

***BABE* : THE TALE OF THE SPEAKING MEAT; PART II**

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SYNOPSIS OF PART 1: In Part 1, I suggested that the film *Babe* provided a valuable context in which to discuss the replacement of the Cartesian mechanistic model of animals, which has dominated the industrial world since the Enlightenment, by a communicative model which is more suited to survival in an ecological age. The film offers a recognition of communicative virtues and characteristics as central to both human and nonhuman forms of life, and a vision of the emergence of communicative forms of relationship as victorious alternatives to forms based on violence, domination and terror. Focussing on the paradox of the speaking meat the leading character Babe represents, I argued that one of the great strengths of the film is that it invites us to challenge some of the blocks and erasures which support our denial of the meat animal as a communicative subject. As *Babe's* drama of recognition reveals the multiple insensitivities and denials of kinship that are part of the meaning of meat in our society, we can grasp the possibility of alternative meanings that recognise food as kin. I outlined a context-sensitive approach to vegetarianism which refuses cultural universalism and recognises the radically different ethical meanings meat can have in different societies. Finally I explored some of the ethical and political ambiguities of communicative forms, and the tantalising questions *Babe* raises about the communicative farm. Will the new communicative paradigm be used to liberate the sheep and the other farm animals, or merely to oppress them in more subtle and self-complicit ways? Will the communicative animal farm stand to the mechanistic farm as the hegemonic communicative forms of liberal democracy stand to the more repressive forms of patriarchal-authoritarian governance they replaced?

NOW READ ON to discover in PART 11 the moral ambiguities of the human-animal contract, the conceptual traps of pet/meat and person /property dualism, and why we need a politics of animal justice.

4: Communication and Anthropomorphism

Babe's opening shot shows Babe waking in communicative interaction with siblings, expressing sorrow at the loss of his mother and fear as he is seized and carried away. These are all emotions we can realistically expect real pigs to feel and express in this situation, and Babe's 'human' speech as it emerges in this context seems a natural expression of these emotions, wishes and beliefs. The animal communication introduced here works well because it continues and extends the normal body language and communication of the animals. Nevertheless, the representation of such animal subjectivity in human terms is often said to be irresolutely problematic and invalidly 'anthropomorphic'. It is worth considering and clarifying this charge in relation to the representation of animal communication and subjectivity in works of art. I will argue that there is no good basis for the general claim that an artwork is invalidated by anthropomorphism merely on the ground that it attributes subjectivity and communication to nonhumans. The problems in representing other species' communicative powers or subjectivities in terms of human speech are real, but they do not rule out such representation in any general way, and they pale before the difficulties of failing to represent them at all, or before the enormity of representing communicative and intentional beings as beings lacking all communicative and mental capacity. That is a much greater inaccuracy and injustice than any anthropomorphism could be.

We need to distinguish various senses of anthropomorphism, including general and specific senses. The general concept and charge of anthropomorphism, as Mary Midgley¹ has argued, is in its usual sense and definition thoroughly confused. It is ambiguous as between attributing to nonhumans characteristics humans have (OED), and attributing to nonhumans characteristics only humans have. Both senses are problematic, in slightly different ways, when used to support the claim that the attribution of characteristics such as subjectivity to animals must be anthropomorphic. The first sense, that something is anthropomorphic if it attributes to animals characteristics humans have, implies that there is no overlap of characteristics between humans and nonhuman animals. That is, it assumes a hyperseparation of human and animal natures and attempts to enforce upon legitimate representations of

nonhumans such a radical discontinuity. This sense should clearly be rejected, not only because it is based on a demonstrably false assumption of radical discontinuity, but because it can be used to delegitimize virtually any depiction of nonhuman subjectivity that made sense to us.

The second sense of anthropomorphism - attributing to nonhumans characteristics only humans have - is not open to this objection, but is open to the objection that its use to delegitimize the attribution of subjectivity and other contested characteristics to nonhumans is simply question-begging. It assumes just what is at issue, what opponents of the mechanistic model contest, that nonhumans do not have characteristics such as subjectivity and intentionality humans also possess. As Midgley notes, the focus of this sense of the concept tends to be otiose and human-centred. If something is to be faulted for attributing to nonhumans characteristics they do not have, it is sufficient to point out that this is an inaccurate way of representing them, and the inaccuracy itself provides (in a suitably veridical context) sufficient independent ground for rejecting such an attribution. Unless there is a good reason for addressing the question of similarity to humans, it is simply anthropocentric to go on to bring every source of comparison and focus of assessment back to humans and to an animal's similarity or difference from them, as the concept of anthropomorphism tends to do.

