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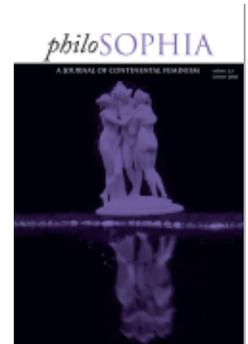
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## From Animal Father to Animal Mother: A Freudian Account of Animal Maternal Ethics

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# From Animal Father to Animal Mother

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## A Freudian Account of Animal Maternal Ethics

ALISON SUEN

IN THIS PAPER, I investigate Freud's study of infantile zoophobias. According to Freud, in nearly all cases of infantile animal phobias, the feared animal functions as a father figure. The feared animal takes on the prohibitive role as the father substitute. The substitutability of the animal and the father is crucial for Freud, as it anchors his theory regarding the familial, social, and religious structure of a patriarchal society. In light of this standard animal-father substitution, Freud's biography of Leonardo da Vinci stands out as a provocative exception. In this psychoanalytic biography, Freud examines da Vinci's relationship with a vulture—only here the vulture is an androgynous creature that serves as a *mother* substitute. More significantly, unlike other accounts of infantile zoophobia, the vulture has an empowering rather than crippling effect on the infant da Vinci. With the story of the androgynous vulture, I argue that Freud's interpretation of da Vinci opens up a new way to understand our relationships with animals—a way that not even Freud himself anticipated. In short, I analyze the significance of this deviant case of animal obsession in Freud's corpus and its ramifications for reconceiving the human-animal relationship.

### FREUD AND ANIMAL FATHERS

Freud's most extensive discussion of animals is found in his writings on infantile zoophobia. It seems uncontroversial—at least according to Freud—that the feared animals are always father substitutes. In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud makes

a rather wholesale claim regarding this substitution: “It was the same in every case: where the children concerned were boys, their fear related at bottom to their father and had merely been displaced on to the animal” (1913, 127–28). Indeed, it does seem to be *the same in every case*: Little Hans displaces his fear of his father onto horses and the Wolfman onto wolves, while Little Árpád, who is afraid of poultry, proclaims unambiguously, “My father’s the cock” (1913, 130). But how exactly does the animal come to represent the father?

In “Inhibitions, Symptoms, and Anxiety,” Freud argues that the fear of animals comes down to the castration complex, as analysis reveals that the phobic little boys are *specifically* afraid of having their penises bitten off by the animal (or otherwise being devoured by the animal). The anxiety of having their genitals bitten off by the animal is, according to Freud, a “distortion [of] the idea of being castrated by their father” (1926, 108). As we know, for Freud the fear of castration is developmentally important for a boy’s life. It is by the threat of castration that the boy learns to relinquish his illicit desire to be with his mother. Now, given that the castration threat is actually part of a positive Oedipal experience, the fear *alone* does not count as neurotic. For Freud, the neurosis lies in the *substitution* of the father for the animal (1926, 103). This substitution has two advantages: first, the phobia can resolve the boy’s ambivalent feelings toward his father; that is, he no longer love-hates his father, for the hatred is transferred to the animal (1926, 125). Second, the phobia makes the threat of castration *conditional*. While the boy cannot avoid seeing his father (who presents the threat of castration initially), he can avoid seeing the horse by refusing to go on the street (in the case of little Hans) or by refusing to read a storybook (in the case of the Wolfman) (1926, 125–26).

Given Freud’s account of animal phobias, the animal takes the place of the father and turns into a punitive figure that threatens to castrate the little boy. Indeed, the prohibitive character of the animal is also evident in Freud’s account of the primal horde in *Totem and Taboo*. The totem animal replaces the primal father and becomes the prohibitive figure that institutes the two taboos in totemism: incest and murder. In her essay “Being Human: Bestiality, Anthropophagy, and Law,” Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks helpfully exposes the connection between the animal and the law by articulating their intertwined origins. She argues that species difference (human/animal) and the law are concurrently inaugurated when the brothers commit the patricidal deed:

The newly instituted concept of murder organizes acts of killing according to the object: those that can be killed (sanctioned slaughter) and those that cannot be killed (murder). The former group is comprised of the animal, in its difference from the human, as food or as sacrificial object. (2003, 103)

In other words, at the heart of the law against murder we find the difference between humans and animals. The law against murder (or more precisely, the *concept* of murder) is predicated on species difference—only the killing of *humans* counts as murder. The killing of animals is, as it were, merely killing. In the time before the law there was no murder, and in the time before species difference there were neither humans nor animals. Human subjectivity is acquired in our differentiation from the animal, and this differentiation is precisely what informs us of what can be killed and what cannot be killed—that is, what counts as murder and what counts as killing. But insofar as the prohibition against murder (together with the prohibition against incest) is the beginning of all prohibitions, the beginning of all laws, the totem animal is, right from the beginning, the guarantor of the paternal law.

