

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,26 and phylogenetically it is a totem.17

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, to both conceal and reveal the bestial and incestuous aspect of pethood.

Puppy Love. One tendency of the institution of pethood is to make distinctions such as that between sexual and nonsexual feelings seem clear and uncontroversial. Thus some pet lovers may object to my discussion of the sexual significance of loving pets on the grounds that, although pethood possibly does blur the distinctions between kind and nonkind and between kin and nonkin, it does not blur the distinction between sexual and nonsexual love. (That is, so long as amatory relations with borderline creatures are nonsexual, there does not have to be ambiguity about whether an amatory relationship with a pet is essentially bestiality or incest.) This objection assumes that there is such a thing as essentially nonsexual love for a being who both is and is not 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 ordinarily say, is, like calf love, a sentimental and transitory affection between a young boy and girl;28 we say it is, for all practical purposes, asexual. (It is the presumably asexual aspect of puppy love that
helps to explain why the term is usually one of mild contempt.) 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"; the beloved being in puppy love is much like a poupée (or doll, the French term being the etymological source of puppy), and also much like a "puppet."

We assume that puppy love is or should be just as sexually innocuous as loving 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 to love a "puppy lover" from inside his consanguineous family. 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. Or snugglepup indicates a young man with whom one attends petting parties. (Sometimes such a man is called 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. It is sold, in its feminine form, as the Penthouse "pet of the month" and as the Playboy "bunny." (Playboy's human 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 a 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 animals).

Petting. We may "doubt if there's [really] such a thing as puppy love." Freudians, after all, believe there probably is no such thing as entirely 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 verb "to pet."

Petting means not only mere patting, "fondling or hugging," but also "sexual embracing" or "petting below the waist." Our petting an animal that we say we love—a being whose kind we distinguish in a commonsense way from our own kind—is thus a kind of bestiality. Our petting the child, sibling, or parent whom we love—a being whose kinship we identify in a commonsense way with our own kinship—is, by the same definition, a sort of incest. (We give the nickname "pet"—and sometimes also "beast"—to 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 kin and both our kind and kin—is 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 . . . ,” and idle petting “can provide reverie and relaxation.” One explanation of why this is so is that it allows us to mark and transcend an otherwise absolute and oppressive distinction between kin and nonkin, and between kind and nonkind, while at the same time allowing us to briefly blur without shame the distinction between sexual and nonsexual demonstrations of affection.

From this perspective on the kind and kin of pets, the way to rightly determine their familial and sexual role must go beyond analysis of psychotic or neurotic human-animal relationships—analyses of the kind that we encounter in studies such as Sigmund Freud’s “Little Hans” and “Wolf Man,” Helen Deutsch’s “Chicken Phobia,” and Sandor Ferenczi’s “Little Chanticleer.” Such 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 preserves the barrier against incest; I should argue that especially nowadays and in America, it is through zoophilia/zooerasty, or animal love—i.e., in particularized pethood—that the effort to preserve this barrier is more typically made.

**BEAUTY AND THE BEAST**

The institution of 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 family pet and unfamiliar animals in general. This dependence means that pethood militates against the idea of general interspecies kinship and may even exclude it. In pethood only family pets are familial kin, only they are human kind. However, pet love is in some circumstances extensible to a brotherly (or, if you will, sisterly) love of all animals universally—to a *Kinship With All Life.* Thus Chaucer’s Prioress weeps not only when someone beats her familiar dog but also when an apparently unfamiliar mouse is caught in a trap. Pet love also seems extensible to universal interspecies love in the case of Christopher Smart, a lover of his cat who writes that animals and birds are, together with himself, “fellow subjects of the eternal King.” For both Chaucer’s Prioress and 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 able to be converted to the status of pethood), are part of a superhuman family.

“All ye are brethren.” One consequence of hypothesizing a universal kinship among human beings is that such kinship makes any act of human sexual intercourse incestuous. That is one reason why religious celibates shun all 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.

If one wants to avoid incest and celibacy one must, of course, look for a sexual
partner outside the family. But if, as I have argued, one maintains the traditional Christian and pagan belief in universal human kinship, then all human beings are from inside the family. The ultimate outcome of such an identity of species with family would be a search for an extraspecies and extrafamilial creature. While sexual relations with actual animals are not uncommon (marriage with them is an ancient legal problem), the more frequent quest is for the symbolic Beast. (Human deities like Jesus Christ and Augustus Caesar might do just as well since, in varying degrees, they are also extraspecies and extrafamilial.)

Maybe this quest for the Beast—or this 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 the well-known folktale “Beauty and the Beast,” one of several whose publication and popularity in France tend to mark the Romantic and post-Romantic eras of “liberty, equality, and fraternity,” the heroine leaves her loving kinsman and kisses the beast.

The tale is of a young maiden whose agreement to marry—or at least to kiss—a fearsome animal corresponds to its physical transformation into a handsome man. Some interpreters explain away the tale’s sexual and bestial aspect by arguing that it is a philosophical allegory of the rational soul’s journey toward intellectual or spiritual love: The sensitive Beauty’s insight into the spiritual beauty of the physically ugly Beast precipitates its transformation into a human, hence beautiful, being. This reading is reassuring and enlightening, but it does not take into account that it is Beauty’s embrace of the Beast—and in some versions of the story, her intercourse with it—and not her insight into its character that is the agent of its transformation from animal to man.

