

Our animal interests

Andrew M. Bailey¹

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Abstract Animalism is at once a bold metaphysical theory and a pedestrian biological observation. For according to animalists, human persons are organisms; we are members of a certain biological species. In this article, I introduce some heretofore unnoticed data concerning the interlocking *interests* of human persons and human organisms. I then show that the data support animalism. The result is a novel and powerful argument for animalism. Bold or pedestrian, animalism is true.

Keywords Animalism · Personal ontology · Personal identity · Metaphysics · Philosophy of mind

1 Introduction

Animalism is at once a bold metaphysical theory and a pedestrian biological observation. For according to animalists, human persons are organisms; we are members of a certain biological species. In this article, I introduce some heretofore unnoticed data concerning the interlocking *interests* of human persons and human organisms. I then show that the data support animalism. The result is a novel and powerful argument for animalism. Bold or pedestrian, animalism is true.

✉ Andrew M. Bailey
andrew.bailey@yale-nus.edu.sg

¹ Yale-NUS College, Singapore, Singapore

2 Animalism

Animalism may be stated in just three words: “we are animals”. Here’s what they mean¹:

We: animalism concerns human persons, those things to which we ordinarily refer with our personal pronouns. Among human persons are those things we sometimes call “non-cognitivists”, “teenagers”, “politicians”, “foreigners”, “heterosexuals”, and more. You are a human person. So am I.

Are: animalism says that each of us is *identical to* a human animal.² Accordingly, everything true of you is true of your animal, and vice versa. One way to test animalism, then, is to examine whether we have all the properties our animals have, and vice versa. Conducting that test and offering a positive verdict is one task of this article.

Animals: the things we are identical to are *human*—with a distinctive evolutionary history and certain biological features (like DNA)—but *animals* nonetheless—typically able to move about relatively freely and endowed with sophisticated sensory and nervous systems.

Animalism is of interest in part because of what it rules out. Here are six views of human nature (answers to the question of what we are) with which animalism is inconsistent:

1. Pure dualism: we are wholly immaterial souls, distinct from any animal.³
2. Moderate dualism: we are wholly immaterial souls, but we inherit certain properties from our animals, and are only in a secondary and derivative sense animals.⁴
3. Union dualism: we are amalgams: part material animal, part immaterial soul.⁵
4. Constitutionalism: we are constituted by but distinct from human animals.⁶
5. Brainism: we are brains, each of us a proper (spatial) part of some human animal.⁷
6. Partism: we are maximal sums of thought-supporting spatial and temporal parts, each of us a proper spatial and temporal part of some human animal.⁸

¹ For more detailed characterization of animalism and its rivals and an extensive bibliography, see Bailey (2015, 2016a); see also all the essays in Blatti and Snowdon (2016).

² On animalism, then, we are not merely *constituted by* or *intimately related to* animals, contra rival views.

³ Many philosophers endorse either moderate or pure dualism. Which disjunct they opt for is not always clear. See Barnett (2010), Harrison (2016), Hasker (2010), Meixner (2010), Moreland (2013), Nida-Rümelin (2010), Unger (2006), Zimmerman (2010). For specific discussion of Barnett’s, Harrison’s, and Moreland’s recent arguments, see Bailey (2014b, 2016b), and Bailey and Rasmussen (2016).

⁴ Lowe (2010) and Meixner (2010): 436–437.

⁵ Swinburne (1997): 145.

⁶ Baker (2000), Corcoran (2006), Johnston (1987, 2007), Shoemaker (2008).

⁷ Brainists include McMahan (2002): 88–94, Parfit (2012), Searle (1983): 230, and Tye (2003): 142.

⁸ Hudson (2001, 2007). See Bailey (2014a) for discussion. For a similar view according to which we are sums of psychologically continuous temporal parts of organisms (but distinct from those organisms), see Lewis (1976) and Perry (1975).

Such are the rivals of animalism. Though some are mutually consistent, each contradicts the central claim of animalism. And so if the argument of this paper is correct, all of them are false.