### PROHIBITIONS AND ANIMAL RIGHTS DISCOURSE

Given the Freudian understanding of the animal as the prohibitive paternal figure, it is particularly ironic that mainstream discourse on animal rights is imbued with the language of prohibition. In his essay “The Case for Animal Rights,” Tom Regan begins his argument by presenting the three main goals of the animal rights movement as follows: “The total abolition of the use of animals in science,” “the total dissolution of commercial animal agriculture,” and “the total elimination of commercial and sport hunting and trapping” (1985, 13).

Collectively, these goals underscore the inviolability of animal lives, and the inviolability of animal lives is motivated by Regan’s deontological commitment to respect all creatures with inherent value (1985, 22ff.). Commentators have extensively criticized Regan’s position, for reasons ranging from its uncritical appeal to Enlightenment ideals to the problematic notion of inherent value.<sup>1</sup> I will not rehearse their criticisms here. Rather, I want to draw attention to the way Regan articulates his vision of the animal rights movement. Regan expresses these goals in exclusively negative terms—he calls for the “abolition,” “dissolution,” and “elimination” of various practices.

What does the negative prescription suggest? Why frame the goals of the animal rights movement in terms of what we are not allowed to do to animals? Surely, it highlights the objectionable character of animal exploitation, and the importance of halting such exploitative practices. However, Regan’s negative prescription also defines the goals of the animal rights movement in terms of *prohibition* exclusively—all three goals have to do with what we need to *stop doing* to animals. The negative phrasing of his goals betrays an important limitation in Regan’s vision: although it aims to radically revamp our treatment of animals, it remains reactionary insofar as it does not go beyond the negation of the status quo. That is, while Regan’s vision offers a prescription of do-no-harm, it does not articulate how humans and animals may cross their lives in

any meaningful ways. And oddly enough, by framing his vision of animal rights in the language of what-we-ought-not-do, Regan has summoned the animal as the figure of prohibition. The psychoanalytic story wherein the animal serves as the guarantor of the law finds a strange reincarnation in Regan's discourse on animal rights. As such, in his effort to plead for the animal, Regan has appealed to the institution of law, an institution whose very origin invokes the figure of the animal as the prohibitive, fearful father.

It is not by chance that the prohibitive, fearful animal-father is invoked in discourse on animal rights. In *The Beast and the Sovereign*, Jacques Derrida helpfully articulates the significance of fear in relation to the law and the sovereign; he calls this fear "the political passion par excellence." The discussion of fear is brought up in the context of terrorism. Specifically, Derrida exposes the "terror" that is operative in the state (or the sovereign) in order to challenge the oppositions between terrorists and the state, antistate terror and state terror (2009, 39). He first reminds us that the name *terrorism* came from "the Terror of the French Revolution, of a Revolution that was also at the origin of all the universal declarations of human rights" (2009, 39). In other words, the origin of human rights—the rights after which Regan models his animal rights—is intertwined with fear and terror. Derrida then points out that in Hobbes's *Leviathan*, individuals are motivated to obey the law *out of fear*. The law is instituted out of fear (of losing one's life), and the law is sustained out of fear (of punishment).<sup>2</sup> Fear is that which sustains the power of the sovereign, insofar as the Leviathan (the "animal-machine") is "run on fear and reigns by fear" (2009, 40).

Importantly, protection is promised as long as individuals submit themselves to the sovereign/the law. Derrida points out that protection has also become a form of subjugation: "I protect you' means, for the state, I oblige you, you are my subject, *I subject you*. Being the subject of one's fear and being the subject of the law or the state . . . are at bottom the same thing" (2009, 43; emphasis added). As such, protection is always an exchange, a bargain; it is offered only to subjects who subject themselves to the law and the sovereign (and to their own fear).

That "protection" serves as a machine of subjugation is especially significant when we consider the language of "animal protection" that pervades the discourse on animal rights. What are we asking in exchange when we offer animals "protection"? In what way have we *subjected* animals by offering them our protection? Consider, for example, the "peacock bill" (SB 1533) that has recently been passed in Hawaii.<sup>3</sup> This bill was introduced in response to a brutal peacock killing that took place in 2009. A Hawaiian resident killed an "annoying" peacock with a baseball bat, and was subsequently acquitted after her lawyer convinced the jury that the peacock was a "pest." ("Pests" are normally excluded from anti-cruelty protection.) While an early version of the bill clarifies that peacocks are not pests, the final version of the bill merely states that the killing of a pest should be "handled in accordance with standard

and acceptable pest control practices and all applicable laws and regulations” (Otto, 2011). As Stephen Otto puts it, “an annoying peacock could still arguably be considered a ‘pest,’ however anyone considering killing this ‘pest’ would not be able to use a baseball bat in doing so” (2011). Although the “peacock bill” aims at extending protection to pests from unnecessary pain and suffering, it actually affirms that “annoying” peacocks can be punished by death. By “protecting” peacocks from death-by-baseball-bat, the “peacock bill” becomes a means to regulate the death of pests. As such, this bill reinscribes our sovereignty over animals by subjecting their life and death to our jurisdiction.

