

**CANADIAN PETS:
The Argument for the Extension of Universal Healthcare to
Non-Human Animal Companions**

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Thesis submitted to Saint Paul University
in partial Fulfillment of the requirements for the
M.A. in Public Ethics

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Abstract

Companion non-human (n-h) animals, more commonly referred to as pets, should be granted species-appropriate healthcare benefits comparable to those of humans. In Canada, this would be most feasible through an insurance scheme such as those provided to human residents through provincial and territorial health care plans operating under the auspices of the Canada Health Act (CHA) – which is a federal act.

This argument can be made in several ways, the strongest of which adopts the bundle theory of legal personhood articulated by Visa Anton Julius Kurki. (2023; 2025) In order to demonstrate the value of this approach, it is also necessary to review the strengths and weaknesses of other arguments that may lead to similar outcomes, though without being directly entangled with the CHA or personhood in the same way, throughout this text.

This work follows a specific trajectory: Introduction, (Chapter 1) key definitions and context, (Chapter 2) a review of historical and contemporary arguments for and against the mattering of non-human animals, (Chapter 3) a review of the bundle theory of legal personhood and non-human citizenship theory, (Chapter 4) a comparative assessment of the arguments for pet healthcare in Canada, (Chapter 5) pragmatic considerations – how healthcare coverage works in Canada and the implications of the different arguments for extending such services to n-h animal companions, and finally, the Conclusion – that expanding coverage to pets through the CHA would require recognition of n-h animal companion personhood as such is requisite for legal resident status in Canada. Further, that doing so aligns with utilitarian, Buddhist, care, and neo-Kantian ethics, the Capabilities Approach, Mitsein and recognition-based frameworks, as well as the relational theory of political n-h animal rights put forth by Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka in *Zoopolis* (2014).

Acknowledgements

Definitely not my professors. Terrible terrible creatures who've done nothing but help and support me. Also, not my family. Equally infuriatingly *there*. Why, *why* would I acknowledge any of these monsters?

Best to forget such crooks.

Avert one's mind from such evils.

There are better things.

Like poetry, pizza, and posthumous recognition.

Good day.

In all seriousness, everyone mentioned prior has actually been fantastic and is entitled to *at least* one pat on the back, maybe two. There are too many names to mention but I will try and mention a few: John Atytalla and Hana Hruška for encouraging me to apply to the Public Ethics program at Saint Paul, Philip Michael Johnathen Guiver for putting up with me when I was at my worst and giving me a second home, Belmo Rojas for supporting me through the same as well and showing me what it is to be at one with nature, my siblings both human and furry – Michaela Rojas Hruška, Tiger, Heidi (Yankata), Egypt, Demon Peaches, Nalaa, Rice Cake, and Luna (Tebeck Utk), for growing alongside me. Aaand my only niece, Lyla. Thanks to my grandparents, Aja and Antonin Hruška for all of the support and curious questions, to mi Abuelita for also showing me *como vivir en las montañas de Boruca* and with the various little furry friends and always greeting me with open arms and a smile no matter how many years it has been. To my aunt and uncle Mario and Mayra for always making sure I'm well fed when I visit

and asking after me – I really want some gallo pinto con natilla y platanos fritos right now! My professors: Rajesh Shukla for agreeing to meet with me when I really had no idea what I was doing and helping me understand how to approach assignments at a master’s level; Monique Lanoix for making sure I actually even got into the program and her critical eye; Matthew McLennan for reminding me how fun class can be and believing in this project, Richard Feist for enduring my obstinance and encouraging me to publish. Thanks also to Shantha Pillay for sending me endless streams of memes to keep me from simply melting into my desk. Thanks to Moe and the other lovely humans at Newport Pizza – honestly this would not have been possible without you. To Jimena Yengle, for encouraging me to get involved in things also away from my desk and being very understanding about my constant “I’m busy rn” responses – I’m sorry, I’m totally going to spend more time again soon! To Gabriel Wong for modelling unwavering dedication, focus, and striving. Daniel Thorp for always engaging me in policy discussions and directing my attention wherever and whenever I miss anything. To Ilan Leizarovich, Richard Singh, and Maya Skarzenski – you are brilliant artists and constant sources of inspiration no matter how far, thank you for being part of my life. To Julia Hunter, Carolina Nino, and all the other wonderful people of EcoEquitable who ask after my various and seemingly endless projects, you reminded me what community was when I felt so lost. B.-R. Comeau, I swear I will be able to make that cookie recipe properly someday, promise! Ronneroo Van Dalen, thank you for discussing both real life and nonsense with me, may we share many more yoga classes and walks together! Mekki Guernane, Alfa Sierra-Mike, Ian Donald, Marky Mark King, Alvin Sun, Mizzle P.-R., and Deedles McDermott – you are family as far as I’m concerned, love you!*

* Perhaps an unnecessary note: Just because someone is mentioned above does not mean they are in complete agreement with all of the opinions below. These are my own ideas, interpretations, and views.

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Introduction

Companion non-human (n-h) animals, more commonly referred to as pets, should be granted species-appropriate healthcare benefits comparable to those of humans. In Canada, this would be most feasible through an insurance scheme such as those provided to human residents through provincial and territorial health care plans operating under the auspices of the Canada Health Act (CHA) – which is a federal act.

This argument can be made in several ways, the strongest of which adopts the bundle theory of legal personhood articulated by Visa Anton Julius Kurki. (2023; 2025) In order to demonstrate the value of this approach, it is also necessary to review the strengths and weaknesses of other arguments that may lead to similar outcomes, though without being directly entangled with the CHA or personhood in the same way, throughout this text.

After this Introduction, the work follows a specific trajectory: (Chapter 1) key definitions and context, (Chapter 2) a review of historical and contemporary arguments for and against the mattering of non-human animals, (Chapter 3) a review of the bundle theory of legal personhood and non-human citizenship theory, (Chapter 4) a comparative assessment of the arguments for pet healthcare in Canada, and (Chapter 5) pragmatic considerations – how healthcare coverage works in Canada and the implications of the different arguments for extending such services to n-h animal companions. Each chapter contains numbered subsections – so, for example, (1.1) refers to the first subsection of Chapter 1, and (1.2) the second. Additionally, all lists not quoted use lettered designation to avoid confusion. After these steps the Conclusion will summarize key points and reiterate the value of the main argument as opposed to the other potential options in the given context.

Chapter 1: key definitions and context

At first glance it may seem hard to grasp that we might grant pets publicly funded healthcare services. Most people simply accept that owning a pet will cost money, and part of that cost is to come in the form of veterinary bills for their respective Fido, Garfield, or Polly. By contrast, Canadian humans generally pride themselves in having greater access to human medical services than, say, our neighbours in the United States.

Therefore, this section looks to dispel the impression that the argument is far-fetched or counterintuitive. It fills some basic gaps, specifically: (1.1) what kind of political space Canada is and its bearing on the argument at hand, (1.2) what is meant by a non-human (n-h) companion animal, (1.3) how Canadians understand their relationships with said creatures, and (1.4) how these items fit together.

(1.1)

Canada is a parliamentary democracy. This means that, as a people, we believe that, to the extent possible, everyone has a say in how we govern our country. We achieve this mostly through voting in elections at our three levels of government, and endlessly publicly debating apropos what is best for our communities at each level right down to requiring public consultation on the demolition of historic buildings.

In rough philosophical terms we might say that the country aims toward political liberalism and multiculturalism. Essentially and/or ideally, Canadians ascribe to a liberal politics of recognition, tolerance, and respect.

The present intervention is contiguous with liberal debate in two senses, (a) the idea of liberal socialism, and (b) the idea of a political community grounded in a moral community – specifically I define this as: our being-with (Mitsein) is in essence recognition of equivalent worth (moral standing) which, depending on our philosophical commitments, creates or flows from the obligation of justice. (Olafson 1999) Justice is defined pluralistically (because of equal-consideration) through whichever doctrines we ascribe to as the overlapping consensus between our many views (also known as horizons, cultures, and comprehensive doctrines). (Taylor et al. 1994; Rawls 1999a; Rawls 1999b; Rawls 2005; Donaldson and Kymlicka 2014; Nussbaum 2022; Chandler 2024; McManus 2025)

In liberal theory, the question of who is allowed to participate in politics comes up time and again. It is unfortunately common to limit the collective participant “we” to neurotypical individuals that are the age of majority. This group of people are often viewed as ideal citizens; however, the work at hand takes issue with this identification and explores why such stricture is unjust – why “we”, as in Canadian society in the present context and more broadly those of us inclined to national collective social action within the country’s confines, need to embrace a wider set of individuals in the citizenry. Chapter 3 of the present text elaborates on this explicitly.

Further, while there are groups that may not feel that being included in such a “we” is in their interest, my argument maintains that it is such voices most especially who need to be heard from in the ongoing political liberal dialogue – it is for this reason that multiculturalism plays a role in this text. As noted by Matthew McManus in *The Political Theory of Liberal Socialism*, while most modern liberalisms hold normative equality and consider “fundamental entitlement to equal liberty within civil society” central to their positions, “the commitment to solidarity is important

for liberal socialists.” (2025, 11)

(1.2)

At times liberal theorists of the kind here discussed have limited their arguments’ application to human animals. However, there are many who have extended the debate to encompass n-h animals – much as the present work advocates in the context of Canada. (Kelch 2007; Donaldson and Kymlicka 2014; Donaldson and Kymlicka 2023; Nussbaum 2022; Kurki and Siemieniec 2025)

As this argument is specific about which animals are granted their due in the context of Canada, it is also important to define who they are. Of course, there is room for reasonable disagreement in a liberal society over which nonhuman animals can legitimately count as pets. However, inasmuch as this argument is made in the liberal public sphere in the specific parliamentary democracy that is Canada, it will, for the sake of present arguments, abide by definitions presently in use in the country’s capital, Ottawa. That is to say that, while allowing for the heterogeneity of the contexts within the country, the model at hand will adopt Ottawa’s definition. Specifically, *Ottawa’s Animal Care and Control* (By-law No. 2003-077) permits residents to maintain domesticated cats, dogs, rabbits, and other small animals like snakes, ferrets, and rodents (not exceeding 1500 grams). The by-law also includes prohibitions on protected and endangered species. Additionally, as there is no prohibition on domesticated avian species, these will be included. This by-law also stipulates maximums and registration with the municipality. The maximums for the number of dogs a household can maintain will be applied across-board instead of at varying levels, therefore the maximum will be considered three of any one type of n-h animal, though combinations up to five n-h animals would be considered

permissible. (City of Ottawa 2025) For the purposes of the argument at hand, as healthcare is managed provincially in Canada, registration of pets will thus be set at said same level rather than at a municipal level.

(1.3)

Defining what animals can constitute pet-types is important because the majority, over 80%, of Canadian households include at least one such “pet”. (Blair 2026)ⁱ Also of important note is that even conservative estimates find that at least 71% of Canadians consider their pets as family members. (Angus Reid Institute 2022)ⁱⁱ

Pets as family is perhaps not the only way one might integrate Canadian pets into an understanding of Canadian society. For example, one might pause and say, “But I haven’t any pet of my own.” Even so, the average human is inclined to the perception of cuteness when they encounter a n-h animal of typical companion species in the street and is also further inclined to feel well and sociable toward said creature. (Borgi et al. 2014) From this point, it is perhaps immediate that one feels a sort of friendship, or perhaps it takes several encounters with, say, Purring Cat. In this situation we can imagine that one now goes out of their home on any given day to head off to work, the coffee shop, or some such other important place where the business of human life must be attended to, and on such route to leave the neighbourhood one encounters their friend Purring Cat. Here we might look to the work of Yiran Hua who notes that, “Friends, unlike people in some other relationships, see each other as equals.” (2025b, 974)ⁱⁱⁱ On the basis of Hua’s argument we might infer two additional things, (a) that friendship is one of the strongest forms of recognition; it goes beyond Mitsein, in that not only must we suddenly adhere to what Olafson describes as “an element of obligation that can be satisfied only by a good-faith effort to

understand what is being done on both sides in its relation to the two sets of interests.” (59) But it is also something more profound, which is beyond just the need to acknowledge the two sets of interests generally, that being, the deeper psychological perspective – we *care* about their central attitudes and projects, in other words, we take their interests seriously. As their belief that any which thing is important constitutes an interest, this means “[...] that taking your friend seriously is simply taking the *fact* that your friend has certain central beliefs seriously.” (Hua 2025b, 975) (This also brings our conception of friendship very close to the ideal relationship we maintain with others in a political liberal society.) And (b) that, with this in mind one might also forgive or at least accept that not everyone will agree with this argument and they might still be allowed to be part of our society – even if we might rightly assess them to be bad or at least unthinking people.^{iv}

All to say that the majority of Canadians cohabit with n-h family members and that even those that don't are likely to make friends of such socially recognized n-h animals upon encounter. Pets are, in essence, part of our community.^v

What is *community*? Drawing from Michael Warner's idea of *publics*, Casey Plett conceives the empirical notion defining community as “[...] an ongoing space of encounter.” (2023, 139) Plett further elaborates that,

“Communities welcome certain people and cast a suspicious eye on others. Communities lift up their valued members and ignore those they value a bit less. Sometimes those values are, shall we say, suspect. Communities can expel members when they choose, regardless of what that means for the member, and they stay communities no matter how heartless that expulsion might be.” (87-88)

Resultantly, “[...] community can *activate* us in key ways that it is nearly impossible to do [...] through a free act of will. That activations can open us to larger worlds, and close us off to them too. And, sometimes, both at the same time.” (107) Essentially, community is a socially bound group of individuals who both actively and passively affirm each other’s membership and deny such to others. Communities have powers greater than individuals and are capable of different types of actions because of internal cooperation.

(1.4)

Continuing in accordance with the resultant understanding of the previous section and in looking to fit the items of this chapter together, there is an important matter of defining communities of different levels. A sort of “high-level” community is a nation state, like Canada. There are larger communities, like the European Union, and smaller ones – in the Canadian context these would be provinces, regions, cities, towns, and specific social groups (e.g. the queer community of Toronto, or the rock-climbing community of Ottawa).

Communities impress obligations and rights on their members – though some may have rights without obligations, like certain groups living with specific diseases which cause disabling conditions, like fibromyalgia, Parkinson’s, or schizophrenia, who are accommodated through various schemes of social support to allow for equal participation (on a national level there is the newly updated Canada Disability Benefit which in addition to allocating resources moving forward also allows for back payments up to 24 months prior to receipt of application, which is further complemented with the Disability Tax Credit which “aims to offset some of the costs related to an impairment by reducing the amount of income tax” the individual may have to pay – there are other supports that are provincially maintained), and some might also lose certain

rights, for example people imprisoned for having committed particular crimes like murder, sexual assault, or armed robbery. (Canada Revenue Agency 2025; Employment and Social Development Canada 2026)^{vi}

In Canada, one of those obligations is paying taxes, which, depending on your macroeconomic ascription is to pay for services (classical), stabilize markets (Keynesian), or to create demand for government currency and control inflation (Modern Monetary Theory). (Chang 2014; Kelton 2021) As classical economics are central to contemporary Canadian policy we might attend to such. (Miljan 2022)^{vii} One of the types of services that are ostensibly “funded” by taxes, are those subject to the Canadian Health Act – we can generally call these healthcare services.

A central value that grounds the CHA is solidarity, as noted in the “Preamble” on page 1, “Canadians, through their system of insured health services, have made outstanding progress in treating sickness and alleviating the consequences of disease and disability among all income groups [...] continued access to quality health care without financial or other barriers will be critical to maintaining and improving the health and well-being of Canadians.” (Health Canada 2025) The idea that health services should be universally accessible is already accepted, what is not are who might be included as residents. In Canadian law residents are persons, which more specifically are either *natural persons*, i.e. humans, or *juridical persons* i.e. corporations – neither of these current legal realities accepts n-h animals as persons. (Adriano 2015; Bale et al. 2014; Pao 2023; Thomson Reuters n.d.; Department of Justice Canada 2026b)^{viii}

At this stage it is possible that some might take issue with the imposition of alien legal systems on those who may not wish to participate in them – specifically here that would mean the imposition of a legal system on n-h animals who cannot verbally consent. This specific type of argument has its history in Franciscan criticism against Pope John XXII’s imposition of his view

of property upon them. Essentially their argument was that Jesus didn't have property and thus they felt it unethical that they should also possess property or even acquire things generally. This argument is not simply theological; the criticism is ultimately ethical. Specifically, Daniel Loick notes in his book *The Abuse of Property*, that "[...] for the Franciscans, the Roman institution of property is a form of domination." (2023, 60) John found this nonsensical and resolved that those who wished to stay with the church would be subject to church law. The Franciscans responded by developing arguments against being subject to legal systems more generally. Subsequently, the argument has been used as a means of understanding the wrongs done unto native populations subject to Western expansion. The argument goes like so: "[...] the violence of law consists in damaging the ethical substance of a native community by coercively transforming it into an alien social grammar, and in this way devaluing preexisting knowledge and local practices." (58) This is salient, however it cannot apply in the case of n-h companion animals who already adhere to the social norms within their respective locales and are in fact often held to higher standards than humans, as any of their violence generally leads to summary execution often without any legal debate.

