A Real Animal Right(s)?

Discourse Bias in Animal Discourse

Matthew Chrulew[1]

The recently published collection *Animal Philosophy* brings together writings by prominent Continental philosophers on the subject of animals, pairing each with a commentary. As Peter Singer remarks in his preface, such a volume is important for 'a new debate about the real implications for our relations with nonhuman animals of the work of writers in the Continental tradition'.[2] But it is heralded in a somewhat hesitant fashion: Singer's previous two paragraphs are disparaging of such work's track record so far. As a Continental scholar committed to the 'rights' of animals, what stings most for me is that this criticism is largely deserved. Unfortunately, Continental theorists have typically been suspicious of 'nature' and 'animality' in a manner which threatens to render their valuable critical tools irrelevant to the problematics of embodied animals and their habitats.

Typically this centres around the predominance of a form of 'pantextualism' in Continental and postmodern writings. Deconstruction may be seen as a common culprit, but often, also, the work of Michel Foucault is cited as an influence on approaches which apprehend animals solely on a semiotic or discursive level. Indeed, the selection from Foucault himself in *Animal Philosophy* does precisely that in its description of the historically changing discursive position of animality vis-à-vis reason and madness in the Renaissance and classical periods.[3] This discourse bias serves to compound two other related problems: the pre-existing anthropocentrism of Foucault's work, and the

---

1 Matthew Chrulew is a doctoral candidate in the Centre for Studies in Religion and Theology at Monash University. He was awarded distinction from the University of Western Australia for his masters dissertation, 'Discipline and Exhibit: A Zoocritical Heterotopology of Zoological Gardens.' He has published in the areas of cultural studies and human-animal studies, as well as a number of speculative fiction short stories. He is allergic to cats and dogs; once fell off a horse; has been stung many times by jellyfish. He keeps coming back for more.

2 P. Singer (2004), 'Preface', in M. Calarco and P. Atterton (eds), *Animal Philosophy: Essential Readings in Continental Thought*, Continuum, London and New York.

3 M. Foucault (2004), 'Animality and Insanity', in Calarco and Atterton (eds), *Animal Philosophy*, pp. 65-71.

tendency to reduce species discourse to social factors.[4] Keith Tester's *Animals and Society* is the prototypical example of an application of this mode of Foucault's thought: in it he notoriously argues that modern animal rights is a historically contingent phenomenon concerned primarily with marking the boundaries of humanity.[5]

Tester's sociological analysis was immediately drawn into a debate which highlighted the inadequacy of this 'constructionist' position for animal rights. But reponses to the ethical problems associated with Tester's (supposedly Foucauldian) position almost uniformly correct it by the supplementation of a form of 'critical realism' better able, it is supposed, to make reference to an objective, external reality. The regularity of this response has severely restricted the scope of any neo-Foucauldian approach to animal questions. My argument is that it is only a discourse-biased interpretation of Foucault—on *all* sides of this debate—which necessitates this concession. Applications of Foucault to animals almost exclusively focus on his earlier, 'archaeological' work in its attention to discourse, when in fact Foucault went on to develop a more spatially oriented 'genealogical' approach attentive to material embodiment.

Now this discourse bias in the case of animals can be traced to the source. When analysing the nonhuman natural world, whether the discourse of animality in *Madness and Civilization* or the mutation from classical natural history to modern biology in *The Order of Things*, Foucault remained always on a discursive level. However, as Clare Palmer rightly points out in her commentary on the Foucault extract, this anthropocentrism is not integral to his approach: for human-animal studies scholars today, Foucault's later analytics of power might be much more usefully applied to critique the material power relations of human-animal contact.[6]

In the context of a debate about the relevance of Continental thought for human-animal relations, this is a potent, viable position. Unfortunately, an awareness of this prospect is missing from Tester, critiques of Tester, and most other considerations of Foucault in relation to animals. In this paper I will

---

4 There have recently been challenges to these obstacles. For attempts to apply Foucault's work to environmental issues, see É. Darier (ed) (1999), *Discourses of the Environment*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford & Massachusetts. For a powerful understanding of the *irreducibility* of species discourse, see C. Wolfe (2003), *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London.

5 K. Tester (1991), *Animals and Society: The humanity of animal rights*, Routledge, London and New York. Further references to this text are in the body of the essay.

6 C. Palmer (2004), 'Madness and Animality in Michel Foucault's *Madness and Civilization*', in Calarco and Atterton (eds), *Animal Philosophy*, pp. 72-84.

examine this discourse bias in an attempt to reinvigorate the potential for applying Foucault's work to our interface with the nonhuman.