3 The interlocking fates of animals and people

There are intimate and obvious associations between human persons and human animals. Our animals are ever with us. We see them in mirrors. When our animals go unfed, we feel the pangs of hunger. When they lie down and fall into deep sleep, we go unconscious. When we hope for rain, the eyes of our animals brighten and their heads turn towards the clouds above.

We could argue from *all* of these associations to some theory about how we relate to our animals. For now, I shall focus on just a few. My hope is that a narrowed focus will furnish us with extra clarity. It will also furnish us with a potent argument for animalism. The particular associations I shall exploit have this distinctive feature: they concern the interlocking *interests* of human persons and human organisms.

Let's begin with a few mundane examples. Consider a few ways in which someone might harm your animal (the human animal you see when you look in the mirror): beating up your animal, depriving your animal of oxygen, or even killing it. Were someone to do one of these things to your animal, would *you* be harmed? It seems so. If I were to beat up your animal, I would harm your animal; but more can be said. I would harm *you* too. I would harm a human person. Similar remarks apply to other cases of harming. Similarly, if I do great benefit to your animal (saving it from drowning, say), I thereby do great benefit to *you*. You and your animal, then, have a great many interests in common.⁹

It's not just you. The fates of human persons and their organisms are intimately tied together. One obvious way to benefit or harm *any* human person is to benefit or harm her animal. And it's not just at the individual level that this holds: one obvious way to benefit or harm human persons in general is to benefit or harm human animals in general. The fate of human persons is linked to that of a biological species.

There are, then, a great many correlations, links, or associations between the interests of human persons and their animals. Let us call this long list of correlations between the interests of human persons and the interests of their animals "the interest datum".

4 The interest datum is a datum

The interest datum seems to be systematically presupposed in sound moral reasoning. It seems to be a datum.

⁹ Throughout, I shall use "interest" and its cognates in this way: the things that are good for or benefit you are in your interest, and those that are bad for or harm you are not in your interest.

Consider this little argument schema:

- A1. x-ing would harm a human person (and we know as much).
- A2. Therefore, we have a *prima facie* moral reason not to x.

Instances abound. Covering the walls of a playroom with lead-based paint would harm certain young human children (we know this). And so we have reason not to use lead-based paint. Smoking cigarettes would harm me (and those around me); we know this. And so I have reason not to smoke cigarettes. Examples like these are easy to multiply. We often move from instances (A1) to instances of (A2). Such moves will strike most of us as totally unproblematic. This is evidence that we ordinarily presuppose a thesis that licenses the move from (A1) to (A2). We ordinarily presuppose something like this:

- A3. If x-ing would harm a human person (and we know this), then we have a *prima facie* moral reason not to x.

This suggests that (A3) is a moral datum of sorts. The same is true of the interest datum. Consider:

- B1. x-ing would harm a human organism.
- B2. Therefore, x-ing would harm a human person.

Again, instances abound. Covering the walls of a playroom with lead-based paint would harm certain young human organisms. Using lead paint, therefore, would harm certain young people ('children', we call them). Smoking cigarettes would harm my animal (and many other animals around me); thus, smoking cigarettes would harm me. We often move from instances of (B1) to instances of (B2). What's more, we deploy parallel arguments that instead of harm, concern benefit; vigorous exercise would do my animal good, and would thus do *me* good. These inferences will strike most of us as totally unproblematic. This is evidence that we ordinarily presuppose a thesis that licenses the move from claims like (B1) to claims like (B2): something like the interest datum. The interest datum is, like (A3), a datum.

5 The interest argument stated

The interest datum is good evidence for animalism. Or so I shall now argue. The Interest Argument, as I'll call it, unfolds as follows:¹⁰

Data: The interest datum holds

Evidence: If the interest datum holds, then it is best explained by animalism

Link: if the best explanation of the interest datum is animalism, then animalism is true

¹⁰ For brief discussion of an argument in this neighborhood that the present article supersedes, see Bailey (2015): 871–872.

