



**Journal for Critical
Animal Studies**

VOLUME 17, ISSUE 3

May 2020

ISSN 1948-352X

Journal for Critical Animal Studies

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Contents

Issue Introduction: Learning to Listen pp. 1-2
Nathan Poirier

Essay: Stray Philosophy II: Dog/Human Reflections pp. 3-30
on Education, Boundaries, Care, and Forming
Interspecies Communities
Eva Meijer

Poetry: Silver-backed Chevrotain; Bodacious pp. 31-33
Lynne Goldsmith

Author Biographies p. 34

JCAS Submission Guidelines pp. 35-36

Issue Introduction: Learning to Listen

Nathan Poirier

A fundamental tenet of both feminism and anarchism is listening. Listening, rather than speaking, decenters the self out of respect for another. Listening conveys a sense of inclusion and is necessary for understanding the situation of others. In a general sense, “listening” also includes being attentive to non-verbal and unfamiliar modes of communication.

This broadly defined interpretation of listening is the underlying message of the article included in this issue, “Stray Philosophy II: Dog/Human Reflections on Education, Boundaries, Care, and Forming Interspecies Communities,” by Eva Meijer. This article is the companion piece to Meijer’s “Stray Philosophy: Human-Dog Observations on Language, Freedom and Politic” also published by JCAS in 2014. The present article centers around Meijer’s and, to a lesser extent her male dog Ollie’s, relationship with a newer female dog companion, Doris.

Stray Philosophy II is about decentering humans in companion animal relationships. By focusing on dog-human interactions, Meijer foregrounds the shared communication between humans and nonhumans. As her subtitle suggests, education, boundaries, care and communities are shaped by all those affected by the meaning of these words. Meijer shows how she and Doris co-construct the meanings of these concepts. Although many who live with companion animals expect their animals to learn human modes of communication, Meijer contends that people also need to learn how their animals communicate. Therefore, humans must learn to interpret their body language, behavior and vocalizations because animals constantly tell us what they want and do not want. Through descriptions of everyday activities of Meijer and her dogs, Doris’ unique personality, ways of communicating, and agency are revealed.

Also included in this issue are two poems, “Silver-backed Chevrotain” and “Bodacious,” by Lynne Goldsmith. Both are meditations on human intrusions on the lives of nonhuman animals.

This issue is being published in the throes of an ongoing worldwide environmental, social, economic, and political crisis, namely COVID-19. The main culprit? An anthropocentric view that legitimizes the wanton

human intrusion into nature and the lives of nonhuman animals. Nature is pushing back and communicating with us. Will we listen?

Stray Philosophy II: Dog/Human Reflections on Education, Boundaries, Care, and Forming Interspecies Communities

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Abstract

In *Stray Philosophy II* I reflect on the process of learning to live with our Romanian dog companion Doris, and her learning to live with my other dog companion Olli and me, in the city of Amsterdam. I use our experiences to criticize anthropocentrism, and to investigate how we can establish better relations with other animals, foregrounding their view on the matter. This is not just a matter of acknowledging dog agency, but also an attempt to theorize in a more-than-human way. The paper is a follow up to “Stray Philosophy: Dog-Human Observations on Language, Freedom and Politics” (Meijer, 2014), which focused on Olli’s first months in Amsterdam. Our reflections are divided in four sections: education, boundaries, care and forming new interspecies communities, and draws on insights from animal political philosophy, ecofeminism, interspecies autoethnography, and narrative ethology. Similar to how this worked in the first Stray Philosophy paper, I am the one writing it down, but Doris and Olli co-formed every word written.

Keywords: interspecies community; animal politics; interspecies communication; autoethnography; dog philosophy.

Olli and I first met Doris at the parking lot of a small nature reserve just outside of Amsterdam. We had borrowed a car and arrived early. As we were waiting for my friend Helen to arrive, Olli sniffed around the parking lot, looking for something to eat. Helen arrived in a small black van, together with three dogs: her own companion, Muis, Billy, a friend of Muis, and Doris, who was at that point still called Amber. I was slightly nervous. Olli and I greeted Helen, and then Muis, who was the first to jump out of the van. Muis is a Spanish rescue dog who accompanies her human Helen to her work at a home for humans with mental and psychiatric disorders. Muis began doing so as a puppy, and really grew into the job. She has her own function in the team and is respected, as well as liked, by staff and clients. She works a couple of days a week, including night shifts. When she goes to work she really goes into work mode: her posture changes, she becomes more serious and calmer.

Muis was overjoyed to see us – she sometimes stays with Olli and me and has a bit of a crush on him; Olli was at that point around 9 years old and thought her youthful enthusiasm was a bit much, though he was and is quite fond of her. Billy followed; she ignored Olli, who ignored her too – he is very polite. Then Doris came out of the car. She was around six months old, and I had been warned that she was shy of strangers, both dogs and humans. Olli ignored her as well, and I greeted her with my voice. She looked into my eyes. “That went well,” said Helen, who had told me before that she could still not look straight at her without upsetting Doris.

Doris, a medium-sized dog who looks like a shepherd-collie-something mix with a black, white and brown coat, was at that point staying in her fifth home. She had been born in the town of Râmnicu Vâlcea in Romania, where she was found in a garbage bin as a young puppy, together with two siblings. She was rescued by the dog rescue organization A Doua Sansa, and in the first two months of her life she lived in a large shed, with around forty other dogs. A small Dutch rescue organization, One of a Kind Dogs, had arranged for Doris’ transport to the Netherlands. She stayed with a foster family, and was soon adopted by a family with children. When this family adopted her she was scared, and when they returned her, she had developed ‘fear aggression’ and a strong dislike of children. It was the summer holidays, so she had to go to another foster family, and then was adopted again and returned again. Her anxieties had gotten worse and she had now also developed a fear of bags and sticks. At the time we met her she

was staying with another foster, a friend of Helen, who had experience with traumatized and anxious dogs.

After fostering several Spanish dogs, I was looking for a permanent companion for Olli and me, and Helen had told me about Doris. Our dog friend Pika had died two years earlier and our cat friend Putih had died earlier that summer. Olli missed both of them very much, and I did too. We had planned the hike at the nature reserve to see if the three of us would get along.

It was a lovely day – bright skies, the weather not too warm and not too cold, with a light breeze. Olli walked into the water a couple of times to cool his belly; the other dogs chased one another between the trees. The humans in our company ate a sandwich, sitting on a fallen tree, and I gave Doris some pieces of my bread, which she accepted – she loves bread. When we were almost back at the car she jumped up on me. She has a very specific way of jumping up on you: it is only one jump, and with her front paws she hits your abdomen. This is her way of saying you belong to the group. When she did this, she looked into my eyes again and I blushed, because it was such a direct message.

