Pethics: Moral Theory and Practice Regarding Companion Animals

Abstract

Considerations of ethical questions regarding pets should take into account the nature of human-pet relationships, in particular the uniquely combined features of mutual companionship, quasi-family-membership, proximity, direct contact, privacy, dependence, and partiality. The approaches to ethical questions about pets should overlap with those of animal ethics and family ethics (and, for veterinary issues, with healthcare ethics), and so need not represent an isolated field of enquiry, but rather the intersection of those more established fields. This intersection, and the questions of how we treat our pets, present several unique concerns and approaches for focused examination.

Keywords: Pets; companion animals; animal ethics; pethics; family ethics; veterinary ethics

Introduction

The ethics of laboratory and farm animals have become recognized as "fields" within bioethics. In comparison, companion animals have not given rise to the same degree of attention, nor to much consideration of how to identify and address key ethical questions relating to how we treat our pets.

Companion animals or ‘pets’ have a particular, and unique, place as moral objects and subjects in our human lives. They are bred, bought, sold, trained, caged and killed according to our will. They also share our homes and our lives, drawing upon our emotions and resources. Should companion animals therefore have a particular, unique place in bioethics? Do our relationships with pets require a special field of, or approach to, ethical deliberations and practice?

This paper considers this question in light of our relationships with our pets. It argues that our specific relational responses to others, such as pets, should be taken into account when constructing how we make ethical decisions about them. Ignoring moral psychology in ethics can make applied ethics difficult to achieve in practice. We have certain non-voluntary reactions when face-to-face with certain other beings. In particular, our ethics of companion animals should consider the prevalent human psychology within our relationships with companion animals, just as we ought to consider the importance of partiality to friends and family (Scheffler 2010). An overly demanding impartiality that could lead to alienation and undermine the personal projects and personal relationships that make life worth living (Railton 1984). A strong claim would be that these should in some way *determine* our ethical approaches (in the same way that our relationships with our family members may be deemed to legitimately cause us to eschew utilitarian approaches). Here we make the weaker claim that we should consider our 'pre-ethical' relations before considering the normative implications of those relationships. Since we have different relationships with pets than with other animals or human family members, this suggests they need a tailored approach to ethical decision-making. This paper therefore adopts a degree of Humean criticism of impartialism in ethics, in support of a commonsense morality. This approach may be compatible with the views of Rorty and Strawson's conception of ethics as being based on subjective, affective, personal and transcendent relations between beings (Strawson 1958).

This paper argues, on the basis that our ethical approaches should take into account our relations with others, then the ethics of pets must adequately take into account the unique place of pets within society and the unique nature of human-animal relations between ourselves and our pets. It suggests that companion animal ethics should be given an increased

and focused attention. There are important questions about how we care for our pets and specific elements of the human pet relationship that are unique, and which raise special ethical issues and may inspire particular approaches to resolving those issues. This paper identifies key subjects and salient features of pet ethics or "pethics". These various strands should be brought together, and explicitly related to those of (other) animal ethics, family ethics and, for veterinary work, medical ethics.

Why Consider Pets

One initial question is whether matters relating to our pets should be subjected to ethical analyses?

For some, the fact that we should reflect on how we treat pets may be apodictic: as one of us (JY) as an owner and veterinary surgeon does – as a matter of fact – make value-based decisions about his actions, and those actions can affect those pets in ways that could be said to matter to them. Our actions generally can cause or prevent them experiencing pain or pleasure; frustrate or satisfy their desires, restrict their liberty or provide opportunities; and end or extend their lives. Pets are totally dependent on us for their survival and well-being and need us to care for them on a daily basis (Stephens & Hill 1996). Their lives are not utopic: pets are commonly "stressed, lonely, overweight, bored, aggressive and misunderstood." (PDSA 2011, see also 2014). This suggests we should consider the ethical dilemmas raised by keeping animals as companions, just as – even if in different ways - we consider other beings who can be similarly harmed or benefitted. Many of the more general reasons for subjecting our agency regarding other (non-wild) animals to ethical scrutiny would suggest we should devote energy to determining how best to interact with companion

animals – albeit without specifying that pets should be considered in exactly the same ways as other animals. In short, pets have interests, just as other animals do.