Conclusion: Therefore, animalism is true (from Data, Evidence, and Link)

We have already observed the intuitive case for Data. The case is resilient and can be easily tested. Go ahead: move around a bit and give your muscles a little workout. I predict that the benefit done to your animal by the exercise will accrue to you. Expose your human animal to a virus. I predict that *you* will suffer. In the business of everyday life, the things our animals enjoy or suffer are enjoyed or suffered by their associated human beings. The case for Data, then, is strong indeed. The interest datum certainly *seems* to hold.

One could, of course, resist the interest datum. But the fact that interest datum is widely presupposed in good moral reasoning (as shown above) strongly recommends against this strategy, I think. My advice to non-animalists is to resist the other premises of the Interest Argument. Let us, then, consider those premises, Evidence and Link.

6 On behalf of evidence and link

The gap from the interest datum to animalism is not wide. Evidence is one attempt to bridge it. There is plausibly some explanation or account of *why* the interest datum holds. When making sense of the interest datum, we need not throw up our hands in despair. We may, instead, offer a metaphysical theory (or, if you like, tell a metaphysical story).

Animalism is, I contend, the best such story. Here are some rival stories (they correspond to the six non-animalist views noted above):

- (i) The interest datum holds because wholly immaterial human persons inhabit or are embodied in human animals, and embodiment guarantees that the interests of the former line up with the interests of the latter.
- (ii) The interest datum holds because, in general, we *inherit* properties from our animals (like *being sick* or *weighing 62 kilograms*), and vice versa (like *hoping for rain*). So also, we and our animals mutually inherit properties concerning what would do us benefit or harm.
- (iii) The interest datum holds because our animals are, in fact, proper parts of us, and parthood guarantees the right kind of link between the interests of parts and their wholes.
- (iv) The interest datum holds because we are constituted by our animals, and when *x* is constituted by *y*, there will inevitably be intimate correlations between the interests of *x* and *y*.
- (v) The interest datum holds because we are proper (spatial) parts of our animals, and (spatial) parthood guarantees the right kind of link between the interests of parts and their wholes.
- (vi) The interest datum holds because we are proper (temporal) parts of our animals, and (temporal) parthood guarantees the right kind of link between the interests of parts and their wholes.

These stories are less than riveting. But they are of the kind that metaphysicians tell. And all six stories all enjoy some degree of explanatory power. Each, when supplemented with the perfectly crafted auxiliary metaphysical and moral theory (theories about interests have a normative element) about embodiment, constitution, property inheritance, or the intimacy of parthood, can plausibly claim to explain or aid in the understanding of *why* the interest datum holds. But none is so simple or as powerful as the story animalism offers: *the interest datum holds because we are (identical to) our animals. So, for example, your interests line up with those of your animal because you are your animal.* Though the accounts may be tied in explanatory power, animalism is the victor when it comes to simplicity. Animalism needs no abstruse theory of embodiment, constitution, property inheritance, or the intimacy of parthood to explain why the interest datum holds; it deploys only simple numerical identity. The things that are good or bad for us are good or bad for our animals (and vice versa) because we are our animals and they are us.

Compare there are many associations between Samuel Clemens and Mark Twain. When one shows up for a book signing, the other does too. Donations to Twain's favorite causes turn out to be donations to Clemens' favorite causes. To speak to one is to speak to the other. What could possibly explain these correlations? We could opt for a complicated conjoined twin theory, a parthood theory, a constitution theory, an embodiment theory, and so on. Or we could instead conclude that Clemens is (identical to) Twain. Though the theories are perhaps tied for explanatory power (each can say *why* Clemens shows up at all of Twain's book signings), the identity view clearly has a powerful boost in the theoretical race by virtue of its simplicity.

The same simplicity considerations show that, in light of the interest datum, animalism has a powerful advantage over its rivals. Even if all six stories explain the interest datum as well as does animalism (I have my doubts), none does so quite so simply. Animalism is, accordingly, the *best* explanation of the interest datum. So I conclude that Evidence is true.