This sexual aspect of the tale has made it an attractive text for psychoanalytic criticism, which generally interprets it as expressing Beauty’s fear of and eventual accommodation to human sexuality, but explains away the “bestial” theme. Thus some analysts say that the tale represents a young girl’s reaction to a man who requests that she sleep with him, a request that at first she can only understand as beastly, but that she comes to understand as simply human. According to a psychoanalytic elaboration of the tale, the beastly man behind the Beast is Beauty’s own father; her father’s picking the red rose in Beast’s garden is a symbol of his desire, conscious or unconscious, to “deflower” Beauty. But in their occasional symbolic sophistication, such readings do violence to the literality of “Beauty and the Beast”: Beast is not only a human being in animal guise—the usual figure in animal fables and cartoon talkies—but also an actual animal. (In Jean Cocteau’s brilliant cinematic version of the tale, Beast says that he is not really an animal while Beauty insists that he is—see fig. 11.) The tale, ultimately about bestiality and the human family, marks the definitive limits of the literary form called the “animal groom story.”

Who else is there for Beauty to marry but an animal? Almost all the male human beings in her world are her close kin—usually her father and three brothers, so
that any ordinary sexual love would seem incestuous. Consider, as a useful scheme for understanding the metaphorical structures—or species and familial divisions—of the tale, the two interrelated "laws" that Westermarck proposes in his History of Human Marriage. First, Westermarck's species "law of similarity" has it that all animals, including humans, tend to mate with those like themselves; they shy away from intercourse with those outside their species—or from bestiality. Second, Westermarck's family "law of dissimilarity" has it that we humans tend to mate with those unlike ourselves; we shy away from intercourse inside the family, or from incest. In the fairy tale, Beauty shies away from 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, she 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—and, in some versions, essentially the only available—man. This identity between the two male beings—the one too unlike her, the other too like her—is hinted at in the economic bargain informing 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 mortal sicknesses of the two rival "suitors," which compel Beauty to choose between attending to the needs of one or to those of the other, hence between killing one or the other (see fig. 12).\(^56\)

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.\(^57\) It is a conflation that informs even its ancient analogue, Apuleius' "Tale of Psyche and Cupid." 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 Beauty might as well be sleeping with anyone or anything—with her father or with a great viper (which is what Beauty's sisters tell her that she is doing)—as in a grand masquerade where all beings can or do pass for one another.\(^58\) In "Cupid and Psyche" it turns out, however, that Psyche was unwittingly not the lover of beast or father but of a god, Cupid.\(^59\) Psyche = Beauty is a Roman version of the Christian sponsa dei or Roman vestal virgin, as if only a god could transcend in one leap both familial and species boundaries. Like Beast, Cupid (and, if you will, also Christ) is, in the instant of his osculatory 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 and land being, as well as both animal and man. Beast’s recreation as man through a kiss from Beauty—a kiss that is at once chaste and unchaste—is like God’s re-creation as man through a sexual intercourse with Mary that is similarly ambivalent. (That is, God as lover, like Beast as lover, is both a human being and a husband and He is neither.) The kiss at the center of the animal groom tale would seem to transcend the ordinary questions of “Who is it proper to kiss?” and “In what manner is it proper to kiss him?” as much as does the Christian universalist “kiss of peace” or “holy kiss”—a kiss promiscuously given to all persons alike. It is a kiss which, by virtue of the Christian monachal doctrine, would seem to transcend the distinction between kin and nonkin and hence between chastity and incest.

In more or less psychoanalytic terms, though by no means from a psychoanalytic perspective, I may summarize thus: In “Beauty and the Beast,” Beast becomes, in the instant of its osculatory transformation from animal to man, a transitional object between parental and spousal love. Only Beast’s miraculous transformation into a human husband allows for the chaste marriage, neither bestial nor incestuous, that gives the fairy tale its Edenic or paradisiacal ending. (In the 1761 ending of the tale, the instant of Beast’s transformation into human form in the castle corresponds to the immediate translation of “her father and his whole family” to the castle: husband and father appear together in the castle at the same instant. The last words of this version are “Their happiness . . . was compleat.” This family reunion combines or transcends kinship relationships like daughter and wife or father and husband, and thus provides the right 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 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 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 view, say, of the United Nations) but also that all animals are our kind (the view of Saint Francis and some pet lovers). The ultimate consequence of this view would be understanding the only alternative to absolute celibacy as bestial incest, or incestuous bestiality.

In the same way, we might understand the notion of our kinship with animals as leading 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 would be 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. That is where the beast story comes to the rescue.