It is, for example, in accordance with Section 3 of Ontario's *Dog Owners' Liability Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. D.16, that a dog having been found to have "bitten or attacked a person or domestic animal or that the dog's behaviour is such that the dog is a menace to the safety of persons or domestic animals" that "the court may order [...] the dog be destroyed". In fact, just such a case occurred in 2025 when "a dog attack on a residential street led to the animal being shot and euthanized after it bit a child and an officer." To be clear, "The officer and the child [only] suffered minor injuries". (Rodrigues 2025) In comparison, it is hard to imagine that such an act by a human would result in anything more than hospitalization for mental illness and/or an

assault charge with the requirement for monetary compensation alongside (perhaps) community service. This all to say, no one would expect the “destruction” of a human for biting another, such would be considered unnecessarily cruel and vengeful. The worst-case scenario might actually simply be some time in prison which seems quite reasonable when compared with death.

In this way, we can already see that pets are not outsiders being subjected to a foreign invading force nor “an alien social grammar”, they are rather already participants in a legal system whether or not they understand its complexity and significance. For the n-h animal, law is simply a codified anthropocentric abstraction of social norms.

It is in this way that Canadians already recognize pets, as family members, friends, and community members, as beings with moral standing worthy of equal recognition to that of human persons whether or not we presently extend to them their due as members of our society.^{ix} Therefore, it is time we reconsider how we treat them. The present text looks to facilitate the progression of one of the most evident problems in this regard – the double standard relating to the allocation of health services.

Chapter 2: a review of historical and contemporary arguments for and against the mattering of non-human animals

The history of arguments for and against non-human (n-h) animal mattering is lengthy. For this reason some thoughts below are grouped together, some are simplified, and some are noted in relation to other arguments at other times. When possible, these will be explicitly related back to the central argument of the paper. Regardless, their value should be taken implicitly – if n-h animals matter to any extent, we need to define what that extent is and adjust our policies accordingly. Most importantly, if they matter to the extent that they have moral worth, we need to seriously reconsider how we treat them in general, as agents rather than just as subjects – resultantly, as individuals and ends in themselves. The value of such a finding in the present context, coupled with the recognition of them also as participants in Canadian society, is that it justifies the granting of species-appropriate healthcare benefits comparable to those of humans. To simplify such an expansive review, this chapter will follow specifically: (2.1) the argument against the moral consideration of n-h animals and the moral-status argument, (2.2) the equal-consideration argument and the utility trumping argument, and finally (2.3) a therefore statement.

(2.1)

This subsection reviews what are generally referred to as *speciesist* arguments, both in their explicit and more subtle, implicit forms. Speciesism is “a prejudice or bias” that occurs when one gives more weight, priority, or favour to the interests of a particular species “on the bases of species alone.” (Singer 2023, 4, 5). The term itself was originally coined by Richard Ryder in 1970, and the form discussed here is more specifically “the assumption of humans’ superior

moral worth,” or “The attitude that humans are superior to other species”. (Hussain 2022; Sanders 2025) Some of these speciesist arguments discard any need for considering the moral worth of n-h animals whatsoever, however, others tend in the direction of the moral-status argument – that is, that while they do not consider n-h animals as important as humans, they do still think that we ought to consider their moral standing to some smaller extent.

Some arguments appear not to be speciesist because they base moral consideration on some capacity said to be inherent to humans other than species – however, when confronted with so-called “marginal” cases of humans lacking in this capacity, the ones making the argument will usually retreat to species membership as grounds for special pleading (indeed they have to, if they want to avoid the charge of ableism, or the implication that we are permitted to treat disabled people the way we currently treat n-h animals).^x Specifically, the problem is that such capacity-based arguments, including group-based ones, are inherently ableist (vs. arguments for equal consideration which are essentially about equivalent moral worth). In the West, the history of such arguments starts with Ancient Greeks and Romans; particularly Aristotle and the Stoics, who both argued that n-h animals were incapable of reason and thereby lesser than humans.

In his work *De Anima (On the Soul)*, Aristotle divides “the soul, [with] locomotion, on the one hand, and thinking, understanding and perceiving on the other”. What he means, is that thinking – which “is something other than perceiving, and [of which] its two kinds are held to be imagination and supposition [...] admits of being false”, and that imagination is not always correct. He contrasts this with “knowledge and intellect” – which to him are always correct. And that, imagination and belief are separate because

Belief [...] is followed by conviction, as it is not possible for those that hold beliefs not to be convinced of the things in which they believe, and while none of the animals have

conviction many of them have imagination. (In other words, the conviction that accompanies all belief is produced by persuasion, a task of reason, and while some of the beasts have imagination none has reason.) (1986, III.3 427b-428a)

This leads us to rationality, which is the application of reason. Importantly, those who cannot reason are not rational by definition. Note that we can critique Aristotle here on two grounds: first, for basing human superiority on a criterion not all humans actually share (the aforementioned problem of “marginal cases”), and second, for failing to see the presence of a degree of rationality in n-h animals.

More explicitly, regarding the second critique, the working definition for rationality in this section is a capacity for abstraction and universalization coupled with self-awareness. A pet cat easily meets this bar when it plays with a toy mouse that it realizes was gifted for such a purpose. The cat creates a game for purposes of entertainment and is there absorbed – for all intents and purposes, the cat does not need to actually do anything with the toy.^{xi}

In his book *Animal Rights: A Very Short Introduction*, David DeGrazia notes, that in this vein, “Aristotle also held that men are naturally superior to women, due to men’s allegedly superior reasoning ability, and that some humans – stronger in body than in mind – are naturally suited to be slaves.” (2022, 3) Aristotle thus upholds that apparently morally irrelevant characteristics are morally relevant – i.e. gender. Speciesism is another version of this; in fact, this claim that some “are naturally suited to be slaves” is the very idea that underlies the use of horses which we will explore in more detail later.

The Stoic perspective results in a similar conclusion. One version of the argument is neatly summarized by Stephen T. Newmyer in his introduction to Plutarch’s *De Sollertia Animalium*;

While humans feel kinship with other humans, and non-human animals with other non-human animals, the bond of *oikeiosis* [, affinity and akinness in Stoic terms,] can never exist between humans and other animals because of the limitations of the soul of non-human animals. A human being, on attaining to rationality, feels increasingly alienated from other animal species, for the lifestyle, interests and goals of rational beings have nothing in common with those of irrational beasts. (2021, 5)

An elaborative passage in Stoic philosopher Epictetus's *Whatever is Rational is Tolerable* states that Zeus said unto him, "I have given you a portion of myself [...], the power of positive and negative impulse, of desire and aversion – the power in other words, of making good use of impressions." (2025, 4) Essentially, this is Epictetus's definition of rationality.^{xiii} This is what might be called the *god given argument* and it bleeds into subsequent views as "The Bible largely reinforced the Aristotelian view of animals by asserting that God created humans in his own image, and that we are free to use natural resources – including [n-h] animals – for our own purposes." (DeGrazia 2022, 3)

Pointing to Judaism and Greek antiquity, Peter Singer states, "These roots unite in Christianity, and it is through Christianity that they came to prevail in Europe." (2023, 209) DeGrazia elaborates that, "In the Middle Ages, such Christian philosophers as Augustine and Thomas Aquinas underscored the claim that animals' lack of reason justified their subordination". In regard to other Abrahamic religions, DeGrazia also makes the distinction that Jewish perspectives maintained, that with compassion in mind, one at least shouldn't hunt for pleasure, while

Islam [...] concurs that humans are uniquely important and that animals exist for human use. Still, the Koran forbids cruelty to animals and arguably suggests (depending on one's

reading) that animals possess some degree of rationality; moreover, the Prophet Muhammad allegedly commented, ‘Whoever is kind to the creatures of Allah, is kind to himself.’ (2022, 4)

By means of adherence to Abrahamic religions, much of the globe has come to be dominated by such perspectives. And, though it applies similarly in all three religions, the idea described by DeGrazia above, about humans being “free to use natural resources – including animals – for our own purposes”, is what we might call the *rough view of Christian dominion*.^{xiii}

This rough view of Christian dominion takes us into the terrain of property theory.

First consider the foundational social contract theorist Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), who wrote in *Leviathan* that “To make Covenants with Beasts, is impossible; because not understanding our speech, they understand not, nor accept of any translation of Right; nor can translate any Right to another: and without mutuall acceptation, there is no Covenant.” (2016, ch. 14) Roughly put, Hobbes thought that non-human animals could never acclimate to social norms. To elaborate, Hobbes believed property was only possible with a sovereign more powerful than the common man to enforce the aforementioned “Covenants” – interestingly contemporary Canadian law still has covenants in property law for real estate. These, however, are not of the same sort as Hobbes conceived. For Hobbes covenants applied to all matters for which individuals surrendered their “natural rights”, their ability to be at “Warre” for all resources, and submitted to their sovereign – in this way man was inclined to peace. This was the social contract that Hobbes believed only humans could aspire to and maintain.

Not long after would come John Locke (1632-1704), the founder of *classical* liberalism and an early Enlightenment thinker, who makes a transition to individualism in his conception of property. As Daniel Loick notes,

In order to grasp the scandal of Locke's individualism, it is critical to bear in mind that most representatives of the natural law tradition, such as Thomas Aquinas, Samuel Pufendorf, and Hugo Grotius, assumed the original common ownership of the earth by humanity. [In other words, the rough view of Christian dominion.] From this original common ownership, these natural law theorists derive legal powers that remain effective even in civil society, such as the free use of water and air, sailing of the seas, or petty food theft. [...] Locke now claims that God has indeed given the earth to humankind in common as a gift, but at the same time instructed people not to keep it as common property but rather to convert it into private property. [...] Locke justifies the necessity of private property by suggesting that *use* coincides with the *consumption* of an object. (2023, 5-7)

Locke's contention on the transition to private property is predicated on the concern that it is impossible to share what one eats (or needs use), as in fact, the act itself precludes the same by another. Specifically, Locke says:

That *labour* put a distinction between them and common. That added something to them more than Nature [...] and so they become his private right. And will any one say he had no right to those Acorns or Apples he thus appropriated, because he had not consent of all Mankind to make them his? Was it Robbery thus to assume to himself what belonged to all in Common? If such a consent as that was necessary, Man had starved, notwithstanding the Plenty God had given him. We see in *Commons*, which remain by Compact, that 'tis the taking any part of what is common and removing it out of the state Nature leaves it in,

which *begins the Property*; without which the Common is of no use. (2016, 2nd Treatise, chap. 5, sec. 28)

In this way, objects become personally bound to individuals, who come to possess and use things to their advantage—a concept expanded by Locke into a theory of property that acknowledges both rights and responsibilities. The prohibition on waste narrows what is permissible while also making property applicable to items beyond food, such as tools or land; this allows for ownership of resources essential to life and those that cannot be used communally.

But how does one come to own, say a place? In Locke's conception it is through labour. A physical thing is "mixed" with labour and so becomes property. In addition to this, Locke speculates that the non-perishable metals later formed the currency of the time in order to allow one to overcome the requisite relation of personal needs for accumulation of possessions.

By overcoming the relation to personal needs, it becomes possible for an owner to accumulate wealth they no longer use or need at all. It is simply enough to not let it rot in order to remain its legal owner. Moreover, this makes it possible for people to invest money—that is, convert it into capital. [...] Monetary exchange, he claims, is the hallmark of a cultivated society. In Locke's view, only the possibility and incentive to produce more than one's own needs leads to an effective agricultural use of the available land. (Loick 2023, 11-12)

This results in a capitalist argument and forms the basis for wage labour. A servant, or worker of whatever sort really – possibly a *broken* horse^{xiv}, can till one's land for a wage (or food in the case of a servile non-human) without coming to own what has already come to be the property of another.

The servant is thus prevented from performing the very act that originally legitimates private property. As such, the possibilities of use for the capitalist and worker are antagonistic to each other: use by one excludes use by the other. This applies not only to the consumption of foodstuffs, as Lockean casuistry would have us believe, but also to the use of privately appropriated means of production such as land along with the products of labor. (15)

In this way, as the example given above of the servile horse, it is possible for a n-h animal to be enslaved – that is to live a life of servitude as the possession of another. Clearly, Aristotle and the Stoics refuse to leave the discussion.

Another tack for devaluing n-h animals in the West was taken by René Descartes (1596-1650) who saw them as automata, parts of nature without consciousness. (DeGrazia 2022) Specifically, Descartes posited that *res cogitans* (the soul or thinking mind)^{xv} must be present for anything to have moral worth. Things without, to his mind, have only *res extensa* (the body). For Descartes, ordinary creative language use, which he understands (along speciesist lines) in terms of human language is evidence of *res cogitans*. For this reason, “Descartes draws a strict line between humans and other animate creatures by deducing that, since the latter have no language [...] they also have no thoughts.” (McLennan 2018, 49) This argument is particularly weak in light of what we now know about n-h animals having languages and even dialects.^{xvi} It also conflates an epistemological point with an ontological one (displaying evidence of thought is taken to be a necessary condition for actually having thoughts). Finally, the argument has the troubling and false implication that humans who don’t have language are mere automata. (See Eva Feder Kittay’s *Learning from My Daughter* for an account of the subjective lives of persons with severe intellectual disabilities.)

This dedication to an anthropocentric definition of rationality comes up again in the last embers of the Enlightenment in the work of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) – whose whole *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* framework can, reductively, be summarized as “rationality ought to command all”. In order to effectively judge whether or not an action might be considered moral, he creates his *categorical imperative* – essentially several formulations of “What would happen if everyone acted in the way you are considering acting?” In Kant’s perspective, it is also important to note, that we do not actually have direct obligations to n-h animals, our direct obligations are to ourselves and other humans.

“Some non-human animals share similar characteristics to humans, such as their perception of pain and pleasure, but their lack of a rational will, according to Kant, is what disqualifies them as beings that deserve direct moral consideration.” (Mir 2019, 2)

The genesis of this idea can be found in the *Groundwork*, where Kant states that only “*a rational nature exists as an end in itself.*” (2012, 4:429) In other words, all that is not “a rational being” is a usable means to the ends of another. There are limits though; for Kant humans do have an indirect duty. We ought not harm n-h animals gratuitously because doing so desensitizes us and decreases our own capacity for empathy thus demeaning ourselves and weakening our capacity to maintain the moral duty we have to other humans. (Mir 2019) Note that, here again, the problem of “marginal” human cases arises: because he defines the moral community in terms of the possession of rationality, Kant faces tough questions about partially or non-rational humans, such as children and persons with cognitive disabilities, and whether we only have indirect duties to them – either through ourselves or through others to whom they matter.

Two final notes on Western perspectives come to us from the John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) and Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860). Mill was a utilitarian who believed that different types of

pleasure had different value and that the goal of ethical action should be to maximize the net value of all pleasures. In his conception, the most important pleasures derived from complex actions that humans articulate. Intellectual contemplation, and thereby pleasure had, is generally greater than the base actions n-h animals are capable of – e.g. sexual or gustatory experience. So, while he was against suffering generally, he did think that human lives have more value all things being considered. (Mill 2000; DeGrazia 2022) (The next section will consider contrasting utilitarian perspectives.) Note that here again, the relative superiority of humans is based on capacities that not all humans actually possess.