Link adds this plausible thought to the mix: that animalism is the best explanation of an important datum is powerful evidence of its truth. Perhaps you agree thus far, but decline to conclude that animalism is thus true *full stop*. Fair enough; in that case, I recommend you replace "true" in Link and Conclusion with "probably true" or "is more likely than its rivals". What we are left with, at any rate, is a valid (and, I have argued, sound) argument with either "animalism is true" or "animalism is probably true" or "animalism is more likely than its rivals" as its conclusion.

7 A simple objection

Paul Snowdon (himself an animalist) has recently dismissed simplicity-based reasoning for animalism on two grounds. First, denying animalism does not involve "postulating real extra entities with extra causal roles".¹¹ Absent

¹¹ Snowdon (2014): 81.

postulating such extra causal structure, rival explanations of the association incur no ontological penalties and thus are not sliced by Ockham's Razor. Second, it is unclear whether or how simplicity considerations should play any role in metaphysical theorizing.

I think I agree with Snowdon's second point: it is indeed unclear just how simplicity should figure into metaphysical theorizing (or theorizing in general). So it is with appropriate trepidation that I deploy it here; and I am prepared to retreat to the conclusion that animalism is merely *probably* true.¹²

Snowdon's first point will take a little more work to answer. I begin by noting that positing extra *causal* structure isn't the only way to get sliced. Consider an abundant platonist view, according to which, in addition to the material world around us, there are uncountably many numbers, propositions, sets, and the like, all of which enjoy real existence but are abstract and causally inert. When it comes to answering charges of ontological extravagance, emphasizing that these items are *causally inert* doesn't seem to help. In fact, it might hurt the platonist's case. "If the sets and numbers don't *do* anything", the nominalist reply goes, "we have even less reason to believe they exist!". I think the nominalist has a point here. And so I conclude that it is not only the addition of *causal* structure that should prompt ontological surgery. Extra entities alone give us reason to reach for the razor.

Further, the denial of animalism, together with a few very plausible auxiliary premises, strictly entails the existence of extra entities. For if we exist, if animals exist, and if we are not animals, then—in addition to us—there are animals. To put that consequent a little differently, there are—in addition to human animals—human persons. I propose that we do indeed exist, and that our animals exist too. I conclude that, if animalism is not true, then there are extra entities. And these extra entities (whether or not they have causal powers) justify use of the razor.

Now for an *ad hominem* point. A great many anti-animalists do, in fact, posit extra causal roles for persons distinct from animals. Here are a few examples. Lynne Rudder Baker says that persons (and not animals) are capable of (i.e., have the power to or occupy the causal role of bringing about) certain kinds of first-personal thought.¹³ Sydney Shoemaker says that the causal profiles of properties exhibited by persons differ from those exhibited by their animals, which would certainly seem to imply that persons and animals occupy distinct causal roles. Shoemaker's example of *being immune to a certain disease* illustrates his argument nicely. You have the

¹² If you think that simplicity has *no place at all* in metaphysical theorizing (or theorizing in general), then I invite you to read my main argument as supporting a conditional along these lines: *if* simplicity is a theoretical advantage, *then* animalism enjoys that advantage.

¹³ Baker (2007), 69: "The onset of a first-person perspective is the coming into existence of a new entity in the world. A human person essentially has a first-person perspective; a human animal does not. Your persistence conditions are first-personal: You did not exist until there was something that it is like to be you." See also Baker (2007): 79, fn 41 (referring to Baker's earlier work, emphasis added): "... a person comes into being when a human organism develops a robust first-person perspective or the *structural capacity* for one." I interpret *capacity* talk here as causal—a capacity just is a causal power. So, positing a new item with a capacity is positing new causal structure.

power, Shoemaker suggests, to gain such a property by switching bodies. But your animal cannot switch bodies. So you have a power your animal does not—extra causal structure.¹⁴ Pure dualists like Alvin Plantinga say that material objects (suppose for a moment that animals are material, though I'll revisit this point below) cannot survive certain kinds of rapid change,¹⁵ or think,¹⁶ though human persons can.¹⁷ And this is a common refrain among pure dualists: it is precisely *because* immaterial souls can do things material animals cannot do (survive certain kinds of rapid change, engage in conscious thought, etc.) that pure dualists recommend their dualism. The denial of animalism, then, often *does* involve positing extra causal structure.