A few weeks later, Doris came to live with Olli and me in Amsterdam. Though she was nervous, she was not as scared as Olli was when he came to live with me (Meijer, 2014). Because she immediately felt she belonged with Olli and me, and she was still quite young, I could let her walk off leash fairly soon. She did have, and to some extent still has, social anxieties: she was very scared of large dogs and unknown humans, and in the beginning responded defensively. Nowadays, she has learned to ignore humans and dogs, as long as they keep their distance, but she will still growl and bark in certain social situations. Olli and she accepted each other immediately, and as Doris is very loving, I think it makes him happy to have her as a friend. The only thing that sometimes bothers him nowadays is that she often wants to play with him when we are outside – Olli is around twelve years old now, and not so into playing that much anymore.

In this paper, I reflect on the process of learning to live with Doris, and her learning to live with us. Recent work in animal philosophy, ethology, and animal studies more broadly, criticizes the use of anthropocentric frameworks for studying nonhuman animals (Blattner et al., 2020; Despret, 2016; Donaldson & Kymlicka, 2011; Meijer, 2019b). Instead, humans need to foreground nonhuman animal agency and voices, in order to overcome human bias and prejudice. One of the ways to do this is by studying more-

than-human animals in their habitats, for example, in their own communities or shared interspecies communities with humans, such as animal sanctuaries or multispecies households. In these studies, relations between the researcher and the animals she studies are not to be avoided, but to be approached differently. Ignoring someone is not neutral: it is a social act that influences the outcome of research. Furthermore, human researchers who study other animals are situated beings, whose research frameworks are not neutral or universal, but formed by cultural, political and scientific views about nonhuman animals, that often reflect the human exceptionalism and human domination our culture rests on. These background conditions need to be considered when studying other animals, in order not to repeat stereotypical views in one's judgment.

This article responds to this epistemic and political challenge by focusing on learning to live with a formerly stray companion dog. Drawing on insights from different strands of theory, such as political philosophy, narrative ethology, and critical animal studies more broadly, it investigates the difficulties and promises of doing justice to dog agency under non-ideal circumstances, in a world that is hostile towards other animals. It navigates the ethical, political and ontological questions that are tied to living with dogs from the ground up, accepting the writer is situated, as well as always already entangled in relations with companion dogs and other nonhuman and human animals.

The following reflections are divided in to four sections: education, boundaries, care and forming new interspecies communities. As in the first Stray Philosophy paper (Meijer, 2014), I am the one writing this down, but by living and working together, Doris and Olli co-formed the insights mentioned, and by this they do not shape only our common world, but also this text.

Education and training

When my first dog companion Pika, a Greek rescue puppy, came to live with me, and my then partner, it was as if she already knew everything she needed to know in order to function well in a multispecies society. We sometimes asked her to do or not do something, but as she grew up, she usually simply understood what was necessary or good, and educated me about that as well.

When Olli came to live with Pika and me, he was very scared, and he had never lived in a house before. He spent the first years of his life on the streets, and was then locked up in a shelter for another couple of years, and this situation was completely new for him. Because he was a grown-up, a kind fellow with an inherent sense of justice or social norms, I understood my role not so much as his teacher or trainer, but rather as an equal, showing him the ropes of Amsterdam dog life. In this process, our dog friend Pika was actually more important; he looked at her for guidance and clues and in the beginning he followed her every move.

The situation with Doris was different from both Olli and Pika. She was quite a lot younger than Olli when he arrived, he was already six years old, but older than Pika, who was a puppy. She already had a life behind her, including some bad experiences. Her character differs from Olli and Pika in the sense that she likes to follow Olli and me and be with us. Pika was autonomous by character, Olli because he had had to take care of himself his whole life, living on the streets and surviving Romanian shelters. Doris likes to be with me more, and to work alongside me. Another difference was that some of her reactive behavior was socially unacceptable, and therefore potentially dangerous to herself and others. She seemed to need more guidance to become a responsible adult and function in a society that sometimes forces proximity on dogs.

When Doris arrived she was very nervous. She chewed on her leg and tail, her skin and fur looked bad and she was quite thin. Soon after her arrival she began to eat more, and she grew fast; she also started to sleep better. While she befriended some of my dog and human friends, it did become clear she was not too fond of visitors. If someone she did not know entered our house, she would growl and bark, and if I had not been around, she would probably have bitten them. The same applied to the area around our house, mainly the space before the front door and the alleyway at the side of the house: Doris did and still does not like it when humans and dogs walk there and will let them know. Olli is very tolerant and gentle, and he accepted her presence immediately. They played together a lot in the first months, on the couch, in the garden and in the park. Unfortunately, his grand social skills did not influence Doris' behavior. On the contrary: because she feels safe with him she feels more secure and reacts more strongly towards other dogs, and this is even more visible when her canine best friend Vera also joins us on our walk.

Some of her anxiety, like the chewing on her leg and tail, disappeared in the first weeks. Other problems remained. Most of the foster dogs who stayed with Olli and me calmed down after a while and settled into our daily routine without me explicitly explaining the rules of the life or city to them. I had hoped the same would happen with Doris, but her anxiety was more fundamental. Perhaps cultural differences also play a role here: many volunteers who work for rescue organizations describe differences in character and behavior between Southern European dogs on the one hand (Spain, Portugal, Greece) and Eastern European (Romania, Bulgaria) and Russian dogs on the other. My foster dogs came from a Spanish shelter, and dogs from the south of Europe are seen as more human-oriented and more easygoing in multispecies environments. The volunteers explain this by human treatment of the dogs in the different countries, and often also mention the differences in climate, which influence social encounters.

Doris had clearly taught herself to defend herself in fearful situations. This works well: as a medium-sized shepherd/collie dog she can scare away humans by barking or growling. This usually moves them out of the way, but some get angry. With dogs it is more complicated: she does not mind dogs who are her size or smaller, but she is scared of larger dogs and will be defensive if she encounters them while on the leash. Off-leash she is fine if the dog in question ignores her, but when they chase her or bark loudly she might panic and run. To address these issues, we explicitly needed to build a common framework of trust, attention, and communication to rely on. We went to the dog school.

The Dog School

At Hondenschool De Gabber, the dog school everyone recommended because of their dog-friendly teaching methods, they ask that everyone first follows an intensive month-long course, in which you take lessons three nights a week. After this basic course you can follow all kinds of other courses, or train for agility or other sports. We started the basic course in November – it was already dark when we went to the park in the evenings, which was about an hour travel from our home by tram and foot, and in my memory it rained every night we were out on the field. The lessons were a combination of training on the field and theory sessions – the latter focused on dog behavior and communication, and proved to be especially useful for humans who came to the course with their first dog companion. In the first

week, Doris was very scared. She was allowed in the theory room with the humans because of her fears, while other dogs had to wait inside the kennels in the back, or in their cars. The humans nearby ignored her at my request, and the inside part was fine for Doris. Being outside on the field in a group with around ten other dogs however frightened her so much that she walked with her tail between her legs, in a very low posture, with her belly almost on the grass. Furthermore, whenever we walked in the direction of the exit she would pull on the leash fiercely to tell me “please, let’s get out of here as soon as possible.”

