

Stephan Blatti and Paul Snowdon (eds.) *Animalism: New Essays on Persons, Animals and Identity*, Oxford University Press, 2016, 352 pages, Hardback. ISBN: 9780199608751. £50.

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This volume is the first of its kind: a collection of articles focusing specifically on the Animalist theory of personal identity. This view has gained prominence in recent years, having been previously neglected by personal identity theorists, so it is refreshing to finally see a collection wherein Animalism is the main focus. Animalism may not be true—it is too early in the day to say—but it is well worthy of serious discussion. What the essays in this collection do so well is prove just how fruitful serious discussion of Animalism can be.

The aim of the volume is not to convince readers of the *truth* of Animalism. Instead, its aim is to draw out the central issues and debates, and move the conversation forward. This is precisely what the volume achieves. It is essential reading for anyone working on personal identity, and should be read by anyone interested in the fundamental question as to what kind of thing we human persons are.

*Animalism* has fifteen chapters, including a helpful introduction by the editors. These are organised into three main parts. Most of the articles have not been published before, having been written especially for the collection. (The only exceptions are the papers by Derek Parfit and by Tim Campbell & Jeff McMahan.) Each article makes an important contribution to the literature, and deserves to be read with care.

Animalism is often stated as the view that we are identical with human animals. This might sound like an obvious truth, but it is widely rejected by philosophers. Many, for instance, endorse *Constitutionalism*, on which we are non-animals constituted by animals. This view receives a detailed defence in the contributions by Denis Robinson and Lynne Baker. Baker has been developing her version of this view for years, but her contribution to this volume is packed with novel arguments and insights. It also provides important clarifications of her position.

Anyone familiar with Sydney Shoemaker's earlier work will find his chapter particularly engaging. For here he abandons his earlier Constitutionalist view, and defends an alternate picture, on which human persons are identical with 'psychological animals', which are in turn constituted by 'biological animals' (p. 128). Roughly speaking, a psychological animal is an animal with 'psychological persistence conditions', whilst a 'biological animal' is an animal with 'biological persistence conditions' (ibid). On this view, then, there are *two* animals where each of us is, whereby one constitutes the other.

This looks like an interesting hybrid of Animalism and Constitutionism. However, one might well wonder what grounds there could be for saying that there are *two* animals per human person rather than just one. There is also a question as to *why* Shoemaker feels the need to posit two animals at all. The simpler view would be that whilst we are identical with human animals, those human an-

imals turn out to have psychological persistence conditions. It is unclear why Shoemaker does not prefer this view.

One of the more radical theories defended in the volume is Parfit's. On this view, human persons are *proper parts* of human animals, namely their 'thinking, controlling parts' (p. 39). Parfit does not actually say which part of an animal its 'thinking, controlling part' is, but he seems to mean something like the brain or cerebrum. If that is right, then Parfit's theory has close affinities to the theory defended by Campbell & McMahan in their contribution, which states that we human persons are the 'functional brains' of human animals (p. 235). This view initially seems hard to believe—surely I'm not really three inches high, made of spongy-grey matter? However, Parfit and Campbell & McMahan do a good job of making the theory seem plausible.

One of the stand-out articles in the collection is Mark Johnston's. Johnston takes Animalism to be the view, not just that we are identical with human animals, but also that the kind, *Animal*, is a 'substance kind', so that whatever is an animal cannot cease to be one without thereby ceasing to be. Against this view, Johnston presses the 'remnant person argument', which aims to show that even if we are in fact animals, we could in principle become non-animals without thereby ceasing to exist. (The rough idea is that even if you are now an animal, you could in principle survive as a mere cerebrum floating in a vat; but in that condition, you would no longer be an animal. The argument here is ingenious, and makes a welcome change from the intuition-based arguments that are so common in the personal identity debate.) On the basis of the remnant person argument, Johnston concludes that whilst we are indeed human animals (in our usual state), the claim that we are animals does not tell us what we most fundamentally are, since we could cease to be animals without ceasing to be. As to what we kind of thing we really are most fundamentally (or what 'substance kind' we satisfy), Johnson remains agnostic (p. 127).