Let us return to fear and the discourse of rights. Given the centrality of fear and terror to sovereign power, it should not surprise us that Regan articulates his goals in terms of prohibition, and that the name *abolitionism* becomes common parlance within the animal rights debate. The abolitionist approach forms a great alliance with the legal discourse that pervades the literature. After all, punitive measures do discourage exploitative practices that the abolitionists seek to tear apart. However, the language of prohibition also simplifies the ethical question at stake. Specifically, thinking of animal ethics in terms of what we can (and cannot) do to animals translates the vague notion of “human-animal relationship” into *legal* terms. Instead of interrogating the human-animal boundary, we now ask: How should we enforce anti-cruelty laws? Can animals sue? Can humans sue on behalf of an animal? As such, the language of prohibition goes hand in hand with the emphasis on animal law in current discourses on animal ethics. Mainstream animal advocacy often revolves around the legal status of animals—do they have rights? Are they persons or property? In fact, questions regarding the *moral* status of animals are often used in service of the *legal* status of animals.

Nonetheless, is prohibition a sufficient or even a necessary condition to motivate a promising human-animal relation? Can we have an animal ethics based solely—or even primarily—on prohibition? As I will show, to think beyond the language of prohibition means to think beyond lawmaking and the extension of rights, and to see that the regulation of behavior need not be punitive.

## FREUD AND DA VINCI’S ANIMAL

Given what we have seen so far, Freud may seem to be an unlikely resource in considering an animal ethics beyond prohibition. After all, animals in Freud’s work are often linked to the punitive father. In Freud’s account of the primal horde, the animal-father substitution plays a crucial role in anchoring the familial, social, and religious structure of a patriarchal society. The totem animal has to be the father and not the mother. In fact, the rigid substitution between the father and the animal sometimes comes at the expense of the mother. Throughout Freud’s account of the totemic origin, the significance of

the maternal figure is repeatedly dismissed. For example, matriarchal society is mentioned merely in passing, as Freud speculates that both homosexuality and matriarchal institution might be originated during the in-between time after the brothers' expulsion from the horde and before the murder of the father (1913, 144). When it comes to mother-goddesses, Freud acknowledges that his account of religion fails to take them into consideration, but he quickly moves on to discuss the role of the father-gods, leaving this wrinkle of his theory untouched (1913, 149).

But this animal-father substitution is perhaps not as certain as Freud would have it. In her essay on Little Hans, Anna Ornstein argues that it is not entirely obvious that Little Hans was afraid of his father rather than his mother, even though "Freud obviously maintained a deep conviction that a horse could only represent a male and, if the child was afraid, he could only be afraid of his father, not his mother" (1993, 95). As Ornstein points out, Freud insists on the animal-father substitution even when:

Hans called the coal-carts and furniture vans the horses were pulling the "stork-box carts," which were obvious references to his pregnant mother . . . or when Hans related his fear of the horse making a row and screaming to his sister's screaming "when Mummy whacks her on her bottom and she makes such a row with her screaming." (Ornstein 1993, 95-96).

Interestingly, Little Hans also drew a parallel between beating a horse and beating his mother. After Little Hans told the story of him (Little Hans) beating a horse in Gmunden,<sup>4</sup> his father asked him, "Which would you really like to beat? Mummy, Hanna, or me?" (What a *loaded* question!) And Little Hans immediately declared that he would like to beat his mother—with a "carpet beater" (1909a, 81).<sup>5</sup> More importantly, it was the mother who made the castration threat: when Little Hans was caught playing with his penis, Little Hans's mother said to him, "If you do that, I shall send for Dr. A. to cut off your widdler. And then what'll you widdle with?" (1909a, 8). (To which Little Hans replied, "With my bottom" [1909a, 8].) Given these remarks, it seems that Little Hans's mother also served as a prohibitive figure, which complicates Freud's claim that the feared animal must be a father substitute *in every case*.