**FABLES OF PASIPHAÉ; OR, VACCINATION AND VACCIMULGENCE**

*When Iesus Christe shall be come, Princes must be protectours of Christianitie, and Queenes must be nurse mothers.*

—Calvin’s Sermons (1579)

_Advt., Wanted, a Child to Wet Nurse, by a Young Woman with a good breast of milk._

—Want ad in the Morning Chronicle, April 13, 1784

In the story of “Beauty and the Beast,” human endogamy intersects with bestial exogamy so that human exogamy comedically arises from the topos of the animal groom or god groom. In much the same way, the topos of the animal or divine nurse-mother sometimes makes for endogamy. For according to the regulations of many societies, milk kinship results in the same diriment impediments to marriage as blood kinship. And a nurse-mother, or wet nurse, transmits familial kinship—and hence species kind—through her milk just as a consanguineous parent transmits kinship through the blood.

Montaigne, in considering the institution of the nurse-mother in his essay “Of the Affection of Fathers for Their Children” (1578–80), writes that “it is ordinary where I live to see village women, when they cannot feed their children from their breasts, call goats to their aid... These goats are promptly trained to come and suckle these little children...” Animal nurse-mother and human nurse-child become much attached to each other: “If any other than their nurseling is presented to them, [the goats] refuse it, and the child does the same with the goat.” Montaigne refers to instances where nurse-mothers even develop, for their non-consanguineous nurse-children, “a bastard affection [aflection bastarde] engendered by habit more vehement than the natural, and a greater solicitation for the preservation of the borrowed child than for their own.” He concludes first, that the “natural affection of a genetrix for her consanguineous child” to which we give so much authority has “very weak roots,” and second, that “animals alter and corrupt [abastardissent] their natural affections as easily as we [humans do].” According to Montaigne, then, both interfamilial and interspecies collactaneous kinship can take precedence over intrafamilial consanguinity. Affective kinship is engendered by custom, not by sexual generation.

Since (as we have seen) consanguineous kinship is in any case always ultimately deniable and since the collactaneous affinity that develops between nurse-mother and nurse-child can change a child’s family and even its species, the human or animal nurse-mother sometimes becomes a feared creature. Where the social insti-
The Human and the Animal

Institution of nurse-mother is widespread, as in some aristocratic and slave-based economies, we find tales and fears of accidental changing by an unwary nurse or purposeful changing by a wily one. How many children born slave-owners have thus became slaves? How many born paupers thus end as princes? Where nurse-mothering is widespread, we also find accounts of foundling and orphan children fostered by kindly wild animals in the forests. Virgil's story of the she-wolf's fostering of Romulus and Remus is a locus classicus. In eighteenth-century Germany and France there circulated hundreds of "true accounts" of enfants sauves raised in the "state of nature." In the nineteenth-century United States, the institution of black nurse-mothers (Mark Twain's Roxana) haunted America's white population as a specter undetectably diluting their race (or species).

Collactaneous affinity, like consanguineous, affects not only family kin but also species kind. Having intercourse with a human nurse-mother or her near kin counts as incest. (The story of Ambleth and his foster sister—Shakespeare's Hamlet and Ophelia—is an important example.) Similarly, since "der Mensch ist was er isst [You are what you eat]," as Feuerbach says, the human nursing of a she-animal is part animal, and anyone having intercourse with that nursling commits bestiality. In a prerevolutionary France concerned with an ideal of Nature, the question of the "bastardizing" effect of a child's imbibing human milk from outside the family was debated in much the same terms as the question of the "animalizing" effect of imbibing milk from outside the species. In his Émile (1762) Jean-Jacques Rousseau attacked the institution of human nurse-mothers as immoral; in her popular handbook for breast-feeding, Avis aux mères qui veulent nourrir leurs enfants (1767), Le Rebours stressed the importance of endogamous breast-feeding and argued that what a child receives from the nurse-mother is generally a dangerously "alien and bastard milk [lait étranger et bâtard]." Fear of animalization was similar: Garden writes that "one of the most serious charges leveled at the wet nurses of the Lyons area was that they substituted goat's milk for their own," and only a few Frenchmen had a more practical view toward animal milk. (Boerhaave's Traité of 1759, for example, argues that there was nothing at all wrong with goat's milk.)

Linked with the controversy surrounding the animalizing effects of drinking animal milk—and the vampiric effects of transfusion with animal blood—was the debate in the Romantic era about the animalizing effects of vaccination, or the inoculation of human beings with animal diseases. For example, the arguments informing discussion about the efficacy of drinking cow's milk, or "vaccimulgence" (a neologism of the 1790s whose sound Coleridge seems to have relished) informed the discussion about the efficacy of "vaccination." Dr. Edward Jenner, who had studied the medical implications of the fact that people who worked around cows did not get smallpox, argued in his Inquiry into the Causes and Effects of the Variolae Vaccinae (1790) that vaccination with cowpox could prevent smallpox. But many people preferred smallpox to being cowed, or to being "grafted" with a cow, or vacca.
Grafting, which in the botanical realm involves an implantation that turns two things into one, has its counterpart in the zoological realm. This counterpart is not quite twinning, as where two friends are as alike as “twinned lambs” — to which actual animals the two kings in The Winter’s Tale, King Leontes of Sicilia and King Polixenes of Bohemia, are compared. Nor is it quite the relationship that a father and his consanguineous son have when they are “as like as eggs”—to which potential animals Leontes compares himself and his possibly bastard son Mamilius. The real zoological counterpart to botanical grafting occurs where there is identity, or unity, of the two creatures, as when we learn, at the beginning of The Winter’s Tale, that “Sicilia cannot show himself over-kind to Bohemia. They were train’d together in their childhoods; and there rooted betwixt them then such an affection which cannot choose but branch now.” Leontes cannot show himself overkind to Polixenes, because he and Polixenes are as kind as can be. Like the Siamese twins that Montaigne discusses in “Of a Monstrous Child” and Mark Twain depicts in his fabular Those Extraordinary Twins, they are grafted together by a process that is the business of the whole mythos of The Winter’s Tale to reveal.