Eric Olson replies on the Animalist's behalf to Johnston in his chapter. He says there is no obviously right interpretation of the cases on which the remnant person argument turns (though he sketches out many ingenious options), but argues that this kind of case poses problems for everyone, not just Animalists (pp. 158-9).

Stephan Blatti and Rory Madden, in their contributions, also engage with the remnant person argument. However, they are primarily concerned with another important problem Animalism faces: the 'thinking parts problem'. Blatti nicely brings out how this problem causes dialectical troubles for Animalism. As it turns out, there is some pressure to admit that some of the large proper parts of human persons, including their heads and brains and upper-halves, are conscious beings. If that is right, however, then a crucial premise in what is arguably the strongest argument for Animalism fails. This is the *thinking animal argument*, which turns on two ideas. One is that you are the only conscious being in your chair. The other is that there is a conscious human animal in your chair. Both claims seem plausible, but putting them together yields the Animalist thesis that you are identical with your accompanying human animal. The trouble, as Blatti rightly notes, is that this argument is unsound if it turns out that we each contain a host of thinking parts. For in that case, no human person will be the only conscious being in her chair.

But things get even worse. For, as Madden notes, if we each have a host of thinking parts within us, then we face the ‘sceptical threat’ that we cannot *know* we are animals even if we are. More generally, we may be unable to know that we have humanoid form. (This means that Constitutionists should be worried as well.) This is because the belief that one is an animal (or has humanoid form) will be *unsafe even if true*, since the many thinking parts will use the same reasoning as oneself but thereby reach a false conclusion.

Both Blatti and Madden say we should respond here by arguing that the allegedly thinking parts are not really conscious. Elsewhere, Olson has argued that the parts are not thinking because they don’t exist. (See Olson: 2007, *What Are We? A Study in Personal Ontology*, Oxford University Press.) Blatti and Madden, however, take a less radical approach. Blatti argues that the parts don’t think because in general, it is only whole human animals that can properly be said to think. (One might worry, however, whether facts regarding what ordinary language permits us to *say* could really settle questions about whether a being is conscious.) Madden, in contrast, draws on a familiar representationalist view of consciousness in order to argue that it is only human animals and *not* their proper parts that satisfy a necessary condition on consciousness, *viz.* having brain with a certain naturalistic function. (This is undoubtedly one of the best and most original arguments in the collection.)

Besides the remnant person argument and thinking parts problem, the friends of Animalism face a further worry, deriving from certain problem cases, wherein we seem to have two persons but only one animal, or only one person but two animals. Consider a case of commissurotomy. One might argue that there are two persons in such cases, but one human animal. This would imply that at least one of the persons is not identical to the animal (by the transitivity of identity), but since it would be arbitrary to identify just one of the two persons with the animal, it follows that neither person is identical with the animal. In their essays, both Mark Reid and Campbell & McMahan argue that this kind of case undermines Animalism. In contrast, Snowdon does a persuasive job of pushing back on the Animalist’s behalf.

In David Hershenov’s article, we find a rare discussion of Animalism within a four-dimensionalist framework. Against Olson (2007) and others, Hershenov argues that Animalism is defensible even within a four-dimensionalist setting. Hershenov also picks up on the debate about the ethical implications of Animalism, arguing (against orthodoxy) that our identity-related prudential concerns track biological rather than psychological continuity. The ethical implications of Animalism are also investigated by Jens Johansson and David Shoemaker in their contributions. Shoemaker argues that Animalism ‘lacks the proper fit with our prudential concerns’ (p. 303), whilst Johansson reaches a more Animalist-friendly conclusion. These investigations into the ethical implications of Animalism represent an extremely interesting and novel line of inquiry that I am sure will be taken up elsewhere.

*Animalism* is a superb collection, packed full of excellent chapters. To anyone interested in Animalism and related topics, this book could not be more highly recommended.