Thus my *ad hominem* point. The lesson I glean is as follows. My main goal in this article is not only to show that animalism enjoys a leg up against its denial (thinly construed). Rather, I hope to show that animalism is better than its *relevant rivals*—extant theories that philosophers actually propose in its stead. Showing that many of those theories involve extra causal structure bolsters *this* component in my case, even if it may not demonstrate the wholly general point.

Finally, note that the denial of animalism also involves extra *theoretical* structure: the anti-animalist must deploy theories of embodiment, constitution, property inheritance, or the intimacy of parthood to explain the interest datum (to see as much, take a look at the six rival explanations canvassed above). But abstruse theoretical structure—just like extra entities or extra causal structure—comes at a price. This is a price the animalist need not pay, for she needs nothing so fancy; for the animalist, identity alone does the job.

I conclude, then, that simplicity considerations *are* indeed relevant, and that they cut in favor of animalism.

¹⁴ Shoemaker (2008): 323: "... a person and her biological animal can have the property of having a certain disease, or the property of having an immunity to a certain disease. But if persons can in principle change bodies and biological animals can't, then there is a slight difference in the ways these biological properties can be lost in the two cases—the person, but not the biological animal, can lose the disease or immunity by changing bodies. Since the causal profile of a property will include the ways in which the property can be lost, the disease and immunity properties of the person will have slightly different causal profiles from the disease and immunity properties of the biological animal..."

¹⁵ Plantinga (2006): 5, "Now it seems possible-possible in that broadly logical sense-that medical science should advance to the point where I remain fully dressed and in my right mind (perhaps reading the *South Bend Tribune*) throughout a process during which each of the macroscopic parts of my body is replaced by other such parts, the original parts being vaporized in a nuclear explosion-or better, annihilated by God. But if this process occurs rapidly-during a period of 1 microsecond, let's say [my body] will no longer exist. I, however, will continue to exist, having been reading the comic page during the entire process."

¹⁶ Plantinga (2006): 11, "...no material objects can think—i.e., reason and believe, entertain propositions, draw inferences, and the like. But of course I can think; therefore I am not a material object."

¹⁷ Another pure dualist who thinks that material objects cannot enjoy conscious mental thought is David Barnett (2010).

8 Another route to evidence and link

I have mapped out a simplicity-based route to Evidence and Link. Perhaps the ride is a little bumpy, though. It'd be good if there were other routes to take. And there are. Here is one (there may well be yet others).

Animalism *fits* better with the interest datum than does any of its rivals. Given animalism, the interest datum follows naturally. The two cohere well. Given animalism, the interest datum is to be expected. One expression of these observations goes as follows: the *conditional epistemic probability* of the interest datum on animalism is very high (indeed, it is 1). And this is *obviously* so; if we are animals, of *course* our interests and theirs align. Animalism correctly predicts the data we observe. On animalism, that data is neither a wild (or even somewhat tame) coincidence, nor is it remotely surprising.

The situation isn't quite so rosy for the rivals of animalism.

Consider pure dualism. Would it be surprising to discover that, though you are a wholly immaterial item distinct from your animal, your interests are nonetheless aligned? I think so. But then the conditional probability of the interest datum on pure dualism falls short of 1. One could, of course, *add* various complex and independent auxiliary hypotheses to pure dualism and thereby arrive at a conjunction on which the interest datum is highly probable. But then one must pay the price of additional causal, ontological, or theoretical structure. In this probabilistic framework, the price is a lower *prior probability* of the conjunction. This is, of course, the bargain one strikes when adding independent conjuncts to a hypothesis: the data are more probable on the new hypothesis (that's good), but the hypothesis is itself less probable (that's bad). The animalist need not strike any such bargain or weigh those options, for she needs no auxiliary hypotheses at all.