Schopenhauer, meanwhile, rejected reason, autonomy, self-consciousness, and power as primary determinants of moral status. Influenced by Hinduism and Buddhism, Schopenhauer maintained that moral living requires compassion for all beings who can suffer. Nevertheless, in his view, human beings' greater intelligence increases their capacity for suffering and to that extent justifies heightened moral concern for human suffering. (DeGrazia 2022, 5-6)

Again, we find with this passage, that the existence of “marginal” cases is a problem for such a position.

In many texts there is a generalized note about how the Indigenous populations of what are now commonly called the Americas understand n-h animal relations.^{xvii} Specifically, the perspective is that “In keeping with their spiritual view of animal life, Native Americans generally accept some principle of respect for animals, while permitting the (respectful) killing and consumption of them.” (7) Despite the notional misexplanation like that of Robin Wall Kimmerer, a member of the Potawatomi Nation, an Anishnaabe group native to the Great Lakes region, as well as a professor at Syracuse University in New York, in *The Serviceberry: Abundance and Reciprocity*

in the Natural World (2024), in which she writes on page 33 that “A gift economy nurtures the community bonds that enhance mutual well-being”, there is no mutuality, or respect, when a particular being of a n-h species is killed to the benefit of a human. That is evidently the prioritization of human life over those of other animals. As Peter Singer notes in *Animal Liberation Now*, “Wolves and tigers must kill, or they will starve. Humans kill other animals to please their palates.” (2023, 251)^{xviii, xix} And further, as noted by Yael Tamir when discussing whether or not cultural groups can change, “A great deal of paternalism is embedded in the assumption that while ‘we’ can survive change and innovation and endure the tensions created by modernity, ‘they’ cannot; that ‘we’ can repeatedly reinvent ourselves, our culture, our tradition, while ‘they’ must adhere to known cultural patterns.” (1999, 51) “We”, in this instance, being the adherents of dominant Western culture – as opposed to the collective group identified by shared nationality, and “they” being any localized or distant cultural *other* – for example the specific text is discussing “Indian” people, a historically common term for the aforementioned regionally defined indigenous peoples also referred to in the previously cited text as Native Americans, in this passage.

Generally, and comparatively, Eastern traditions tend to be more compassionate towards n-h animals than Western ones, however it may be worth noting that Mencius of Ancient China, while sounding so in one breath soon turns to a classist in the next: “The attitude of a gentleman towards [n-h] animals is this: once having seen them alive, he cannot bear to see them die, and once having heard their cry, he cannot bear to eat their flesh. That is why the gentleman keeps his distance from the kitchen.” (2004, 1A7)

This sample makes evident that speciesist arguments have been ubiquitous throughout history and still hold sway over many common perspectives to this day. That is to say, there have always

been and continue to be many people willing to justify treating n-h animals prejudicially simply because they are not human. Even those who pretend to argue for human superiority on the basis of human reasoning capacity, not species, must face up to the existence of humans with diminished reasoning abilities and make a decision: either fall back to a speciesist position, or bite the bullet and accept the ableist position that humans with diminished capacity are inferior beings who do not merit full inclusion in the human moral community.^{xx}

(2.2)

If the argument of the last subsection is right, then there is a dilemma for those who don't grant animals equal consideration: either they are speciesist, because they base human superiority on the morally irrelevant criterion of species, or they are ableist, because they base human superiority on a criterion, such as reason, that not every human possesses or possesses in full.

Thankfully there is another, more egalitarian history of arguments about animal standing to account for. And so, this subsection looks to elucidate some important points in the history of the moral status of n-h animals argument – namely those commonly termed *equal-consideration* arguments. That is to say, that “We [, humans,] must give equal moral weight to humans’ and animals’ comparable interests. For example, animal suffering matters as much as human suffering.” (DeGrazia 2022, 20) Some of these arguments will fall into the utility-trumping category, that is to say, “Like humans, animals have certain vital interests that we must not override (with few exceptions) even in an effort to maximize utility for society. For example, animals have a right to liberty, meaning we should not harmfully confine them even if doing so would bring about many benefits and few costs.” (20) Ultimately, I will argue that, as Andrew Fenton notes in “Can a Chimp say ‘no’?” (2014), “appeals to mere species identity (that is,

merely being a member of the species *Homo sapiens*) as sufficient grounds for human-level moral status have consistently failed to withstand philosophical critique.” (131)^{xxi}

Now, having finished subsection 2.1 with Ancient China, it is perhaps reasonable to start this subsection there as well; Confucian philosopher Zhang Zai’s *The Western Inscription* – so named because it was written on the western wall of the room in which he taught, notes that one should be kind to the weak and further that “[...] all living things are my companions.” (Zai n.d., 1; Zai 2006; Wang and Weixiang 2010)

Also of particular note is the Pali Canon from the 1st century BCE, the first codified texts of the schools of Buddhist practice and theory, which contain a wealth of important concepts like *ahiṃsā* – alleviating suffering and maintaining the practice of non-harm towards any sentient being with an inclination toward the welfare of all living beings, and *karuṇā* – often translated as “compassion” but which is more action oriented than the English term implies and is sometimes seen as “compelling”. (Keown 2020)

An interesting set of parallel developments in thought can be found between Buddhism and contemporary Care theory – for brevity I will give only three examples;

(a) For Theravāda Buddhists, “At all levels of society—between family members, friends, and even strangers—generosity is widely encouraged and seen as an indication of spiritual development.” Such “being freedom from egocentric thoughts and sensitive to the needs of others.” (12) In many ways this is similar to the “promiscuous care” doctrine elaborated in *The Care Manifesto* – that “All forms of care between all categories of human and non-human should be valued, recognised, and resourced equally, according to their needs or ongoing sustainability.” (Chatzidakis et al. 2020, 40)

(b) Another striking example of such a parallel can be found in their usages of the concept of interdependence. In Buddhism the concept is passed through multiple schools and can be explained as “the doctrine of dependent origination [,which] is interpreted as a teaching that the entire cosmos has an underlying metaphysical unity that links all phenomena in a delicate and complex web of relations.” One striking manifestation is “‘Indra’s net’ found in the Avatamsaka Sūtra (3rd-4th century CE) [, which coming from the Huayan school of China] is often used to illustrate this concept”. (Keown 2020, 32)

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy notes that Huayan Buddhism “interprets emptiness in terms of interdependence and treats the natural world as possessing intrinsic value.” This predates the later school of Zen which also emphasizes universal emptiness and in which “The friendly with is owed to that emptiness from which the distinction between the I and what is other has been removed.” (Han 2022, 93)

Similarly, throughout *The Care Manifesto* one finds that the same word, “interdependence” (5) is used alongside various analogs like “interconnectedness” (13), and even a broad call for a global interdependence (Chatzidakis et al. 2020, 94-95) – which, though ultimately less expansive than the Buddhist view noted above of universal interdependence, is nearly identical in intent.

(c) Comparatively, as noted on the very second page of *The Feminist Care Tradition in Animal Ethics*, “the feminist care ethic thus has rejected abstract, rule-based principles in favor of the particulars of situational, contextual ethics, allowing for a narrative understanding of the particulars of a situation or an issue.” (Donovan and Adams 2007) This is, in essence, the same strategy that the often less abstract school of Mahayana Buddhism assumes. Compassion is central to both, and in some ways also parallels the Zen notion “of altruism and ethical excellence [...] as ‘emptiness imbued with compassion’ [...]” (Kapstein 2014, 60)

Comparatively, some Grecians also held views that animals were moral subjects. Plutarch's *De sollertia animalium* (*On the Cleverness of Animals*) "constitutes the earliest extant Greek defense of the proposition that non-human animals possess at least a modicum of reason and that human beings have a moral obligation to take account of their interests in their interactions with them." (Newmyer 2021, 3) Plutarch makes this argument in response to the Stoic contention that n-h "animals are devoid of reason", and by so challenging this view he argues that the prerequisite capacity for moral consideration "does indeed exist in all animal species." (4)

Even further back in Ancient Greece, Pythagoras believed that all animals had immortal souls and that eating them would pollute one's own – especially since reincarnation, the soul's transmigration from one body into a new one which was termed Metempsychosis, might imply that one was a different creature in a different life. (Morgan n.d.)

Another notable figure from the traditions of ancient Greek philosophy, though not Grecian himself, is Porphyry. Porphyry followed his master Plotinus in practicing vegetarianism and wrote *De Abstinentia* (*On Abstinence*), of which Voltaire (François-Marie Arouet, 1694-1778) would later note, "he regards other animals as our brothers, because they are endowed with life, the same feelings, the same ideas, memory, industry—as we. (Human) speech alone is wanting to them." (Wynne-Tyson n.d., 8)

In his *Philosophical Dictionary*, Voltaire compares the distress of a dog to that of his own. He mentions the skill of birds in the construction of their homes, and reminds us that animals have feelings and knowledge, and also that the dog "[...] prodigiously surpasses the man in friendship." (2004, 65) Here we might remember what Hua said about friendship; if dogs are truly better friends, then perhaps they are more entitled to our consideration than we humans are to each other's! Further, sticking to Voltaire, we might find a certain consonance with the present

work's argument, specifically where he says, "What is toleration? It is the prerogative of humanity. We are all steeped in weaknesses and errors: let us forgive one another's follies [...]" (387) This of course aligns well with the idea of a multicultural democracy and the goal of political liberalism.

Subsequently, David Hume (1711-1776) regarded "sympathy as a fountain of moral thought, [and] noted that sympathy can extend to sensitive creatures other than humans." However, he simultaneously believed that "the notion of justice concerns transactions among those roughly equal in power and is therefore irrelevant in our dealings with animals." (DeGrazia 2022, 5)

Just a bit later, though in roughly the same time period, Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) would go on to found utilitarianism. In contrast to his philosophical heir, Mill, Bentham took a view which listed, in *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, three types of beings to whom various relations of pleasure and pain might be accorded, "1. The Supreme Being. 2. Human beings. 3. Other animals." This is done in Chapter V which is entitled "Pleasures and Pains, Their Kinds" and lists such accordingly. The same text includes a footnote that reads "a full-grown horse or dog is incomparably more rational and conversable than an infant of a day, or a week, or even a month old. Even if that were not so, what difference would that make? The question is not *Can they reason?* or *Can they talk?* but *Can they suffer?*" (2017, 144) This shows his basis for equal consideration, which is reinforced by the fact that the text also discusses sympathy in regard to the suffering of fellow creatures, as in n-h animals, and not just humans as well. (84)

Similar in formulation, though devoid of any religious concern, the present-day utilitarian Peter Singer argues that all sentient beings deserve equal-consideration.^{xxii} While this has very much improved the discourse – Singer is largely credited for bringing animal welfare back to the public

and academic debates around ethics with the original publication of *Animal Liberation* in 1975 – it falls short of the *utility-trumping* argument that many, present author included, believe should be granted to *all* animals. Before exploring this concern however, another very important contribution to this discourse Singer makes is his assessment – echoed in the conclusion of my previous subsection – that if we consider some particular capacity as necessary for moral consideration, we inevitably should leave out a great many individual and specific humans that fail to meet the standard, and simultaneously, may very well need to admit many individual and specific n-h animals.

For example, if the capacity to reason is central, we must admit Lyla, a Bernadoodle, who has recently shown what I would call “moral restraint” – in an incident involving her adoptive human mother, my sister, and my sister’s now ex-boyfriend.

The then boyfriend, was drunk and acting aggressively, while my sister feared him and his increasingly violent actions. Lyla went over to him and made a conditional assertion.

Specifically, she made it known that she would defend my sister physically if his actions continued to escalate by putting her mouth gently over his arm and pressing lightly. This clearly indicated that she was ready to use force, to bite down with the strength of a large Bernadoodle, but also that there was room for negotiation – if he stopped she would let go. That is restraint, planning, foresight, rationality, envisioning a desired outcome, assessing the context, and acting in the caring interest of her family member. It shows that Lyla is conscious and reasoning.

The situation was novel, Lyla has not been trained to do this and in her response she even showed creativity by coming up with a strategic manner to defuse the situation. And it worked.

My sister’s now ex-boyfriend stopped and Lyla let go.^{xxiii}

Returning to utilitarianism, and consequentialist arguments more generally, the central criticism is that they focus on ameliorating outcomes in a way that often undermines the moral rights of individuals. This can be thought of as a sort of *greater good* type argument, that individual sacrifice can serve a larger purpose to which a collective might aspire.

Even having dispensed with the rationality of greater good type arguments, one might still rightly ask if some form *applied rationality* is of value and what its relationship to *intent* needs be if so. This is important because constraints on actions are often seen as limitations to freedoms, but here I want to show that freedom is not necessarily the capacity to do whatever one desires. Therefore, I propose a simple thought experiment: Assume that a person suffering some sort of severe delusion has resolved that in order to save the world from a calamitous disaster they must run into highway traffic.^{xxiv} This obviously helps no one and might generally, if unkindly, be referred to as madness. Though the individual in question might be considered to have acted of their own volition, they should not be understood as free. As Epictetus notes, “Madness and freedom are poles apart. [...] Freedom is something good and valuable; to arbitrarily wish for things to happen that arbitrarily seem to you best is not good, it’s disgraceful.” (2025, 29)

From this we can understand that rationality, when applied, does not result in very great diversions from actual good results and can still be of use in particular ways that do not efface the moral worth of individuals. In fact, we might even say that this is a *more* rational argument than the greater good type arguments. This form of applied rationality necessarily results in positive outcomes for all parties involved. This way of thinking avoids the cognitive illusions of a potentially suicidal and therefore *false* “greater good”, since no rational person looks to kill

themselves as their own good is self-possessed. To better explore this implication, we now turn to Christine M. Korsgaard.

In her 2018 book *Fellow Creatures*, Korsgaard extends Kant's idea of persons as ends rather than merely means to non-human animals. She notes that we are all beings who experience lives. And that goods are always relational, in that, a glass of water for example, is itself a neutral object.

However, if a thirsty being should be granted access to such, it is a good –

what is in a life matters because it matters to the subject of the life, and he matters. When we combine this thought with the requirement that a creature who is an end in itself should never be treated as a mere means to the ends of others, this has an important implication: that the value of a life is, first and foremost, its value *for the creature himself or herself*.

(65)

Further, Korsgaard notes that “life itself is good-for the sentient animal [...] Death is not consistent with the good of the animals.” (224-225)

In this subsection we have explored the difference between utilitarian models which maintain equal-consideration and Korsgaard's neo-Kantian approach which is utility-trumping. The value of such an assessment has been to show that no animal should ever be used merely as a means but rather should be treated as ends-in-themselves.^{xxv}

(2.3)

In this subsection I will review the central argument at hand. Because the work is about the application of personhood theory to the specific problem of healthcare services access, that discussion will be had in its own, subsequent, section – along with additional important

considerations that must be taken into account for such an argument to be fully compatible with the Canadian context. The task at hand is, more precisely, to make the link between equal animal mattering and inclusion in the political community. After all, as Korsgaard says,

A society that decides it is going to allow pet-keeping should have some kind of social infrastructure dedicated to ensuring their welfare, some sort of social services for pets. This is not as crazy as it might sound. It is the kind of work that private animal welfare organizations already do in cooperation with law enforcement, but expanded and made out into a more formal institution of our society. (234)

Chapter 3: a review of the bundle theory of personhood and non-human citizenship theory

This section builds on the previous, incorporating additional arguments necessary to bring about the conclusion that our non-human (n-h) animal companions, pets, are entitled to citizenship – without yet introducing technical considerations.

The internal sequence is as follows: (3.1) introduction to the political status of n-h animals and the present academic dialogue, (3.2) further discussion of legal rights, moral rights, and the bundle theory of legal personhood, (3.3) n-h animal citizenship – discussion of included and excluded parties.

(3.1)

Nussbaum, in her book *Justice for Animals*, extends an iteration of the Capabilities Approach (CA) to non-human (n-h) animals. In her words what this means is,

Human beings are vulnerable sentient animals, each trying to achieve a good life amid dangers and obstacles. Justice is about promoting the opportunity of each to flourish in accordance with the person's own choice, through the use of laws that both enable and restrain. [...] the CA holds that a nation is minimally just only when each person is treated as an end in some very important areas of life, their dignity respected. [...] Why on earth would such an approach to the lives of other animals not be appropriate, for similar reasons? They too are vulnerable sentient animals. [...] Korsgaard was correct in her argument that the pursuit of valued goals by an animal, all by itself, entitles the striving animal to end-like treatment: it has dignity, not just a price. (Nussbaum 2022, 95-96)^{xxvi}

She further elaborates that,

Each form of life is different. But each one is the right one for that type of being. [...] we differ in the specific nature of the goods we seek.