The critic of representing animals in communicative terms often draws on another sense of anthropomorphism which is closely analogous to the concept of weak anthropocentrism², and which, like weak anthropocentrism, makes it very hard or impossible for representations of nonhumans to avoid being assigned the label anthropomorphism. This is a weak sense which locates anthropomorphism in the presentation of animal communication 'in human terms', from a human conceptual location. Any representation of the speech-content for a human audience will have to be an interpretation in terms of human concepts, and in that weak sense, a background level of anthropomorphism is always likely to be present. What is much more difficult to demonstrate is that anthropomorphism of this background kind, in the weak sense of employing a human conceptual apparatus or conceptual location, is necessarily harmful or invalidating, or that there are no practices which can counter it.

Where the charge of anthropomorphism can lead to the application of more stringent standards to the representation of animal communication than are used to judge the success of comparable human representation, it is itself liable to the counter-charge that it is anthropocentric. Arguments of this kind are often advanced to show that any representation of animal communication is rendered illegitimately anthropomorphic because of problems of translation and indeterminacy, although problems are also familiar in the representation of human cultural difference. There are parallel difficulties for both cross-cultural and cross-species representation: a weak cross-cultural analogue to background anthropomorphism is involved in virtually any translation project, for example, in any attempt to 'bring over' one culture's forms into another's. To avoid delegitimizing all such attempts, we need to distinguish the impact of weaker and stronger forms of anthropomorphism, just as we need to distinguish weak and usually harmless forms of anthropocentrism from strong and damaging forms.³ Weak forms are unavoidable but not necessarily harmful, while strong forms may be damaging but are by no means inevitable. As with anthropocentrism, the confusion between the two forms gives rise to the illusion that damaging forms are inevitable.

Once we proceed beyond these weak general senses, the concept of anthropomorphism is somewhat ill-defined, and the features being problematised under that description can usually be better characterised in terms of anthropocentrism rather than anthropomorphism. But in the same way, the charge of anthropocentrism cannot be used in a generalised form to delegitimize representations of nonhumans as communicative subjects. There may still sometimes be a point to the charge of strong anthropomorphism, but it becomes much harder to demonstrate. As in the case of weak anthropocentrism, the question is not whether or not some degree of humanisation of perspective is present in any particular human representation of animal communication, for it always will be at the background level, but how damaging it is, what is its meaning, and what practices can be used to counter it? Since the inevitable presence of background levels of anthropomorphism means that the charge of impurity can always be raised, it is helpful here to

distinguish the motives for raising it. Are there ever legitimate problems the charge points to?

We have seen that a commonplace motivation for raising the charge of anthropomorphism is a rationalist-Cartesian policing of human-animal discontinuity, to maintain the human observer's distance from and indifference to the animal observed. Although there is in response to the dominant Cartesian-rationalist stress on discontinuity often a need to provide a counterstress on continuity between the human and animal, the question of anthropomorphism can often be raised with some greater validity in the context of the denial of difference which is a key part of structures of subordination and colonisation to which animals are subject.⁴ The charge of anthropomorphism may then legitimately draw our attention to a loss of sensitivity to and respect for animal difference in humanisation or in representation. The concern about lack of respect for difference can extend to cover even well-meaning animal rights attempts to assimilate animals within the model of the person, in contexts where there has been no associated attempt to deconstruct the person/property dualism formative of liberalism.

But there are a host of dangers in this area uneasiness about anthropomorphism may reflect: the infantilisation of animals which their insertion into the structures of the private household as pets or their treatment as adjuncts to human children tends to produce is just one of the forms of humanisation associated with the structuring of what domestic animals can become in terms of the limiting slots available for them in human society. The charge of humanisation can draw attention to the reduction of the animal which appears in demeaning or subordinated forms of humanisation. But some kinds of uneasiness about the influence of the human are less warranted. It is only too easy to adopt here over-strong criteria which unwittingly re-invest in human-animal dualism through the assumption that the only genuine animal is the wild animal, the animal completely apart from and uninfluenced by human society, (just as the only genuine indigene is one who looks and sounds exactly as before the days of contact). The genuine problem here is not so much human influence and relationship itself, which is not inevitably corrupting or demeaning, but the reduction of animals which

so often accompanies their insertion as subordinates, deviants or resources into an anthropocentric culture. A solution does not have to try to maintain or represent an 'ideal' pure animal uninfluenced by interaction with the human - although every effort should be made to maintain wild animals in their own ecosystems - but to reach out for relationships that allow for both species together some kind of fullness of becoming, or, as Freya Mathews puts it, allows the animal to 'achieve a significant degree of the form of self-realisation appropriate to its particular kind'.⁵ The mixed farm of *Babe* showed some of the possibilities here, especially for the working dogs.