Discourse bias is endemic to approaches which apply Foucault's work to animals. Typically, when scholars suggest the relevance of a Foucauldian reading of the environment, they mean to stress a discursive approach to a necessarily scare-quoted 'nature'. For example, prominent environmental philosopher Kate Soper observes that:

> the stress […] on the conceptual dependency of the idea of "nature" as a conventional and inherently revisable binary counter to that of "culture" […] is more associated with Derridean or Foucauldian-influenced gender studies and cultural criticism [… while] the social construction of knowledge, or […] the human hand in the physical making of much that is loosely referred to by environmentalists as "natural" [… is] more emphasized in the argument of philosophers of science, cultural geographers, sociologists and political ecologists.[7]

I find it a noteable omission that Foucault's work is situated on the former side of this divide; but what is more worrying is the fact that Soper's assessment (without challenge) of the extent of his influence on approaches to nature may not be too wrongheaded. Despite Foucault's insistence on the efficacy of material power relations, this discourse biased conception is extremely widespread. For example, leading ecocritic Lawrence Buell argues that:

> From an ecocentric standpoint a criterion built on a theoretical distinction between human constructedness and nonhuman reality […] is far more productive than a criterion based on the presupposition of the inevitable dominance of constructedness alone (Foucault's theory of discursive formations).[8]

He goes on to equivocate between Baudrillard's theory of postmodern simulation and Foucault's poststructuralist theory of discourse, for which, according to Buell, nature is still 'outside' and (unlike with realism) unreachable. And when David Mazel proposes 'approaching the environment as a construct, not as the prediscursive origin and cause of environmental discourse but rather as the effect of that discourse', he suggests that the following questions might define some of the parameters of this project:

> What has counted as the environment, and what may count? Who marks off the conceptual boundaries, and under what authority, and for what reasons? Have

7 K. Soper (2000), 'Future culture: Realism, humanism and the politics of nature', *Radical Philosophy* 102, pp. 17-26, on p. 17.

8 L. Buell (1995), *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture*, The Belknap Press, Cambridge and London, pp. 113-4.

> those boundaries and that authority been contested, and if so, by whom? With what success, and by virtue of what strategies of resistance?[9]

Important questions all, but not going further under-utilises what I believe are the most compelling aspects of Foucauldian thought, especially for considerations of the nonhuman natural world. Some further questions would be: where is nature defined? In what spaces? How is it disciplined? With what power effects on the nonhuman subjects implicated in these technologies?

Unfortunately, even those who apply Foucault's genealogical approach to animals tend to minimise its materialism. Mette Bryld and Nina Lykke, who in a fascinating section of their book focussing on dolphins 'take Foucault's notion of bio-power to be our theoretical framework, but extended from human to planetary bodies and artificial life in outer space', neglect to consider the actual implication of animals within these power relations, rather limiting themselves to 'discuss how space flight allows fanciful *ideas* of new kinds of bio-power to proliferate: from life management on a cosmic scale to radical recodings of bodies as cyborg-machines'.[10]

However, the most prominent perpetrator of this widespread misuse has been Keith Tester. His *Animals and Society* is a stimulating sociological study which deals in particular with the formation of the modern notion of animal rights. Tester follows the culturalist tradition of animal studies, for which particular societies' constructions of the natural world, including animals, are produced according to systems of classification that reflect the meaning-making prerogatives of their human progenitors.[11] In particular, Tester argues that:

> the concept of animal rights is only marginally concerned with animals. More importantly, it is part of a social project to classify and define humanity. Animals are useful for humans to be able to think human. […] animal rights may be understood as a social ontology of social being. (48)

That is, at core, discourse about animals in fact has little to do with its purported objects. Rather, animals provide a way of defining notions of

---

9 D. Mazel (1996), 'American Literary Environmentalism as Domestic Orientalism', in C. Glotfelty and H. Fromm (eds), *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, University of Georgia Press, Athens & London, pp. 137-146, on p. 143. Similar suggestions are commonly made elsewhere, but very rarely is the reference to Foucault followed through.

10 M. Bryld and N. Lykke (1999), *Cosmodolphins: Feminist Cultural Studies of Technology, Animals and the Sacred*, Zed Books, London and New York, pp. 92-117, on p. 92, emphasis added.