There are two procedures in The Winter’s Tale whereby two become one. First, there is marriage, as traditionally understood by Pauline theologians. Man and wife become one flesh—as when Leontes’ offspring Perdita marries Polixenes’ offspring Florizel. Second, there is artful engineering of nature: the gardener’s art of grafting plants, say, or the shepherd’s art of breeding animals. It is with his shepherdess daughter Perdita—whom he has feared to be a zoological bastard (i.e., an illegitimate or natural child)—that the disguised Leontes discusses botanical bastards (a specific kind of a flowering plant). And he describes the gardener’s artful implantation of one gens (or species) into another:

You see, sweet maid, we marry
A gentler scion to the wildest stock,
And make conceive a bark of baser kind
By bud of nobler race. This is an art
Which does mend Nature—change it rather—but
The art itself is Nature.

(4.4.92–97)

Implantation or inoculation—the two terms have been near synonyms since Francis Bacon’s New Atlantis—is the hallmark of civilization when it comes to the culture of plants and animals. In agriculture, inoculation once meant “to implant an eye or bud into,” “to bud one plant into, unto, on, or upon another,” or “to join or unite by insertion (as the scion is inserted into the stock so as to become one with it).” But in eighteenth-century zoological and medical discourse, inoculation came to mean “to impregnate (a person or animal) with the virus or germs of a disease . . . for the purpose of inducing a milder form of the disease.” The inoculant (or its animal or human source) and the inoculated become as one.

Controversy about medical inoculation involved two questions. First: Should a human being ever be inoculated with a disease from another human being?
the "inoculant" is a poison, like syphilis, the medical civilization that brings inoculation appeared like "syphilization"—which in the 1840s became a near synonym for "inoculation." Second: Should a human being ever be injected with a disease from an animal (or another kind of animal)? That people could catch animal diseases was well known. (Such human diseases as "chicken pox," "cow pox," and "swine pox" were named after animals.) But could people catch animality itself from animal inoculation?

Animal inoculation thus became the focus of an ideological debate about inter-species miscegenation and the definition of human being. Those who argued for vaccination were called "cow maniacs" and those who argued against it were called "cow phobics." Cow phobics argued that the practice of vaccination would make for the gradual and imperceptible bestialization of humankind (see fig. 13). For example, Dr. Verdi-Delisle, in his Physical and Moral Degeneration of the Human Species Caused by Vaccination (1855), argued that vaccination would mean the end of human beings as we know them. In his Medical Tracts (1799) Dr. Moseley asked "Who knows . . . what ideas may rise in the course of time from a brutal

Fig. 13. Colored copper-plate engraving. Cow-Poxed, Ox-faced Boy. In Rowley, Cow-Pox Inoculation No Security Against Small-Pox Infection, 1805. (Institute of the History of Medicine, The Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore)
Several cow phobics insisted that people who were vaccinated soon looked and acted like animals. For example, Dr. William Rowley’s engravings (1805) show “how children who had been vaccinated were developing cow’s faces,” and so do Dr. R. Squirrel’s illustrations (1805). And a child vaccinated in 1801 at the Russian court was afterward called “Vaccinoff,” as if he were part human and part cow. A few cow phobics, focusing on the fear that vaccination produced mixed species, claimed that it amounted to incest. For example, Dr. Joseph Merry, in his Conscious View of Circumstances and Proceedings Respecting Vaccine Inoculation (1806) “stated that cowpox inoculation was comparable to incest, introducing into the human body a disease of bestial origin similar to syphilis.” And Dr. Moseley, referring to the Greek story in which the human Pasiphaë breeds with a bull and gives birth to a Minotaur, asked, “Who knows also, but that the human character may undergo strange mutations from quadrupedian sympathy, and that some modern Pasiphaë may rival the fables of old.”

In a similar vein cow phobics attacked Benjamin Waterhouse, a member of the universalist Society of Friends who had helped to introduce vaccination to the United States; they accused Waterhouse of attempting to homogenize humans and animals in a kind of spiritually incestuous stew. A few cow phobics commented on vaccination as a cannibalistic rite-of-passage that defines communal brotherhood in much the same way as the Eucharist. By the century’s end, the vegetarian George Bernard Shaw, in his preface to Back to Methusaleh: A Metabiological Approach and his preface to The Doctor’s Dilemma, attacked inoculation “as a horrible reversion to the most degraded and abominable forms of tribal ritual.”