In the second week, she began to enjoy the lessons, made friends with some of the dogs, and she turned out to be a swift learner. Even when her anxiety got the best of her, she would still try to do what I asked from her, which was quite moving. At first, these were simple exercises such as sit, stay, down, wait, come here, later they became more difficult. Lessons always begin with some minutes of “following” – dogs and humans walk around the field having to pay careful attention to one another and not so much to their surroundings. This is still one of the most difficult exercises for Doris, as she always wants to keep an eye on what is going on.

In the third week she began to enjoy going to the dog school; before we got out of the tram she would stand up and wag her tail happily, eager to get to the park. In addition to the dog school, we practiced the exercises in our neighborhood, which she liked a lot. At the end of the course, she had the highest score of all dogs on her exams.

During the exams, dogs and humans perform the exercises we practiced alone (such as sit, wait, here) or in the group (follow), and they get a mark for how well they perform them. It is an easygoing and joyful affair, but the dogs still know it is serious because the level of concentration is higher than usual, and there is an audience (the other dogs and humans). Exams at the dog school can be moving to watch. The dogs (and humans) know something special is happening and really focus on doing it right, even though they sometimes get overexcited or nervous because all the others are watching.

During the course it had become clear that Doris was scared of doing agility, because of the attributes (such as tunnels, hoops, and bridges) that were used, and that she really liked the obedience exercises. After the basic course we signed up for the follow-up obedience course. Doris was again scared at first, then really liked it, and graduated as the best dog (this time

she won a bird toy). After this, we tried the fun course, which they recommended because Doris was still quite young, but according to Doris, this course was no fun at all. There were lots of different exercises, and many scary objects to deal with, including a skateboard and a hoop to jump through; she did not get into the intense slow concentration from obedience that she prefers. We did go to all lessons, and as in the earlier courses, Doris did after few sessions begin make new friends. After the fun course, we did obedience two, which went the same as obedience one (this time she won a squeaking pig toy). We currently follow obedience three.

Clicker Training

At De Gabber, clicker training is used to teach the dogs the different exercises, such as “sit,” “follow” and “here.” This works as follows. The human has a clicker, a small plastic object with a metal strap inside of it that produces a click when moved with one’s thumb. The human clicks when the dog performs the right behavior, and the dog gets a reward; this can be food, playing with a toy or cuddles, depending on what the dog likes best. A click always means a reward, even when the human clicks at the wrong moment, but it is not necessary to always click. When you teach a dog to sit, you click for every sit, but once they know what “sit” means, you click less, and finally you might click in exceptional circumstances with lots of noise for example, but you usually do not click for a simple sit anymore.

Clicker training may sound like a behaviorist or mechanic way of approaching dogs, but it is in fact more complex and interesting. At De Gabber they believe that it is not really the dogs that need training: humans need to learn to understand their dogs, and to communicate with them in a clear way. Using a clicker is always connected to a question – the human for example asks “wait” –, and an answer – the dog waits. In order to get the right answer, the human needs to ask the right question. The clicker helps humans to be clear in their communication. As such, it is a tool for interaction, or for conversation, similar how the leash and learning to walk on the leash played a role in the process in which Olli and I got to know each other (Meijer, 2014). (Olli also loves clicker training, as it involves food; we do it for fun sometimes and he is a fast learner.)

Here it is useful to turn to what Vicki Hearne (2007) writes about teaching pointer Salty to fetch. She describes this process as constituting a common language-game in which both actors exercise agency (see also

Meijer, 2019b, Chapter 2). Teaching a dog to fetch creates a new form of communication, but it also affects the common dog-human world. This common world grows when the human teaches the dog a new concept, a practice in which the dogs exercises agency as well, and in which the human needs to be attentive to that agency to make it work (Meijer, 2019b). Learning to use a clicker is a language-game (one that usually only takes minutes), and the clicker plays a role in other language-games connected to learning and training. As a tool for conversation, its precise meaning is rooted in the lived experience of beings – their histories, attitudes, characters, moods – and works differently for different individuals.

As Vinciane Despret (2016) argues with regard to science, the questions we ask matter for how other animals can respond (Hearne, 2007; Haraway, 2008; Meijer, 2019b). Active communication and working on understanding the other makes for more complex and interesting relations, similar to how this works with human friends and partners. Instead of confining a dog by working with, or training, them, working or training can enable dogs to respond more elaborately because it extends the common framework of reference (Meijer, 2019b; Hearne, 2007; Kerasote, 2008).

Training as a Set of Language Games

There are different dog training cultures, focusing on for example police dogs, guide dogs, therapy dogs or companion dogs. While there are differences between these cultures, and some focus more on disciplining dogs than others, in the world of dog training there is a general shift from coercion and control to dog-centered methods, that take dog agency and subjectivity into account (Fox et al., 2020).

For Doris and me, training led to a greater understanding of one another. It also enlarged her freedom: because she listens to “wait” she is now able to walk off leash safely in the areas where we go for walks (in the Netherlands, these are usually not too far from roads, and there are not many spaces where you can walk for a long time without meeting others). Doris and I also learned to go into working mode, a form of deep concentration in which we were completely focused on the other. She is better at that than I am – I sometimes forget the exercises if we have not done them for a year, while she remembers, and I can get distracted by expectations of the teacher while she focuses on me.

Our training at the dog school and at home thus contributed to developing a common vocabulary. While this is partly serious, it is also playful – for Doris training is always a joyful affair (Bekoff, 2007; Massumi, 2014). Training builds a common framework, and during training sessions or afterwards, dogs can bend the rules of that framework, make fun of what is asked, or do something differently than is asked (Hearne, 2007), which depending on the situation can be a form of play, or even a joke (Meijer, 2019b).

A common joke at the dog school is to disobey when asked to sit, wait and come. Dogs will sit and wait, but then start running big circles around the field when their human asks them to come. Almost all dogs do this at some point in time. The humans have to really entice them with enthusiastic calls and promises of treats, or else they will not come, and sometimes other dogs join in. In the earlier courses more dogs will join in; in the higher obedience courses most dogs will ignore their running pal. This is partly because they are older, and partly because through training they learn to control their emotions. However, very obedient dogs often also make this joke at some point, often later in their training, when they know they exercise perfectly, probably because they feel confident in the situation. It also often happens at exams, when the dogs are more excited than usual. It is clear the “mistake” is deliberate if the dog knows the exercise, has done it a couple of times without problems, in combination with happy body language – wagging their tail, showing a happy face, sometimes panting with enthusiasm. This specific form of joking seems to be tied to the training context at the dog school. Doris also makes jokes in other situations, but running around and doing something else than is asked from you seems to be most fun when others are watching and your human calls you with their friendliest and happiest voice.