11 Much is bequeathed to this approach from the structuralist tradition of anthropology. See such foundational studies as C. Lévi-Strauss (1966), *The Savage Mind*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London; and M. Douglas (1966), *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London.

humanity; humans create this discourse, and humans are its ultimate referent. He concurs with the anthropological claim that 'societies classify animals through a knowledge which attempts to establish unambiguously *what it is to be human*.' (31) This is particularly evident in the paradoxical discourse of animal rights: human treatment of animals is valorised as either 'humane' or 'bestial'. (114) Rather than being ready-made objects, 'animals *are* a blank paper' (42) on which we draw ourselves, or a mirror in which we see ourselves.

Among other historical and anthropological work, one of Tester's main guides is Foucault. Tester attempts to incorporate an understanding of historical discontinuity in attitudes to animals, and to this end considers Foucault's early work on epistemological changes leading up to the modern period.[12] Largely, Tester's history of animal rights is the narrative of two contradictory discourses on the relationship of humanity to animals—what he calls the 'Demand for Difference' and the 'Demand for Similitude'—and their eventual unification in modern animal rights. Despite their clear opposition, the two Demands both 'broadly agreed that cruelty [to animals] was wrong because it did something to humanity. The cruel person either threatened society or ignored the natural law.' (141) And when the modern notion of animal rights arose in Henry Salt's combination of the two Demands, reconciling their different elements in its policing of the 'human' (with regards to treatment of animals) and claims to moral universality, this too was a call to be properly human, defined now as a stable figure at the peak of moral and social progress, and moreover one that, Tester contends, was only possible within the specific contours of the modern *episteme*. Salt combined the Demands 'in a wonderful pageant of the evolutionary decline, fall, and recovery of the conclusively true morality and a final encounter with the question 'What is "man"?' (164) When Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation*[13] resurrected animal rights in the late twentieth century, he attempted to ground it in a narrative of humanitarianism, 'the expanding circle thesis which identifies a historical process of the moral enfranchisement of [dissimilar] classes and categories of life.' (166)

Tester furnishes us with some useful insights, but on the whole this sort of analysis—which claims, for example, that 'animal rights is not about animals, and as a fetish it is arguing that if we construct a selfhood which is divorced from animals, we will become better humans' (177)—is no longer given much credence in animal studies. By reducing human concern for animals to the social conditions of its construction, and then undermining that construction's claim to

12 The central text is M. Foucault (2002) [1966], *The Order of Things: An archaeology of the human sciences*, Routledge, London and New York.

13 P. Singer (1976), *Animal Liberation: Towards an End to Man's Inhumanity to Animals*, Jonathan Cape, London.

universality, Tester in the process rejects all possibility of care for animals. This is only possible, however, because his mode of analysis has already rejected human/animal relationships as secondary to the more fundamental concerns of social and economic relations, and the desire for human self-definition.[14] More recent zoocriticism has insisted, on the contrary, that what Cary Wolfe calls 'species discourse' cannot be so easily reduced to the status of a 'product' (or in Tester's neo-Marxist language a 'fetish') of other concerns. Thereby, the discipline has instead taken upon itself the goal of critiqueing *problematic* forms of concern for animals with the goal of opening up less dubious forms, different modes of care in human-animal interaction. Tester closely ties animal rights to a 'Nietzschean pathos of distance', arguing that 'Without distance and freedom, animal rights would be impossible', (198) but his selection of targets is quite limited: 'Tester's analysis focuses on the ALF [Animal Liberation Front] because it fits his model of a cult, but ignores the more peacable' organisations devoted to animals.[15] Adrian Franklin's research suggests that supporters of animal welfare desire 'not that we should live apart but that we should work out a moral and ethical way of living together.'[16] Many further possibilities can be found in ethical relationships with animals that involve closeness and cohabitation: living with them, touching them, sharing land (including urban environments) and needs.[17]

However, this sophistication of animal-centred *discursive* analysis still struggles over a central question: 'the relationship between […] the *discourse* of animality […] and the living and breathing creatures who fall outside the taxonomy of Homo sapiens.'[18] And despite common opinion to the contrary, Continental thinkers, particularly Foucault, have important insights to offer regarding the human impact on this material level. Unfortunately, Foucault's own anthropocentrism precluded this possibility in his own work; and the discourse bias of those who take up his work has perpetuated this problem. Thus,

---

14 Tester's relativism also misuses Foucault's suspicious uncovering of historical contingency and mutability to *disqualify* rather than *contextualise* systems of morality.

15 A. Franklin (1999), *Animals and Modern Cultures: A Sociology of Human-Animal Relations in Modernity*, SAGE Publications, London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi, p. 185.