It is also noteworthy that Freud's first case of animal phobia actually concerns a forty-year-old *woman*, Frau Emmy von N. (1893, see "Case Histories: 2"). While Frau Emmy's case offers many points of comparison, Freud systematically fails to make reference to her case in his examinations of infantile animal phobias (all of them come *after* the Frau Emmy case). First, Frau Emmy had an animal hallucination that seemed to be inspired by a storybook. Freud should have made a connection in his diagnosis of the Wolfman dream, given that he insists that the Wolfman's dream came from a fairy tale. Second, Frau Emmy's

hallucinations often involved mice or rats, but Freud makes no mention of her hallucinations in the Ratman case. Third, one of Frau Emmy's symptoms involved making a "clacking" sound that Freud refers to as a "*tic*," a sound that "resembled the call of a capercaillie" (1893, 49n1). This comment is strikingly similar to the way Freud describes Little Árpád's speech inhibition, that he "abandoned human speech in favor of cackling and crowing" (1913, 130). In both cases, the animal phobics had their human speech interrupted by the voice of an animal, but Freud seems completely oblivious to this similarity when he discusses Little Árpád's case. Finally, at one point Frau Emmy told Freud, "A whole lot of mice were sitting in the trees"—a hallucination that parallels the Wolfman's dream of the wolves sitting on a big walnut tree. Again, Freud draws no comparison to Frau Emmy's case in his analysis. Of course, at the time of her treatment Frau Emmy was no longer a child, so her animal phobia could not really count as an instance of infantile zoophobia. But how did her story get obliterated to the point of never being mentioned or referenced in Freud's analysis of animal phobias? Perhaps Freud neglected his case study of Frau Emmy for the same reason he disregarded some of the crucial claims made by Little Hans: the animal must take the place of the father and stand as a figure that issues the castration threat.

It is against the backdrop of this seemingly rigid link between the animal and the father that I turn to Freud's *Leonardo Da Vinci and A Memory of His Childhood* (1910). Many pages of this psychoanalytic biography are devoted to a dream that da Vinci had as a child, a dream where da Vinci is visited by a vulture. Interestingly, Freud tells us that the vulture is a hermaphroditic creature: it has a female body while possessing a phallus. The ambiguity of the vulture's sex is suggestive, especially in light of the link between the animal and the father that we see in cases of infantile zoophobias and the story of the primal horde. But what does the vulture substitute in da Vinci's case? What is the relationship between da Vinci and his animal? This ambiguous hermaphrodite opens up a place for us to reconsider, to challenge even, the link between the animal and the father.

### DA VINCI AND THE "KISSING VULTURE"

Da Vinci's memory of the vulture's visit, which Freud quotes from a German translation<sup>6</sup> of Scognamiglio's transcription of *Codex Atlanticus*, which was then translated by Alan Tyson, is as follows,

It seems that I was always destined to be so deeply concerned with vultures; for I recall as one of my very earliest memories that while I was in my cradle a vulture came down to me, and opened my mouth with its tail, and struck me many times with its tail against my lips. (1910, 82)

James Strachey, the editor of the *Standard Edition*, points out in the preface that there is a significant inaccuracy in the German translation that Freud references. Namely, the Italian word *nibbio* should be translated as “kite,” not “vulture” (1910, 60–61). While Strachey attributes this point to Irma Richter (“Editor’s Note,” 61n1), this mistake in translation was discovered as early as 1923 by art historian Eric Maclagan, and Freud apparently never publicly acknowledged the mistake (Anderson 2001, 10–11). As we will soon see, Freud specifically invokes the *vulture*-goddess in Egyptian mythology in order to ground his interpretation of da Vinci, so the mistake in translation seems costly. Since Maclagan’s discovery, critics of Freud have dutifully noted this mistranslation in their commentaries on the da Vinci case: some merely mention it in passing, some see it as detrimental to his analysis of da Vinci, and some go so far as to suggest that this mistake is indicative of Freud’s shady scholarship.<sup>7</sup> In 2001, art historian Wayne Anderson published *Freud, Leonardo da Vinci, and the Vulture*, a painstakingly researched monograph that disabuses many misunderstandings surrounding the translation debate.<sup>8</sup> Given the purpose of this essay, I will not go into the intricacies of Anderson’s argument. And given that I am primarily interested in the way *Freud* (rather than da Vinci) uses the animal in his work, the specific species of the bird is inconsequential. However, this translation debate reminds us that Freud’s analysis of da Vinci is subject to the precariousness of translation, that is, the precariousness of substitution. It serves as a reminder of the significance of—and the risks associated with—the economy of translation/substitution in discourses on animal ethics.

As noted, the ambiguity of the vulture’s sex makes da Vinci’s case exceptional, insofar as it departs from the norm of substitution that Freud prescribes for a patriarchal culture. Despite its hermaphroditic features, Freud insists that the vulture is a *mother*-substitute for da Vinci (1910, 88). First of all, Freud points out the phonetic similarity between the name of an ancient Egyptian goddess *Mut* (who has a vulture head) and the word *Mutter*, the German word for mother (1910, 88). But the vulture has been associated with motherhood primarily because the vulture was believed to be an exclusively female species, a species that propagates by being impregnated by the wind (1910, 89). For Freud, da Vinci’s identification as the “vulture-child” is indicative of his father’s absence—he was, like the vulture, a child without a father (1910, 90).