Training is one cluster of the many possible dog-human language-games – others for example are greeting, playing, learning, mourning, and resisting. Some language-games are initiated by dogs, some by humans, and some come into being by living together or interacting. While I took the lead in going to the dog school, Doris takes the initiative in other situations, and the shape of our common life is formed by both our actions, as well as larger social structures.

The Biting Incident

Through forming new habits and working at the dog school, Doris slowly became more confident. Unfortunately, this process was hindered by an incident that took place about half a year after Doris arrived. On a late Friday afternoon in February, Doris and I were going to go for a walk. Olli wanted to stay at home – he joins us for the long morning walk, but prefers to stay at home or to spend some time in the garden if we take another long walk –, and I went back into the hallway with Doris, leaving the front door open, to check whether I had put the can with dog food away. In the week before, Olli had managed to open this large can and ate kilos of food. When I closed the cupboard door, a man passed by our house and Doris ran out into the street, barking at him. He began to kick her and she bit his leg. Doris had barked to humans like that before; when they ignore her there is no problem, but this escalated quickly and badly. It was of course my fault: I had left the door open. And the man should not have kicked her, but he was scared.

In the Netherlands, the policy for biting incidents largely depends on the police officer assessing the situation. The legal situation is such that dogs can be confiscated by the police, on the orders of mayor of the town where they live, after one biting incident, even when the victim does not press charges. In this worst case scenario the dog is brought to a large barn with other nonhuman animals – dogs from the same situations, but also animals who are confiscated by the police because they were neglected or abused by their owners. They stay at this facility, on a secret address, for at least a couple of weeks, often months. During this time, they usually do not have much contact with other dogs or humans. They then get a test, conducted by someone they never met before, to see if they can stay calm in different circumstances. At any point in the process, a judge can decide they have to be killed. While there is officially the possibility to appeal this order, the procedures are often opaque, and it is often very difficult to regain custody over one's companion. There are several examples of companion dogs who are killed in the past years before their humans had a chance to appeal the decision.

Doris would have never passed this test at that moment. Because of this threat I was unsure about whether or not I should contact the police myself: it could work in Doris' favor if I was the first to contact them and tell them my side of the story, but I did not want to bring the incident to their attention if it was not absolutely necessary.

To complicate matters, the son of the man Doris had bitten came by my house about an hour after the incident and threatened to kill me. A few hours later another son came by and asked for two thousand euros. Later that evening, a boy of around 16 years old threw stones at my front door, yelling that the dog needed to die. While I understand their anger, fortunately the man was not badly hurt and only had superficial scratches on his leg. He went to the hospital but did not need a tetanus shot, nor other treatment.

I called the dog school for advice, and they offered their help: when dogs are in training the police often do not follow up after a complaint. Furthermore, while Doris and I were in the wrong, the man's actions influenced what happened as well. "I would also bite if someone kicked me," our trainer remarked. I decided to call the neighborhood police officer to explain the situation, also because of the death threats. He came by the next day to speak about the situation. I offered to pay for new pants and possible medical treatment, and he offered to speak to the man who was bitten. A few weeks later the situation was solved.

In this conflict the different actors involved had different social status. Doris had low status because of her species, the man she had bitten was of Moroccan descent and did not speak Dutch well, and I am not male, which led to him not wanting to speak to me directly. In *Dangerous Crossings* (2015), Claire Jean Kim discusses the relations between different human social groups around advocating for environmental and animal issues. She argues that we need a multi-optic view to co-conceptualize different forms of oppression. There is not one primary form of oppression and different oppressions often are primordial, even if their genealogies are different. Explicating interconnections is useful and often necessary for understanding these different oppressions, and conceptualizing the road to a better future.

This incident confronted me with the precarious position of dogs in Dutch society directly, but also with my own privilege as a white human – the man who was bitten was from Moroccan descent and did not speak Dutch very well. While it was never explicated, it was likely that this played a role in my negotiations with the neighborhood police officer.

In the context of biting incidents in the Netherlands, there are often interconnections between dog and human groups. A report about biting incidents and social workers in the Netherlands (Kanhailal, 2019) for example shows that social workers who perform house visits have a higher

risk of being bitten than humans in other professions who do house visits, and that there is a relation between dog bites and domestic abuse. Another example is the relation between pit bulls and certain human marginalized groups.

Pit bull type dogs are seen as a status symbol by humans in poor neighborhoods, especially young males (*ibid*; Dickey, 2017). Because of this, they are often bought impulsively as puppies and abandoned when they grow of age and begin to show problem behavior. Pit bull type dogs make up 35.7% of dogs in Dutch shelters, and they stay there for longer than other dogs. The average stay for dogs in shelters is 63 days, for American Bulldogs this is 80 days and for American Staffordshire Terriers 115 days (Gerbscheid & Van den Nieuwboer, 2015). Pit bulls are also the most likely dogs to be reported for biting incidents – it is unsure whether they bite more often, whether their bites are more serious, or whether their bites are just more likely to be reported, because they are stereotyped as aggressive (Gerbscheid & Van den Nieuwboer, 2015). They are even deemed a “high risk” breed by Dutch legislation and are treated differently from other dogs: when they cause serious biting incidents they do not get a second chance to improve their behavior.

Adequately addressing biting incidents asks for further investigating the cultural and political dimensions of the relations between dogs and human groups, and not solely blaming the individual dogs and humans involved, or singling out one breed as dangerous, as is currently the standard.

After the biting incident I felt that for Doris’ sake I needed to be stricter and more careful, which made everything more stressful. Her behavior around that time sometimes brought me close to tears. Reactive behavior is often interpreted as aggression, and others will often respond to that with aggression. This made our walks in the neighborhood trying. But it was just a matter of keeping at it – we did not really have another choice.

Learning to Read Each Other’s Voices and Bodies

At the dog school, Doris and I learned some specific language games. These are helpful in certain social contexts. “Stay” for example helps when Doris is scared; instead of attacking the other dog or running away she stays when I ask her to, and slowly this creates confidence. It helps her to see that staying quiet makes for a more relaxed encounter with, or better means of avoiding, the dog we encounter. Going into the concentration also helps,

when we walk in the city and cannot avoid difficult situations. She focuses on me instead of her surroundings, and learning that others will usually ignore her helps to build confidence.

However, even though we worked hard, there remained problems, for example when walking with a larger group of dog friends, with unexpected encounters, and especially in and around the house. I trained this by inviting friends over for coffee to practice, but we made little progress. Part of the solution is acceptance: we adjusted our routines so that we avoid problem situations. In making new friends it is for example best to visit them on neutral ground a couple of times, and then invite them over here; once Doris accepts someone it is completely fine. Of course Doris has a say in who is welcome in our house, but sometimes there are unexpected visitors, or visits from humans we do not know that cannot be avoided, for example from professionals who need to fix something in the house. Over time she taught me about her preferences with regard to this.