At the same time, we do – as a matter of fact – have relationships with pets. As owners, we have them in our homes and lives, albeit in a power-relationship partly defined by ownership. Dogs and cats were domesticated several millennia ago (Davis & Valla 1978; Sablin & Khlopachev 2002; Vigne et al 2004; Vila et al 1997) and pet keeping is now popular in many countries (e.g. there are about 10.5 million pet dogs in the UK: Murray et al 2012) and our expenditure supports a multibillion dollar industry (Holbrook & Woodside 2008; Brockman & Brockman 2008; APPMA 2005). We relate to them and, insofar as we can consciously shape those emotional relationships, there is value in discussing what relationships we should endeavour to have with them. This paper cannot summarise the literature on the anthropology, sociology and psychology of pet keeping, or the host of books both autobiographical (particularly dealing with bereavement) and academic (see citations in the text), although readers are directed in particular to Fudge (2008) and McKenna (2013). In particular, pets play important roles in our lives as companions, providing loyalty, dependability and 'unconditional' love (see, e.g., Beck and Katcher 1996; Serpell 1996; Dollins 1999; Knapp 1999; Haraway 2003; Anderson 2008; Arluke and Sanders 2008; Flynn 2008; Blazina et al 2012; DeMello 2012; McKendree et al 2014; Meyer et al 2015; Bailey-Merritt 2016). Pet keeping may also provide concomitant, instrumental benefits, not least in terms of health (eg Cutt et al 2007; Arhant-Sudhir et al 2011; Johnson et al 2011; Cherniack and Cherniack 2014; Westgarth et al 2014) – but these indirect benefits are arguable secondary to the overarching inter-personal relationship of companionship.

The potential for pets to suffer due to our actions, and the natures of our relationships with them, raise questions about various issues. While it is impossible to have an exhaustive list of our interactions with such significant others in our lives, key aspects include pet choices; pet breeding; neutering; tail-docking; pets hunting; pet food; rehoming; euthanasia; disease control; and the use of live or dead pets in teaching or research (e.g. Morton 1992; Burgess-Jackson 1997; Boonin 2003; Jessup 2004; Palmer 2012, et al 2012; Moutou and Pastoret 2010; Hess et al 2011; Passantino et al 2010; Rumney 2011; Tiplady et al 2011; Yeates 2010, 2016, et al 2013).

There has also been some general ethical consideration of our actions and relationships in relation to pets (e.g. Borthwick 2009; Hens 2009; Cooke 2011; Rock and Degeling 2013; Beck and Katcher 1996; Sandøe et al 2015). However, the attention given to pets may be thought disproportionately modest in comparison to analysis of the use of animals for food or in laboratories,[i] or that of humans. As a useful indicator, a recent anthology on animal ethics (Beauchamp & Frey 2011) had a single chapter on pets (Bok 2011) compared to several on agricultural, biotechnical and research topics, and which had only three citations of discussions on pets within the bioethics literature, all of which were references to overarching animal ethics books (Francione 2000 and two chapters by Favre and Anderson in Sunstein & Nussbaum 2004). Similarly, the analysis of pet ethics relative to the work done on topics relating to humans, or to particular subsets is also disproportionately small, at least relative to the numbers of beings involved. As a useful litmus test, several "bioethics" journals (including "*Bioethics*") do not publish on pet ethics topics (pers. comm.). Given the popularity of pet keeping (including in some non-Western cultures), the importance of those pets to ourselves, and the potential for our actions to impact on those pets, there is a need for an increased focus on ethical concerns relating to pets and our interactions with them. The next question is how that focus should be directed.

Relationships to Other Fields of Bioethics

Animal ethics

Perhaps such a focus on companion animal ethics could be achieved within animal ethics. Animal ethics is a well-established field (see, e.g. Degrazia 1996; Garner 2005; Sandøe and Christiansen 2008). Pets are animals,[ii] and in some cases closely related to animals within farms or laboratories, and may suffer in similar (but not identical) ways. Some of the metaethical and fundamental normative questions about pet ethics reflect many of those considered within animal ethics more widely, such as what determines their moral status, and questions such as the value of "natural behaviour" or lifestyles. Indeed, several general books covering animal ethics have considered pets within that discussion (e.g. Rollin 1980; Regan 1983; Midgley 1983; Orlans et al 1998; Varner 2002; Taylor 2003; Garner 2005; Hills 2005; Sandøe and Christiansen 2008; Bok 2011; Gruen 2011).