Where the argument against vaccination of human beings boiled down to a fear of “bovinization,” it seemed useful to cow maniacs to employ such reassuring analogies to vaccination as milk-drinking or beef-eating. Many cow maniacs tried to point out the relationship between vaccination and imbibing or eating cow. For example, Adams, in his Answers to All the Objections Hitherto Made Against Cow-pox (1805), writes of the “nonsense about the danger of inoculating humours from an animal whose milk makes the principal part of our children’s food, whose flesh is the source of Old English courage, and whose breath is not only fragrant but salubrious.” A speaker at the Third Festival of the Royal Jennerian Society in 1805 made the same point about the humanness of cow’s milk. But whether it was essentially human either to drink cow’s milk or to eat cow’s flesh was already a hot debate.

At this time in Germany, where most practicing physicians were against vaccination, the novel entitled Die Kuhpocken [The Cowpox] focused on a family quarrel in which a cow-maniac father wants to have his child vaccinated and a cow-phobic mother does not. In later years, Thomas De Quincey was struck by how so eminent a thinker as Kant could have seriously questioned Jenner’s evidence in favor of vaccination, and have insisted that vaccination was a monstrous “inoculation of bestiality.” In response to queries from respondents on the subject of vaccination in 1800, Kant went so far as to claim that the practice was morally
unjustifiable. And under Kant's influence, his friend and physician Dr. Marcus Herz published his *The Inoculation of Bestiality* (1801) which again defined the question of disease in relation to breeding between species and within families.

**KINDNESS AND CHRISTENDOM**

Let us backtrack here and reconsider, on the one hand, the relationship of the idea of universal animal kinship to the idea of universal 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.

**Universalism and Particularism**

Universalist ideology, we have seen, overtly posits that there is essentially only one human family in the world. For believers in such a religion, "All human beings are my siblings and only animals are others." But the rhetoric of universalism invites us to wonder whether only our kin are our kind even as it recalls the languages of primitive tribes where the word for "human being" and the word for "fellow tribesperson" are one and the same. For the universalist statement turns out easily to mean "any creature who is not my brother is not human" or "only my brothers are human, all others are animals"—a conclusion with catastrophic moral consequences. Particularist ideology, on the other hand, rules out of order this politically dangerous slide 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 human. While the universalist insists that all aliens are animals (he cannot admit the existence of others who are human), the particularist allows "us" to think of and treat some beings from outside our tribe as human rather than as animals.

(Who "we" are matters. The creature that a person from one universalist tribe calls "extrafamilial," hence "nonhuman," may be essentially "familial," hence "human," in the view of someone from another universalist sect; or that creature may be essentially "human," if also "nonfamilial," in the view of someone from a particularist sect. The changes in meaning of such terms pose for the interlocutor—"mon semblable—mon frère"—a sometimes intolerable complication in discussing toleration.)

Greater political consequences follow when universalist theorists or sentimentalists claim to extend the boundaries of kinship to include not only beings considered human but also those considered animal—an extension generally made in order to eliminate the otherwise burdensome problem of distinguishing human beings from animals. The universalist statement "All creatures are our siblings" now turns easily into the view that "Only our brothers are creatures, all others are nonanimal—or both nonhuman and nonanimal." Universalist religion thus not only treats alien humans as nonanimal but also treats alien humans and animals as
The Family Pet

nonanimal, or as insentient things. It treats both alien humans and animals differently than does particularist religion. As we shall see, the practical moral and political consequences of this difference 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 concepts of “human” and “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. More significantly for our purpose of understanding long-standing aspects of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, the prime Christian stance is that Christianity itself is a universalist religion and Judaism a particularist religion. 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. 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 universalist 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 regards to animals and kinship, two positions in polar opposition to each other: (1) Animals are akin to humans; that is, they are our brothers, hence are to be thought of and treated as if they were members of our tribe or species. In this view, we are not the “keepers” of animals but their equals. In holding to it, Christianity is what one historian of animal sentimentality calls “the most anthropocentric religion that the world has ever seen.” (2) Animals are extraspecies and extratribal beings, and hence, like all essentially nonhuman things, are outside the “covenant.”

The position that all living creatures are our brethren is a hypothesis entertained by Christian thinkers such 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, and even Renaissance “free thinkers” influenced by Stoic “cosmopolitanism” such as Montaigne. 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."107

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, etc.)—as if the caroling humans were ani-
mals or the animals were caroling humans. The notion of the animals' friendship, kindliness, and brotherliness to man is of course pleasant. But it can also be pretty 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 superspecies family. At the very least, kinship, such 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 at by the birthplace that Christians generally assign to Jesus: a stable. 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." 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. Columba's College." (In Christendom, popular stories about interspecies sexual generation between human beings and animals or gods often recall Mary's giving birth to the godman Christ. Thus Hogarth's "Medley," which shows a woman giving birth to bunnies in a church, mocks the Enthusiast Methodists' pre-Darwinian belief in interspecies generation.)