Species is often seen as the marker of difference in engaging with nonhuman animals. However, the nature of the social relationship between certain groups of nonhuman and human animals for a large part determines whether or not we understand, or can learn to understand, others (Donaldson & Kymlicka, 2011). Adopting Doris' perspective, and her adopting mine, was made possible by living together, paying attention, and looking for the right ways to communicate.

The biting incident is almost two years ago now, and Doris is still changing. She knows how to read me and I know how to read her. Living together also changed me, in different ways: I for example know which humans she will bark at because they have a funny walk, are too tall or too small, wear a hat, make explicit eye contact, use a walking stick, or do something else that Doris considers impolite, even to the point where I now also get annoyed with them, though I of course won't show it because they cannot do anything about it.

Boundaries, Personal Space and Consent

Doris is very sensitive to touch, and she prefers to have a lot of space around her. Her behavior constantly reminds me of how easily certain humans will touch the body of other animals, or not respect their space in other ways – an example is walking very closely past the dogs on the platform where we wait for the metro, it is as if some humans see the dogs as suitcases.

When Doris and I are in public spaces – in the park, waiting for the tram, chatting to a friend in a café – humans will often suddenly touch her without asking her for permission. If Doris cannot back out of the situation, for example when she is on the leash, she will try to move back, growl if this is impossible, and lately she uses the technique of giving one sharp and loud bark to scare them – this works very well. Some humans do ask me for permission. When I tell them that Doris does not want to be touched by strangers and explain why, most accept that, but some say something along the lines of “I am very good with dogs,” or just “she is so cute” and will still try to touch her, which moves us to scenario one, which reinforces Doris’ weariness of humans she does not know well. I understand the desire to touch dogs but Doris makes it very clear she is not interested: she backs away and if that is not enough she growls. Humans who do touch her take my judgment not seriously: they also, and more importantly, ignore what she is saying.

Ecofeminists have since the 1970’s drawn attention to parallels in the positions of women and other animals, arguing that we live in a binary system that prefers male over female, reason over nature, mind over body and emotion, and that sees these pairs as connected (Adams & Gruen, 2014). Women and nonhuman animals are positioned at the side of nature, the body, and emotion. This power hierarchy is inscribed in many cultural, social and political processes. One of these is the right to bodily integrity. While women’s struggles for bodily autonomy have led to some results in this area, for nonhuman animals the situation is still poor. The topic has received some attention with regard to animals in factory farming (Adams, 2010), but the problem is underexplored in the literature. Normalization of human domination over other animals’ bodies is found in all relations between human and other animals, also in more “animal friendly” environments. Petting zoos are a familiar example – the animals there are forced to perform emotional labor, often having little possibility to rest or escape. The fact that they work is usually not recognized, and their working conditions are often not safe. Nonhuman animals who are bought as companions also run the risk of being touched and held against their wishes. Companion animals have their own preferences with regard to touch, in part connected to their species but also based on individual differences, and they have different ways of making these clear to humans. Currently, for many nonhuman animals, options to say no are very limited. While certain companion animals, such as cats and dogs, have at least some space to express they do not want to be

touched, for example by walking away, smaller animals who are kept in cages often do not have this choice.

As in relations with humans, the question of consent is important here, even though other animals cannot express their consent in human language and vice versa (Sleigh, 2018). Investigating the types of relations other animals desire with us begins with creating conditions under which nonhuman animals can choose to engage with you, and by asking questions and listening to their responses (Blattner et al., 2020; Meijer, 2019b; Smuts, 2001). This can be combined with educating oneself about a certain species' languages and cultures – rabbits have other ways of saying no than chickens; companion rabbits have other ways of expressing themselves than wild rabbits, and so on. While the relevance of this may sound completely obvious to some, our encounters in the streets, the popularity of petting zoos, and the conditions under which many nonhuman animal companions live, show that many humans never think about it, causing others fear and discomfort.

Olli and Doris have their own ways of discussing these issues, with one another and with me. When they have been apart for a while, they always first greet one another, and then me. They do so by walking up to each other wagging their tails, often touching faces first, then smelling the other's body all the way to their tail – Doris is usually overjoyed to see her best friend in the world again, so she might jump up and down a bit, play bite Olli in his neck, face or leg. Olli will just wag his tail fast. The greeting might turn into a bit of playing. With playing inside the house – on the couch or the bed – Olli is usually the one who invites Doris to play. He does this at moments when she is also awake and cheerful. He will move onto his back, roll around a bit, and she will go up to him and play bite him – usually the nose and neck, sometimes his legs, and he will play bite her. They also growl deeply, which is an Eastern European thing that other dogs do not always understand. They play for a couple of minutes, take a step back when it gets rough, and end it by walking away or ignoring the other. While it may seem as if there is no explicit consent in this interaction, there is embodied communication in which both pay attention to the signals of the other very carefully, and respect the other's boundaries (Bekoff, 1995). Olli is usually the one who begins and ends playing, but Doris also sometimes ends it.

The same applies in interaction with me. Both dogs pay attention to my signals in greeting, play and cuddling, and respect my boundaries – Doris loves to play bite me, and now also started to play bite her dog sitter. Olli

sometimes wants more cuddles than I want to give him, and will keep petting me with his front paw. If I had enough, turning my back to him works best: he will then turn around and go to sleep. Similarly, he ignores me if I want to cuddle and he prefers to sleep.

In encounters with new humans or dogs, Doris prefers to be ignored. If dogs are calm, she will often want to play with them at a certain point. With humans it takes longer. It took my parents over a year of ignoring her before they could touch Doris, but once she trusts someone, she loves to cuddle. She is very affectionate with me, she sleeps on the bed and we always start the day with a cuddle and play session. Sometimes strangers on the street call Doris “vals,” untrustworthy and evil, but she is not. She just has a very strong sense of community (more about that in the final section), and personal space, and she wants to be able to determine how close others get to her. (Perhaps we can draw parallels with women who are labeled as aggressive when they speak up for themselves, or claim space in public spaces.) Her attitude sometimes also gives her an advantage. She can for example join me at professional meetings and talks I give, something she enjoys because she likes to come with me when I leave the house. She will just wait patiently, where Olli wants to interact with humans all the time and otherwise barks for attention.

Care

In our shared household, power hierarchies are flexible. When Doris just arrived, I often felt as if Olli and I were her parents or guardians. He and I teach her different kinds of lessons, and he can provide her with a different sense of security and home than I can. Some time ago, Doris saw a pheasant during our walk. She ran off, and because the pheasant flew over a river, she ended up in the river. Doris is scared of water; she never swims. She swam to the other side as fast as she could, after which she was separated from Olli and me by the water. When she came out of the river she ran to the nearest crossing, as fast as she could, and then ran to Olli first, pressing her body against his. Now things were all right again, and she came to greet me, all wet but wagging her tail.

