

Animals and humans—a false divide?

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We don't just share our lives with animals; we are animals – a reality that we often choose to forget in modern Western culture. Research published in the June special issue of SAGE journal, *Social Science Information (SSI)*, delves deeper into our relationship with other creatures, critically examining our own animal nature, and looking at how animals profoundly influence our culture – perhaps more so than we had initially thought.

We have often been told in Western thought that the human species is one that is highly developed, above that of the animal kingdom, a division that is clear cut and one that clearly sets the [human species](#) apart. Yet Dominique Lestel, a highly influential researcher studying animality (our animal nature), opposes the separation of human and [animal life](#). Lestel ask us to reframe the question of animality, asking us to view humanization as an ongoing performative practice, rather than an historical threshold that was crossed long ago.

Looking at the relationship between animal and human, Lestel argues that [species loss](#) has both an ecological and symbolic consequence on our culture, as every species contributes to our very being, our meaning. He warns that "each species that disappears is a part of our imagination that we amputate perhaps irreversibly".

According to Lestel, the question is "not that of knowing how I share my life with others, but how others shape me and how I shape others," The work focuses on the interrelatedness of all animals (humans included), where more usually we tend to highlight the boundaries between us.

In addition to humans' place in the [animal kingdom](#) at a scientific level, Lestel also highlights our essential, existential animality in his opening comments with fellow editor, Hollis Taylor. "A key question now is to know how the human of the [21st century](#) can reactivate his animality and animalize himself anew when all Western thought since the Greeks tells him that he is human precisely because of this rupture with animality," Lestel suggests, building on his critique of the very philosophical foundations of the ethological tradition. "To be human does not mean to have fled animality, but on the contrary to live within it and to let it live within us...we are animals and animals are us."

Provided by SAGE Publications

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