However, pets also play very different roles in our lives to those of other animals: indeed people sometimes do not relate to them "as animals". Humans benefit from farm and research animals by eating them or their produce, wearing them or taking medicines derived from their use, whereas the main benefit of pet keeping is the human-animal relationships involved. Similarly, the direct responsibility on pet owners to look after their animal is different to how consumers and citizens have to rely on farmers and laboratory staff, putting systems in place to ensure that trust where necessary. Another difference is the number of animals involved in most interactions, particularly in large-scale farming, whereas most pet owners interact with individual or small groups of pets. As an example, discussions of other animals include suggestions that they are 'replaceable' (e.g. Singer 1979, 1980; Cave 1982; McMahan 2002),

but it is no surprise that pets are used in Lockwood's "Disposapup" thought experiment to question replaceability (Lockwood 1979). This thought experiment presents us with a scheme in which puppies are bred, kept for a while and then killed, to be replaced with another, new puppy – potentially eliciting responses that this is not an acceptable arrangement.

Our closeness to our pets is also not replicated for other animals: people may live in spatial proximity to urban wild animals and have a biological intimacy with animals they eat, but most people's relationships with (live) farm, research and wild animals are largely indirect. Pets play important roles in our lives as companions – indeed, the purpose of keeping "companion animals" is arguably, and tautologically, companionship. This relationship is one of proximity, privacy and intimacy. Pets share our environments (Toohey and Rock 2011), living in our homes and sometimes sleeping in our beds.[iii] They share our activities (Westgarth et al 2015), even accompanying us on walks and holidays. They lick our faces and hands, and share our food – and share with us a significant proportion of our microbiota (Song et al 2013). On the one hand, this can risk some spread of zoonotic (and reverse zoonotic) diseases (Damborg et al 2015); but on the other hand, it may make us less likely to develop allergies if they are present during pregnancy (Aichbhaumik et al 2008; Fujimura et al 2010; Havstad et al 2011) or early life (Wegienka et al 2011).

Our relationships with our pets are personal relationships with particular individual animals (Irvine 2003, 2007; Taylor 2007). Most pets are named (Harris 1983), owners are attached to them (Julius et al., 2013), and are concerned about their own animal's interests above others animals (Brockman et al 2008; Milligan 2009). When pets die, they are often mourned (Dresser. 2000; Kenney 2004), with one study suggesting that bereavement is experienced by about two in three owners and is severe in one in three (Adams et al 2000). The importance

of individual pets to individual owners is illustrated by cases such as Leona Helmsley, who disinherited 2 grandchildren, left 10 million dollars to her other 2 grandchildren and 12 million dollars to her dog Trouble. The rest of the money, many billions, went to a trust for "purposes related to the provision of care for dogs."' (Toobin 2008).

Companion animals may also benefit from human company, themselves, not only for food and basic vital provisions (as other captive animals do), but also an emotional dependency. For example, lack of human (or other) company for dogs can lead to signs of stress (Hubrecht 1993; Bradshaw et al 2002; Fallani et al 2007; Yeates 2012) with 'hyper-attached' dogs appearing especially stressed when separated from their usual carer (King et al 2000). Indeed, human and conspecific company may represent separate canine motivations (Rooney et al 2000; Odendaal & Meintjes 2003), of which human company may be the more important (Rooney & Bradshaw 2002). Completing the circle, this dependency can further affect our relationship with them. Pets may fulfill a human need to be needed, to nurture and to love. In fact it could be argued that some pet species have been bred, and some individuals have been raised, in order to illicit and fulfill this response. For example, dog breeds can exhibit neotony, where they have been bred to appear and act as juveniles throughout their lives (see Bradshaw 2011). Arguably our responsibilities to our pets are special because we have made them dependent on us (Palmer 2010).

Treating pets in the same way as animals in general therefore risks framing our discussions in ways that miss specific aspects of our relationships. Particular risks that we would highlight here are: (1) such an approach might overly focus on questions of legitimate exploitation of our property or as considering only their depersonalised, objective characteristics. These issues are important – as they are for ethical discussions on how we treat other humans – but