According to Freud, while *Mut* was characterized as a mother-goddess, the Egyptians usually represented it as an androgynous figure (1910, 94). The maternal figure was equipped with paternal potency—an erect phallus (1910, 94). The androgynous feature of the Egyptian goddess also supports Freud’s claim that the tail of the vulture in da Vinci’s dream signifies a phallus (1910, 85, 97). The vulture is at once a mother substitute and a phallic power. But this androgynous goddess is as puzzling as it is fascinating: How is it

possible that a mother-goddess is equipped with an erect phallus, “a mark of male potency which is the opposite of everything maternal” (1910, 94)?

To resolve this apparent contradiction, Freud turns to the children. He argues that before a male child comes to a full understanding of the threat of castration, he undergoes a phase where the phallus is compatible with the maternal figure. In fact, the child should have no reason to assume that the mother’s body is different from his own; so his mother, like him, should have a penis. It is the discovery that the mother does not have a penis that makes the castration threat real. Importantly, this discovery invokes “a feeling of disgust . . . [which] can become the cause of physical impotence, misogyny and permanent homosexuality” (1910, 96). Freud calls the time before this discovery “a time when [the male child] still holds women at full value,” that is, a time before the hierarchy of gender is inaugurated (1910, 96). Interestingly, gender egalitarianism is not the only kind of egalitarianism that a child seems to take for granted.<sup>9</sup> In different writings Freud has also commented on a sort of human-animal egalitarianism that he finds in children. In *Totem and Taboo*, for example, Freud points out that the human-animal hierarchy is not assumed by children:

Children show no trace of the arrogance which urges adult civilized men to draw a hard-and-fast line between their own nature and that of all other animals. Children have no scruples over allowing animals to rank as their full equals. Uninhibited as they are in the avowal of their bodily needs, they no doubt feel themselves more akin to animals than to their elders, who may well be a puzzle to them. (1913, 126–27)

Elsewhere, Freud makes a similar observation:

Such a displacement [in this case the displacement of the father by a horse] is made possible or facilitated at “Little Hans’s” early age because the inborn traces of totemic thought can still be easily revived. Children do not as yet recognize or, at any rate, lay such exaggerated stress upon the gulf that separates human beings from the animal world. (1926, 103)

Is the parallel between gender egalitarianism and species egalitarianism in children a mere coincidence? Do children “discover” that women are not of the same “full value” as men at the same time they distinguish themselves from animals?<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, the kind of egalitarianism that a child purportedly takes for granted seems to be motivated by his narcissism. A child holds his mother “at full value” based on the assumption that *like him*, the mother also has a penis. And in the case of species egalitarianism, the child ranks animals as his equal by virtue of their *likeness* in the “avowal of their bodily needs.” Ironically, this egalitarianism based on sameness is often replicated in

contemporary literature on animal ethics. In their effort to extend membership of the moral community to animals, philosophers often identify morally relevant qualities that are *shared* by both humans and animals to make their case, such as the capacity to feel pain (*à la* Singer) or being an experiencing subject of a life (*à la* Regan). But grounding animal rights on the notion of sameness can be problematic. As Kelly Oliver puts it, “Just as feminists ask why women have to be like men in order to be equal, we can ask why animals have to be like us to have inherent value” (2009, 30). In “Of Mice and Men,” Catherine MacKinnon also reminds us that “seeking animal rights on a ‘like-us’ model of sameness is misconceived” because we “miss animals on their own terms” (2004, 264). Indeed, we may even say that an animal ethics grounded in the model of sameness is also narcissistic; and once again we see a strange parallel between Freud’s account of animality and mainstream animal rights rhetoric.

In light of the connection between gender and species egalitarianisms, it is telling that Freud also seems to relegate empathy for animals to the feminine. For example, he insists that da Vinci’s compassionate acts for animals—declining meat, buying birds from the market in order to set them free—are motivated by the “feminine delicacy of feeling” (1910, 69).<sup>11</sup> Specifically, Freud argues that da Vinci’s mother’s “tender seductions” were responsible for the intensity of his infantile sexual researches; and the violent, sadistic traits associated with infantile sexual researches were manifested in an opposite direction as an “exaggerated sympathy for animals” (1910, 132). In other words, da Vinci’s empathy for animals is symptomatic of a lack of paternal authority. While Freud insists that animals are father substitutes, his interpretation of empathy for animals reflects the age-old association of the animal and the feminine. Specifically, empathy for animals is often viewed as some emotional excess that women—because they are less rational—are prone to suffer.<sup>12</sup>