16 Franklin, *Animals and Modern Cultures*, p. 188.

17 Examples of care for animals that are not based on distance include feminist ethics of care (e.g. a number of contributions in J. Wolch and J. Emel (eds) (1998), *Animal Geographies: Place, Politics, and Identity in the Nature-Culture Borderlands*, Verso, London and New York) and queer ethics of touch (e.g. C. Sandilands (2000), 'Desiring Nature, Queering Ethics: Adventures in Erotogenic Environments,' *Environmental Ethics* 23, pp. 169-188.)

18 C. Wolfe (2003), 'Introduction', in C. Wolfe (ed), *Zoontologies: the question of the animal*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis and London, pp. ix-xxiii, on p. xx.

the restriction of this problematic discursive analysis by critical realists has lead to the wholesale rejection of potentially useful philosophical tools, i.e. Foucault's genealogical approach. By revisiting the debate over Tester's work, I hope to correct this omission.

The reception of Tester's work was typical of much in the 'constructionism vs realism' debate of sociology of science and sociology of the environment: deeply held predispositions entrenched on both sides. Ted Benton's response is prominent. In his well-argued review, he clearly lays out the problems with Tester's approach:

> At no point in the historical-cultural narrative Tester tells are animals referred to as setting limits to what we may say or think about them, or, indeed do to them, independently of our own taxonomic activity or systems of moral regulation.[19]

Elsewhere, however, he is less patient. Reacting to Tester's '"blank paper" view of animals'—and particularly his inflammatory point that 'A fish is only a fish if it is socially classified as one' (46)—Benton writes: 'Perhaps, if we were to impose the socially produced category of fish upon the viper its bite would lose its venom?'[20] Benton reserves his own venom for his mocking appraisals of Tester as a representative of social constructionism: his 'daft' position (though 'currently very fashionable') 'provides us with a wonderfully entertaining sample of this way of thinking'.[21]

Dickens puts it more politely: 'there are real differences between how people *construe* fishes, but this is a wholly different matter from how a fish is physically constructed. This is the nub of the argument here.'[22] Martell agrees, offering some unhelpful tautologies:

> the problem here is that fish cannot be categorized any old way because they have objective properties which cannot be fitted into any category. They cannot be categorized as feathered because they do not have feathers. And they can only be categorized as scaly because they have scales.[23]

Though their statements of it vary in clarity, these realist responses share a central point: there are empirical objective properties in response to which classifications are made. Perhaps more importantly, they insist that such realism

---

19 T. Benton (1992), 'Animals and us: relations or ciphers?' *History of the Human Sciences* 5 (2), pp. 123-130.

20 T. Benton (1993), *Natural Relations: Ecology, Animal Rights and Social Justice*, London, Verso, pp. 65-6.

21 Benton, *Natural Relations*, p. 66; T. Benton (1994), 'Biology and Social Theory in the Environmental Debate', in M. Redclift and T. Benton (eds), *Social Theory and the Global Environment*, Routledge, London and New York, pp. 28-50, on p. 45.

22 P. Dickens (1996), *Reconstructing Nature: Alienation, Emancipation and the Division of Labour*, Routledge, London, p. 73.

23 Martell, *Ecology and Society*, p. 175.

is critical for an *ethical* engagement with the natural world. But this insistence on questions of correspondence, and the accuracy of scientific knowledge, serves only to distract attention from the much more important ethical concerns of how an "objectively physical" fish, or indeed any animal, is materially caught up in prevailing systems of human power relations. But it is precisely this understanding that Foucault's later work could provide.

A number of critics have been sympathetic to the constructionist element of Tester's work. Burningham and Cooper point out that the problem with many realist responses is that they overemphasise the extremity of the constructionist positions. "Feathers" and "scales", they argue, are 'pre-existing categorizations', and moreover, 'Tester's central point […] that the fish could be classified otherwise […] does not amount to a denial' of the fish's material reality.[24] Franklin agrees that the rhetorical force of realist denunciations of social constructionism lies in an overemphasis of the degree to which the latter are 'denying the extra discursive reality of nature.'[25] In his sociology of human-animal relations in modernity, Franklin both uses and critiques Tester's work, extending the analysis into the twentieth century (filling in the hole between Salt and Singer) and focusing more on material socioeconomic changes.[26] But he, too, merely perpetuates the discourse-biased reading of Foucault, writing that Tester 'is inspired by Foucault whose work has focused on classificatory systems in modernity and the effects of knowledge on social change.'[27] Moreover, Franklin simply repeats Tester's reduction of changes in human-animal relations to changes in social organisation. With regard to animal rights, he argues, 'the issue is not the ethical consideration of the "other" but the moral consideration of "ourselves".'[28]