they may not be the most helpful focus for discussions about our relationships with our pets (or with one another). (2) Considering our effects on pets in the light of, or comparison to, our effects on other animals risks our dismissively subordinating of those issues, because they are seen as less severe or widespread as those facing farm or wild animals, or to our making a Panglossian assumption that, because we tend to think of pet owners as providing unconditional love compared to the profiteering commercialism of farming, our effects on them must be benign. Again, there is a valuable question to ask about whether keeping pets is simply another form of animal use – but this question should be an open one, for which our answer is not predetermined by the framing within animal ethics. (3) It risks ignoring the real value-driven relationships that we have with our pets, which we do not have with other animals: in particular our partiality and their emotional dependency. It risks failing to recognise the moral primacy (at least from the viewpoint of many owners) of those with whom we enjoy relationships of love and friendship. Rollin (2005) argues that ethics should recognise such partiality – using the Aristotelian term "philia" – which he associated predominantly (currently) with companion animals. Jose Parry (2011) also argues that our relationship with animals *should* involve a degree of sentimentality, which he explicitly cites as compatible with Rorty's views. (5) In practice, this risks alienating owners or undermining their personal relationships and activities with their pets. Pets appropriately occupy a different place to other animals; pet guardians take on different roles from stockmen. Again there may be value in comparing the relationships (if only, in some cases, to highlight that our relations with our pets are not always utopian), but this should be a comparative rather than a homogenising exercise that treats the different relations merely as variations on a theme.

Consideration of ethical questions relating to pets should learn from, and adapt, approaches from animal ethics. Indeed, concern about pets also raises issues relating to treatment of other animals, such as how those other animals are used to provide food or drugs for our pets (e.g. Rothgerber 2013), and an overarching framework for consideration may help to address these issues. However, companion animal ethics should not be simply taken as part of general animal ethics or simply follow its generic approaches: it would at least need specific differentiation and attention.

Family ethics

If pets do not fit entirely comfortably within the conventional animal ethics framework, can they be considered within conventional family ethics instead? Family ethics can be (arguably) dated back at least to at least century (Tufts 1916) and is also a significant field of academic enquiry (e.g. Scales et al 2010). There are various similarities between the contexts. Children, like animals, are vulnerable dependents, with varying degrees of autonomy, and who have historically sometimes been treated as property. Many of the characteristics of the human-animal relationship – which is direct, personal, private, altruistic and dependency-based – are reminiscent of the family relations (see Fudge 2008). Some people may consider their pets to be part of their families (Turner 2001) and, indeed, companion animals may have the most desired attributes of family members (Beck 1999). This relationship is epitomized in movements such as the modern ‘furry baby’ craze (Greenbaum 2004), in which pets are explicitly treated as if they were their owners’ (unusually hirsute) human offspring. Questions about pet ethics also reflect many of those considered within family ethics more widely, such as responsibilities to dependents’ (best) interests, reproductive technologies, proxy decision-making, organ donation, what partiality is legitimate and what is an ‘acceptable’ or ‘ideal’ family.

However, nonhuman pet animals and humans have different biological needs, developmental stages, learning processes and experiences. Some dialogues may equate cognitive abilities, such as the 'argument from mercy' for active human euthanasia or the efforts to demonstrate nonhuman linguistic abilities. But it seems implausible to consider the experiences of a cat as very similar to those of a juvenile adult human. Most dogs have a significantly improved sense of smell; cats and Syrian hamsters are largely asocial animals – their views of the world, needs and preferences are, in many ways, very different to ours. However similar to us as our pets are, they are not humans.

Another key – albeit contingent – difference is that pets are often considered as property. At one end of a pet's life, pets are deliberately bred and bought for owners' interests, and often bred to fulfil certain functions or having certain features. Many are deliberately bred to conform to cosmetic criteria (e.g. breed standards), even when this means they are bred to have genetic diseases (Bateson and Sargan 2012) – a kind of "malgenics". It might even be argued that pets are deliberately bred and bought with the expectation of being, or even in order to be, slavishly dependent and obedient (e.g. through breeding for behavioural dispositions) and then kept in a state of obedience (e.g. through habituation and training) and dependency (e.g. by preventing them hunting, scavenging, grazing, flying or socialising).[iv] Some are so emotionally dependent that they suffer from anxiety or other aversive affective states when separated from their owners (evinced by a suite of responses more broadly termed "separation-related behaviour"). Ironically and tragically, such issues can be labelled as "misbehaviour" and can affect owners' level of attachment to those animals (Hoffman et al 2013; Curb et al 2013; Meyer et al 2015). While this status as property can be ethically questioned (e.g. Francione 2012), it remains a contingent, hegemonic aspect of most current

human-pet relationships. The power-dynamic in our relations with our pets makes them very different (hopefully) from the reason many parents have children. Pets appropriately occupy a different place to human family members; guardians take on different roles from parents.