Consider partism. Would it be surprising to discover that, though you are a proper temporal part of a proper spatial part of an animal, your interests are nonetheless aligned? Again, I think so. It is not as though *all* proper temporal parts of proper spatial parts of host entities *always* coincide in interests with those host entities, after all. But then the conditional probability of the interest datum on partism falls short of 1. The partist could, of course, deny that our interests align with those of our animals after all or add hypotheses to the view on which the interest datum is itself highly probable. But these moves come at a price, whether from extra causal, ontological, or theoretical structure or from denying what appears to be so.

More generally, if we are not animals, it would be at least a little (and perhaps very) surprising (not to be expected) that our interests should align with theirs to the extent noted in the interest datum. The conditional epistemic probability of the interest datum on the denial of animalism falls short of 1.

If all that is correct, interesting results follow. First, the interest datum *confirms* animalism. Second, one should, on learning the interest datum, increase our confidence that animalism is true (and, accordingly, decrease our confidence in its rivals). The interest datum is *evidence* for animalism over its rivals.

Evidence is near at hand. For philosophers attracted to probabilistic reasoning of the kind deployed above, confirmation and explanation are closely linked. Indeed,

within this framework, searching for explanation of some data may just *be* the search for hypotheses that predict that data (i.e., hypotheses the data confirms). Since animalism is the hypothesis best confirmed by the data (the data is more to be expected on animalism than on any of its rivals), animalism is the best explanation of the data. And so Evidence is true.

One can be forgiven, I think, for having doubts about this probabilistic framework and its present use (I harbor a few). But the exercise is instructive. For it shows that a case for Evidence may be cooked up from various ingredients, and simplicity need not play a leading role in the operation. Those who wish to deny Evidence, then, have a bit of work to do; renunciation of simplicity-based arguments in metaphysics *tout court* will not alone do the job.

9 Counter-evidence

A tempting objection:

Sure, there's *some* evidence for animalism; but there's also evidence *against* the view. There are, to enumerate just a bit of the relevant data, transplant cases ("where my cerebrum goes, there go I"), anti-physicalist convictions ("material objects can't be conscious, so I am no material object and thus no animal"), religious doctrines ("to be absent from this animal is to be present with the Lord"), and even cases in which the interests of a person and her animal apparently part ways (the artiste, personally enriched by a drinking habit that is also the very demise of her animal). These data tell against animalism. And so the interest argument should not, after all, convince us of animalism.¹⁸

A general reply: counter-evidence is no surprise. But it is, in a way, irrelevant to the issue at hand. For in general, there may well be powerful evidence for a target view even in the face of counter-evidence (analogy: evil is evidence *against* classical theism, even if fine-tuning is evidence *for*). What we learn from the interest argument is that there is *new* and *powerful* evidence for animalism.

The evidence is *new* in at least the following sense. Animalists and anti-animalists alike have spent a lot of energy on various *metaphysical* issues in the neighborhood (think here of constitution, composition, coincidence, persistence, and so on). But none, to my knowledge, have focused at any length on how the *moral* questions at hand (questions about what is *good* or *bad* for persons and animals—that is, about their interests) intersect with those metaphysical issues. The central argument of this paper has brought that intersection into focus and thus revealed new connections and theoretical costs and benefits to animalism and its rivals. That's new evidence. By analogy: suppose everyone already knew that Clemens and Twain regularly showed up at the same events, supported the same causes, and so on. Even so, reflecting on the various ways in which this would be either a wild

¹⁸ I thank anonymous referees for pressing this objection.

coincidence or would require implausible theoretical structure—unless, of course, Clemens and Twain are one—would bring *new* evidence to bear on the question of Twain’s identity.

And the thing to do in light of new and powerful evidence for a view is to raise one’s credence in that view. So even if you find the counter-evidence persuasive, you should lean more towards animalism now than you did before reading this article.¹⁹

The artiste case deserves its own reply. The case undermines the interest datum or animalism only if it involves a person’s interest parting ways from those of her animal. It is no such case. The artiste’s animal—and the artiste herself—may well be in *some respects* harmed by her drinking and untimely demise. But if her libations are indeed a fount of enrichment, they may also occasion great benefit to her and her animal in *other respects*. A habit may be, at once, a source of both harm (shortened lifespan, hangovers) and benefit (learning from experience, wisdom through suffering). My objector may here hypothesize that animals are simply *incapable* of learning or becoming wise, and so those benefits can accrue only to the person. This is, to be sure, an intriguing hypothesis. It is also, so far as I can tell, unsupported by reflection on the artiste case alone. We would do well to withhold from affirming the hypothesis, I think, until presented with a potent argument on its behalf. Without the hypothesis, the artiste case does little to unseat either the interest datum or animalism.