In Freud’s case studies, the relationship between the child and the animal is often ambivalent (hence replicating the love-hate feeling a child has toward his father). Nonetheless, because the animal stands for paternal authority, the ambivalent feeling invariably involves fear: the Ratman is traumatized by the rat-punishment (a punishment which involved putting rats into one’s anus);<sup>13</sup> the Wolfman is afraid of being devoured by wolves; and for little Árpád the fowl represents a constant threat of castration. In da Vinci’s case, however, the vulture does not present any obvious threat, and there is no evidence that da Vinci was vulture-phobic in Freud’s account. Indeed, throughout his analysis Freud describes da Vinci’s obsession with the animal as “vulture phantasy” instead of “vulture-phobia.” But if da Vinci’s story is not a case of animal phobia, what does it tell us? How might it transform the way we conceive of animality? Let us turn to da Vinci’s dream once more.

Recall that in his dream da Vinci was struck by the vulture repeatedly. The striking of the vulture may seem violent at first glance.<sup>14</sup> But Freud offers two

interpretations for this scene, both of which make it difficult for us to read physical violence into it. He first interprets the striking of the mouth as “an act of *fellatio*” (1910, 86), but later translates this same scene as a mother pressing “innumerable passionate kisses on [da Vinci’s] mouth” (1910, 107). While both readings make explicit the sexual undertones of the dream, neither presents the vulture as menacing (if anything, the vulture seems very affectionate). Also, unlike other case studies of infantile zoophobia, the threat of castration is not mentioned. Both interpretations seem to suggest that the vulture is an object of fantasy instead of an object of fear.<sup>15</sup>

For Freud, the tenderness of the mother is damaging. “The violence of caresses,” as Freud calls it, is insidious insofar as it has “robbed [da Vinci] of a part of his masculinity” (1910, 115–17). (Da Vinci’s supposed sexual abstinence is yet a form of castration.) But what exactly is this masculinity of which he was robbed? As far as Freud sees it, it all comes down to da Vinci’s alleged inability to pursue heterosexual relations. What the two interpretations share in common is the implication that da Vinci was a homosexual: When Freud first interprets the dream as a fantasy for *fellatio*, he finds it “strange” that the fantasy is “so completely passive in character” and that “it resembles certain dreams and phantasies found in women or passive homosexuals” (1910, 86). Moreover, in the biography Freud explicitly draws a connection between homosexuality and maternal influence—one becomes a homosexual through one’s erotic relation with the mother (see 1910, 98–100). In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud even speculates (albeit merely in passing) that homosexuality and matriarchal society share a common origin (1913, 144). Hence, even though the vulture did not threaten to castrate da Vinci, it mutilated da Vinci’s manhood.

Freud’s view of violence, of course, presupposes the norm of heterosexuality prescribed by patriarchy, and a rereading of the dream will call for resistance to this particular notion of violence. Indeed, if one is willing to rethink the hierarchy of masculinity and femininity, perhaps the kisses of the vulture-mother can be enabling rather than crippling.

It is significant that Freud identifies maternal influence as the cause of homosexuality. Recall that Freud also holds maternal influence responsible for da Vinci’s “exaggerated sympathy for animals” (1910, 132). It is not a coincidence that the mother is the culprit for both homosexuality and empathy for animals. For Freud, maternal influence supposedly erodes masculinity, and homosexuality and vegetarianism are often viewed as signs of defective masculinity. Outside of the psychoanalytic tradition, feminist thinkers such as Carol Adams and Marti Kheel have called attention to the relationship between meat eating and masculinity (Adams 1990; Kheel 2004). They argue that the consumption of animals is bound up with the consumption of women; hence, when a man refuses to consume meat, it is suspected that he may refuse to “consume” women as well. In her study on gender disparity in the animal rights movement, sociologist

Emily Gaarder points out that “some male activists experienced ridicule relating to their masculinity and sexuality. One man described how hunters called him an ‘animal rights queer’ during a protest against hunting” (2011, 107).<sup>16</sup>

It seems that patriarchy (whose origin is grounded in the logic of the animal-father substitution) has prescribed a specific norm governing our relationship with animals, a norm that replicates the father-son relationship in the myth of the band of brothers. Just as the brothers in the myth see the father as their rival, we define ourselves *in opposition* to the animal; just as the band of brothers commemorate their “triumph over the father” by instituting the totemic meal, we affirm our superiority with a full-scale exploitation of animals, an exploitation that is repetitive and expansive. And just as over time the “savages” forgot the origin and significance of the totemic meal, our exploitation of animals has also become a mindless and institutionalized repetition. As such, the norm governing our relationship with animals in a patriarchal society replicates the father-son dynamic that grounded the paternal law. Accordingly, a deviant model of the human-animal relation (one that is based on compassion instead of fear, for example) is often relegated to the maternal in order to preserve the integrity of the patriarchal norm.

