

so, have you heard of humans?

When I present my work or research, one of the most common questions for the past sixteen years is: what about humans or human suffering? On the one hand, I completely understand this line of questioning. There is an overwhelming and disproportionate amount of violence and injustice globally. Yet, at times, I have grown impatient with that question because, at the outset, it relies on the binary, hierarchical, anthropocentric, and divisive implication that humans are not animals. The second part of the question takes a myopic perspective on suffering rather than acknowledging that violent systems are not only interconnected but interdependent. If we look closely enough across material and political histories, it is clear that when violence against humans occurs, violence against non-human animals is typically concurrent. Either way, if you disagree that humans are animals—which is not to deny the beautifully variegated perceptual, social, linguistic, etc., differences between species that should be celebrated rather than denied—then we will not be able to have a nuanced conversation about animals or justice. I am no longer interested in battling over this basic fact.

Or, as Fran Tirado, a podcaster on *Food 4 Thot*, hilariously explained, this form of questioning feels a little like throwing an AIDS benefit where an attendee comes up to you and asks, so have you heard of cancer? * Decentralizing humans does not reduce the question of violence but instead expands the scope of inquiry. I am not pitting humans against non-human animals. I am simply asking us : those who would like to engage | to look at what it means to be an animal moving inside the sharp complexities of human-animal cultural systems.

[I can feel the severing (between words) in my animal body]

* A Susan Sontag reference to *Illness as*

Metaphor

would also be a helpful bit of

research to discuss

how AIDS and cancer

have been differently

politicized but

a) that is prob a different essay

and b)

I'm doing my best to keep this read fairly

casual i.e., without footnotes.

Instead of arguing with humans at a lecture or a show or dinner [and / and...] , I would like to

ask the human-animal querent to examine why they feel so strongly compelled to distance

themselves from the entire ecology of beings with whom we share worlds. [editing out a rant and

cutting to the point > anthropocentrism is actually itself an enormously privileged position

[Also, also. I am still unlearning being

h a r s h

and personally critical as a mode of

engagement

—— I learned this [in part and also] in academia.

{elsewhere}

So maybe, ~~most likely academic~~——human-animal querent,

can we also, we can? also. talk about pedagogical and institutional brutality

together?]

because this conversational mode all so feels so unjust and just like a knife :

Is it just to argue ?

that living beings should be forced to stand in their own excrement

for their entire lives? Or that any being, human and non-human, should be denied basic needs like water, food, or shelter based on the [human invented] categories one may belong to? Is it not beautiful to celebrate all life with a sense of mutual respect?

Is it not just to offer kindness and care to those who think, look, feel, and perceive differently than our [many shattering] selves?

Is it not just to value beauty and also just to feel the coexistence of suffering?

Is it not beautiful to recognize the interdependence of life?

Oh, and one more thing-

also, and again, and yet ,

So, for me at this point—arguing over the fact that humans are animals is not productive. But thankfully, I am done fighting. I am not going to unpack or {re}perform / displace / relive / unveil various layers of trauma with you. We shouldn't have to reveal trauma to access mutual empathy. < this word is fraught it is so easy to misplace empathy or misperceive to empathize but yet and again, words can also fail while being efficient, but also: overwrought and imprecise]

More fighting is not what is needed. I am not a hammer. Or,—as Sarah Ahmed so poetically wrote in *An Affinity of Hammers*—when someone points out violence, they become associated with the violence. They become the hammer. I am not a hammer. And also

again and again I am an animal trying to reconcile the painful violence of being a human-animal

while finding small tufts of beauty that are life-sustaining. And I am lately, often,

and also.....sometimes, just. —struggling to live
and respect life

——~~at a time~~ while also doing and doing

work that is hopefully maybe, someday of some
small benefit to animals—

[we've established that humans are animals

right, no? and also?

so I am going to drop the linguistic play bc

I'm super tired. aren't you tired? I am so tired.]

Now, I would like to ask a few honest and curious follow-up questions, to the querent

like— What does insisting on hierarchical distinctions provide for you? How
might shifting your personal epistemology of the animal ask you to look at your
relationship to systems of violence, power, and oppression? What would you have to give
up, change, or deeply examine? How does seeing yourself as an animal
destabilize your , identity , or trigger feelings of shame or historical trauma?

Is it not beautiful to be an animal among other animals?

Is it not just a mode of being?

keywords: rituals : feed, water / allogrooming / mineral supplementation / mastitis

further reading: systemic reproduction— breeding, birthing, tagging, separation, feeding,
confinement, culling, slaughter, consumption, rebranding ——— recursion

[domestication]

What else does this fact bring up for you that causes you to ask me to take personal responsibility
for [insert x—ex: one to twelve instances of acute human suffering [or you know, lettuce
suffering] in the world] ? Because I am accountable for a lot of violence, and

and also and yet

it is also worth noting,

one might argue Otherwise: It is obvious that. Of course—

and also, those in power

/with

Clearly.

What I am trying to do is take a tiny seed : the fact that humans are animals : and turn it

over

many times to examine this fact, the systems it produces,——

to examine how violence echos across species,

and continually reorient my and/or and still our relationship to the problem

until me and you or also we can see / are seeing or feel / until thinking is feeling about /

and again /

think about animals in

many iterations

and contexts , and .

[and forms and again over and over...]

It is philosophical, epistemological, and aesthetic work. In that sense, I am not an activist who is doing the hard work of changing policy, and I do not want to co-opt that term. I hope to create small gestures to

[micro, micro —idk macro is beyond reach —

is macro the only legitimate scale?]

change how humans (myself included, {ongoing}

think about the condition(s) of the animal

/ as a broad category.

And perhaps to luxuriate in our animal bodies

to rest in being an animal

among animals to celebrate care within systems that exploit

and also if that is the case

My question is: given the fact that

is it fair to assume that ? we are both

animals

Or that we are having a discussion, so given that— we are animals, how would you like to proceed?

if first you I/me/we/us have to prove for x
By putting x and also every , until you can put every instance of
macro injustice of x on my shoulders.

[also, also x it isn't mine to carry alone]
if you would like to carry some of it : of x of whatever that x that spurs is

with me though, are you with me, though?

Are you tired? I'm so tired. and yet,

perhaps we can talk about animals?

is it not just

beautiful?

meaning that we are also talking about humans.

living / working / breathing draft {ongoing}