10 Conclusion

A little recap is in order. I began by attending to the close associations, links, or ties we enjoy with our animals. I focused on a subset of these—those concerning our interests and those of our animals—and have argued that these interlocking interests provide support for animalism. The news so far, then, is good news for animalists. I have yet more good news to share. For it is not just the interest datum that supports animalism. A yet broader base of evidence—*all* of the intimate associations we enjoy with our animals—does so as well. So if you’re moved by the Interest Argument, you should be even more moved by a parallel argument that takes as data all of the associations. Good news for animalists indeed.

If the arguments thus far are sound, we are animals. This conclusion alone is of considerable interest. It makes progress in understanding one important dimension about human nature; for it furnishes us with an answer to the question of what we are and a framework from which to proceed. We are animals.

But other questions remain open. Some of these pertain to the nature of these human animals we are. In particular:

¹⁹ For the record, you should not find the counter-evidence persuasive. But establishing *that* claim is a task for another day, and one admirably accomplished by, among many others, Olson (1997) and Snowdon (2014).

Matter Question: Are human animals wholly material beings?

Persistence Question: Do human animals have strictly biological persistence conditions?

Most contemporary animalists say “yes” to the Matter Question. But it was not always so. For Aristotle was an animalist if ever there was one, and according to Aristotle (arguably) and (some of) his disciples, human animals are not wholly material beings. They are instead compounds of *form* and *matter*, where *form* here is not wholly material (although it may depend for its existence on some wholly material item or items).²⁰

Most contemporary animalists also say “yes” to the Persistence Question. According to these animalists, a human animal lasts across an interval just in the case that its “purely animal functions—metabolism, the capacity to breathe and circulate one’s blood, and the like—continue”²¹ across that interval. We may, following Eric Olson, call this theory about the persistence of animals the “Biological Approach”.²² Animalism as formulated in this article is neutral about the Biological Approach. It is compatible with that approach and with its denial. So arguments that target the conjunction of animalism and the Biological Approach need not tell against animalism as such; for it is open to the animalist to denounce the Biological Approach.

Animalism, in short, leaves open important questions about the nature of human animals. I draw two lessons. First, there’s still work to be done; animalism alone is an incomplete metaphysics of the human person. A more complete and satisfying animalist metaphysics of human persons—a more complete answer to the question of what we are—will say something about what animals are too. Second, any final evaluation of animalism will likely depend on answers to these questions about the nature of human animals. Objections to animalism, for example, that target the conjunction of animalism and the Biological Approach (as the cerebrum transplant case above appears to do) will tell against animalism as such only if the Biological Approach is itself correct. Otherwise, the objections may be deflected by simply denying the Biological Approach. Animalism’s critics and defenders alike, then, would do well to attend to these questions in future work.

Animalism is a minority view these days (alas). But popularity need not correlate with the facts. And in this case, I have argued that it does not. A wide class of data offer evidence for animalism. The data I have invoked are difficult to resist, and the support they offer is strong. I recommend following these data and accepting animalism.

²⁰ It is unclear whether Aristotle himself thought we were wholly material or not; but many contemporary hylomorphists—such as Toner (2011)—classify their view as a kind of non-materialist animalism. On contemporary hylomorphism, see Bailey and Wilkins (forthcoming); on the varieties of animalism and whether the animalist must endorse materialism see Thornton (2016) and (MS).

²¹ Olson (1997): 16.

²² It is sometimes unclear whether Olson takes the Biological Approach to be about what it takes for *us* to last over time or what it takes for *human animals* to last over time. I mean the latter.

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