In what ways do animals pose a threat to us? Of course, animals can physically harm us. The bars through which we look at zoo animals serve as a constant reminder of the danger they pose. And even if they are not the big bad beasts that threaten us with their maws or talons, they can still threaten our health by spreading dangerous contagions—the bird and the swine seem to be the experts at that. But beyond the physical threat, animals also threaten our human identity. Many qualities that we considered uniquely human—rationality, morality, language—are now discovered in various animal communities as well. It is no longer easy to locate human uniqueness via comparison with animals. In response to the threat of animals, we domesticate them in zoos, farms, canine training schools; and we dismember them via castration (to “fix” them, we say), experimentation, and butchering. While we may not—and probably should not—erase our fear of animals, is it possible to mitigate it? Can we imagine a human-animal relation that is not grounded in fear but in love?

## A MATERNAL ANIMAL ETHICS

The exceptionalities of da Vinci’s animal—its androgynous features, as well as its identification with the maternal—interrupt the animal-father substitution that we see in other cases of animal phobia. Da Vinci’s relationship with the vulture-mother invites us to renegotiate our relationship with animals. Specifically, it invites us to consider a maternal animal ethics that emphasizes fantasy and love rather than fear and dominance.<sup>17</sup> We need not deny that animals are at times threatening like the fearful father in the myth. Indeed, with the

rapid expansion of human population, it is important that we acknowledge the conflicting interests between humans and other species (animal or not) when it comes to issues of natural resources and habitats. But animals can be our mothers as much as they can be our fathers. They can be our companions as much as our competitors. And even though they scratch, sting, and bite, they also cuddle, play, and kiss.

That a human-animal relationship *can be* based on love and fantasy is certainly not something unusual. Many people identify themselves as “animal lovers,” and pets are often considered family members. The question here is why such a model of human-animal relationship remains marginalized while the exploitative model of human-animal relationship remains operative. In fact, even the commonly sanctioned pet love is at times pathologized or censured: the stereotype of the “crazy cat lady” becomes such a popular icon it gets its own action figure,<sup>18</sup> while the image of Paris Hilton and her “purse dog” feeds the idea that pet love is a mere accessory.<sup>19</sup> And if even pet love is marginalized as either pathological or vain, we are still a long way away from a normative human-animal relationship that is grounded in love.

Although Freud himself pathologizes da Vinci’s vulture fantasy, such pathologization is very much informed by his patriarchal thinking. Accordingly, a revision of human-animal relations goes hand in hand with the remaking of gender relations (perhaps even a remaking of the myth of the band of brothers). Freud’s account of the vulture-mother remains instructive insofar as it showcases a human-animal relationship that is based on love and fantasy, instead of fear and dominance. Just as the vulture-mother kisses the infant da Vinci in his dream, intimacy can also ground human-animal relations. And just as da Vinci sublimates his desire for his vulture-mother into artistic creativity, we are also inspired by animals in our various scientific, artistic, and intellectual endeavors. And recognition of the animal as our nurturing mother, it seems, would point to a more nurturing (and less violent) human-animal relationship.

\* \* \*

In “The Dog on the Therapist’s Couch,” Stanley Coren suggests that Freud’s dogs served him both personally and professionally. Specifically, the presence of a dog seems to help the patients speak:

This difference was most marked when Freud was dealing with children and adolescents, who seemed more willing to talk openly (especially about painful issues) when the dog was in the room. . . . In addition, during psychoanalysis, when the patient is getting near to uncovering the source of his or her problem there is often a resistance phase. . . . Freud’s impression was that the resistance was so much less vigorous when the dog was in the room. (2002, 139–40)

Freud's observations illuminate the recent use of "courthouse dogs" in the United States. In the past few years, trained dogs have served the role of "testimony enablers" in various courthouses. These dogs are allowed in the courthouse to provide comfort for vulnerable or traumatized witnesses, such as children who were sexually abused. For example, recently a courthouse dog (Rosie) provided emotional support for a fifteen-year-old who was raped and impregnated by her father—" [Rosie] sat by the teenager's feet. At particularly bad moments, she leaned in [to encourage the witness]" (Glaberson, 2011).<sup>20</sup> Advocates for the "dog-in-court-cause" argue that just as the "Support Persons Case Law" allows a support person to "increase some children's capacity to testify and enhance the child's direct and cross-examination," a specially trained dog can serve the same purpose (O'Neill-Stephens, 2010).