Taken together, the two universalist views we have discussed here—that animals are akin to humans and therefore part of the covenant and that animals are not akin to humans and therefore not part of the covenant—can be contrasted with the view of animals informing a "particularist" religion such as Judaism, which allows that there are nonhuman, extraspecies members of the covenant, just as it allows that there are human extratribal members. For Jews, animals and human beings are both within the covenant, albeit they inhabit a different place in it. For Christianity, on the other hand, that only essentially human beings are covered by the covenant and the laws, means that insofar as we are obliged to treat animals kindly, we must also treat them as (if they were) responsible humans. In some realms of Christendom, therefore, animals that have committed a "wrong" are admitted to the ecclesiastical courts dressed in human clothing, and then compelled to sit on a chair or to stand on two legs.

The view of all God's creatures not only having a place in the choir but also inhabiting the same species-place in it is, in a literal sense, totalitarian. And since it denies the various animals a place of their own, it often leads to their relegation, not to human status, but to that of mere "things"—say, only 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 they are not, like family pets, inside our family—or insofar as they are, unlike family pets, entirely outside our species—they are, like vegetables
and stones, outside the covenant of the law. Christianity, especially in its post-medieval context, thus grants to human beings virtually limitless dominion over the world of "things," including animals.\textsuperscript{113}

Augustine himself underwrites the Christian withdrawal of protection from all fauna except humankind in his commentary on the "Story of the Legion of Devils Cast Out." In this story, Jesus allows—even induces—thousands of pigs to drown themselves in the sea, as in a holocaust of swine (marranos). "Then went the devils out of the man [who was called Legion] and entered into the swine; and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked."\textsuperscript{114} Augustine recognizes that Jesus was ill-treating a large number of animals and was thus apparently violating certain rules of the Old Testament. So he argues that, according to the New Testament, there is no protection whatever for them: "Christ himself shows that to refrain from the killing of animals . . . is the height of superstition, for judging that there are no common rights between us and the beast . . . [God] sent the devil into a herd of swine. . . ."\textsuperscript{115} Thus Pope Pius IX was in step with the historical Christian tradition when he refused to sanction the establishment of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) in Rome, on the grounds that its ideology implied that humans would have duties toward animals that according to Christianity they do not have.\textsuperscript{116} After all, it is not Christianity but Judaism which has laws that specifically include animals in the covenant\textsuperscript{117} and that protect nonhuman animals; and it is Christianity, not Judaism, whose doctrines, from Jesus to Saint Augustine to modern popes, deny any obligation toward nonhuman beings.\textsuperscript{118}

What are the practical consequences of this difference between Christianity and Judaism regarding the treatment of animals? Jewish doctrine, while disclaiming equal kinship with animals, enjoins humane kindness toward them. There are Old Testament commandments, for example, that one should help even the ass of one's enemy when the ass is under its burden,\textsuperscript{119} that one should allow animals to rest on the Sabbath,\textsuperscript{120} that one should not muzzle an ox when it treads out the corn,\textsuperscript{121} and that one should regard highly the life of one's beast.\textsuperscript{122} 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";\textsuperscript{123} and Church fathers, citing Paul's letter to the Corinthians, argued that God does not care at all for oxen as oxen.\textsuperscript{124}

How some Christian thinkers converted the rules of the Old Testament against being cruel to animals into a license to dominion over them\textsuperscript{125} is as interesting as how the Jewish injunction against physical cannibalism became an endorsement of spiritual cannibalism (the Eucharist) or how that against physical incest became an endorsement of spiritual incest (God as the Father of Himself). Many Christians argued that beasts were not fit parties for taking part in a Covenant and therefore
could not be part of one. 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." Calvin wrote similarly that animals were permitted to rest on the Sabbath only to ensure that their human masters do as well. 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 . . . ?)

In the late, Christian secularist eighteenth century, when animal sentimentalists 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. 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 or about the animals' interspecies equality with us.

The sentimentalists cited Hebrew scriptures for their purpose of encouraging kindness to animals. But they mistook the complex and balanced Jewish understanding both of stewardship and of kindness, representing the Jewish position on the relationship between humans and animals—and on the relationship between one group of animals and another—as having, 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. Nowadays, indeed, the sentimentalist position has become idealist to the point of wondering whether it might be unkind, not only to eat sentient, nonhuman beings (animals), but also nonsentient beings (vegetables) and even nonliving beings (rocks). It is as though, for thoroughgoing sentimentalists, universal human starvation was the only alternative to being inhumane. Returning to Eden is their aptly entitled handbook.
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 baalei hayyim, or legislation prohibiting causing animals undue pain, includes explicit consideration of the humaneness of shehitah and of the "bird's nest law," which enjoins against slaughtering a mother animal with its young or a young animal before the eyes of its mother. The closeness of the relation in Judaism between being kind to animals and eating them (as in the rule that Jews should not boil a kid in its mother's milk) recalls, once more, the words from Hamlet, one is cruel in such a way as to be kind.

In this context, it is important to emphasize that Christianity, unlike many other religions, does not ban the eating of any food: It is essentially an omnivorous ideology. 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 Christian culture, the widespread modern institutionalization of sanctioned pethood 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 reveals our characteristic "indulgence" toward them is as the animal or nonhuman being that cannot, or should not, be eaten—even in the otherwise virtually omnivorous gourmet centers of Christendom.) 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.