A parallel set of issues arise in the case of representation. As in the case of the human other, so in the animal, such representations must always raise questions about supplanting and assimilating the other. However there can be no general argument that such cross-cultural perspectives presenting another's viewpoint, are deceptive or illegitimate. Cross-species representation, like cross-cultural representation, is not automatically colonising or self-imposing, and may express motives and meanings of sympathy, support and admiration. Rather, specific cases have to be argued on their merits, not just in terms of the alleged intrusion of non-indigenous or human impurities, but in terms of the kinds of insights they present or prevent and the moral quality of their representation.⁶ We need to put into place here counter-practices which oppose colonising tendencies in these contexts. For example, representation should keep in mind the distinction between claiming to be rather than to represent an other's perspective, to see or speak as the other rather than to see or speak with the other.⁷ In the case of translation and indeterminacy, counter-practices could require an effort to note non-equivalences in forms of life and to treat difficulties about translation as sources of uncertainty and tentativeness. Using the problems of such an approach as a model, we might expect an appropriate methodology for dealing with cross-species conceptual difference and translation indeterminacy to be one which stressed corrigibility and open expectations. Dealing with both human and nonhuman cases of translation indeterminacy requires openness to the other and careful, sensitive, and self-critical observation which actively seeks to uncover perspectival and centric biases⁸.

So I don't think it can be argued that *Babe* is lacking in proper respect for animal difference because it represents animal subjectivity and communication in terms of human language, any more than it can be argued that cross-cultural translation is inevitably hegemonic. Undoubtedly there can be great variations and moral differences here, but again, we cannot reject as automatically colonising the mixed or impure perspective which places a human subjectivity into an animal situation. Indeed, as the Larsen cartoon about why dinosaurs died out demonstrates, such 'anthropomorphic' transferences of perspective may be not only funny but philosophically revealing, about ourselves as well as about the other. They can enable us to enter into, if not the other's subjectivity, the other's situation, and that can contribute to our understanding and sympathy. Here, much depends upon the stance the work takes towards the anthropocentrism it represents: rather than being the bearer of an insidious and unexamined inferiorisation of the other, the imposition of an obviously human framework may be the joke, a joke that is partly on us, and which precisely invites reflection about human importations.

Cross-species representations then are not necessarily but can be unacceptably human-centred. Our civilisation is haunted by animal images, but those images themselves are often made complicit in the project of subordinating real animals and eliminating them from our lives. The privileging of the representation of animals over the animals represented is a widespread form of human-centredness which is symptomatic of the growing success of the project of human self-enclosure. This danger is especially acute in cases like *Babe* where films use living animal actors, rather than more indirect forms of representation. The animal justice movement has been right to raise questions about the treatment of animal actors in animal films during and after film-making, although perhaps less right where it has ignored the difference between the willing participation of domestic animal actors and the coerced participation of wild animals, and insisted upon conditions so stringent that they would prevent any participation of domestic animals in filmic events.

The project of human self-enclosure and its privileging of animal representation over animal lives is routinised in popular representations of animality. Compare the kind of humanisation displayed in *Babe* with the Disney paradigm of humanisation. Disney cartoons, as John Berger has noted, are usually only superficially about animals; Disney characters with stereotypical animal bodies often have totally humanised personalities, frequently incorporate little or no recognisable reference to the characteristics or situations of the animals represented, and are permitted no critical reflection on their relationship to the human community or membership of the mixed community. The animal form appears in this anthropocentric conception as a nullity which is made to bear the burden of meanings which have no connection with the animal's own subjectivity or situation. The Disney paradigm, normalised in television cartoons, is one in which animals are, in John Berger's words, 'totally transformed into human puppets' whose main role is to naturalise various hegemonic forms of the human condition by attributing them to the animal 'kingdom'.⁹

The erasure of animals in the Disney animal cartoon is objectionable for reasons that directly reflect its anthropocentrism and its contribution to the incorporation of the other, in this case expressed in the inability to encounter the animal respectfully as an independent other who is more than a disguised form of self. These movements to incorporate the other also underlie the highly anthropocentric assumption I criticised above, that an 'animal film' can only be taken seriously to the extent that it is actually about humans. In contrast, a less anthropocentric and belittling treatment would take animals seriously as agents, communicative subjects, bearers of knowledge, and members of the mixed community who are themselves able to observe us and perhaps to reflect critically on us and their relationships with us. On these sorts of criteria of anthropocentrism in the treatment of the animal other, I think 'our Babe' comes out rather well. 'Eatin' pigs! Barbaric!' exclaims the ewe Maa when she learns of the Hoggett's intention to eat Babe. The animal gaze, we are reminded, can also capture and evaluate us.