The CA is basically about giving striving beings a decent chance to flourish. That is how it views the role of law and government. Humans will have to take the lead in making laws and establishing the institutions of government, but there is no reason why humans should do this only *for* and *about* other humans. (97)

Essentially, what Nussbaum does in these two most important passages is argue that the CA approach to n-h animals is *not* speciesist and *does* take into account the administrative hurdles necessary to enable species-specific flourishing for all of sentience.^{xxvii}

A delineation is required here; species-specific still means that the argument is essentially speciesist – i.e. that it focuses on the general capabilities of each species per se, rather than on those of each particular individual of any given species.^{xxviii} Imagine treating a toddler human as an adult simply because they are of the same species; one might say, “Okay little one year old, you have the right to work here – as you have citizenship. Off to the factory floor with you!”

This is obviously an exaggerated simplification. The point however is important: flourishing, no matter the species, requires further specificity to the agent. We, for example, support people with say cerebral palsy with various forms of assistance – e.g. funding for assistive devices (wheelchairs, or other such things). In another way, we encourage specific types of flourishing for individuals with particularly evident talents – e.g. grants for research. It is further possible that a particular human will receive both forms of positive freedoms. Before going too far afield, the point is that we need a standard greater than simply a species-specific one. After all, can there be real dignity without *Mitsein*? Without real allowances for the individual’s agency? To be clear, the kind of dignity being discussed here is a *deontic* form of *relational dignity*, as opposed to

derivative dignity which is gained or lost through actions or inaction, or *naturalist dignity* which is inherent – begging the question of why it might matter if it is inviolable, as in, why should recognition matter if it is innate? (Zylberman 2025, 7-11) In parallel, we might also say that not acting upon the knowledge at hand would make us undignified in the derivative sense – negligent in a moral sense.

In “Towards an Agency Turn in Animal Law”, Visa Anton Julius Kurki and Paula Siemieniec identify three standards of animal representation in law. Nussbaum’s work here merits the designation at the first rung, the *Interest Standard* – it ultimately amounts to something like wardship at best even while aiming toward political empowerment.^{xxix} After this, Kurki and Siemieniec identify the second rung as the *Listening Standard*. The example they associate with such is the work of Mark Rowlands, in which he argues for a more individual-specific flourishing. Finally, the third standard is fully participatory, which Kurki and Siemieniec dub the *Empowerment Standard*.

Table 1. *The standards of animal representation in law*

Standard	Characterisation	Examples where potentially appropriate
Interest	Representation of animal interests by humans	Where being heard and empowered is inappropriate or inapplicable (eg due to communication barriers, lacking capability or more fundamental interests at stake, such as life or liberty)
Listening	Solicit input from animals, who have a right to be considered	Family law cases (divorce, adoption and ‘guardianship’, custody and access disputes); health and medical decisions about animals
Empowerment	Enable animals to make legal decisions	To veto involuntary work and captivity

(2025, 24)

Thinking back to the last section, one might remember the example of the horse that needs to be broken in order for it to be of use to a human. The Empowerment Standard would allow for the horse to fully reject training of any kind. To be clear, we already expect this in Canada for certain species. For example, at present there is an ongoing situation in which thirty-four whales, thirty belugas and four dolphins, are in limbo as Marineland, a company that used to train the animals to act on command, awaits confirmed permission to ship the animals somewhere where they will no longer be expected to perform nor breed into the restraints of further captivity. (Brown 2026)

This could be important in a medical context as not everyone has, for example, the same pain tolerance. Some humans choose Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID) under circumstances in which some might instead accept a perpetual refill prescription for opioids. That is to say, we must be attentive to the specific persons as individuals. Resultantly, a species-specific response to medical treatment is unlikely to be good enough in every case. If we started saying that a human who suffers in some such particular way should be *put down* – as in adopting language presently used with non-human animals, we would in effect be deciding for a species-specific group when they ought to die, thus removing agency even if we listened to their input. This is not to say that we cannot refuse to assist in dying, and it is for just such a reason that MAID cases in Canada are required to undergo a process to assess the situation in which someone is requesting said assistance. (Department of Justice Canada 2024)

This, of course, does not preclude a more general employment of species-specific healthcare. Simply, what is meant by such a system still requires a deeper recognition of the individual as our healthcare for humans does. And so, we would not give a sedative for cows to a human and vice-versa. We simply treat the patient as an individual – not to say that good veterinarians do

not already do this, there just is no national act requiring health services for pets as of yet.

(3.2)

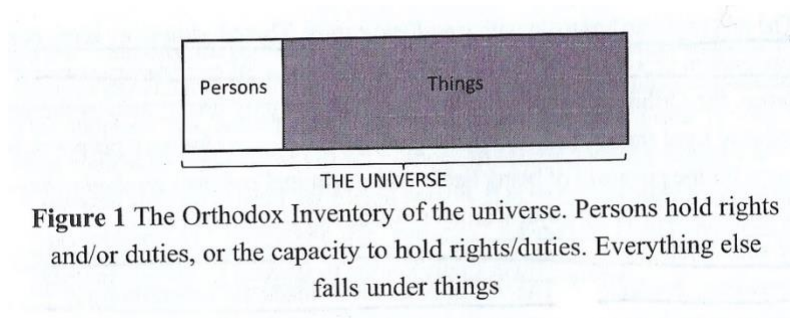
A claim-right is "a position of deontic protectedness", and a legal duty is "a requirement that makes some kind(s) of interference or uncooperativeness legally impermissible". (Kramer 2025, 2) The argument at hand is, resultantly, that pets in Canada should have a specific claim-right, and that Canadian human citizens should have a legal duty to maintain such for said specific n-h animals. The specific claim-right is access to publicly funded healthcare services, and the legal duty is for human citizens to maintain such. Though this argument can be made in a variety of ways, it is my contention that such is most reasonably achieved by giving n-h animals personhood and citizenship. This subsection deals with the former and the next with the latter.

Here, it is important to remember that this argument centres a recognitive model – *Mitsein*, in the sense used by Frederick A. Olafson. As noted in the previous section, this is a *deontic* form of *relational dignity*. Drawing from Ariel Zylberman’s legal philosophy, this as a “non-reductivist and holistic” model of dignity and rights – specifically in which, “dignity and rights are dynamic relational properties: [which] in their natural guise, [...] exist independently of conventional recognition, yet they are [only truly] actualized or completed through relations of recognition.” (2025, 37)

Recognition is resultantly inseparable from discussions of rights, and further, this has important implications when considering what personhood is and why it is centred in the present discussion. To better understand this concern, we must ask a specific question, namely: how does personhood work in legal theory?

In his 2021 article “Legal Personhood and Animal Rights”, Kurki notes that, “a legal person is an entity that holds, or can hold, legal rights; a thing is either property or simply an entity without rights.” (49)

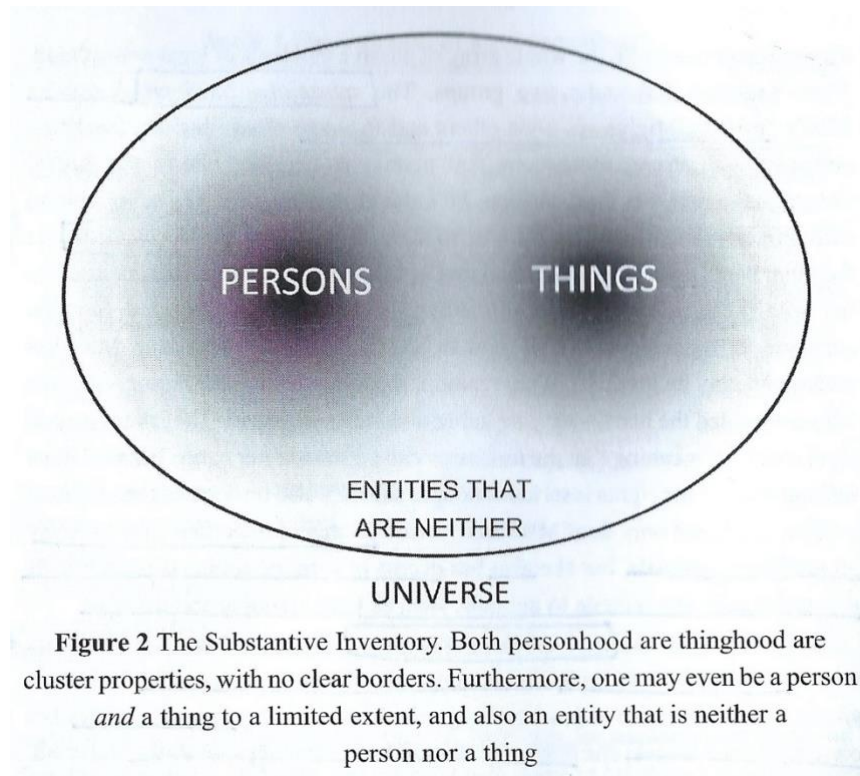
Two years later, in his book *Legal Personhood*, Kurki notes that there are two types of existences perceived in common legal theory; these are intuitive positions in what he terms *the Orthodox Inventory* – in which, an existence can either be a person or a thing. That is to say, anything not ascribed personhood is de facto considered a thing.



(11)

To make short the discussion apropos such inflexibility, one need only note that *legally* corporations are considered both persons and things throughout most of the world.^{xxx} So even if it is conventionally understood that legal understandings are generally bound to some idea of the Orthodox Inventory, the notion itself is entirely contextually implausible. The model holds no real-world weight.

Therefore, in order to better understand the world as it *actually* is, Kurki puts forth *the Substantive Inventory*, of which his central argument is for an adoption of a specific iteration, *the Bundle Theory of Legal Personhood*. In such, “Legal personhood is not about *whether* one holds rights and/or duties, but about *how many* and *what kind of* rights and/or duties one holds.”



(16)

This model is invaluable not only as it explains the actual way in which legal personhood comes about, but also in the context of *any* argument for legal non-human personhood. Take for example what I call *the Minimum Proposition of Legal Non-Human Personhood*, that *at least* certain animals meet the required threshold for personhood given the rights we already extend to them. This is the type of proposition that usually relies on some differentiating criteria, like a definition of rationality for example. We already briefly touched on one example in which we might apply the Minimum Proposition; in the last section we discussed the case of the final surviving whales of Marineland. This instance of complication came about due to the codification of Canada's *Ending the Captivity of Whales and Dolphins Act* in 2019, which enshrined certain protections for whales in Canada.

Subsection 2 of the *Ending the Captivity of Whales and Dolphins Act* specifies that “[...] every one commits an offence who (a) owns, has the custody of or controls a cetacean that is kept in captivity; (b) breeds or impregnates a cetacean; or (c) possesses or seeks to obtain reproductive materials of cetaceans, including sperm or an embryo.” In legal philosophy this part of the act can be described as granting Hohfeldian rights, specifically a liberty entitlement, for the whales, and a no-right for humans in regard to said cetaceans. Granted that we similarly do not allow the unlawful imprisonment of humans, as persons, I posit that it is in such context that we can start to see the contours of an enshrined form of personhood for n-h animals in the Canadian context.

This approach has an older parallel, and as with the assessment of the animal rationality argument for moral consideration, it can be described as being premised on similarity – which is, in fact, what Nussbaum calls the “So Like Us” approach originally advocated for by Steven Wise, founder of the Nonhuman Rights Project (NhRP). The difference, however, is that the basis for granting personhood is not grounded upon attribute similarity but rather legal positionality. In other words, we are belatedly *acknowledging* the personhood that should already be evident from the legal context in which certain animals find themselves and then extending it to encompass ones who we have yet to attain such legal ground thereby eliminating the need to debate anything other than the citizenship and associated rights of said animals. We might call this argument the *Maximum Proposition of Legal Non-Human Personhood* – thus allowing for interstitial arguments.

Importantly, “Accordingly to the bundle theory, legal personhood consists of numerous elements, not all of which always come together.” (Kurki 2021, 48) This allows the theory to find consonance with differences in allocations of particular resources such as supports and obligations such as levels of taxation that are already in function within democratic liberal

societies like that of Canada.

(3.3)

In constructing their argument for “Towards an Agency Turn in Animal Law”, Kurki and Siemieniec look to “Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka, who promote a more expansive conception of agency that feminist and disability thinkers have developed. This conception encompasses a wider range of political actors and activity. Donaldson and Kymlicka argue for an inclusive conception of citizenship that extends the right to active political participation to domesticated animals because of their membership in society and claims as stakeholders.” (2025, 3)

Donaldson and Kymlicka, for their part, have been the central advocates of the extension of citizenship to some n-h animals. Their book *Zoopolis* defines the fundamental contours which allow us to conceive the distinctions between in and out groups for citizenship, and so this section briefly summarizes their argument as the final point of the current section.

In their model, Donaldson and Kymlicka define three different categories of n-h animals in relation to humans:

First, there are *Domesticated Animal Citizens*. These are the animals that are already part of our society, should be considered community members, and for who there are no

other forms of existence [. ... Resultantly,] we have a duty to include them in our social a duty to include them in our social and political arrangements on fair terms. As such, they have rights of *membership*—rights that go beyond the universal rights owed to all animals, and which are hence relational and differentiated [. ...] the appropriate conceptual

framework for thinking about these relational membership rights is that of *citizenship*. Citizenship, in turn, has at least three core elements: residency (this is their home, they belong here), inclusion in the sovereign people (their interests count in determining the public good), and agency (they should be able to shape the rules of cooperation). (2014, 101)

Here it is worth pausing to note, that in *Zoopolis*, Donaldson and Kymlicka describe domesticated n-h animals as though they have been domesticated *by* us. I think this is correct only in instances where the discussed n-h animals need to be “broken” – like the example of horses in the previous section. In other instances, I propose we look to the thoughts of two other thinkers. In his book *The Domesticated Brain*, Bruce Hood argues that humans are *self-domesticated* – that our relational socialization is the process of domestication itself. (2014) And in the introduction to *How to Care About Animals*, M.D. Usher, the collection’s compiler, editor, and translator, notes that “our interactions with fellow creatures are best described as a long process of *codomestication*.” (Porphyry et al. 2023, xiv) By this, I mean to say, that societies themselves are what domesticate, or that, it is our innumerable social interrelations that codomesticate. Only animals that are forced in some way to be entirely subservient to human whims, like say whales bred in captivity and made to perform tricks, are domesticated – our community members, both human and n-h alike, are codomesticated.^{xxx1}

This note also allows us to weave in a thought of Korsgaard’s; specifically, that these n-h animals with which we share our lives are essentially interdependent *with* us. Specifically in her instance, she points toward her cats.

And so, with this minor aside, I re-enter the point of recognition, the idea of being-with – Mitsein.

Second in the *Zoopolis* framework are *Wild Animals as Sovereign*. These are n-h animals that live independently of humans, in their own communities, and who are for all intents and purposes, not direct subjects of our laws – unless they attack us, in which case we humans usually kill them, or if we decide to take their land for our own purposes. (There are serious ethical considerations to be had in regard to both of these exceptions, however they fall out of purview of the present document.) Think here of animals like narwhal.

The third and final classification of related animals is that of *Liminal Animals as Denizens*. These n-h animals live in or near our settlements but are not integrated into our societies. Importantly, “liminal animals have no place else to live [– they have coevolved with our societies, or been displaced by our constructions and adapted]; urban areas are their home and their habitat.” (2014, 212) Further, “Whatever our obligations towards liminal animals, they cannot be captured by a principle of non-interference. Every time we erect a fence, build a house, or establish a park, we are interfering with the activities of liminal animals, sometimes in ways that benefit them, sometimes in ways that harm them.” (213) In this instance we might consider animals like mice or squirrels.

As the second and third categories are not central to this work, I will leave them aside. That being said, it may be worth reiterating some points on our n-h animal companions.