These considerations suggest that while pethics might useful employ concepts and methods from family ethics, these need to be adapted to take into account relevant (but not irrelevant) human-animal differences and human-animal relationships. Simply incorporating companion animal ethics into family ethics (at least as currently framed) would not work. Particular risks are worth highlighting (1) Considering pets as humans can risk errors of 'ethical anthropomorphism', which fail to take into account the specific natures of the animals. There can well be a value in some critical anthropomorphism, recognising relevant similarities as shared capacities and needs. But treating them as undifferentiated family members risks uncritically failing to recognise their special otherness, and adapting our behaviour accordingly. (2) There is a risk that our ethical discussions **become inconsistent** in **their** treatment of pets in ways similar to "persons" but without the characteristics normally stipulated as necessary or sufficient conditions for "personhood". Broader reflections within or alongside family ethics could perhaps lead to different conclusions about the attribution of personhood to companion nonhuman animals, for example if there were an increased focus on extrinsic (e.g. social or relational) aspects of personhood, rather than simply intrinsic properties of an animal (e.g. their psychological connectedness or self-consciousness). But, such conversations need to be explicit, rather than assume that pets are persons in identical ways to human persons. (3) Ignoring concepts such as property risks any conclusions being in tension to the reality of owners' relationships with their pets. For example, treating a dangerous dog like a dangerous child could risk legal sanctions. Such tensions may be

because those realities are ethically inappropriate, but they still need to be taken into account in our discussions.

Healthcare ethics

It is also worth considering whether the specific subset of companion animal ethical issues relating to their health might be considered within healthcare ethics. Academic 'bioethics' arguably began as human-focused medical ethics to solve practical problems in medicine (see Peck 1974; Jonsen 1988) and address dissatisfactions with traditional ethical theory in the face of new biomedical developments (Bryant et al 2005). There are similarities between human and companion animal healthcare. Veterinarians face difficulties regarding clinical decision-making, treatment choices, assessing interests, authority to treat and controlling of infectious diseases within populations; and use concepts such as life expectancy, (health-related) "quality of life" and valid consent. In many ways, a pet's predicament is in some ways similar to that of a young incompetent child or infant, and owners could be considered as animals' "guardians" able to provide proxy consent (Yeates & Main 2009). Indeed, there has been some consideration of veterinary ethics topics have been discussed, often drawing on concepts and approaches from medical ethics (e.g. Tannenbaum year; LeGood 2000; Rollin 2006; Wathes et al 2013; Yeates 2013). Particular examples include analyses of the treatment of bladder stones; cancer; terminal care and the acceptability of significant expenditure on pets' health care relative to humans or other animals (e.g. Ogilvie 2008; Hadley and O'Sullivan 2009; Osborne et al 2009; Yeates 2009, 2010; Akashi 2011; Rollin 2011; Shearer 2011).

However, there are specific differences that suggest predominant approaches to human medical decision-making are not easily applied to veterinary work for several reasons

(Dickinson et al 2010). As one example, the differences already noted between humans and animals may mean that the treatment options that human patients often prefer may not be appropriate for companion animals, who may lack long-term hopes that would make extending life a benefit (e.g. to see the next Christmas), different understandings of medical treatment (e.g. hospitalisation may seem like involuntary confinement rather than a choice made by the patient) or the ability to conceptualise medical treatment as a coping mechanism (e.g. seeing "the light at the end" of the tunnel during chemotherapy). They may therefore fare very differently during treatment, with different distributions of risks and benefits to those commonly assumed or stated in human medicine. Indeed, the patient-centred values used to determine treatment choices may be employed in very different ways in veterinary and human medicine (eg "quality of life": Mcmillan 2003; Yeates and Main 2011).

As another central example, pet patients are unable to make meaningful, informed decisions about the provision or withdrawal of life-saving treatments (see Cigman 1980, 1989; Regan 1983; Singer 1979): pets can neither consider medical treatment nor give valid consent (Rollin 2006). In this capacity, owners may be asked to give consent. However, owners' roles as proxy decision-makers for animals are different to those for a fellow human, whom they do not "own". The issue of ownership has implications for practices such as gaining valid consent that, while superficially similar to those practiced in human healthcare (in particular paediatric medicine), could be argued to have very different basis – to whit, an owners' right to determine what happens to their property (i.e. the animal), rather than their ability to act as a surrogate in the decision-making processes concerning another being who fundamentally has the same rights (i.e. a child). As a concrete, contingent difference, human proxies are not usually considered to have any right to make decisions about active euthanasia of humans, whereas this may be considered acceptable for pets within academic discussions (Regan

1983; Yeates 2010; Rollin 2006) and in practice (Sanders 1995; De Graaf 2005; Yeates & Main 2011).