The criminalised, women, animals - all these are bearers of a denied or lessened form of subjecthood, which cannot itself command the position

of knower but which is the object of an arrogant form of knowledge which so stereotypes and denies their difference and their speech that they are obliterated as possible subjects of reciprocal exchange or dialogical encounter. As Foucault notes, to be always under such an arrogating observation is also the fate of the prisoner, and as feminists have pointed out, a feminised subjectivity is one in which the subject internalises such a male gaze. John Berger¹⁰ has claimed that this arrogating conception of the other has now gone so far for animals that the animal proper is now irrecoverable for us as a possible other for encounter and communicative exchange. He writes: 'animals are always the observed. The fact that they can observe us has lost all significance. They are the objects of our ever-extending knowledge. What we know about them is an index of our power, and thus an index of what separates us from them. The more we know, the further away they are'.¹¹ This diagnosis is acute but perhaps too fatalistic. There are cultural means to problematise and subvert these anthropocentric conceptions of the animal, to recover the animal as subject and reciprocal observer rather than as background, passively observed object; it is encouraging then that in the final shot of *Babe*, it is the animal who looks back.

5: Meat and the Colonising Contract

Among the film's other pleasures are the way the lead character Babe, from his position as speaking meat, systematically disrupts each of the background assumptions of meat I identified in Part 1. In the initial scenes of the film, we have (briefly) to confront the first assumption of the multiple and emphatic denials of kinship presupposed by the factory farm, and the second as we are introduced to the meat as a speaking subject. The third assumption, that of a neat, rational and unproblematic hierarchy of considerability based on intellectual ranking, is systematically disrupted by Babe and several other characters throughout the film, and this is one of its best subversive achievements. Thus Babe's assertion of intelligence and communicative status disrupts Fly's comfortable assurances to her puppies that 'only stupid animals' are eaten. This disruption poses ethical and political questions, analogous to questions arising in post-colonial theory about the role of colonial hierarchies, about the distinction between meat and non-meat animals,

and about the nature of the human contract with that special, more privileged group of animals who can never be 'meat'.

'Babe' is the name of an innocent, an original, Christlike pure soul, to whom the first news of the dirty secret of meat is eventually revealed in the outhouse by the revolutionary duck Ferdie - where the meat comes from, where Babe ('babies') himself comes from, in an act of disillusionment which neatly parallels that of the human child newly discovering reproductive and sexual relationships. ('Not the Boss!' breathes the incredulous Babe, in parallel with the child's shocked 'Not my parents!') But it is from the malevolent cat that Babe finally learns the full hurt of the dreadful secret the factory farm and the sinister farm meathouse hold. The unspeakable is finally spoken: pigs are meat, pigs are subjects, and pigs suffer the reductive violence which denies, distances from and hides their subjectivity. Babe is only called 'pig' while he is alive, but 'they use a different word, "pork or bacon", after you are dead', explains the satisfied cat, revelling in her privileged, protected status. As Babe's innocence is stripped away bit by bit, we see the gradual unveiling of various levels and kinds of animal oppressions and colonisations - the baring of the 'world of wounds' we all somehow learn to come to terms with as part of our loss of innocence and 'adult' accomodation to an oppressive world.

Positioned as counter to these unveilings of oppression are various emancipatory comments and viewpoints from the animals who appear as sceptical and critical spectators of the human show. Their comments deftly expose the politics of the mixed community, especially its human violence and surrogate dog violence, and the strangeness of human ways. They give us positive perspectives on the importance of listening to and being open to others, and on the injustice, distortion and violence of the exclusionary boundaries which keep Babe positioned as meat. We feel the thrill of broken chains, the excitement of emancipation as Babe is gradually enabled to break the boundaries which keep him positioned as meat, finally crossing the privileged threshold of the house from which he has been so pointedly excluded to watch television with the farmer and Babe's surrogate dog mother Fly.