These particular n-h animals, as noted in the introduction, are subject to our laws – that is to say, they have certain obligations. They also have certain rights enshrined in our laws, for example in the Canadian Criminal Code, Section 445.1 Subsection 1, “Everyone commits an offence who (a) willfully causes or being the owner, willfully permits to be caused unnecessary pain, suffering or injury to an animal or a bird; (b) in any manner encourages, aids, promotes, arranges, assists at, receives money for or takes part in (i) the fighting or baiting of animals or birds, or (ii) the

training, transporting or breeding of animals or birds for the purposes of subparagraph (i)”.
(Department of Justice Canada 2026a)

These two points together, of course, substantiate their eligibility for personhood in any iteration of the Substantive Inventory, and I believe demand it under the requirements of the Bundle Theory of Legal Personhood. And finally, our pets are interdependent with us, codomesticated members of our communities, and generally regarded as family. In short, they are at least also *unrecognized* residents, if not, as Donaldson and Kymlicka posit, unrecognized *citizens*. After all, they already maintain all the necessary social attributes but are not yet tied to political power.

And with that lack of political power in mind, it seems worth at least glancing at Donaldson and Kymlicka’s “Doing Politics with Animals” (2023). The central concern of which, is that the prevailing attitude in the dialogue to present, has been that animals are only capable of being *political patients* and not *political agents*. “In its own way, this plays into long-standing tropes of animals as voiceless and incompetent.” (624)^{xxxii}

Resultantly, they argue that,

Rather than trying to fit animals into existing ideas of politics with their problematic assumptions that political subjectivity/agency requires rising above dependency, the body, and place, the idea of politics should start from the realities of interdependence, embodiment, and embeddedness in ecology and place. And rather than asking how to represent animals’ interests in human decision-making, a better starting place is to ask what kinds of politics animals themselves engage in. (625)

They take pains to remind us that,

many animals are genuinely social and cultural beings – reasoning, norm-complying, and behaviorally flexible individuals who come to be who they are within a particular social and cultural group whose practices are passed down through social learning, not (or not just) instinct. (626)

Further, they state, that

many animals [...] develop cooperative arrangements across species boundaries [...] Some of these are evolved symbiosis that may have strong instinctive basis [remember here, the term: codomestication]; others are minded and deliberate adaptations to new situations and opportunities. (626)

Most animals engage in some kind of social behaviour at various points throughout their lives, many species consistently exhibit prosocial behaviours, and a great number live communally. Resultantly, “Researchers have come to discover that being embedded in social networks plays a critical role in almost every aspect of animal life: what they eat, how they protect themselves, whom they mate with, the dynamics of parent-offspring relations, power struggles, navigation, communication, play, cooperation, culture, and more.” (Dugatkin 2024, xii) They observe, modify, and create new norms. In some species, it even makes sense to speak of prosocial norms of “justice” evidenced by their social behaviour. (Bekoff and Pierce 2009) They co-operate and perform signalling by various means to show alignment with ingroups and define the boundaries of their social lives. They encode information on a contextual basis, using skills like vocalization (e.g. growls and chirps) and specific motions (e.g. bowing and standing tall) differently whether at play or in defense. The politics of n-h animals involves “myriad practices for navigating the complexities of group living, especially when the group is made of diverse individuals with both shared and competing interests.” (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2023, 627)^{xxxiii}

An example given in “Doing Politics with Animals” is of actual voting that occurs among wild horses who are divided on whether or not to collectively go to eat and drink. One internal faction is composed of nursing foals who require the additional energy of a meal, and the other is the faction that presently prefers to sleep. In such an instance, the group might gather to decide whether to subdivide, thus allowing for both actions to be collectively taken, or not – if danger is about and security is a concern. Donaldson and Kymlicka call this a *fission-fusion strategy*.

Noting that,

From a political theory perspective, fission-fusion in animal societies looks something like federalism in human political arrangements—in other words, different levels or scales of decision-making that correspond to different kinds of shared, overlapping, or conflicting interests. [... Proving that] humans are not the only zoon politikon. (628-629)

Still, this does not bridge the gap, as it is yet to “offer a vision of politics as something humans and animals do together.” (630) Resultantly, Donaldson and Kymlicka distinguish between degrees of two main factors; (1) *shared sociability* – “At one end of this spectrum, humans and domesticated animals typically share the enabling conditions for thick interspecies sociability: safe proximity, mutual communicative intelligibility, and reduced fear. At the other end, there are animals with whom this sort of sociability is unlikely or inadvisable (e.g. cobras, grizzly bears) and many wild animals who avoid contact with humans due to their experience or fight or flight responses.” And (2) degrees of *territorial overlap* – which they also describe as spatial entanglement.

Importantly, these factors allow us to assess our relationships and need for engagement with the politics of such creatures. Particularly, “the more humans and animals share a common social world and/or a common territorial and ecological space, the more joint politics is called for.”

(631) (The transverse antipode implying a need to respect boundaries, or perhaps even entrench them – again, this is out of scope, so I will not elaborate further.)

Donaldson and Kymlicka advocate doing politics with both “domesticated and liminal animals” – which of course in my language would mean domesticated, codomesticated, and liminal; at least until such a time as we no longer domesticate animals – i.e. allow for an appropriate level autonomy, self-determination, for all animals living in domestic situations with us to decide for themselves whether or not to stay in the relationships on offer – in the way many already do with “outdoor” house cats who move freely between their homes and neighbourhoods. Like Purring Cat from the introduction, who already decides to subject herself to medical treatment by not simply abandoning the family member(s) who takes her for check-ups and shots at least once a year, and maybe more as she gets older and requires more complicated support.^{xxxiv} This, of course, can be described as an application of the Empowerment Standard.

Because our concern is, at least primarily, with codomesticated animals, we will finish this section with a deeper exploration of how we might employ such an Empowerment Standard with them and why, as with humans, citizenship is necessarily defined by spatial residence.

For their part, Donaldson and Kymlicka point to differences between sanctuaries for rescued and escaped farm animals. Specifically, they contrast sanctuaries that simply administer care inattentive to the desires of said animals (this would amount to an application of the Interest Standard), with sanctuaries in which some are given freedom of association between species, and where the human caretakers are attentive to their preferences (thus maintaining the Empowerment Standard).

The specific example they use, is that of chickens at VINE Sanctuary. These particular chickens do not much like being picked up in open spaces but are amenable to being checked for health issues on their way out of “the coop in the morning”, which is one example of how the sanctuary uses “careful observation and response to what animals propose about how to organize space, how to use objects, how to engage newcomers to the community, how to alter routines, and many other practices.” This prefigures “the kind of joint human-animal politics that will become possible and necessary once domesticated animals’ right to self-determination is recognized and supported more broadly.”^{xxxv} From this we see, as pertinent to my argument, that there is an inseparable relationship between the application of the Empowerment Standard and doing politics with animals.

Further, as Donaldson and Kymlicka note, “human-animal politics exists all around us. Unfortunately, people often fail to see this reality due to a number of theoretical blinders.” Resultantly, “human-animal politics requires rethinking what is meant by a political community.” (page 635) For our purposes, it will suffice to note that in the instance of occasions/locations like the aforementioned sanctuary, there are other n-h animals not tied by our shared socio-spatial arrangements (e.g. foxes and other liminal species), and that they alongside us (humans and former farm animals) are *denizens* of such a space. But with our “distinctive rights and responsibilities”, we are also co-citizens *with* the chickens and other former farm animals “tied to ideas of social membership.” That is to say, “A sanctuary is not a single community, but a messier place of overlapping communities, and this requires a way of understanding communal self-determination that starts from interdependence and overlap, not separation and independence.” Not to belabour the point, “rights and responsibilities” can easily be described in parallel as the requisite “rights and/or obligations” required for personhood – that is to say, in the

context of my argument, that the requisites for personhood maintain an inseparable relationship with the requisites for citizenship.

The same understanding can, of course, be applied to all other physical spaces we inhabit. As “co-citizenship in a membership-based political community authorized [inevitably comes] with a broad spectrum of shared concerns (e.g. social services, distributive justice, inculcation of norms of civility, etc.).” (637)

Finally, “Doing Politics with Animals” also identifies another “key theoretical blinder, which is about accessibility.” (639)^{xxxvi} In such context, we acknowledge that “the shared territory of self-governing groups serves as the holder and bearer of collective identities.” That is to say, that “Material and ecological environments [...] are not just the containers or settings within which politics takes place, [...] they] also play a central role in bearing and holding individual and collective subjectivities.” Importantly, “Perhaps even more than humans, animals have located lives tied to specific habitats. And so they too should be seen as having powerful place-based rights.” (640)

Chapter 4: a comparative assessment of the arguments for pet healthcare in Canada

With the groundwork for non-human (n-h) animal mattering (to the extent that they are ends in themselves), personhood (of the moral and legal kind), and citizenship (being a step beyond simply persons with resident status) set by previous sections, we now proceed to the specific issue of access to public healthcare.

In what ways could one justify the cost of a nationalized healthcare system, of any kind, for n-h animal companions in the Canadian context?

The reductive anthropocentric answer might simply be to point to research coming out of Johns Hopkins Medicine, which lists the following health benefits to human companions of n-h animals: reduced stress, lower blood pressure, increased physical activity, boosted heart health, as well as decreased loneliness and depression. (2024) However, the context of the present argument requires more than just this one statement of common benefits. Therefore, this section looks to understand whether or not there are specific and statistically evident benefits to pet healthcare and further to understand what kind of healthcare is most effective more generally in order to advocate for the best possible option. Given that more than 80% of Canadians have pets, this is accomplished by (a) confirming that preventative medicine is the most efficient form of healthcare in regard to *quality-adjusted life years (QALY)*^{xxxvii}, and positive *economic outcomes* in terms of cost effectiveness over time – i.e. long-term budgetary impacts at micro (individual and community), meso (city), regional (provincial and territorial), and macro (national and global) scales. That is to say that lives lived with the intervention of preventative medicine are better experienced, more cost-efficient, and more productive. This is of obvious benefit to the animals themselves, their companion humans, and the community at large. And (b) by relating this back to the normative theories reviewed in previous sections, which allows us to bolster the

central argument of the present work, I infer that we should indeed invest in a nationalized healthcare system for n-h animal companions.

There are only two subsections here: (4.1) Verification of the assumption that preventative medicine is indeed statistically more effective in attaining higher scoring QALY and economic outcomes – essentially responding to the question, “Are the lives lived with preventative medicine better and is the cost financially sound?” And (4.2) which ethical schools of thought can be used to normatively justify publicly funded healthcare for pets?

(4.1)

This subsection argues that preventative medicine is statistically more effective in attaining higher scoring QALY and positive economic outcomes. This is important because investing in something as expansive as n-h animal companion healthcare would be at least initially costly, and so it would be important to know both that it is worth it – and if so how, as well as how best to make such an investment. The value of such an analysis is that, from such, one can disambiguate the types of benefits that can come from the investment – is it good just for the pets? Is it possibly also economically sound? Does it perhaps contribute to the lives of humans as well? Ultimately, it is my contention that we can satisfy all these desirable outcomes, which of course, will be related back to the normative arguments under review in the next section.

In order prove that the statement “preventative medicine is statistically more effective in relation to quality-adjusted life years (QALY), and economic outcomes” accurately reflects reality it is necessary to not make the assumption without significant data. Therefore, we look to a human healthcare umbrella review that assesses long-term costs versus those of intervention, and a

quantitative assessment of specific healthcare uptake for pets. This dual review approach allows us to ensure that the argument is not human specific while still confirming the claim holds generally.

The umbrella review is a 2023 paper entitled “Modeling Long-Term Budgetary impacts of Prevention: An Overview of Meta-Analyses of Relationships Between Key Health Outcomes Across the Life-Course” by Nathaniel Z. Counts, Mark E. Feinberg, Jin-Kyung Lee, and Justin D. Smith, which synthesizes data from thirty-seven meta-analyses showing that the value of early interventions is evident in long-term cost savings that can thereby be realised.

The paper looks to address the concern that

Despite increasing evidence for the cost-savings associated with upstream interventions to prevent chronic diseases, policymakers and other public and private entities continue to invest few resources in prevention. [And how] This arises in part because the budgeting frameworks they use do not effectively incorporate long-term cost-savings. (178)

In order to overcome this deficiency, the authors developed a cascading path model – that is, a framework that allows for a sequential understanding of events and their relationships. Thus, allowing for the comparison of upstream versus downstream costs – i.e. preventative interventions versus lack thereof.^{xxxviii} Specifically the researchers reviewed

meta-analyses that link health risk factors in the perinatal and early childhood period with high-cost health conditions later in life through intermediate health outcomes in a cascade of spreading effects and cumulative consequences. [Further,] To be included, a meta-analysis had to examine the association between an included health risk factor and a health-related outcome. (179)^{xxxix}

Below is a diagram more fully explicating the selection process for meta-analyses.^{x1}

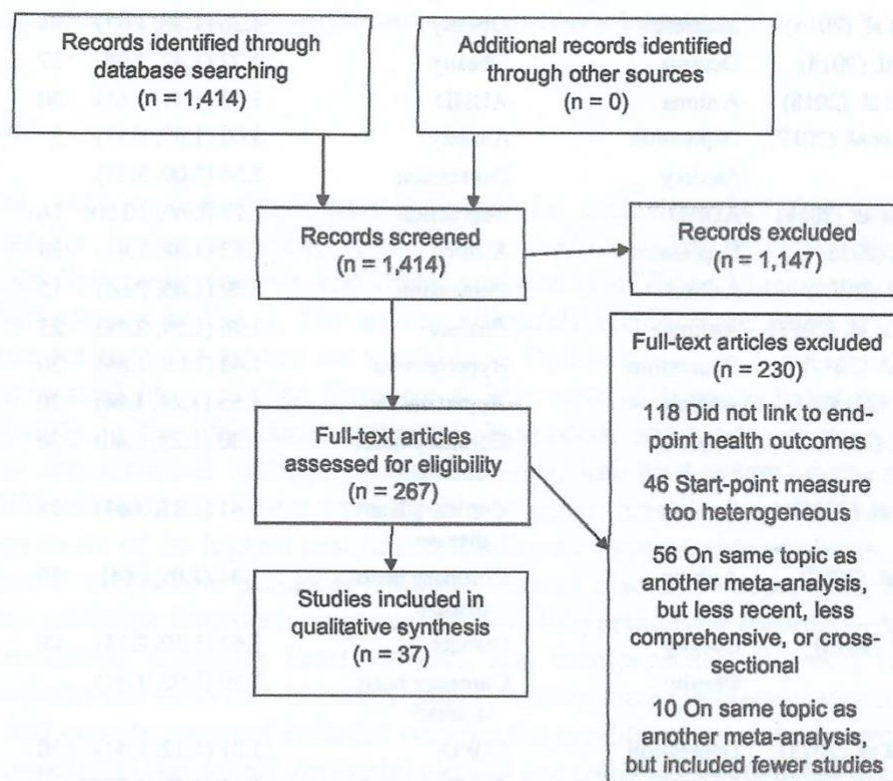


Fig. 1 PRISMA flowchart for systematic review

(181)

Here is a sample and explanation of how the resultant findings work in context:

Table 2 Associations between key health outcomes across the life-course

Risk factor	Health outcome	Odds ratio	95% CI
Antenatal depression	Preterm birth	1.37	(1.04, 1.81)
	Low birthweight birth	1.30	(1.02, 1.67)
	Depression	1.79	(1.61, 1.99)
	Anxiety	1.50	(1.36, 1.64)

(184)

In this diagram we see that, for example, antenatal depression – i.e. a serious but treatable clinical mood disorder experienced by women during pregnancy, increases the odds of a preterm birth, a.k.a. a premature birth, by approximately 37%. That is what the “odds ratio” indicates by being “1.37” (where “1.0”, conversely, would mean no association in either decreased or increased risk). The “95% CI” is what is called a confidence interval, in this instance it tells us that antenatal depression likely increases the odds of preterm birth, and the true increase is likely somewhere between 4% and 81%.^{xli}

And finally, here is a diagram that shows the verified connections between causal events:

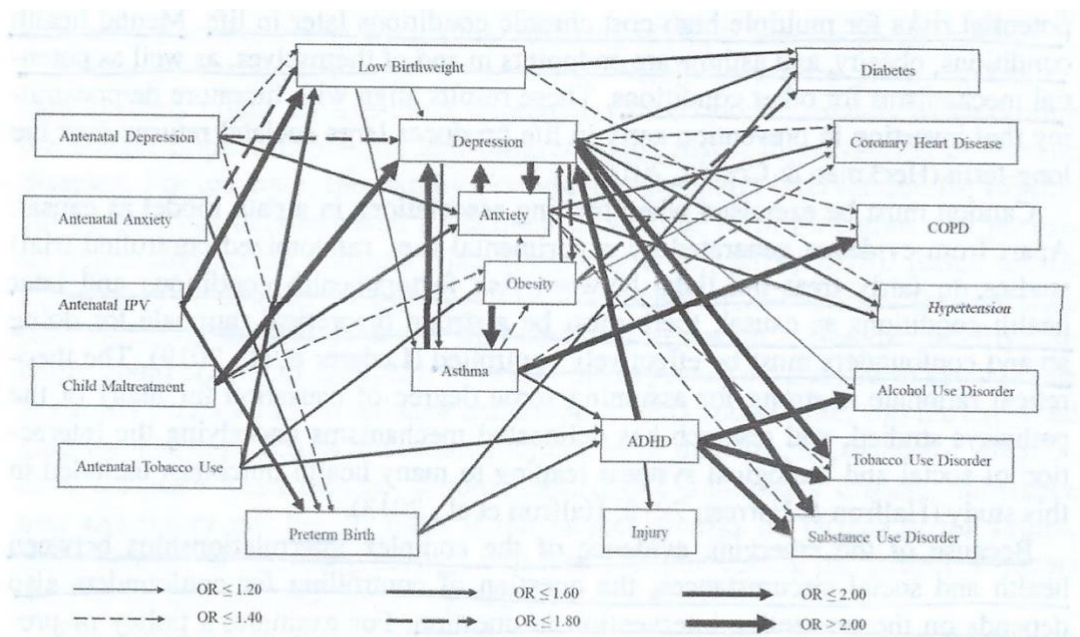


Fig. 2 Cascading associations between health risks and health outcomes. *ADHD* Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, *COPD* Chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder, *IPV* Intimate partner violence, *OR* Odds ratio

(185)

The implication is clear, that long-term healthcare costs are multiples of those of intervention.