Others have managed to go beyond this anthropocentrism. Steve Baker notes Tester's position of detachment from any zoopolitical cause; his is not 'a "committed" history', is not interested 'to change things with regard to or on behalf of animals' and certainly not via his criticism '*strengthen* the conceptual base for animal rights.'[29] Baker's critique of Tester, on the other hand, and his

---

24 K. Burningham and G. Cooper (1999), 'Being constructive: social constructionism and the environment' *Sociology* 33 (2), pp. 297-316, on p. 309.

25 K. Soper (1995), *What is Nature?*, Blackwell, Oxford and Cambridge, p. 8. See A. Franklin (2002), *Nature and Social Theory*, SAGE Publications, London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi, pp. 39-59; Burningham and Cooper, 'Being constructive'.

26 Franklin, *Animals and Modern Cultures*, pp. 25-30, 60-1, 175-199.

27 Franklin, *Animals and Modern Cultures*, p. 25. His only bibliographical reference to Foucault is to *The Order of Things*.

28 Franklin, *Animals and Modern Cultures*, p. 196.

29 S. Baker (1993), *Picturing the beast: Animals, identity and representation*, Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York, p. 22, 31n, emphasis in original.

work in general, *is* so committed: and thus he challenges Tester's reliance, in his critique of 'a self-deluding modern experience […] of the urban-symbolic', on a contrast with '[t]he authenticity of rural experience of the animal' for its implication that '*cats are simply less real than cows.*'[30] In Baker's own commitment to '*what made animals meaningful to the masses*', to 'those popular urban cultural practices in which the symbolic still played (and still plays) a part'[31] he goes beyond Tester's ignorance of these symbolic meanings to provide us with cutting-edge work on animal representations and art. Baker's argument is an important example of animal-centred attention to discourse, but I believe it is also imperative to take the critique of Tester in another direction, not only to other (still largely non-material) aspects of cultural representation but to our nondiscursive lived relationships with animals.

Erica Fudge adds her voice in her sweeping *Animal*: 'One of the implications of Tester's view is that there is no ethical space for animals, that there is only representational space – only what we make of animals – and this precludes any possibility of ethical intervention.'[32] She correctly recognises Tester's circumscription of animals to the realm of human meaning and the problematic ethical implication of the ignorance of flesh-and-blood animals. Her response, however, merely reiterates Benton's sarcastic reference to a viper's bite. The theoretical weakness of her dismissal of Tester is evident in the hesitant qualification of her following remark: '*Somehow*, Tester manages to close off even the possibility of thinking about animals in any other terms than anthropocentric ones.'[33]

This is how: Tester improperly uses only limited dimensions of Foucault's thought, resting inordinately on his earlier 'archaeological' period. This privileging of the archaeological model erases the ethically relevant presence of animals by limiting itself to the realm of human-constructed discourse.[34] For Tester, Foucault plays the role of harbinger of 'discontinuity' in historical change, and authority on the centrality of Man to the modern *episteme*. But he criticises Foucault's unwillingness to make claims on historical causality, arguing that 'it is fair to say that he [Foucault] does tend to place too heavy an emphasis on purely ideational events.' (195) Tester, rather, points to urbanisation, which intensified

30 Baker, *Picturing the beast*, p. 20, 19, 20, emphasis in original. Baker further discusses the strange rejection of pets by philosophers in S. Baker (2000), *The Postmodern Animal*, Reaktion Books, London, pp. 166-190.

31 Baker, *Picturing the beast*, p. 21, emphasis in original.

32 E. Fudge (2002), *Animal*, Reaktion Books, London, p. 51.

33 Fudge, *Animal*, p. 51, emphasis added.

34 It was Benton who recognised this at an early stage, though none have attempted to correct it. Benton, 'Animals and us: relations or ciphers?', pp. 129-130.

our separation and alienation from animals, as a fundamental determinant of the changing attitudes to animals. (196-7)[35] But he seems unaware of Foucault's continued emphasis on the material context of power/knowledge, on bodies and spaces, spelt out most clearly in his genealogical work.[36] In the case of the 'urban working class', Tester claims to emphasise (in opposition to stresses on rhetoric) the 'social reality' of their exclusion—but this emphasis is hardly extended to the 'reality' of exclusions of animals. But it is imperative to emphasise, *contra* Tester, that the 'historical context' of animal rights is not only that of urbanisation but also, for example, a multitude of institutions devoted to mass-production of animal flesh for human consumption, that is, a material industry in which animal lives and bodies are at stake.