Doris has now been with us for over two years, she is three years old, and the relations have shifted. We all care for one another. I sometimes joke that all three of us are one another’s emotional support animals. Olli suffers from anxiety when there is thunder or fireworks, Doris has her social

difficulties and I sometimes suffer from depression – walking with the dogs and having them care for me is an important part of what keeps me going (Meijer, 2019a). When we go to the vet, Olli and I support Doris, who finds this quite stressful. Olli does it by getting very close to her, so that the sides of their bodies touch, at exactly the right time, when the vet touches her – he moves away again when she is done. If we are outside, and there is a sudden loud noise, Doris and I support Olli, who has trauma related to loud noises (the vet calls this PTSD because it relates to him being shot at in Romania). If something is wrong in my life, both dogs support me, but Olli is especially attuned to my emotions. When I received a phone-call from my sister saying that my father was in hospital, he was sitting next to me immediately, with his nose under the palm of my hand. This is clearly noticeable because he is usually minding his own business, or so it looks. Apparently he is always paying attention, also when I think he is not. The same happens when I argue with my partner – he is there immediately, again pressing his nose in the palm of my hand. Doris is always more explicitly focused on me, and guards Olli and me. This is not just a formal task, in the sense that she makes sure strangers stay away, it is also emotional: she gets upset when Olli is upset (more so than when I am upset).

While many individual humans recognize the importance of relations with nonhuman others in their lives, culturally and politically there is still a clear hierarchy between humans and other animals, also in the context of care. Humans are mostly regarded as carers for other animals, perhaps with the exception of support animals, but even in that situation humans are the owners of their support animals, and are seen as the ones that make the important decisions. In line with skepticism about other animals' cognitive abilities, there is skepticism with regard to whether they are able to love others and truly care for them, or just act on the basis of instinct. This hierarchical view, that positions humans above other animals and sees a sharp line between these groups, however relies on contested ideas about nonhuman animals and possible relations between human and nonhuman animals, as well as on a flawed conception of agency.

Viewing humans and other animals as radically different is problematic for several reasons, on which I will only briefly mention (Meijer, 2019b). There is no gap between humans on the one hand and other animals on the other, instead on the levels of biology, culture, and politics, human and nonhuman animals are related and connected in different ways (Bekoff,

2007; Derrida, 2008; Meijer, 2019b). In the context of care, we find that nonhuman animals care for, love and mourn their loved ones (Bekoff, 2007; King, 2013; Smith, 2005), human and nonhuman. Mourning is seen as one of the ways we can measure love, because it clearly transcends what is necessary for survival and shows us something important about nonhuman inner lives. Olli loved Pika and Putih and grieved for them for a long time. He also very much loved one of our foster dogs, Titan, who unfortunately could not stay with us because he could not get along with Putih.

The second aspect, of agency, is often tied to an image of the human as rational and autonomous, which is formed in contrast to other animals (Blattner et al., 2020; Meijer & Bovenkerk, forthcoming). In philosophy, agency has traditionally been reserved for intentional human action and is linked to the capacity for propositional thought. Jeff Sebo (2017) calls this “propositional agency.” This view starts from the commonsense idea that there is a difference between action and mere behavior. This difference is in the philosophical tradition often interpreted as the difference between intentional action and mere behavior. Intentional action is specified as acting on “judgments about what we have reason to believe, desire, and/or do” (Sebo, 2017, p. 4). Being capable of intentional action formulated in this way presupposes cognitive capacities that other animals were long thought not to possess, such as for example second order thoughts.

Many animal philosophers and scientists today challenge this interpretation of agency, together with the underlying view of animal subjectivity (Sebo, 2017). They argue that at least some nonhuman animal species possess (some of) these capacities and that differences between humans and other animals in this regard are a matter of degree, and not kind. They also argue that humans often act habitual (*ibid.*) and that an image of the human as primarily a rational being relies on an idealized view of that human. Introducing agency as intentional agency in this narrow description does not do justice to other animals’ capacities and inner lives, and it creates a conceptual gap between humans and other animals.

Furthermore, defining agency in terms of cognitive capacities does not do justice to the fact that agency is always constituted by relations with others (Meijer & Bovenkerk, forthcoming; Gruen, 2015). Individuals are always tied to specific circumstances, capacities, and contexts, which influence their options for acting on the micro- and macro level (see the final section for a longer discussion). Humans for example are born as a certain

sex, in a specific culture, with a specific skin color, in a specific class, and so on, and while their individual capacities influence their scope for acting and making choices, relationships with individual others and social structures co-shape these as well. For other animals, social relations, species, physical capacities, and other factors can similarly all play a role in one's options for exercising agency.

As ecofeminists have argued, humans and other animals are always entangled in relations with individual others from their own but also other species (Adams & Gruen, 2014), that can create different forms of interdependence, and influence our options for exercising agency and autonomy. While there are limits on Olli and Doris' ways of exercising agency in our society, there are also limits on mine. By caring for one another we aim to enlarge one another's wellbeing and freedom, even though this is not always possible. Care and agency are in these processes not opposite poles but connected, and our relations are shifting as we change.

Forming New Dog-Human Communities

Both Doris and Olli have a clear sense of boundaries and social norms, but they have different views on community. In the first section, I mentioned that Olli arrived in Amsterdam with his own moral compass and that Doris needed to learn new social skills. While this is true, it is not the whole story. They also have different perspectives on community, and different attitudes towards others.

Olli could perhaps best be described as a liberal democrat or even a cosmopolitan. He respects everyone's freedom as long as his freedom is respected and makes no difference between interactions with friends or with strangers that he meets on the streets. He does have special attachments to the dogs and humans that are part of our larger community, but he is always open to meeting new folks, and everyone is welcome in our house. For Doris, the borders of the community are strict, which would locate her on the side of communitarians, and in some respects anarchists. She is completely loyal towards those she loves, but hostile towards others when they come too close. And some animals she learns to accept, such as the pigeons who regularly visit our garden. If I have been away, she smells my face, neck and hands carefully to see with whom I have been, recognizing if I visited my parents, sister, or others she knows, and she will softly growl if I have touched a dog she does not know or dislikes. When on foreign ground – in a new city, house

or nature reserve – she will respect that this is not her land, and keep her distance from the dogs and humans living there, similar to what she prefers when they enter her territory. While she is generally eager to work with me, this is not limitless: when I do something she dislikes, she will give me an indignant look (this look is very clear, humans who do not know much about dogs will recognize it) or simply make a different choice, showing that she makes her own decisions and does not always accept my authority.

Olli's attitude towards strangers seems to be completely different from Doris' – he greets them with kindness. However, this is not simply a welcoming gesture. When he was living on the streets of Romania, he learned to read humans in this manner – it shows him who will be nice to him, who ignores him and who intends to harm him. While it may seem as if he is at ease, he is actually trying to influence an unpredictable social situation by asking a human to pet him. Olli is also very diplomatic with dogs. In conflict situations between other dogs, he knows how to intervene, and he can approach any dog on or off lead without trouble. Again, this is a matter of good social skills, and not simply friendliness. Both Olli and Doris try to influence the outcome of encounters with strangers in their own ways. As Bekoff (2019) notes, for dogs and humans personality can change over time, and Doris seems to be making new connections more easily as she is getting older.