All secondary health outcomes identified by the review are chronic with the sole exception being

low birthweight, and all tertiary or final health outcomes are chronic. Chronic health concerns require upkeep; they are repeatedly financially taxing. As a single example, months of treatment for antenatal depression are significantly less costly than years of treatment for any subsequent issue. This is obviously a significant problem for the individual(s) involved and potentially any system of care that they might access – both in terms of ancillary complications (e.g. stressors that degrade quality of life) and financial costs.^{xlii} Resultantly it makes evident that such cost would be borne unto QALY for the individual in that not only might their years be of degraded quality but they might also die younger. A further implication of this is lost productivity – as the unwell underperform compared to respective counterparts in better condition. (Keramat et al., 2025)^{xliii} Suffice to say, the above negatively affect economic outcomes.

With the knowledge that long-term healthcare costs are multiples of those of intervention, we now turn to a specific piece of research exploring the opportunity cost of medical intervention involving n-h animals in order to bolster this chapter’s central claim - that we, Canadians, should indeed invest in a nationalized healthcare system for n-h animal companions.

The 2025 paper entitled “First quantitative assessment of the effects of parasite control in dogs and cats in the UK” presents a quantitative assessment of how parasite prevention impacts the health and finances of pet owners in the United Kingdom – specifically via a “modelling framework designed to estimate the health and economic benefits of parasite prevention in UK companion animals, focusing on averted infections and associated veterinary cost savings.”

(Gianelli et al., 1)

The paper contrasts two scenarios,

Scenario A represented current, in which pets were classified into three groups: regularly treated, occasionally treated, or untreated. These estimates reflect current practices in the UK [... And] Scenario B represented optimized coverage, assuming that all pets receiving occasional treatment under Scenario A would instead receive regular, guide-aligned treatment. (4)

Below is a diagram depicting the calculation approach used in the research:

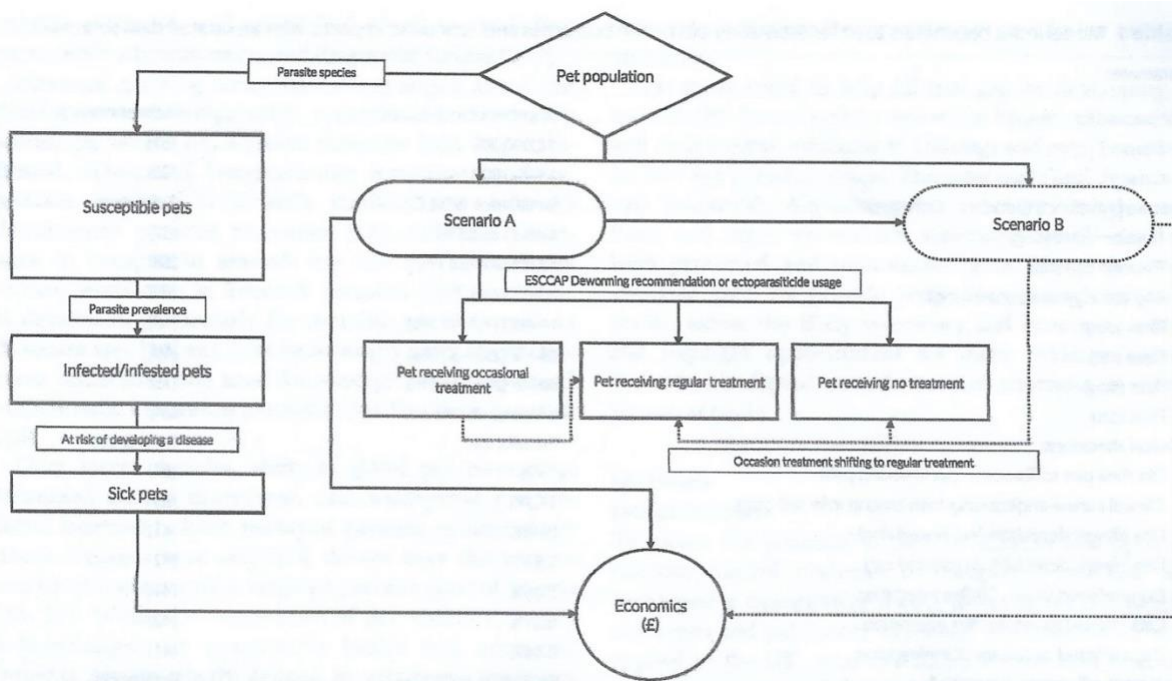


Fig. 1 Diagram depicting the calculation approach, with relationship between parasite species, pet susceptibility, and treatment scenarios

(4)

Two important notes about this research are that (a) “The total cost of treating clinically affected animals was estimated from average veterinary expenses incurred by pet owners, including

examination, diagnostics, hospitalization, and therapy.” (5) And (b) that “Direct health costs were estimated from the probability that infected or infested animals would develop clinical disease requiring veterinary examination, diagnostics, and treatment.” (2)

Resultantly, the researchers found that current parasite measures save households around £53 million a year, and that optimal coverage could result in around £95.2 million in savings. That is to say, an additional £43.2 million in savings are estimated granted optimal coverage – or a 81.5% increase in savings.^{xliv}

In their discussion, the researchers noted that the study provides “quantitative evidence that optimizing parasite control in companion animals can deliver substantial health and economic benefits. [... And that] Effective parasite control benefits both animal welfare and human health”. (page 9) Further, the authors raise the concern of a lack of data and tracking on zoonotic disease – i.e. disease transmissible between humans and other animal species. They note that livestock animals are an exception, yet companion animals rarely enter the picture.

Ultimately the authors conclude that the “study provides evidence that current preventive parasite treatments in UK dogs and cats deliver substantial health and economic benefits. These benefits extend beyond individual animal welfare, influencing public health, veterinary economics, and the human-animal bond.” (10)

Given these micro economic and public health benefits it is evident that such investment on a national scale would decrease psychological distress and resultant health concerns for human family members of any n-h animal companions covered under such a regime. Which, again, are at minimum 71% of Canadians – so the majority of Canadians would benefit. And further, as over 80% of Canadian households have a pet regardless of whether or not they consider them

family, this argument actually covers an even greater percentage of the population than simply those who consider n-h animal companions family. Additionally, as noted above, pets are also beneficial to human health outcomes more generally – so much so that therapy dogs are common in universities and through programs like Therapeutic Paws of Canada. (Carleton University Mental Health and Wellness 2026; University of Ottawa Campus Life 2026; One Health & Wellness at the University of Saskatchewan 2026; Therapeutic Paws of Canada 2026)

(4.2)

This subsection addresses the question: What are the implications of this information in regard to the potential normative frameworks and other potentially important theoretical structures that might be applied? It responds in broad strokes defining such frameworks and structures based on the previous sections.

Given that it would be cost effective, as in it would benefit economic outcomes to invest in pet healthcare of any sort on a national scale, we can confirm that such would find consonance with the classical macroeconomic view that the Canadian government affirms.

Given that doing so would lessen suffering among all sentient beings we can confirm that it would be in accord with Buddhist ethics. Additionally, that QoL would be generally improved makes it consonant with utilitarian ethics. Such an extension of moral consideration further works with Christine M. Korsgaard's neo-Kantian approach, not only because she explicitly notes that we should create such infrastructure in her work, but also because it acknowledges n-h animal companions as ends in themselves with their own bounded goods.

Given that it centres care and the interconnectedness of our national community it would find additional consonance with Buddhist ethics as well as care ethics. This mutuality aligns it with the ideals of indigenous philosophies of the Americas as described by Robin Wall Kimmerer as well. This interest in mutuality also evidences alignment with Martha C. Nussbaum's Capabilities Approach.

Given that it adheres to a recognition of n-h animal companions such actions would be in keeping with Yiran Hua's ideals of friendship, Frederick A. Olafson's iteration of Mitsein, Charles Taylor's recognition framework, as well as the multicultural and political liberal ideal of overlapping consensus between our many views, and also liberal socialist solidarity.

And finally, in a perhaps seemingly roundabout way, because this is ultimately a very rational argument and is thereby tolerable and aligns with the will "as a capacity to choose *only that* which reason, independently of inclination, recognizes as practically necessary, i.e. good", it also satisfies central needs to both stoic and Kantian ideals. (2012, 4:413) Again, further bolstering its position in regard to the kind of liberalism the present text advocates.

Critically, none of these arguments require personhood for n-h animal companions – that is to say, that they can all be used to argue for pet healthcare whether or not we recognize pets as persons. However, the central liberal argument is bolstered by such recognition as they collectively attain the prized position on a Venn diagram and are found within the confines of our overlapping consensus. We can therefore conclude that it is the resultant combinatory value of such a version of such an argument that is strongest and best enriches the liberal theoretical tradition.

Chapter 5: pragmatic considerations – how healthcare coverage works in Canada and the implications of the different arguments for extending such services to n-h animal companions

Philosophical certainty is not enough; therefore, this section turns to pragmatic considerations, that is to say, to the present reality of healthcare service implementation in Canada – both as it relates to the Canada Health Act (CHA) and other related legal and localized mechanisms. In turn these pragmatics will be related back to the arguments for non-human animal companion healthcare service access and facilitation.

This section is thus subdivided into (5.1) legal mechanisms at play, and (5.2) precedence and potential for further integration.

(5.1)

At present Canadian *human* residents receive health services through insurance schemes operated at a provincial level. Importantly, a *resident* in the context of the CHA is defined as “in relation to a province, a person lawfully entitled to be or to remain in Canada who makes his home and is ordinarily present in the province, but does not include a tourist, a transient or a visitor to the province”. (4) This definition, importantly, is not limited to humans *per se*, but to *persons* – the term “human”, at no point whatsoever, comes up in the Act itself.

Additionally, the preamble to the Act states, among other things, “that continued access to quality health care without financial or other barriers will be critical to maintaining and improving the health and well-being of Canadians.” It also makes note that it is the responsibility of citizens to participate in the promotion of health and that “the Parliament of Canada wishes to

encourage the development of health services throughout Canada by assisting the provinces in meeting costs [...]” (1, 2)

Another very important definition maintained by the Act is that a *health care practitioner* “means a person lawfully entitled under the law of a province to provide health services in the place in which the services are provided by that person”. (3) This definition, in theory at least, should allow for veterinarians to be covered – as they are persons who are lawfully entitled to provide health services where they are.

Note that, veterinarians are provincially regulated. So, for example, Ontario’s broad-reach Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Appeal and Review Boards Act provides the legislative authority for the Health Professional Appeal and Review Board (HPARB) to review decisions made by the College of Veterinarians of Ontario (CVO)'s Inquiries, Complaints and Reports Committee (ICRC) and Registration Committee. (Ontario Ministry of Health 2026)^{xlv}

The College of Veterinarians operates under specific Ontario legislation, namely the Veterinarians Act –

established by the Government of Ontario, provides a framework for the licensing of veterinarians and the accreditation of the veterinary facilities. The Act also governs the practice of veterinary medicine in Ontario and sets out the authority framework for the College. The Ontario government recently approved new legislation, the *Veterinary Professionals Act*. (College of Veterinarians of Ontario 2026)

All this to say that, structurally, the integration of health systems is legally already a reality. The missing piece is personhood.

Within its own terms, the purpose of the CHA is “to establish criteria and conditions in respect of insured health services and extended health care services provided under provincial law that must be met before a full cash contribution may be made.” (5) In essence, the CHA dictates under which conditions provinces and territories are to receive federal cash contributions for their respective healthcare programs – this is called the Canada Health Transfer, or CHT for short.^{xlvi}

The criteria include “(a) public administration; (b) comprehensiveness; (c) universality; (d) portability; and (e) accessibility.” (5) Important at present is that “In order to satisfy the criterion respecting universality, the health care insurance plan of a province must entitle one hundred percent of the insured persons of the province to the insured health services provided for by the plan on uniform terms and conditions.” (6)

The CHA is much more comprehensive. However, for present purposes, this sufficiently illustrates why the limitation to its reach is at present really only one of the definition of personhood. Such, as noted in the previous section as well, aligns with the argument for cost savings that could be achieved alongside entangled and shared health benefits by the extension of healthcare services access to n-h animal companions, otherwise known as pets. A barebones iteration of this argument would not extend citizenship, only personhood – these animals are already registered residents so long as their human companions are respecting municipal bylaw. Therefore, it is not strictly necessary that they be extended full citizenship, however, and this is important, as citizenship ensures certain advantages, and this is the kind of coverage that I am advocating for.^{xlvi}

(5.2)

Here, we return to a previously noted but not fully explored facet of the present context; that the human residents of Canada simply accept that part of the cost of having pets is the requisite financial expense on veterinary medicine. This is, of course, not a foregone conclusion, just a present reality.

As late as 2025, only 3.8% of Canadian pets have some sort of insurance coverage. (Recamara 2025) That is not none, it is only a very small percentage, leaving the majority uninsured.^{xlviii}

80% of this market is controlled by Trupanion, Petsecure, and Desjardins, and

Most Canadian insurers offer three tiers of coverage: accident-only, accident and illness, and comprehensive plans. Coverage limits typically range from \$5,000 to \$20,000 per year. Add-ons such as dental, preventive care, and behavioural therapy are available, though at additional cost. Policies often exclude pre-existing conditions and may impose waiting periods or age restrictions, limiting access for older pets or those with chronic issues.

This indicates that roughly 96% of Canadian pets are uninsured.

That being said, not all pet medical support is costly. In fact, there are some services available that are subsidized or free.

PAWS Canada, for example, operates a subsidized program in Middlesex, Brant, Hamilton, and Waterloo, Ontario, offering “Members of the public with inadequate income [...] who are unable to afford the cost of required, medically necessary veterinary care [...] specifically for] critically-needed vet care.” This covers costs for spaying/neutering, vaccines, and diagnostic, essential and urgent medical care as well. (2024)

Comparably, in Edmonton, Alberta, there are multiple pet food banks and the Alberta Helping Animals Society offers free veterinary services

including health examinations, vaccinations, treatment for internal and external parasites, X-rays, laboratory tests, sterilization procedures (with certain restrictions), dental care, support for chronic diseases, behavioral and nutritional counseling, and euthanasia when necessary for humane reasons. (UACConnect n.d.)