Tester uses Foucault in tandem with the tradition of cultural anthropology, without challenging that discipline's emphasis on the metaphorical use of material bodies (including animals) for human self-definition. But Foucault in fact strongly challenged this position. The body, he argued, does not simply *signify* but is a conflicting site penetrated by multiple discourses and power relations. The scaly, feathered, biting animal bodies that the realists are so keen to show Tester are fully compatible with this approach. But Tester's discourse bias compounds his (and Foucault's) anthropocentrism. It is only this selectivity that allows him to be so blasé about actual animals; he argues that 'It is not the thing itself (the morality, the animal, the product) which is the cause of fetishism; rather, it is the social relationships within which the thing is located', (195) and that is all that counts. In doing so he does not consider the important *differences* between animals and his other examples of fetishes, 'commodities and religious ideas'. (172) Within the realm of knowledge, animals are reduced to 'things', equated with all other objects of an omnipresent cultural construction. But it would be much harder to ignore the institutional context, and erase animal presence, from within an approach committed not just to discourse but also to the nondiscursive context of power relations.

Palmer's comments on Foucault might be easily extended to Tester. In comparison to contemporary cognitive ethology, 'Foucault's discourse of animality is […] largely symbolic and imaginative, and has little or no contact

35 For discussion see Franklin, *Animals and Modern Cultures*, p. 193.

36 The two central studies are M. Foucault (1991) [1977], *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, A. Sheridan (trans), Penguin Books; and M. Foucault (1998) [1976], *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality Volume 1*, R. Hurley (trans), Penguin Books. For further introductory material, see M. Foucault (1980), *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-77*, C. Gordon (ed), Pantheon Books, New York; and M. Foucault (2002), *Power*, J. D. Faubion (ed), R. Hurley and others (trans), Penguin Books, London.

with animals understood as living biological organisms.'[37] The same might be said of Tester's discourse: his claims about animals are claims about nonscientific human discourse about animals—*this* is the object of his study. Burningham and Cooper, and Franklin, point out that it is precisely this which releases Tester from the realists' criticisms. Such a position, however, may in itself not be enough. Palmer asks of Foucault's work: 'If one operates with a discourse in which animality and madness are excluded from reason, what power relations are thereby reflected, expressed, and encouraged […]?'[38] And though we might want to ask a similar question of environmental realism,[39] it was none other than Benton who posed it to Tester first: 'What is the "strategy of power" underlying Tester's own narrative?'[40] But it is telling that to do so he referred Tester back to Foucault: for such a task is precisely suited to Foucault's genealogical project and, more broadly, the Continental tradition of suspicion.[41]

Grab a dog's wet hair and take a whiff; stand under a tree full of birds—animals are of course very real. They are also caged and drugged and tested; loved and dumped and destroyed; bred and grown and slaughtered—in their millions. By human societies, for human purposes. *As if* they were no more than blank paper.

These material practices are tightly connected to human-centred manipulations of animal discourse. This is precisely why we must push our understanding of how humans discursively construct animals beyond the blindness of discourse bias, and create a discourse fervently attentive to the impacts of our activities on their lives.

---

37 Palmer, 'Madness and Animality', p. 82.

38 Palmer, 'Madness and Animality', p. 80.

39 As Franklin points out, environmental realism is 'largely concerned with legitimating a pragmatic association of the social sciences with green politics.' Franklin, *Nature and Social Theory*, p. 50. This precise connection can obscure the need for critical understanding of how environmentalism operates through a governmental regime of power/knowledge. See, for example, P. Rutherford, '"The Entry of Life into History"', and 'Ecological Modernization and Environmental Risk', both in Darier (ed), *Discourses of the Environment*, pp. 37-62, pp. 95-118.

40 Benton, 'Animals and us: relations or ciphers?', p. 128.

41 For further argument, see M. Chrulew (2003), 'On Animal Resistance' in J. Haswell and D. MacCallum (eds), *Liveable Communities*, Black Swan Press, Perth, pp. 85-96; and C. Palmer (2001), '"Taming the Wild Profusion of Existing Things"? A Study of Foucault, Power, and Human/Animal Relationships' *Environmental Ethics* 23, pp. 339-358.