That there should be anything at all it would be wrong to eat was a crucial new position for Christendom. It is an essentially Protestant position; Roman Catholic churchmen frowned upon pet-owning—and also upon the practice of giving "Christian" names, or names "appropriate" to human beings, to animals—because such practices tended to confuse the partly human Christ (and the Eucharist) with the partly human Fido (and pet-eating). For many decades after the introduction of widespread pethood the Romantic and Victorian Christians treated pet-eating and cannibalism as identical; they conflated the new taboo, "Thou shalt not eat a pet"—which the institution of pethood promulgated—with the old taboo, "Thou shalt not eat a human being"—which traditional Christianity had both promulgated (insofar as the human being on the platter is most anyone) and also broke or transcended (insofar as the human being is Christ). The meat-eater Henry David Thoreau, exhibiting a kind of millenialist spirit, wrote in Walden that some day people would scorn our present animal-eating habits much as we scorn the...
man-eating habits of so-called savages: "Whatever my practice may be, I have no
doubt that it is part of the destiny of the human race, in its gradual improvement,
to leave off eating animals, as surely as the savage tribes left off eating each other,
when they came in contact with the more civilized." (In The Citizen of the World,
Oliver Goldsmith wrote sarcastically of those who argue for kindness to animals
while at the same time eating meat that "they pity and they eat the objects of their
compassion.")\(^{141}\)

The Christian secularist distinction between what animals may and may not be
eaten 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 act of cannibalism, rolled into one.\(^{142}\)
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 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."\(^{143}\) Leach then goes on to find a structural par-
allel, in the tradition of Lévi-Strauss, between two groups: those beings with whom
we are barred from having sexual intercourse, and those that we are barred from
eating. Leach makes two or three far-reaching and apparently commonsense
assumptions about these two categories of forbidden things. But 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 intercourse and eating.

Leach’s first assumption is that only humans belong in the group with whom
we are barred from having sexual relations. This means that while he considers the
taboo on incest he passes over that on bestiality. Yet there are people for whom
intercourse with certain kinds of more or less familiar animals, is not absolutely
condemned.\(^{144}\) His second assumption, that only animals belong in the group of
beings that can be divided according to which are edible and which are not, means
that, while he considers the taboo on eating animals, he does not consider the taboo
on cannibalism. Yet there are people for whom eating certain human beings is not
only partly allowable but even obligatory.\(^{145}\)

In any case, the principal examples that Leach uses to support both assump-
tions contradict an excellent hypothesis of his about pets—namely, that they are
not so much animals per se as intermediating beings between animals and
humans.\(^{146}\) Leach contradicts this hypothesis when he says that the quintessential
example of a being with whom we may not have intercourse is a member of our
own human family—as we have seen, a pet animal might serve just as well. He also
contradicts it when he says that the quintessential example of a being we may not
eat, is a pet—as we have seen, a human 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 either group; a pet is as much or little a being with whom we cannot have inter-
course as it is a being that we cannot eat.

Insofar as we conceive the pet as both human and nonhuman, it stands at an
intersection between species (it is my kind and another kind as well); similarly,
insofar as we conceive it as being both familial and nonfamilial, it stands at an in-
tersection between families (it is my kin and not my kin). The pet thus stands at the
focal chassé-croisé of the taboo concerning eating and the taboo concerning incest.

Leach goes some distance toward establishing a structural "homology," or
series of correspondences, between eating and sexual intercourse in terms of ani-
mals and human beings. What I have been arguing, however, is that neither the
phenomenon of pethood nor the problem of the relation between human and ani-
mal is easily understood in terms of a structural homology between eating and
intercourse—the canonical anthropological viewpoint that Leach represents:
Rather, what is here at work is an identity of one with the other.

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 inter-
course and those with whom it would not be incest) and at the borderline between
animal and nonanimal or between man and nonman (i.e., at the borderline
between those beings which may be eaten and those which may not). Pets stand at
the chassé-croisé between 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 intercourse with one another)
and where all eating is similarly so (say insofar as we are essentially omnivores),
the institution of pethood is, as we shall now see, an especially sensitive barometer
of the way human beings grouped as nations are likely to treat one another.

Kindness and Cruelty to Humans

To briefly summarize 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 tribe; both groups are participants in the covenant, however much
the ones within the tribe be "chosen," say by divine election. Likewise, the Jewish
position is that there are sentient beings both within and without the human spe-
cies: Both intraspecies and extraspecies beings are protected by the law, however
much the former group is "superior" to the latter, say by virtue of being speaking
animals.

Christianity, on the other hand, does not allow for either 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 extending kinship to others toward denying kindness to them tends to occur not only when we say we are extending kinship to all extra-species beings. It also tends to happen when we say, somewhat less grandly, that we are extending kinship to all extratribal humans in such a way that they all are brethren in a single group. For the view that all human beings are members of one tribe can turn into a call for turning extratribal human beings into things or for dehumanizing them. Chamfort said that the motto of the French Revolution, "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity," really meant, "Be my brother (frater) or I will kill you." 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." Thus the doctrine of universal intra-species human kinship easily justifies 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. Was it not, in our century, a millennialist Christian movement, albeit in a radical secular guise, that called beings from outside what its members took to be the one essential tribe “racially inferior”? That movement made the living conditions of those extratribal beings as filthy as it understood those of some animals to be. “Petting” the Jews and Gypsies in slaughterhouses, the Nazis tried to turn them into animals.

