Generic animalism[1]

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The animalist says we are animals. This thesis is commonly understood as the universal generalization that all human persons are human animals. This article proposes an alternative: the thesis is a generic that admits of exceptions. We defend the resulting view, which we call GENERIC ANIMALISM, and show its aptitude for diagnosing the limits of eight case-based objections to animalism.

1. Introduction

What are we? Better, what *are* we? This is the question of personal ontology. It's unclear what it means, especially when asked in that peculiar metaphysical voice. Consider some unsatisfactory answers:

(1) We are all within a few hundred kilometers of the Earth's surface.
(2) We each have at least one great-great-grandparent.
(3) We are each no more than 240 years old.

These claims do not resolve our question. They disclose facts about us human beings and yet fail to say what we are. For the question at hand demands more than mere generalization. It asks for *classification*.

When it comes to classification, this much we know. You are a human person. You can think. You can feel. You can move about in the world and do creative and terrible things. Most of these feats are accomplished through slight or significant actions performed with your body. You would, at least, be hard pressed to get by without it.

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We also know that your body is a human animal–a living, breathing organism. You see it when you look in the mirror. When it is sick, you don't feel well. Where it goes, you go and it must follow where you go. Indeed, you can make it move through sheer force of will. You bear, in sum, an important and intimate relation to your animal. You are not an exception. We all bear some intimate relation to these animals of ours.

Answers to the question of personal ontology explain what this relation is. They say *how* we relate to our animal bodies and thus, at least in part, what we *are*. Here are eight prominent answers.

ANIMALISM
We are animals.[3]

CONSTITUTIONALISM
We are constituted by animals but inherit properties from animals in a derivative sense.[5]

BRAINISM
We are brains that are proper parts of animals.[7]

PURE DUALISM
We are wholly immaterial souls.[4]

MODERATE DUALISM
We are wholly immaterial souls but inherit properties from animals in a derivative sense.[6]

UNION DUALISM
We are amalgams that have animals as proper parts.[8]

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[3] Defenses of animalism include Árnadóttir 2013, Bailey 2014a, 2015b, 2016, 2017, Belshaw 2011, Blatti 2007, 2012, Hershenov 2001, Licon 2012, 2013, 2014, Liao 2006, 2010, Lim 2018, Mackie 1999a, 1999b, Merricks 2001, Olson 1997, Olson 2003, Sauchelli 2017, Snowdon 1990, 2014a, 2014b, Thornton 2019, Thornton and Bailey forthcoming, Toner 2011a, 2011b, van Inwagen 1990, Yang 2013, 2015. Bailey 2015 and Blatti 2019 survey relevant literature. Johansson 2007 and Toner 2011a discuss how to best formulate animalism. Thornton 2016 surveys variation within the view.

[4] Many endorse either pure or moderate dualism. Which disjunct they opt for is not always clear. See Barnett 2010, Cucu and Pitts 2019, Harrison 2016, Hasker 1999, 2010, Moreland 2013, Nida-Rümelin 2013, Plantinga 2006, Robinson 2016, Rodrigues 2014, Taliaferro 1996, Unger 2006, Zimmerman 2010 and all the papers in Baker and Goetz 2009 and Loose *et al* 2018.

[5] Baker 2000, Corcoran 2006, Johnston 1987, 2007, and Shoemaker 2008.

[6] Lowe 2010 and Meixner 2010. This version of dualism is moderate because it allows that we have physical properties like extension in at least some sense.

[7] McMahan 2002 and Parfit 2012. Puccetti 1973 says we are cerebral hemispheres. See also Gillett 2014 on the view we are "expansive" or "thinking" brains. Another view on which we are proper parts of our animals is the thesis that we are tiny, simple, material particles as discussed in Chisholm 1978 and Quinn 1997.

[8] Swinburne 1997: 145.

PARTISM	NIHILISM
We are sums of thought-supporting spatial and temporal parts that are proper spatial and temporal parts of animals.[9]	We do not exist and so bear no relation to any human animals.[10]

Each elucidates what we are by stepping beyond generalization into classification. None merely specifies features that all human persons happen to enjoy like (1) through (3). Rather, they say that *to be one of us* is to bear a certain relation to a human animal. They aim to classify.

Even so, theories of personal ontology entail generalizations. Theorizing standardly proceeds with a method of classification by universal generalization. Pure dualists have maintained that *every* human person is a wholly immaterial soul, for example. The main goal of this article is to develop an alternative. We defend an answer to the question of what we are that classifies but does not universally generalize. Our answer will be an animalist answer. But the resources deployed may be used by others.

We advance a generic understanding of the animalist thesis. On this generic animalism, *we are animals* is to be read much like *squirrels climb trees*. Crucially, generics like these admit of exceptions. Though squirrels do indeed scamper up trees, not all of them do. So too, the generic animalism we recommend will be consistent with exceptions. Such consistency will prove to be important in defending animalism.

The article unfolds as follows. We first introduce genericity (§2). Then we introduce a generic formulation of animalism, discuss its commitments, and suggest some reasons it is true (§3-4). A primary reason for adopting generic animalism is its aptitude for handling and diagnosing the limits of case-based objections. Eight case-based objections will therefore be considered and dispatched (§5). We conclude by reflecting on different ways generic animalism can be developed (§6).