And similar services are available in Vancouver, British Columbia, through the Vancouver Humane Society. (2026)

This is not an exhaustive list; similar support is available throughout the country.

All to say, there is demand for support, some of which is absolutely necessary for pet health and already in place, some of which conforms to an insurance scheme system, and much of which is paid out of pocket.

Expanding coverage through the CHA would require recognition of n-h animal companion personhood. In extending such recognition, and ensuring healthcare service coverage for n-h animal companions, the utilitarian demand to increase pleasure and decrease suffering would be satisfied as their lives would be better lived in health and their human companions lives would be as well – further finances are a great stressor for humans, and this is a specific additional form of suffering that could be greatly alleviated by the same means. So this is to say that the suffering would be lessened many times over, and the individual and collective pleasures of life would similarly move in great measure. This, of course, also aligns with Buddhist ethics in the decrease of suffering, with care ethics by means of the interconnected caring and communal nature of such a development, with indigenous American ethics as understood by Robin Wall Kimmerer

via strengthening of the “the community bonds that enhance mutual well-being”, and also with Christine M. Korsgaard’s neo-Kantian non-human animal inclusive ethics by directly addressing her concern for such an institutionalized development and the recognition of the moral worth of n-h animals more generally. It further aligns with the Capabilities Approach in its bolstering of positive freedoms and could satisfy a weak version of Frederick A. Olafson’s Mitsein and Charles Taylor’s recognition framework. Of course, to satisfy the arguments put forth by Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka, Visa Anton Julius Kurki and Paula Siemieniec, non-human animal residents should be recognized as citizens and engaged politically. The added benefit in this context, of course, is the type of entitlement to healthcare in Canada they would then have.

Conclusion

What does it mean to recognize another? Who is deserving of inclusion into a political community? These questions and their relative disambiguations have been addressed here to make a simple argument: Pets, that is, non-human (n-h) animal companions, in Canada, deserve the same kind of healthcare supports as their human citizen counterparts.

Obviously, there are details. Fido doesn't necessarily need vision correction; dogs mostly understand their environments through scent and movement. That doesn't mean that his arthritis shouldn't be addressed. Or that we shouldn't listen to him, when he wails in pain, or that we should tend to him only if his human family member can afford to get him the attention he needs.

After reviewing the history of non-human animal moral worth, with the help of the political theory for animal rights expounded upon by Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka in their works *Zoopolis* and "Doing Politics with Animals" this argument was grounded in a philosophical account of rights – a position strengthened by assessing the implications of Frederick A. Olafson's iteration of Mitsein, and the recognition framework of Charles Taylor. We expanded this into the domain of legal philosophy with the help of Matthew H. Kramer, Ariel Zylberman, Visa Anton Julius Kurki and Paula Siemieniec – most importantly, the Bundle Theory of Legal Personhood from Kurki's *Legal Personhood*, and his work with Siemieniec "Towards An Agency Turn in Animal Law", which, of course, brought us full circle and back to the work of Donaldson and Kymlicka.

After that, it was important to consider the context. Canada, as noted at the outset, adheres to a sort of social liberal order, technically a parliamentary democracy. So, in such a space, acts and laws are important. Throughout I have tried to impress upon the reader just how grounded this

idea actually is. It is not outlandish when you look at the context and data – as an example that we’ve touched on briefly, the College of Veterinarians of Ontario already operates under a One Health policy, that is, an “integrative effort of multiple disciplines working locally, nationally, and globally to attain optimal health for people, animals, and the environment.” (n.d.) Pets are registered at a municipal level. Given this, integrating a national database isn’t terribly farfetched, challenging sure, but not impossible. If anything, it is ethically imperative.

In recognizing each other, we give weight to their considerations in ourselves. We care for them and do what we can to ensure collective flourishing. We grant them political power, social importance, and individual rights. With that, let us conclude in the way we started:

Pets should be granted species-appropriate healthcare benefits comparable to those of humans. In Canada, this would be most feasible through an insurance scheme such as those provided to human residents through provincial and territorial health care plans operating under the auspices of the Canada Health Act (CHA). In order to grant the full extension of such privilege, it is necessary to grant them citizenship, addressing their aberrant lack – but first, they’ll need legal, social, and political recognition of their personhood, of which, as we have seen, they are very much deserving.

Afterword

Throughout the process of writing this piece there have been numerous changes to what I considered feasible. For example, I had originally made a significant amount of expository hypothetical examples as well as added a bunch of personal examples for non-human (n-h) animal companion, pet, behaviours that show some aspect or another of their individual personality and thought process – I’ve had pets since my first cat, Tiger, followed me home from the community centre after hours program that I went to as an elementary school student. The best example, was probably Cheese Dog, modelled after my sister’s dog Lyla; this mischievous creature knows what is expected of her, and has throughout her life tested the limits of such. The example was called Cheese Dog because of her interest in stealing cheese from tables – something she has done with more and more subtlety since a pup, and, almost sadly, no longer really does. (It feels like watching a movie about a thief who has to give up her ways somehow, just cuter.)^{xlix}

Among the countless unfinished reads that line my desk and floor, another particular item I would have liked to explore in the text was Rajesh Chandra Shukla’s work *Friendship: Bridging the Gap Between Self and Other*, which has been a great pleasure to read but I only got to after my advisor, Matthew McLennan, mentioned it in the last month of my writing. The argument, to my mind would have gone something like this:

I would have still mentioned Yiran Hua’s work on friendship, I think it lighter and easier to explain as it has less requirements – essentially just *Mitsein*, only she doesn’t use the word. Then moved on to state that a more robust account of friendship can be found in Rajesh Chandra Shukla’s work “Friendship: Bridging the gap between self and other”, interpreting Aristotle’s *philia*, which notes that Aristotle requires three things in defining a friend. Specifically,

“friendship consists of reciprocal affection, well-wishing for the other's sake, and living together.” (2006, 23) And then elaborates that a perfect friendship,

[...] fulfills all the requirements of an ideal friendship, and exemplifies virtue and goodness in an individual's relations and conduct. [...] friendship of the good, perfect, to the greatest degree, and without qualification. All these descriptions share a common theme, namely, the manifestation of the good in moral terms. The above descriptions are consistent with the human logos (reason and prudence), and manifest a common human telos; that is, they symbolize human beings' progression towards the good. (34)

Which is ultimately the basis for well-functioning society. Something to that effect. I would have used this in a few ways, for one I think we can tell that our n-h animal family members fulfil at least the requirement of regular friendship, and probably even perfect friendship – it's the twenty-first century, if you haven't seen countless videos of kind acts performed by n-h animals to those of their own as well as other species just go surf the world wide web!

Of course, there are infinite possible items to look at, for example, in preparation for this work I also read a collection of Cicero's writings called *How to be a Friend*, a work that actually states something in line with Shukla's reading of Aristotle, namely “A friend is, quite simply, another self.” (2018, 139) It also notes a similar type of care for the other that is in line with the type of *Mitsein* I use in my work, “To love someone simply means that you care for another person without putting your own needs or advantage first.” (171) Even noting that “[...] if love and goodwill disappear from life, so does all joy.” (173) I actually think that is important, I don't believe real joy exists alone and I also do not think there's a limiting factor of any real kind to this argument if we assume Ariel Zylberman's holistic approach – that is to say one that is not reductivist or atomist but rather sees these items as interdependent in their networked reality.

Ultimately, this I think is a great way of describing how these various items are at play, they weave together, they produce our overlapping consensus / horizons, cultures, and comprehensive doctrines, and that is a good thing. We are at a time, now more than ever, that requires solidarity of us. We cannot shut out others simply for disagreements of any kind, large or small. We must, in effect, work together and see our shared values as the building blocks and structural supports of our lives in the present.

As always, this is not an exhaustive account, there is so much more overlap that can be found in the fields of normative theory, legal philosophy, and Canadian policy. There are also other concepts that I might've used to bolster some of the central theories I use; for example, I could have looked to Steven Pinker's notes on how Ludwig Wittgenstein thought of family resemblance categories. "[...] various characteristic features run through different subsets of the category, the same way that physical features may be found in different combinations in the members of a family. [...] Most of our everyday concepts turn out to be family resemblance categories [...] These categories often have stereotypes [...] but the definition itself fails to embrace all and only the exemplars." (2022, 99) This, I feel, aligns well with both the idea of the Bundle Theory of Legal Personhood – we don't need the various members contained in the personhood category to be identical, and also more broadly with the idea of actual families – which in common human practice often include adopted humans as well as other species.

Anyway, I probably could spend my whole life doing this, however, there are other items that require attention of me, as I am sure there are, of you. Let's put this one back on the shelf for now, and get out into the world, and practice being moral friends. Let's go out and care for each other and the world, as imperfect as it is, and bask (pro-actively) in the glory of what is life.

Two personal notes before I let you go: my own motto, since starting this journey, has become *debitum honorem omni Mitsein*, I'll leave you to figure that one out. And, as I once told my sister, *you are the brush that colours your friends' days*.

With affection,

Gabriel Rojas Hruška.

18:49 February 21st, 2026

P.S. The day after my defence Monique Lanoix notified me she had reached out to her friend Andrew Fenton who kindly forwarded some additional materials which might be used in support of the argument for pet healthcare. I am deeply grateful and have managed to add two quotes, one into the body of the text and another into the endnotes. There is certainly still more to explore in relation to Fenton's work, his note stated that perhaps my goal doesn't even require a sentientist framing, and in his writing I have found a very interesting clarification in his definition of *intentional agents*. Given time, these are well worth exploring, and maybe I or another will someday, sadly, I am due for a meeting in exactly one hour and should make some tea and review materials for my next article etcetera etcetera. So, for myself, at least, that day is not today. But the future remains bright, and I look forward to all developments in this most positive direction, that being the direction of greater recognition of those we share our lives with.

14:00 May 11th, 2026

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Appendix

The work above has been obvious in some intuitive way to me from the outset and ultimately was a kind of theoretical connect the dots, but in thinking as to where it came from I've come to reflect more deeply on a concept I was introduced to back in 2013, when Bruce Hood's *The Self Illusion* came out in paperback and I happened upon it somewhere in downtown Toronto. The subtitle will suffice to tell you the central argument of his work, it is, *How the Social Brain Creates Identity*.

Obviously, I feel a strong affinity with my non-human family and friends, but also, I am a product of culture. It is with this in mind that I think maybe some poetry has its place in a deeper consideration of what and why I am advocating for a national pet healthcare program.

Below, is "November" by Michael Ondaatje, from his book *A Year of Last Things*.

Where is my dear sixteen-year-old cat

I wish to carry upstairs in my arms

looking up at me and thinking

be careful, dear human

Sixteen years. How many days since

I found you as if an urchin in a snowstorm

and you moved in assured

learned the territories of the house

and what became your garden

Only now do we see the horizon

where you paused two or three times

then slipped into

Was it too soon or too late

that last summer of your life

when we watched your walk

down to a river to take a sip

from its ongoing flow

Oh Jack I miss your presence everywhere

in the corners of rooms, in every chair,

or nesting in a cardboard box

Take me back where the past can again enter
those early remembered rooms, our snowbound street,
lift me upside down in your arms, I cannot stand it

I need a journey too. Have I slept my life away,
do I understand anything? Will I wear a bell
like yours into the afterlife where language
no longer exists and we gather only linked sounds
like oars from a passing boat,

those few syllables

to recall tenderness

You no longer wait for us

All day long, Bashō wrote,

A lark sings in the air

Yet he seems to have had

Not quite his fill

ⁱ An earlier version of this text cited a previous version of the same article, in reviewing the piece for final submission it has been found replaced by an updated version, resultantly, the estimated percentage of Canadian households with pets has risen from 77% to over 80%. (Blair 2024; Blair 2026)

ⁱⁱ According to a Rover study from 2025, that number might actually be as high as 96%.

ⁱⁱⁱ If this is not immediately evident from one's own experience, it should be noted that dogs, for example, will often attempt to comfort and support distraught human companions by bringing their own favourite toys. This is direct well wishing, and the prioritization of the human companion as the dog sees the negative state and looks to assist by sharing what it considers most dear to itself – akin to giving away a cherished book to another who it might benefit between humans. That is to say, it requires prioritizing the other and attempting to understand and support them before oneself. This is very much in line with Marcus Tullius Cicero's note that "[...] often the spirit of friends is broken, and they, have little faith that their fortunes will improve. In these cases, it's not the mark of a friend to have the same judgement of another as he does of himself, but rather to work mightily to raise his spirits and lead him to better hopes and plans." (2018, 105) This here, is what I believe the dog does in bringing their human companion a prized possession – in human language maybe it could read something like, "Here, this thing brings me great joy, you may chew it, it is a good plan – surely, you must know, there are many chewable things in life. Please, indulge, this one is my favourite."

^{iv} Also to be explored more fully in Chapter 3 of the present work, is the separation between three groups of non-human animals taken from Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka's book *Zoopolis* (2014). These are: (a) *Domesticated Animal Citizens* – who I refer to as Co-Domesticated Animal Citizens; (b) *Wild Animals as Sovereign*; and (c) *Liminal Animals as Denizens*. Co-Domesticated Animal Citizens include species that have evolved in common sociality, alongside ourselves – for example the dog. Wild Animals as Sovereign, are effectively those who we do not interact with and do not share space with – for example the water buffalo. And Liminal Animals as Denizens, are ones we do share space with but do not engage with and who generally avoid us – like the rat. Though both the second and third categories are mentioned, this work deals centrally with the recognition we grant our co-domesticated n-h animal companions.

^v It might be said that I am setting the bar high. My response to this is to turn to Voltaire’s elaboration on the matter of friendship – “This is a marriage of the soul, it is a contract between two sensitive and virtuous persons. I say *sensitive* because a monk, a solitary, may not at all be wicked and live without knowing friendship. I say *virtuous* because the wicked have only accomplices, the voluptuous have companions in debauchery, self-seekers have associates, the politic assemble the factions, the typical idler has connections, princes have courtiers. Only the virtuous have friends.” (2004, 29) So, yes, I’m setting the bar high, but it is because I believe pets more easily attain the bar than humans do. This is most probably why dog has long been called “man’s *best* friend.” And not his insensitive accomplice or some such other unfortunate title. We must remember, *The Odyssey*, in which, “There, full of vermin, lay Argus the hound. But directly he became aware of Odysseus’ presence, he wagged his tail and dropped his ears, though he lacked the strength now to come any nearer [...]” is how we have long seen our non-human animal companions – as the *first* to recognize us. (1977, 266)

^{vi} Though not central to the work at hand, an important clarification should be noted, “In many provinces and territories, including Ontario, health care for prisoners is not legislated under the provincial Ministry of Health. Federal and provincial offenders are excluded from the Canada Health Act and are not covered by Ontario’s provincial health system. This creates a parallel - but unequal - system of care for one of society’s most marginalized populations and is a concern for health equity in Ontario. This is an important issue that requires more attention, advocacy and education from the medical profession.” (Lee et al. 2021, 1) Essentially, while the CHA does cover residents generally, it does not cover all residents – one might assume that if there ever were a n-h animal jail such might also be worth considering, however, as will be made evident in coming pages, such is not a present concern.

^{vii} It should be noted that it is common to hear policy wonks actually describe Canada as specifically economically *neoliberal* in terms of policy direction, for example the majority of contributors to the 2024 collection of essays *The Trudeau Record: Promise v. Performance* certainly do.

^{viii} In case it bears mentioning, humans use medical services, however, at least to my knowledge, no corporation ever has. Of course, this may change depending on how we address personhood as it relates to commercially created

entities like Artificial Intelligence (AI) that may someday have sentience, be “Superintelligent”, and possibly even use “wetware” but that is a very different topic for a very different text. (Kingwell 2022; Zimmer 2025)

^{ix} A parallel argument can be found in “Norms for the Public Remembrance of Nonhuman Animals” by Matthew McLennan, in which he notes that with the commemoration and remembrance of n-h animals that have served in war for Canada, we include them in our public memory, and by such means they are recognized and embraced in both an ethics and morality of public memory. More specifically, his argument critiques the lack of follow through stemming from such recognition – “what does it mean to *honour* those whom we use and kill without their consent?” (80) Though the present work does not address the specific context of his argument, it is certainly another important way in which we can understand that the recognition is already there, we simply need to, as I say, follow through with commitments to such n-h animals.