By the same token, the doctrine of universal interspecies kinship can justify treating animals 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 observations do not really help us understand the ideology of a totalitarian and tribal nation torturing and attempting to annihilate nonnationals as both extratribal (“We are Aryans, they are Gypsies”) and extraspecies (“We are humans, they are animals”); their having such status is not, in any ecological case, a moral or political justification for torturing and annihilating individuals and groups. But such observations do help us 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 that was his and is ours still—as with animals in general. Gomperz was interested in animals as part of a tolerant covenant that includes in its purview beings tribal, extratribal, and extraspecies.

**Romantic Utopia**

Among common minds, aye, among any but very uncommon minds, who enquires whether any one can do that which no one does do—. Add to this all the moral Loveliness of the Disposition of the two affections [sisterly and conjugal], which the better part of our nature feels—tho’ only a few speculative men develop that feeling, and make it put forth in its distinct form, in the understanding.—A melancholy Task remains—namely
to show, how all this beautiful Fabric begins to moulder, in corrupt or bewildered (veränderte) Nature—the streets of Paris and the Tents of the copper Indians, or Otaheittans.—Of this elsewhere, when we must. It is a hateful Task.

—Coleridge, Notebooks, no. 1637

The revolutionary ideology of universal fraternité, like the old Christian ideology of universal brotherhood, posits a universal kinship extensible 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 of 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 transcend mere incest.

And how should we describe sexual relations in pantisocracy if we extend siblinghood to animals as well as to all humans—as bestial, or as transcending mere bestiality?

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

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I hail thee Brother—spite of the fool’s scorn!
And fain would take thee with me, in the Dell
Of Peace and mild Equality to dwell . . .
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The dell of interspecies equality where Coleridge would live together with his animal Brother is the same one he speaks of in his poem “Pantisocracy”:

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I seek the cottaged dell
Where Virtue calm with careless step may stray . . .
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And one version of “To a Young Ass” makes explicit the link between interspecies equality and the pantisocratic community for which Coleridge yearns:

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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 dwell . . .
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For some people, the reason we should be kind to an animal like an ass is that it is protected by the law. For others, the reason might be that a particular ass has been kind to them. (This is the reason 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?”) 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 that Coleridge idealizes all intercourse verges on bestiality (or transcends mere bestiality, since animals are his kin, hence his kind). This way of conceiving the matter is, to be sure, outrageous, except perhaps for saints and children. But the matter is restatable in other terms as well: 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 believing in universal brotherhood, all intercourse verges on the incestuous and the bestial. Can one avoid physical incest and bestiality by means of “spiritualizing” kinship distinctions and species distinctions—that is, by “raising” them high above the physical? To use Coleridge’s term, how high-souled must be one’s kindredship with an ass in order to imagine oneself loving it in a wholly chaste, or nonincestuous and nonbestial, way—a way that is not, even unconsciously, physical bestiality or incest? One solution would be an absolute spiritualization of love—of the kind that Coleridge sometimes imagines in terms of “kindred minds.” 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 religious celibates such as Saint Francis stood, leads to a spiritual kind of bestiality, and intrafamiliar equality, for which Saint Francis also stood, leads to a spiritual kind of incest.

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 the problem, Coleridge attempts to dissolve it by means of a joke. “To a Young Ass,” for example, avoids directly confronting the sexual and nutritional difficulties involved in hypothesizing an interspecies equality by means of its apparently nonsensical ending. In the closing lines of the poem, Coleridge says that, in pantisocracy, the

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

E. H. Coleridge assures us that the poet “mean[s]... [this ending]... to have [no] meaning.” Yet what kind of messing, or sporting 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? 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 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 intercourse into incest. The effect of giving all God’s creatures the same “place in the choir” 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.” In America in the 1990s the number of pets far exceeds that of children, and the human-animal 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 family’s kinship structure. In the past, there were family slaves, servants, mistresses, and domestic working animals who provided safety valves for large extended families, which perhaps needed such safety valves less than our smaller families do. The general disappearance of such metakinship institutions has left a lacuna that pets often fill.

Maybe pets provide a better safety valve than metakin 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. 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, anthropocentric ideology of our time—abetted by the Cartesian view that animals are automata—dismisses this question by claiming that animals as such do not really exist. It 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). 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 chapter. Yet it is now clear that we need to reinvestigate several longstanding 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”? Did the disappearance of domestic working animals make for a diminution in our emotional life? What happens when people study an ape “growing up human” in a human family or when people join a family of apes? 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? How, if at all, do we own our pets?\textsuperscript{170}

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 proselytizing 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 and animal kind, or at least thought of as on such a line. Yet sometimes we really cannot tell whether a being is essentially human or animal—when we are children, say, or 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 beings such as pets, we would breed them, for ourselves, in our imagination.