What I found particularly illuminating here was the exposure of the levels of hierarchy among animals created by human colonisation in the small human empire of the farm, an empire which makes concrete human desire and human will in its social relations and its rational design of the earth and of the animals themselves. The film displays the key role of these boundaries of exclusion and levels of hierarchy among animals in maintaining the practices of meat and the non-subject status of the meat animal. The dogs, in the canine equivalent of human chauvinism, attribute their privilege with some complacency to their greater intelligence, but that facile fabrication is disrupted for us nicely by Babe's pig intelligence in some of the film's earliest scenes. What is exposed as unstable, duplicitous and oppressive here is the conventional boundary and contract on which the relatively privileged status of the pet and 'house' animal is based, which bears on the privileged status of dogs and cats in Western society.

Because it reveals the conventionality and instability of the considerability hierarchy among animals, the film provides us with the materials to reconstruct the Contract or political origin story for the privileged group of 'pets' or personal companion animals. In early times, hunting, farming and shepherding man ('the Boss') in certain societies made a contract with certain wolves: the contract was that they would be given a respected role and position very different from that of other animals, that they would never be meat, in return for help with a critical task. That task was their active help in the oppression and imprisonment of other animals, whom they would, using their more-than-human sensory or physical skills, help confine and construct as meat. In return for their help in constructing other animals as meat, not only would they themselves never be meat, they would be 'looked after', given a share of the meat themselves. Their subjectivity would be recognised, and the reductive Cartesian conception would never apply to them. The working animal might often be a 'familiar', like the sheepdogs in *Babe*, the subject of a deeply personal relationship, but also accorded the dignity of a co-worker and acknowledged for their skilful contribution to economic life. In the same sense that various human mythic Contracts or founding political stories are about dividing the spoils, this was a Contract not only about cooperation in economic life but about mutual benefit in

meat. But as the disruptions of *Babe* neatly demonstrate, inclusion in the contract class has nothing to do with 'intelligence', and everything to do with complicity.

This Old Contract, originally a cooperative work contract according privilege in return for complicity in the practice of meat and the domination or elimination of the non-contract animals, is later under the Modern Contract extended to the privileged companion animals - the pets - with whom so many of us continue to share our lives, but extended in a new form. As production moves out of the household at the beginning of the modern era, the role of farm-household animals is transformed in the new separation of public/private in much the same way as the role of women. Both the working farm wife and the working farm animal now become subject to the modernist polarity that construes 'rational' economic relationships in alienated, masculinist and narrowly instrumental terms as hyperseparated from moral and affective familiar relationships, and affective relationships as occurring in a highly circumscribed 'private' sphere of altruism supposedly untainted by economic considerations. The 'familiar' working animal of the contract class is replaced by the bourgeois 'pet' who, like the bourgeois wife, leads a sheltered life in a protected private household.¹²

The hyperseparation between the 'pet' animal and the 'meat' animal is intensified as the meat animal becomes subject to the rationally instrumentalised mass-production regime of the factory farm or laboratory. The 'familiar' animal disappears, and the complementary polarity of the subjectivised and underemployed 'pet' animal and the reduced and instrumentalised 'meat' animal takes its place. As *Babe* reminds us, the 'familiar' working animal could integrate reason and emotion, economic and affective, public and private, elements and exemplify animal skill, difference and mystery.¹³ In the Old Contract relationship (at its best), 'familiar' were skilful and respected co-workers, whose economic role was based on their difference from the human and their consequent ability to extend human senses and human powers; in the Modern Contract relationship (at its worst), the pet is a servile toy or dependent lacking both autonomy and mystery, often conceived in humanised terms as a childlike or inferior self, and for such

structural reasons increasingly marginal to human lives.¹⁴ These are of course the extremes of a possible continuum, but one that in practice tends to be configured in response to the political forces underlying the Old and Modern Contracts. If the pet and the meat tend now to monopolise the roles these forces have left open, what has disappeared is the possibility of the animal 'familiar' *Babe* reimagines for us - the same animals integrated into our economic as into our affective lives, and at the same time the possibility of a less alienated form of economic life which integrates not only the real but the symbolic animal in the form of affective creativity.

For urban dwellers, which is, increasingly, most of us, animals of the Modern Contract class of pets usually now represent our main contact with the animal world. This is unfortunate, because the Modern Contract defines the pet in opposition to the meat animal and reflects and repeats many of the duplicities, denials and exclusions involved in the surrounding western institution of meat. The exclusionary form of the original contract of complicity in meat is retained and intensified in the Modern Contract with the pet, usually a carnivore whom the owner continues to feed on the flesh of other 'meat' animals. The malevolent cat in *Babe* is seen thus profiting from the death of the Christmas duck Rosanna; in real life, non-privileged animals assigned to the 'meat' side of this dualistic hierarchy die to make meat for the pets of people who think of themselves unproblematically as animal lovers - kangaroos, dolphins, penguins, anonymous and rare marine animals in yearly billions are slaughtered at some remove to feed the cats and dogs whose own deaths as meat would be unthinkable to their owners.