Just as Freud's dogs helped the patients speak about their issues, Rosie helped a reluctant and frightened teenager to speak for herself. Just as Freud's dogs helped the patients confront their own demons by overcoming the "resistance phase," Rosie helped the teenage girl confront her father. In an important sense, it is Rosie the dog who gave the victim a voice in court. In popular discourse on animal rights, we often hear the rhetoric of "giving a voice to the voiceless." The case of Rosie as a "testimony enabler" should remind us that, well before we can even "give animals a voice," the animal has already helped us speak. Indeed, it is by establishing a relation with—rather than identifying herself against—the animal that the teenage girl found her voice in court. This flies in the face of the philosophical cliché that defines humanity by setting it against the nonspeaking animal. Rosie's courthouse service invites us to rethink and reconfigure the triangular relationship between language, humans, and animals. At the end, perhaps we as humans are constituted as speaking beings not by virtue of our opposition to animals, but rather because of our capacity to *relate to* animals. Or, to put this more in line with the spirit of this essay: we are most willing to speak, and speak even the most difficult truth, when we see the animal not as a fearful, punitive creature, but rather as a maternal figure to whom we look for support and inspiration when we have momentarily lost our voice.

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## NOTES

1. See for example Donovan (1990); Oliver (2009, ch. 1); Lee (2008); Taylor (1987).
2. Derrida also discusses the way fear motivates crime, so "fear is thus both the origin of the law and the transgression of the law" (2009, 41). While the double function of fear is interesting, I am primarily interested in the way fear and terror operate in sustaining the law.

3. This bill has been effective since July 1, 2011. See [http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/session2011/lists/measure\\_indiv.aspx?billtype=SB&billnumber=1533](http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/session2011/lists/measure_indiv.aspx?billtype=SB&billnumber=1533).
4. Gmunden is a place where Little Hans's family stayed for the summer holidays.
5. In a parenthetical note, Little Hans's father added that the mother was the one who often threatened to beat Little Hans with a carpet beater (1909a, 81).
6. Wayne Anderson argues that Freud did not actually copy from the German translation by Marie Herzfeld, as Strachey suggests, but instead drew from more than one source "without having read Leonardo's words" (2001, 23).
7. Anderson carefully chronicles the ongoing debate in the literature in his 2001 book (10ff.). In his 2005 essay, De La Durantaye argues that Nabokov's dismissive opinion of Freud (and psychoanalysis more generally) is grounded in Freud's lack of attention to details: "What Nabokov very consciously sought to counteract were approaches to art that, in their aspiration to uncover the general, neglected the particular. And this he found in Freud" (68). And the prime example De La Durantaye uses to buttress this observation is precisely Freud's use of the mistranslation of *nibbio* as "vulture."
8. He argues, for instance, that Maclagan's translation of *nibbio* as "kite" is also problematic; he suggests that *nibbio* in the fifteenth century "may have referred to any carnivorous bird . . . while most of the time referencing the chief raptor, the hawk" (2001, 34). Interestingly, according to Anderson, hawks, like vultures, were also believed to be an exclusively female species. I will discuss the significance of the single-gendered species further.
9. That is, if we consider the absence of hierarchical thinking a negative form of egalitarianism.
10. Outside the psychoanalytic tradition, feminist thinkers such as Carol Adams and Karen Warren have pointed out the intertwined relationship between the denigration of women and that of animals/nature.
11. Anderson disputes the claims that da Vinci was a vegetarian or animal lover (see 2001, 139 ff.).
12. As Emily Gaarder points out in *Women and the Animal Rights Movement*, "The image of animal rights still suffers from stereotypical portrayals of overly emotional or irrational activists" (2011, 11).
13. "Notes Upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis" in *Two Case Histories* (1909b, 166).
14. While this may be anachronistic, for readers who remember Kevin Carter's picture of a starving child waiting to fall prey to a nearby vulture, an image of infant da Vinci's being poked by a vulture is unlikely to conjure maternal feelings.
15. It is not that phobia and fantasy are necessarily incompatible, but in Freud's account, da Vinci exhibits no fear of the vulture.
16. In light of this, it is particularly interesting that in 2010, an animal rights group was denied a spot in Sydney's Mardi Gras parade because it was "not queer enough." See Holman (2010).

17. While an animal care ethics has been developed by various feminist thinkers, my paper contributes to the literature by taking on the psychoanalytic perspective.
18. See, e.g., <http://www.mcphree.com/items/11377.html>.
19. That pets are mere accessories is so ingrained in our imagination that the phrase “pet projects” has become a synonym to “earmarks” or “pork barrel” in American political discourse.
20. “By Helping a Girl Testify at a Rape Trial, a Dog Ignites a Legal Debate.” *New York Times*, Aug. 8, 2011.

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