With other nonhuman animals, such as chickens or cats, and with human children, the social setting is different. For Olli, these encounters are friendly and joyful. He loves meeting cats, birds and rodents, will respect their boundaries but seemingly feels at ease. He is also very fond of children – when he just arrived, he only felt at ease around children, so he obviously had good experiences with them. For Doris, children and cats are scary creatures. She loves the way that birds, mice, pheasants, rabbits and others move, and will try to chase them. In this case however being part of the community again makes all the difference – social status trumps species in her understanding.

The attitudes of both Olli and Doris are in part formed in relation to hostile human acts, and we live in an anthropocentric society. Olli challenges this by reaching out to humans, actively creating new opportunities for himself; Doris refuses to interact until she knows the situation is safe, which also actively influences the situation. If their trust had not been harmed, they would perhaps have been more relaxed in the social interactions that are now

tense. However, even then Olli would likely be more eager to interact with new folks, where Doris finds a couple of good friends sufficient.

The most important aspect of asking what political model dogs would prefer might be that it shows that just like humans, individual dogs, and *mutatis mutandis* other animals, have different preferences. Nonhuman animals are often seen as being defined by their species characteristics, while they might also have different opinions, depending on their character, upbringing, genes, history and social conditions – just as humans do. While many humans accept liberal democracy as the best possible option for living together, there are plenty philosophers and citizens who do not agree, and also in the context of liberal democracy there are many different opinions with regard to defining just political decisions.

Asking what kind of relationships other animals want with humans – including asking whether they want relations with humans at all – is, as Donaldson and Kymlicka (2011) convincingly argue, one of the most important questions in determining just relations (Blattner et al., 2020). The question of co-government, or co-shaping communities, is especially important with regard to domesticated animals and liminal animals, or those with whom humans share households and cities.

Olli and Doris both moved from a liminal status in Romania to being companion dogs in Amsterdam. Olli made the change from living outside on the streets to living in a house without many problems, but he still differs very much from Dutch dogs, who are usually more obedient, more focused on humans and less outspoken in character. For Doris the transition has been less easy, and one of the reasons Doris has trouble living in a crowded city is probably that she is not in fact domesticated; her mother was a street dog, which even on the level of genes influences her relation to humans (De Lavigne, 2015). Both dogs have strong views and are capable of expressing these clearly. In order to investigate how we can formulate new forms of living together with them, we need to listen and attend to them, but also create more options for choice.

While creating more freedom for dogs asks for political and social reform (see also the conclusion), for example concerning their rights of movement and infrastructure, there are already many different ways in which they can make decisions about their daily lives. An example is choosing to go on walks. Olli likes to take one long hike every day, and then several short walks, while Doris prefers two long hikes. We usually all go for the long hike

in the morning, either around town – then Olli gets to choose the route, and walks mostly off leash, even though this is not officially allowed, because he is more comfortable that way and there is no danger of him crossing the streets – or outside of the city, where Doris prefers to go and walks off leash, and we follow her. In the afternoon Olli can choose whether or not he wants to join us on a second longer walk. He usually chooses to stay at home or spend some time in the garden, knowing we will take a short walk later, but sometimes wants to join us, especially when we go to the pet store or the vet. (Olli loves the vet. If he could, he would visit them every day for treats and cuddles. There are also some cats living there and he found out how to access the cat food, so it's a wonderful place (one of the reviewers mentioned his eating the cat food might be an expression of resistance to his vegan diet, but he simply likes all food – his favorite is pumpkin from the oven). It is also one of the first places he got to know when he moved in with me and he is very loyal. The friends he made in that time, in our neighborhood and in the park, are still special to him and he greets them with special attention.)

Olli knows what different words mean and before Doris and I leave, I tell him that we go to the car, station, pet store, vet, my parents, or friends, which helps him make up his mind. He will also sometimes suggest one of these options himself, by coming with us and leading us in the right direction. Doris likes all walks, and does not mind following Olli. Because we live in a city, Olli cannot walk off leash without me being present (as for example Kerasote (2008) shows leads to greater freedom), and it is not always possible for him to choose where we go. But this is not a matter of all or nothing, and within the boundaries that are in place we can negotiate.

Other examples of ways in which the dogs make decisions about our shared life are the creation of new, common habits, as I also discussed in *Stray Philosophy I*. Doris usually goes to bed when I do, and sleeps on the bed for a couple of hours. She then moves to the living room, where she sleeps on the couch with Olli. In the early morning she returns to my bed. When we wake up, we cuddle and play for some time; when I go into the living room Olli and I cuddle. We usually spend the first hours of the day, after a short walk, together on the couch, where I work and pet him. Around nine we take our long walk, and when we return they sleep for a while. I then walk again with Doris, Olli often spends some time in the garden. Our evenings are often spent on and around the couch, and before we go to bed we take another walk around the neighborhood. This routine works well for

all of us, and it is co-shaped by our preferences (see Meijer, 2014 for a longer discussion of the relevance of routines and habits). Doris also very much likes it when I do yoga, she especially appreciates the poses where she can lie down underneath me or walk through my arms or legs.

They also have their jobs. Olli's job is to manage the garden. He has dug two holes on opposite sides of the garden that he tends to every day, usually in the early evening, and sometimes lays down in for around ten minutes. Doris' job is to guard the house, and Olli and me. Guarding the house is not always necessary in Amsterdam, but definitely important when we are in a holiday home in the woods, and on our last walk of the day I never have to worry about my safety.

Conclusion

Much research in animal ethics and animal philosophy draws on insights about human rights and duties in order to formulate just relations with other animals. This work is valuable and necessary – these insights about justice and power can be seen as a conceptual toolbox that can and should be used, and as humans our thinking has to start somewhere. Furthermore, because our current social and political institutions and practices rest on these normative ideas, building on these is a good starting point for change. While this way of thinking about questions that concern other animals is a necessary condition for change, it cannot be the whole story. Other animals have a unique perspective on their own lives, as well as on relations with others, including humans, and they have ways of expressing these. In order to determine what is just, and how we should change our societies, we need to center their voices. Finding out how to listen to nonhuman animals in the right way, and how to incorporate their points of view in science and philosophy is one of the important challenges of our time – a time in which humans find out more about nonhuman animal capacities every day through scientific research, but also control their lives more than ever before (Meijer & Bovenkerk, forthcoming).

Listening to Olli and Doris and taking their views and judgements seriously, is on the one hand incredibly easy. They know how to tell me, and the larger society, what they think and want, and in a similar way listen to me when I ask something of them. We are in constant dialogue. (Philosophy is always a dialogue, and for every topic one needs to find the right interlocutors.) It is at the same time incredibly difficult, because we live in a

world that is dominated by humans. Some of the most important questions – such as whether or not these dogs want to live with me, or how they want to shape their days – cannot be asked, because the outside world is not safe for them. In terms of communication, species is often seen as a defining characteristic, while social relations are just as important in being able to understand one another. But in terms of political change, species does matter greatly, as humans are the only species with rights.