If the 'pet' is defined in terms of the same Modern Contract that defines the 'meat' animal, we can understand as complementary constructions the strongly dualistic boundaries of the 'pet' and 'meat' animal; the pet animal is a communicative and ethical subject, ideally subject to consideration and fit for human companionship, the meat animal is none of these things. If the pet and the meat are complementary polarised aspects of the same contract, it is this tainted and hidden relationship that enables our simultaneous claim to love some animals and to have a right to ruthlessly exploit other animals who are not very different, to

simultaneously admit pet subjectivity and ignore or deny meat-animal subjectivity. The Old Contract dignified the role of contract animals, but presupposed an instrumental relationship to other animals, and this division becomes a pet/meat dualism in the contract of the modern era. This genealogy does much to explain the extraordinary contradictions involved in our contemporary treatment of animals and our claims to love and respect animals. For example, it is these dualistic contracts that 'animal lovers' honour when they, perhaps even sometimes as vegetarians or vegans themselves, bring into existence and even breed carnivorous pet animals whom they feed on the 'meat' of other animals; or whom pet lovers irresponsibly introduce to inappropriate environments where they are permitted to make other animals meat and to disrupt carefully balanced and negotiated communities of free-living animals. The dualism of the Modern Contract forms the background to such abuses as the dumping of domestic cats in the wild by 'animal lovers', to become a menace to indigenous animals in contexts like Australia where there are few checks and balances.

The moral dualism of both the Old and the Modern Contract helps construct the taboo against recognising the subjectivity of the meat animal, as well as the general failure to recognise animal subjectivity, and produces the moral evasions of meat, especially factory-farmed meat. Most modern urban dwellers have had some positive experiences with animals such as dogs or cats, have at some time allowed themselves to experience them as narrative and communicative subjects rather than as Cartesian 'machine-animals' or as mindless bodies. But the ethical dualism and impermeability of this contract boundary prevents them transferring this awareness to other animals considered 'meat animals' or to wild animals, reflected in the contradiction of the animal lover's horror taboo against eating dogs and contrasting indifference or complacency about the horrific treatment of the 'meat animal'. The recognition drama of *Babe* takes us some distance then towards pushing over this key barrier to a better consciousness of the moral and ecological status of all animals, showing us how Babe is excluded from contract status as meat, and how both Babe and the sheep are oppressed by the contract and by the privilege of the dogs and cats.

But in another crucial way the film fails to resolve some key ambiguities surrounding the contract. For we can also read Babe's liberation in the end of the film as his joining or displacing the dogs in the contract, recasting him in the role of non-violent communicator with the rest of the farm animals. Is Babe's liberation then to be set within the Old Contract's complicity in the oppression of non-contract animals, and the Modern Contract's dualism of the meat and the pet? Is it merely the correction of a mistaken individual placement in the hierarchical species order of rational meritocracy the contracts preserve? Or does it open up a new possibility: that Babe's liberation can somehow be extended to all other animals? To the extent that it is an exclusionary contract, in which some make a living by complicity in instrumentalising, imprisoning and oppressing others, the contract cannot be extended to provide liberation for all. The attempt to use such a contract as a basis for liberation only succeeds in re-erecting the barrier of moral dualism in a new place, slightly extending the class of persons while leaving the person/property dualism unquestioned.

Here we come up against the limits imposed by the liberal understanding of liberation as individual salvation and by its occlusion of its key underlying dualistic constructions, which applied to the animal sphere generates the same problems that various human liberation movements encounter with liberalism. If Babe is to be saved within the limits of privilege the contracts define, or because he is included in the category of persons in recognition of his newly-discovered resemblance to the human and discontinuity from other animals, we can recognise this as the same colonising contract some forms of liberal feminism have endorsed, to allow the other to survive at the price of bringing them under the sign of the Same and to elevate a few through complicity in the oppression of others. Feminists such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, for example, argued that women should be admitted to the privileged class of political rightholders in virtue of their discontinuity with allegedly 'lower groups' such as negro slaves, and their similarity to the master group, elite white men. The strategy of extending the category of persons without recasting the person/property dualism in which it is constructed is bound to fail as an attempt to elevate animals, for exactly the same reasons that similar liberal feminist strategies were/are bound to fail. The door opens to admit

a few, but closes to keep the rest outside where they were. One boundary of moral dualism is momentarily penetrated, but the rest remain in place or new ones are constructed. So the film apparently displays Babe's liberation, but leaves us with the big questions about whether Babe will be admitted alone, with all other pigs, with some other pigs, with all other animals, or with everything we might consider food?