^x “The term ableism emerged out of the disability rights movement in the United States and Britain to serve as an analytical parallel to sexism and racism for those studying disability as social creation. [...] Sometimes referred to as disablism or disability oppression, ableism privileges a nondisabled perspective and promotes the inferior and unequal treatment of disabled people. [...] That is to say, ableism is a] prejudice and discrimination toward individuals because they are classified as disabled – regardless of whether their impairments are physical or mental, visible or invisible. [...] Ableism can operate at multiple levels affecting personal self-perceptions, interpersonal interactions, and intergroup relations. Like other prejudices, there are both individual and institutionalized forms of ableism and discrimination as well.” (Nario-Redmond 2020, 5-6)

^{xi} “In order to be absorbed in a game, we must behave as if winning were a final end. That end must phenomenally engulf us, if we are to be gripped by the game and if its thrills and threats are to have emotional punch for us. We must pursue the goals of the game wholeheartedly, putting our larger purpose out of mind. In other words, we must submerge ourselves in a temporary agency.” (Nguyen 2025, 11)

^{xii} To be clear, Stoics themselves didn’t believe that humans are rational until either seven or fourteen years of age – the variable apparently being whichever Stoic one chooses to consult. (Newmyer, 2021)

^{xiii} Both Loick and Singer, in the respective texts cited in this section, note that there have been recurrent arguments made within the Church that equated “dominion” more to something like a “stewardship”, these however are not the common interpretation, so aside from making note of such they are best left aside in the present context. (2023; 2023)

^{xiv} It cannot go unsaid, the cruelty of keeping a horse and riding it requires what was historically called “breaking”, I have been told the term has been updated to “starting” in common parlance. May you never be so cruel and egocentric as to ride a horse, they are better off free. While I’m on a tangent, let us outlaw the usage of the term “pest” for wild horses, they are not creatures that directly attack humans and spread disease like the mosquito which we have every right to protect ourselves against, they simply eat what is available. That is fair. They should not be bound to our law as we not to theirs.

^{xv} “Descartes defends a version of the soul that more resembles a transcendental subjectivity than it does the human personality” (McLennan 2018, 47)

^{xvi} One study from 1964, by Peter Marler and Miwako Tamura, entitled “Culturally Transmitted Patterns of Vocal Behaviour in Sparrows” found that the birds learned dialects early in life and could even be taught “an alien white-crowned sparrow dialect” but that they “do not copy recorded songs of other sparrow species presented under similar conditions.” (Krishnan 2021, 1726) A common criticism of the idea of n-h animal language capacities is that n-h animals are not capable of recursion, and so only accomplish “faculty of language in a broad sense”, as opposed to “faculty of language in a narrow sense”. However, Michael C. Corballis notes in “Recursion, Language, and Starlings”, that n-h animals are essentially capable of tail recursion as “iterated or repeated sequences are a common feature of both primate and bird calls, whatever they might mean, so iteration at this level is not a satisfactory measure of the uniqueness of human language.” (2007, 698) Now, even though this leaves the potential for center-embedded recursion being human specific, it simultaneously at least eliminates any question as to whether or not n-h human animals are capable of language more generally.

There are many other examples from recent research that might be used to enforce this point, my personal favourites are (a) a study suggests that there are structural similarities between whale communication and human language, and (b) a piece that shows that dogs in particular learn object labels in the same way infants do. (Arnon et al. 2025; Dror et al. 2026)

^{xvii} While I am aware of the relatively common usage of the term “Turtle Island” by groups in the north, it is not one that my own people used (see subsequent endnote). In fact, there was no common and shared term for the entirety of the geographic areas collectively until relatively recently.

^{xviii} I am mestizo, of Czech and Brunka heritage. As a member of the Brunka people of Boruca, Costa Rica, I also reject any notion that a “traditional” way of life is somehow better – to my mind this extends the distorted idea of the noble savage into contemporary myth making. My Abuela, who still lives in the village, now eats almost exclusively rice and beans with fried plantain – occasionally a family member will bring up some natilla, a sour cream like dairy product that is saltier and less sour than what is available in Canada, and she will enjoy that as well. Her diet does not and need not include meat.

^{xix} For a quick and accessible view into just how violent, abusive, and at least presently insatiable the human desire to consume other species is, read Peter Singer’s *Consider the Turkey* (2024).

^{xx} It is important to remember that “biology has been used to justify disability-based discrimination, oppression, and human rights abuses. Biology directly informed the discredited pseudoscience of eugenics [... and] Eugenics became the dominant philosophy around the world in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, resulting in the oppression of countless disabled people. [... Resultantly,] Many disabled people favor the social model of disability. The social model states that the disadvantages they face do not stem directly from their disability, but from the negative perception and inaccessibility of the world around them.” (Da Silva and Hubbard 2024, 1, 3)

^{xxi} Fenton’s view deserves greater articulation and context, in “Holding Animal-Based Research to Our Highest Ethical Standards: Re-seeing Two Emergent Laboratory Practices and the Ethical Significance of Research Animal

Dissent” (2019) he elaborates that “our highest ethical standards in human bioethics include references to personhood, and personhood should not be seen as something that exclusively applies to humans.” Further noting theological precedence “with nonhuman beings that are regarded or portrayed as persons (eg, Angels of God, Avalokiteshvara, Yahweh, Shiva). There is no clear incoherence in such usage, even if one is disinclined to think that these cosmic beings exist. For those not theologically inclined, we can think of now-extinct members of our own genus.” Also highlighting that “bioethicists tend to favor inclusive enough views of personhood to favor humans, regardless of their youth or neurodiversity. When combined with the irrelevancy of species identity [...], this commits these bioethicists to recognizing the personhood of at least some other animals.” (399) Such succinct articulation naturally leads to one of the central arguments at play in the present work, specifically that n-h animals *are* persons, and should be legally recognized as such. Resultantly, Chapter 3 Subsection 2 deals with the legal theory required for said specific form of recognition.

^{xxii} In his words, “Pain and suffering are in themselves bad and should be prevented or minimized, irrespective of the species of the being who suffers. How bad a pain is depends on how intense it is and how long it lasts, but pains of the same intensity and duration are equally bad, whether felt by humans or animals.” (2023, 23)

^{xxiii} I also submit that this eliminates Byung-Chul Han’s argument in *The Spirit of Hope*, in which he writes, “Hope inhabits the future. To the extent that it can use signs that bear meanings, an animal can speak. But it cannot make a promise.” (2024, 25) Obviously, Lyla has proven this statement to be false with her use of a conditional assertion.

^{xxiv} This is vague in construction as our understandings and labelling of mental disease changes over time and we often do not look fondly on terms we later come to believe stigmatize and other those who suffer them. If necessary, in the present, it may be safe to say that our hypothetical person might suffer from schizophrenia, for an example of how terribly such a mental disorder can distort one’s reality we can look to the Supreme Court of Canada judgement in *R. v. Molodowic* – in said instance a man shot his grandfather, which doctors who had assessed him prior testified “was consistent with his mental disorder having caused him to believe that only in so doing could he save himself from further torment.” (2000a; 2000b)

^{xxv} To be clear, in the Kantian sense, treating beings *merely* as means is the act of disregarding their inherent value and capacity for their own ends, as opposed to simply cooperating with or benefiting from others' actions. It is for such reason that in a section entitled "Working Animals and Animals in the Military", Korsgaard argues that "Since I think that treating an animal as an end in itself only requires treating the animal in a way that is consistent with her good, I think it is in principle possible that it could be permissible for us to use [n-h] animals in these ways." (226) This is, of course, not to say that all n-h animal jobs are ethically sound, simply that many are. One might imagine, for example, that the life of the Seeing Eye dog is fulfilling much in the way that the job of a human who dedicates their life to helping others with different physical disabilities is also fulfilling.

^{xxvi} It should be noted that Nussbaum situates this argument within the political liberal framework. Specifically, she writes, "The political principles built around the Capabilities List are one part of a nation's set of core political principles. But political principles must obey some restrictions, in order to be adequately respectful of human diversity and freedom. In his important book *Political Liberalism*, John Rawls has advanced an important argument with which I fully agree, and incorporate in my approach to justice for animals, as well as for humans." (2005, 93)

^{xxvii} Though I criticized John Stuart Mill in the last section for his assessment of the moral worth of n-h animals in comparison to that of humans, it feels fair to parallel his phrasing in a passage from *Utilitarianism*, where he specifically says "[...] according to the utilitarian opinion, the end of human action, is necessarily also the standard of morality; which may accordingly be defined, the rules and precepts for human conduct, by the observance of which an existence such as has been described might be, to the greatest extent possible, secured to all mankind; and not to them only, but, so far as the nature of things admits, to the whole sentient creation." (2000, §2, 10.9-15) Who knows, perhaps, had he lived to our time, he might've been in better accord with the document at hand!

^{xxviii} A parallel can be found in Azizah Y. al-Hibri's response to Susan Moller Okin's "Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?", when she writes that "So inessential is this Other, even when included in the discussion, it is rendered remarkably indistinguishable and voiceless. It is allowed into the discussion only through the voice and perceptions of the dominant 'I'." (1999, 42)

^{xxxix} Christine M. Korsgaard’s *Fellow Creatures* argues that humans are actively self-constituting and that other animals are merely passively so. This is what Kurki and Siemieniec call *the Passivity Assumption*. Though Nussbaum rejects the Passivity Assumption, her argument is problematized by its reliance on species-specific categorization, which maintains human determination of animal needs, even while acknowledging their capacity to communicate through many different ways, and thus only attains the Interest Standard. (Korsgaard, 2018; Nussbaum, 2022; Kurki and Siemieniec, 2025)

^{xxx} There are varying degrees of personhood ascribed dependent on region. Such discussion is non-essential for the present text and out of scope.

^{xxxix} Without getting too far ahead of myself, I want to be clear that I believe that even domesticated animals can be brought into situations of codomestication – we can, for example, think of animals in factory farms who are rescued but unable to care for themselves completely. In such instance, these animals can be given new lives in sanctuaries. There is however, an important difference, once said animals arrive at such sanctuaries. I explore this briefly in subsequent pages.

^{xxxix} As the argument starts with Aristotle thinking that only humans are capable of being political creatures, we might recall that even he noted that birds have voices and teach their young to speak. (Donaldson and Kymlicka, 2023; Porphyry et al., 2023)

^{xxxix} For more examples see *The Well-Connected Animal* (2024), a collection of animal social network research compiled by Lee Alan Dugatkin from different scientists around the world. The book tells stories of many species of non-human animals, from primates through mice, who create vaster social networks of loose affiliation after disasters as a means of coping and strengthening communities after disasters (hurricanes and cat attacks in these specific cases), as well as numerous other varied and complex networking behaviours.

^{xxxix} Purring Cat may not understand at depth what it means to be prodded, jabbed, and occasionally given odd pills or put in a cone, however, she appreciates that her family care and only want what is best for her, and respect her

autonomy as an individual at a bare minimum with species specific capacities, though probably they also appreciate the specific quirks of her individuality – maybe going so far as to purchase a fuzzy soft mat made for small n-h animals to go where she likes to sun herself by the window in winter. Which of course she understands is for her, and hers in the sense of a possession (i.e. property), and maybe she looks suspiciously at her dog family member when he approaches it, or maybe she invites the company. To be honest, to know for sure, you would have to get to know her as an individual.

^{xxxv} For a deeper exploration of chickens and their different collective cultures per flock, as well as their many capacities, and many little stories about individual animals, read Sy Montgomery’s *What the Chicken Knows*. Two particularly compelling quotes to encourage my dear reader: (1) “Sometimes, lulled by their cozy, restful sounds, I lose track of time, enveloped by a sense of belonging, washed in peace and wholeness among a sisterhood of hens.” And (2), “we share a fundamental talent: a need for companionship, a capacity for affection. [...] they feel like family to me—and in a very real sense, they are.” (2024, 29, 68)

^{xxxvi} This is important, and a running theme in the work of Donaldson and Kymlicka, as their arguments look to not only accommodate n-h animals, but also “infants, the senile, the mentally disabled, those temporarily incapacitated due to illness, or others with severe cognitive impairments” through an assisted agency model – that is to say, a means that (1) would fulfil the *Empowerment Standard* of Kurki and Siemieniec, and (2) that is neither speciesist nor ableist. (2014, 27)

^{xxxvii} Specifically defined as “The quality-adjusted life year (or QALY) is a widely used measure of the burden of disease, which includes both the *quality*, and the *quantity* of life lived. The QALY is often used when trying to formally assess the value for money of a healthcare intervention. The QALY calculated for any treatment is based upon the number of years of life which could be added by the treatment, multiplied by patient’s health utility.” (Jackson, 2021, 55)

^{xxxviii} Imagine, as a simplified parallel example, x throws a snowball at y and misses and hits a window and now their parent, z , needs to pay a lot of money to repair said window. If z could not gather all the data in a coherent manner,

for one reason or another, z might suffer a recency bias, perhaps due to amnesia, and therefore simply decides that windows need to be reinforced, in case of snowballs, when, in fact, the whole thing could have been avoided if z simply had asked x and y to go have their snowball fight further from the house. Obviously replacing a single window is rather costly, certainly more so than taking a short walk out into a field, but even more so than say reinforcing all the windows of a home.

^{xxxix} Specifically, “Risk factors included: maternal depression and anxiety, maternal substance abuse, intimate partner violence (IPV), child maltreatment, depression and obesity. Downstream health outcomes were circumscribed to include only the ten most expensive health conditions: heart conditions, hypertension, diabetes, cancers, chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder (COPD) or asthma, mental disorders, trauma-related disorders, osteoarthritis and other non-traumatic joint disorders, and infectious diseases.” (Counts et al. 2023, 180)

^{xi} The exclusion and inclusion discussion is much more granular in the paper and can be found on pages 179 through 181. (Counts et al. 2023)

^{xli} A full breakdown of the “Associations between key health outcomes across the life-course” can be found starting on page 184 and ending on page 185 of the paper. (Counts et al. 2023)

^{xlii} “Quality of life (QoL) is a term which is used to measure or quantify the general wellbeing of individuals and, in some cases, of societies and countries. [...] this term is used in a wide range of contexts within healthcare. Quality of life generally focuses on physical and mental health, recreation and leisure, and social belonging.” (Jackson, 2021, 39)

^{xliii} “Psychological distress and productivity loss: a longitudinal analysis of Australian working adults” by Syed Afroz Keramat, Tracy Comans, Alison Pearce, Rabeya Basri, Rubaiyat Hashmi, and Nadeeka N. Dissanayaka replicates previous Australian and UK findings. Specifically, that productivity declines when workers feel physically and mentally unwell, and further that the two often are comorbid.

^{xliv} $43.2 \div 53 = 0.8150943396\sim \times 100 = 81.50943396\sim$

^{xlv} This paragraph is an only very slightly adjusted quote from the cited website, the original reads “*The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Appeal and Review Boards Act, 1998* provides the legislative authority for HPARB to review decisions made by the CVO's Inquiries, Complaints and Reports Committee (ICRC) and Registration Committee.” (Ontario Ministry of Health 2026)

^{xlvi} The federal government also has the power to withhold funds if a province allows for *extra-billing* – i.e. “the billing for an insured health service rendered to an insured person by a medical practitioner or a dentist in an amount in addition to any amount paid or to be paid for that service by the health care insurance plan of the province.” (2) The idea with this is to discourage provinces from doing so, it so seems a strangely cruel decision to allow so as it even incurs regulatory cost on the provincial government which would otherwise benefit from federal funding.

^{xlvii} These advantages are “Guaranteed access regardless of employment status; No risk of losing coverage due to immigration status changes; Full provincial health insurance without residency requirements; Emergency medical services coverage even while traveling within Canada”. (Mirzoyan, 2025)

^{xlviii} This being said, as recently as 2022 through 2023, market penetration for insurance premiums was at an increase of 29.8%. (North American Pet Health Insurance Industry Association, 2024)

^{xlix} After submitting my original draft, Lyla has made it in! Not under the best of circumstances, but as you will likely remember reader, she did protect my sister in a most unexpected way, which everyone in my family is quite grateful for. (See Chapter 2 Subsection 2 – note added May 4th, 2026.)