There is a difference between regarding animal agency on the micro-level – in individual interactions – and on the macro-level (Meijer, 2019b, Chapter 9), which concerns shaping the larger structures under which animals live (Donaldson & Kymlicka, 2011). Solely focusing on micro-interactions in relation to nonhuman animals is problematic, because this keeps the structural power relations that oppress other animals intact, while giving the impression that they are taken seriously. In responses to Doris’ behavior we clearly see the role macro-relations play: when she challenges social norms by not being a “good dog” she is deemed aggressive. She cannot change the larger structures under which she lives, and part of my own responses to her behavior, such as our training project, also aims to mitigate her resistance. I do however take her judgments seriously in navigating rules and norms, to which I, as human animal, am also subjected, and within given restraints we work towards larger freedom.

While this essay focuses mainly on individual relations, it does aim to connect to macro-structures – in the piece itself, but also because it aims to contribute to decentering the human in academic thought by focusing on Doris’ and Olli’s experiences. Knowledge that centers nonhuman animal perspectives can and should inform animal advocacy, as well as social and political theory and practice. More in general, addressing the material expressions of anthropocentrism is always necessarily interconnected with critically reviewing its epistemic dimensions.

Fortunately, in this project Doris and Olli have patience with me, and we have time for making mistakes, misunderstanding one another, and creating understanding. We have time to learn about what the good life means for all of us; my own view of the good life is definitely shaped by living with them, and with my other companions. Together we create the precise meaning of the concepts home, and belonging.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the anonymous reviewers, and to Sue Donaldson for suggesting I should write this article.

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Silver-backed Chevrotain

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In the tropical wet and dry climate,
Nha Trang forests of Vietnam
(Greater Annamites Ecoregion)

rare ungulate moves quietly over sticks
to water hole on its four tapering legs.

Chevrotain looks part mouse, part deer,
part afraid before submerging itself

in what returns again of human belief
that whales evolved from
your hunted self of elusiveness.

Bodacious

What if your name had a so-called prettier ring?
What if instead of Pig you were referred to as...
Aurora, Roman Goddess of Sunrise,
some beautiful show of streaming light?

“Pig” suggests dirty, some ugly thing at which to scoff.

It’s as if people don’t know who you are,
what you can do, how your heart can sing.

With your own kind, you snuggle close,
nose to nose you sleep, taking in everything.

Mother swine, when nursing, you sing to your young.

Piglets answer your calls to them by name.

You eat slowly and not proverbially “like a pig.”

And “sweat like a pig” isn’t something even possible since your glands are few.

Being clean is what you prefer; it’s in how you live.

You roll in mud for cooling off,
and that’s if no water is available.

You are most quick to learn,
your intelligence almost matching apes and dolphins
according to reports. Yet what do humans know?—
cruel species whom you’ve saved from drowning and fires.

There’s much unspoken about the essences
that humans take and make from you:

gelatin for marshmallows, drugs, and photographic film;
ingredients for surgical sutures, industrial lubricants,
explosives, antifreeze, candies and chewing gum,
insulin—more than forty medications;
materials for burn dressings and violin strings;
xenotransplantation, rennet for cheese making,
fatty acid and glycerine for matches,
pig hair for paintbrushes,
pigskin for leather goods; more ingredients
for linoleum, pet food, phonographic records,
pig bone china, drum heads and football coverings,
and on and on the examples

along with your being sacrificed in times of war
as sniffers to die for humans.

Yet you, with gestational mystery
of three months, three weeks, three days
before natural timing of birth,

you are Holder of answers, beauty,
inscrutability for awakening the world.

The importance of Pig, Suidae, Sus:

I wish we could let you live.

Author Biographies

Lynne Goldsmith is an author, counselor, and award-winning poet. Her first book, *Secondary Cicatrices*, won the 2018 Halcyon Poetry Prize, was a 2019 Finalist in the American Book Fest Awards, and a 2020 Gold Winner in the Human Relations Indie Book Awards. Goldsmith’s poetry has been published in *Backchannels Journal*, *Manzanita*, *Nebo: A Literary Journal*, *Spillway*, *Thimble Literary Magazine*, and elsewhere. She has three graduate degrees and is currently an inactive triple-licensed therapist and National Certified Counselor.

Dr. Eva Meijer is a postdoctoral researcher in the project Anthropocene Ethics, Taking animal agency seriously (Wageningen, NL). She is chair of the Dutch Animal Ethics group. *When animals speak: Toward an interspecies democracy* was published by NUYP in 2019. Her fiction and nonfiction has been translated into seventeen languages.

JCAS Editorial Objectives

The *Journal for Critical Animal Studies* is open to all scholars and activists. The journal was established to foster academic study of critical animal issues in contemporary society. While animal studies is increasingly becoming a field of importance in the academy, much work being done under this moniker takes a reformist or depoliticized approach that fails to mount a more serious critique of underlying issues of political economy and speciesist philosophy. JCAS is an interdisciplinary journal with an emphasis on animal liberation philosophy and policy issues. The journal was designed to build up the common activist's knowledge of animal liberation while at the same time appealing to academic specialists. We encourage and actively pursue a diversity of viewpoints of contributors from the frontlines of activism to academics. We have created the journal to facilitate communication between the many diverse perspectives of the animal liberation movement. Thus, we especially encourage submissions that seek to create new syntheses between differing disputing parties and to explore paradigms not currently examined.

Suggested Topics

Papers are welcomed in any area of animal liberation philosophy from any discipline, and presenters are encouraged to share theses or dissertation chapters. Since a major goal of the Institute for Critical Animal Studies is to foster philosophical, critical, and analytical thinking about animal liberation, papers that contribute to this project will be given priority (especially papers that address critical theory, political philosophy, social movement analysis, tactical analysis, feminism, activism and academia, Continental philosophy, or post-colonial perspectives). We especially encourage contributions that engage animal liberation in disciplines and debates that have received little previous attention.

Review Process

Each paper submitted is initially reviewed for general suitability for publication; suitable submissions will be read by at least two members of the journal's editorial board.

Manuscript Requirements

The manuscript should be in MS Word format and follow APA guidelines. All submissions should be double-spaced and in 12 point Times New Roman. Good quality electronic copies of all figures and tables should also be provided. All manuscripts should conform to American English grammar spelling.

As a guide, we ask that regular essays and reviews be between 2000-8000 words and have no endnotes. In exceptional circumstances, JCAS will consider publishing extended essays. Authors should supply a brief abstract of the paper

(of no more than 250 words). A brief autobiographical note should be supplied which includes full names, affiliation email address, and full contact details.

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