An anti-anthrocentric culture would, I think, need to reject the colonising aspects of the Old Contract Babe shows us, in which 'the Boss' undertakes to allow familiars the meat of other animals that are treated as beneath moral consideration. But it would need to reject too the Modern Contract in which 'pet' and 'meat' animals are defined in dualistic terms as hyper-separated and complementary animal categories, with the hyper-subjectivised and emotionally-invested 'pet' privileged over the undersubjectivised and emotionally-divested 'meat'. Pet/meat dualism resembles male/female dualism in its complex relationships and interconnection with other dualisms; thus pet/meat dualism is closely associated with and draws on several of the major dualisms that define the economic life of liberal modernity, such as public/private, reason/emotion, urban/rural and person/property, and there are strong resonances with race and gender dualisms for these as well as other reasons.¹⁵ Pet/meat dualism may be seen as a special case of the larger liberal person/property dualism, in which the pet is treated as a *de facto* person, marginally recognised in law, and the meat animal is included in the larger category of animal economic property.

Feminists have argued that a proper understanding of liberalism requires an understanding of its gendered dimensions in connecting the public/private, reason/emotion and male/female dualisms¹⁶; it might equally be said that understanding liberalism requires an understanding of its animal dimensions, in connecting the human/animal, pet/meat person/property, public/private, and reason/emotion dualisms. We have already noticed in part 3 that there is a radical kind of inequality and a-reciprocity in modern commodity practices of meat that is often not present in the society of the hunter-gatherer, where carnivorous practices could express not so much superiority to animals as human inclusion within a common human-animal realm of reciprocal predation and life-

exchange. So marked is this that 'meat' can be said to have a different meaning in each of these political contexts. An important implication for theory of both these sets of observations is that to understand our contemporary patterns of relationship with animals we need a more clearly socially and especially politically nuanced and situated analysis of these categories than is achievable within the confines of an animal ethics framework. That is why I have used the term 'animal justice' instead of the terms 'animal rights' or 'animal defence'.

Moving beyond the contracts¹⁷ does not imply that we have to forgo all systematic association with animals, but rather that we have to be prepared to consider carefully the politics of human/animal relationships and test them against the criterion of realisation in a society where none are morally excluded and made available for the horrors of the gulag. But if the concept of the 'pet' is tainted by the same contract and public/private duality that defines the 'meat', where do we start? I think that the attempt to negotiate a new communicative model of relationship with animals could do worse than start from the concept of the 'familiar' *Babe* makes visible again, because the 'familiar' relationship escapes some of the rigidity of the pet/meat dualism; thus the relationship with the working animal was often strongly communicative, built on a respect for animal difference, and unified rather than split the rational-economic and emotional connection with the animal. Your new familiar could be an animal with whom you form some kind of communicative bond, friendship, protective relationship, companionship, or acquaintance. The familiar may, if you are very lucky, be a wild free-living animal in your local surroundings you see sufficiently often to come to know individually. Relationships with local lizards, birds, and occasionally friendly mammals like wombats, are examples. Or they may be a domesticated or semi-domesticated animal with whom you have economic as well as affective relations not dependent on the moral exclusion of other animals. These possibilities start to become available to us once we begin to see beyond the dualisms that underpin the contracts.

An attempt to rework the 'familiar' relationship for a new time must clearly reject the familiar's traditionally oppressive roles in relation to

other animals. But many of the domestic animals who suffered under the contracts, hens, ducks and geese for example, thrive as human familiars and can live with us in ways that enable the formation of communicative relationships, mutual enjoyment, and exploration - without requiring a further class of excluded animals who exist instrumentally to provide them with meat.¹⁸ We have to ensure that we take responsibility for any harm our familiars may do to ecological communities or to communities of free-living animals, whose welfare I believe should, in the event of conflict, take priority over our desire for animal companions, and in many if not most contexts this must mean abandoning the fostering of dogs and cats. Combining this new/old kind of 'familiar' personal and moral relationship with animals with an economic relationship, as *Babe* imagines, is challenging, to say the least, and involves negotiating so many difficult tensions that it must ultimately lead towards a major revisioning and restructuring of economic life. But the potential rewards are great, and such a strategy also indicates routes towards breaking down those key contemporary versions of reason/emotion and public/private dualism that help construct the linked forms of alienation involved in the human workplace and the animal gulag. To the extent that *Babe* helps us reimagine the animal as potential familiar rather than as pet or as meat, it offers us a glimpse of an overgrown but still discernible path which could begin our journey towards a non-oppressive form of the mixed community and a livable future respectfully shared with animals.