Veterinary ethics should draw upon (human) medical ethics, as a far more developed field. However, companion animal veterinary ethics cannot be easily incorporated into healthcare ethics, at least as currently framed, without explicit consideration of these differences. There are several key risks to companion animal veterinary ethics simply mirroring or applying more general healthcare ethics. (1) There is a risk of erroneous assumptions, e.g. the basis for consent or the benefits of treatment, which could lead to tensions in the final applications to practice (e.g. requiring owner consent in the same way as requiring human patient consent when owners are not focused on what is best for the animal but what is best for them as property owners). (2) There are risks that such analyses forget the complexities or real-life veterinary practice. Whether or not we approve, vets arguably have to consider both pets and owners (Knight 1983; Tannenbaum 1995; Arkow 1998; Rollin 2006; Main 2011; Yeates 2009). That is a three-way tension that needs analysis, discussion and resolution – and it is one that does not occur (at least not in the same way) for human medicine.

On What Should "Pethics" Focus?

These considerations suggest that companion animal ethics has significant potential commonality of topics or approaches with animal ethics, family ethics and healthcare ethics. However, it is not simply a subsection of any one in particular. It is the overlap between these areas. This characterisation affords some suggestions to help us what such a field would address and how.

Firstly, it should consider key issues of importance for pets and their guardians, relating both to the latter's actions (and their effects) and to their relationships. This should, no doubt, focus on questions such as the suitability of particular species, methods of breeding and trade, "husbandry" methods etc – this list is by no means exhaustive (see, for example, the chapter titles in Sandøe et al (2015). Secondly, it should consider the concepts relating to human-animal relationships, for example what does "consent" mean in veterinary practice; and what powers might "guardians" exercise over their animals; is ownership the best relationship for both parties?

Thirdly, it should consider relevant human-animal differences *within* the context of a family of human and nonhuman members. Indeed, it should involve some explicit comparative ethics – considering our ethical treatment of different pet versus non-pet animals (which do not always fit across species divides: a rabbit may be a pet, a wild pest, a zoo exhibit, a laboratory subject or a meal), and between humans and animals. Such work may be able to provide bridging concepts between "human-centred" and animal ethics, or help to isolate particular ethical concepts through thought experiments comparing pets and other animals or family-members.

Conclusions

There is an increasing body of work addressing ethical questions regarding pets. This work needs to be brought together with an appropriate focus and connectedness. Pets are nonhuman animals within our families, whose place in our ethical landscape should be reflected in our ethical approach to pet keeping issues. We do not relate to our pets either as 'near humans' nor as 'mere animals'. They are both, and they are neither. Human-pet relationships are different to all other types of relationship, and pethics has features – or at

least a combination of features - that are different from those addressed by current mainstream fields of bioethics. As such they require a tailored ethical approach, which we might, pithily, call ‘pethics’.

There is a danger of needlessly creating new fields (Ashcroft 2010) and there is no need to define pethics as a new “field”. Rather, it can be considered as the overlap between the established fields of animal, family and healthcare ethics. This suggests that these three fields should ensure that they are able to incorporate such an overlap with their scope of academic investigation (e.g. for journals to include pet ethics). More importantly, it may help us to work on the important ethical questions in this under-exlpored area of human activity and interconnectedness.

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[i] This paper will not consider companion animals that are also kept as utility animals (e.g. assistance dogs or as assisted therapy – see, eg Zamir 2006) or farmed (e.g. dogs farmed for meat in some countries) or the use of ex-pets in research or population control of unowned animals, although these topics may be related contingently and conceptually.
. Nor will it consider animals farmed in domestic smallholdings or "hobby farms" (see, e.g. Holloway 2001).

[ii] Pets are a subset of the set of nonhuman animals (ignoring the possibility that we are someone's pets). This subset is not biologically defined, insofar as 'companion animals' is not a category that maps onto any biological clade. While many are within mammalia, squamata and the paraphyletic group of fish (particularly Actinopterygii), pets can come from all animal groups, including amphibians and invertebrates.

[iii] This paper does not explicitly consider inter-specific sexual acts, which constitute another range of human-pet relationships that requires norms and laws

[iv] As recent editorials in the Journal of Bioethical Inquiry note:
'Pets are at once "persons" to the humans with whom they share lasting, intimate, and emotionally involved relationships and "things" typified in urban policy, legislation, and common law as the private property of human owners' (Rob Irvine et al 2013, at 438)
and
"We could ask...why pets are thought of in some situations as "family members" but in others as "objects of ownership." (Ashby and Rich, 2013, at 430-431].