Notes

1. Mary Midgley, *Animals and why they matter* (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1983).
2. Val Plumwood and R. Routley 'Against the Inevitability of Human Chauvinism', in E. E. Goodpaster and K.M. Sayre eds. *Ethics and the Problems of the 21st Century*, (Notre Dame University Press, South Bend, Indiana, 1979).
3. Val Plumwood, 'Androcentrism and Anthropocentrism: Parallels and Politics', *Ethics and the Environment*, 1, (1996), pp. 119-152. Anthropocentrism is a clearer concept than anthropomorphism although by no means uncontested or unambiguous, and one which also bears more clearly on the moral quality of artworks that represent the animal.
4. Thus post-colonial theory particularly stresses difference, even in some instances defining itself as 'that thought which refuses to turn the Other into the Same'.

5. Freya Mathews, 'Living with Animals', *Animal Issues*, 1, (1997), pp. 4-20.
6. See Val Plumwood, 'Review of Marlo Morgan's *Mutant Message Downunder*', *Environmental Ethics*, Winter, (1996), pp. 431-435 and 'Eurocentrism, Positionality, and Cross-Authoring' manuscript.
7. Donna Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges: the Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective' in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women* (Association Press, London, 1989), pp. 183-202.
8. Sandra Harding, *Whose Science, Whose Knowledge?* (Open University Press, Milton Keynes, 1991).
9. John Berger, *About Looking* (Vintage, New York, 1991), pp.3-28.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid, p.16.
12. This is often only relatively a privileged fate, relative to that of the meat animal. The story of the happy, privileged private pet is idealised for the housebound animal in much the same way as it is for the housebound wife. In practice both suffer and are vulnerable under a form of coverture which allows the household head many opportunities to abuse them with little redress (Adams 1994) see n.15. Both suffer endless ennui, confinement and the indignity of underemployment or uselessness, and both may be limited and distorted in their development by their role of supplying emotional support for hyper-rational masters. At the same time, the need to integrate and confine the animal companion to the space of the individual private household is a further source of limitation, deprivation and assimilation for the animal and of corresponding stereotyping and limitation for human knowledge of companion animals, since it both limits what the pet animal can become and greatly contracts the range of suitable companion animals. The pet's positioning within this privatised structure also supports its infantilisation.
13. The farm wife too had an important economic role, and although that hardly amounted to equality, had to be accorded some respect on account of it.
14. So bringing animals back into human lives cannot just be a matter of better planning, but also requires more far-reaching changes.
15. Carol Adams, *Neither Man nor Beast* (Continuum, New York, 1994).
16. Carole Pateman, *The Disorder of Women* (Polity Press, Cambridge, 1989).
17. I have not proposed a New Contract to replace the Old and the Modern Contracts because I think, with Mary Midgley in 'Duties Concerning Islands' in Robert Elliot and Arran Gare eds. *Environmental Philosophy* (University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1983) and Carole Pateman (1989), see n.16., that the contract framework is highly problematic and exclusionary.
18. Individualisation is another factor that makes such relationships of familiarity difficult to achieve in the contemporary West. The reduction of the domestic animal's living possibilities to that of being an individual human household member on the one hand or gulag inhabitant on the other leaves out the possibility of animals inhabiting the larger shared common world of the mixed community- as the village-common geese do, for example, occupying a role which shades off into that of the wild, free-living animal. See Ted Benton, *Natural Relations* (Verso, London, 1993).

Biography

Val Plumwood is the author of *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (Routledge, London, 1993) and of over 80 papers in a wide range of areas including feminist philosophy, feminist ecology, feminist ethics, feminist logic, philosophical logic, environmental ethics and political philosophy. She is a research scholar at the University of Sydney, Research Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences. Val's home base is an area of mountain forest in southern N.S.W., Australia. She says that as the foster-mother of a wombat, she tends to look at other animals, especially dogs and cats, from a wombat's viewpoint. As the survivor of a drowning attempt by a Saltwater Crocodile, she also feels that she knows a bit about what it is like to be treated as someone else's meat.