2. Genericity

Generalizations predicate properties of quantities. They may be expressed in natural language in a few ways. We focus on generalizations expressed with a

[9] Hudson 2001. For a similar view according to which we are sums of psychologically continuous proper temporal parts of organisms, see Lewis 1976 and Perry 1975.
[10] Stone 2005 and Unger 1979a, 1979b.

quantifier phrase in the subject position of a sentence.[11] Quantifier phrases specify which quantity of things the sentence concerns. *All*, *most,* and *some* are some of the many quantifiers that, with a noun, form a quantifier phrase like *All food courts serve delicious food*.

Generic generalizations are another way to state the properties had by quantities. They are commonly expressed in English with a bare plural.[12] Instead of a quantifier phrase consisting of an overt determiner like *every* with a noun phrase like *U.S. Supreme Court justice* to form *every U.S. Supreme Court justice* or a quantifier phrase with an overt determiner and plural marking on the noun such as *All U.S. Supreme Court justices,* the noun appears without an overt determiner and with plural marking. An example is *U.S. Supreme Court justices*. The syntactic differences carry a semantic one.

(4) All U.S. Supreme Court justices have odd social security numbers.
(5) U.S. Supreme Court justices have odd social security numbers.

In the pair above, (4) was true as of September 2018; (5) is false. A common view on generics is that they are quantifiers.[13] We agree. The truth-conditional difference between (4) and (5) is therefore owed to a difference in what things are quantified over within a domain.

But generics do more. They add explanatory depth to generalizations. In contrast to a quantifier phrase like ⌜All *F*s are *G*⌝, which merely states the quantity of *F*s within a domain that are also *G*, ⌜*F*s are *G*⌝ conveys that there is a special or intimate connectedness between being *F* and being *G*. Reconsider (4) and (5). The truth-conditional difference between them can be attributed to the absence of that connectedness. Though every U.S. Supreme Court justice has an odd social security number, nothing about being a U.S. Supreme Court justice is intimately connected with having an odd social security number. The connectedness can be understood as a relation between being a member of a kind and having a particular property; being of kind *F* carries a special connectedness to being *G*.

[11] To simplify, we ignore adverbs of quantification including generic ones like *normally* or *usually*. We characterize generic animalism in §3 with bare plurals because an adverbial characterization like *we are normally (identical to) animals* invites a reading where our proposal is about generic identity. It is not. Our proposal is about the quantification with which animalism is articulated.

[12] Genericity can also be expressed with definite and indefinite descriptions. Our discussion will be limited to generic uses of bare plurals. Ascriptions of habit or dispositions are often considered generic as well. For reasons given by Nickel 2016, 2.2, we think such ascriptions are different.

[13] Exceptions include Carlson 1997, Liebesman 2011, Leslie 2008, Teichman 2016, and Collins 2018.

We adopt a normality-based understanding of this connectedness. A generic is about the normal, typical, or characteristic *F*s.[14] So being of kind *F* carries a special connectedness to being *G* because to be a normal *F* is to be *G*. Combining the proposal that generics are quantificational with the understanding that they are about the normal *F*s, we work with a semantics where generics universally quantify over normal *F*s.[15] A generic generalization like (5) can be paraphrased as (6):

(6) All normal/typical/characteristic U.S. Supreme Court justices have odd social security numbers.

In this semantics, the connectedness between *F*s and being *G* results from rendering the domain of quantification to concern the normal (or typical or characteristic). Being *F* is connected to being *G* because all normal *F*s are *G*. A benefit of this semantics is that the falsity of (5) and (6) may be uniformly explained. There is nothing about U.S. Supreme Court justices as a kind that makes it normal for members to have odd social security numbers.

As advertised at the beginning, a curious and distinguishing feature of generic generalizations is that they admit of exceptions. Birds lay eggs, but some never do. Ravens are black, but some are albino. Following Nickel (2016, 55), *F*s are either CONFORMERS or EXCEPTIONS to a generic generalization like ⌜*F*s are *G*⌝. Conformers divide in two: PROPER CONFORMS (the normal *F*s that are *G*), and DEVIANT CONFORMERS (the non-normal *F*s that are *G*). As an illustration, Nickel asks us to compare a raven that is black in the normal way and an albino raven that is dyed black. The former is what the generic statement that ravens are black is about. The latter is not but it still happens to conform to the generalization anyway.

	NORMAL	ABNORMAL
CONFORMER	Proper	Deviant
EXCEPTION	Genuine	Merely Apparent

[14] For our purpose, *normal*, *typical*, and *characteristic* are interchangeable terms for glossing the special connectedness exhibited by generics. Throughout, we occasionally emphasize this interchangeability to prevent unintended inferences about what we are advocating.

[15] Asher and Morreau 1995, Pelletier and Asher 1997, Eckardt 2000, and Nickel 2008, 2016 are representative. See Lawler 1973, Dahl 1975, and Delgrande 1987 for earlier versions of a normality-based semantics. For some general objections see Krifka *et al* 1995. For objections to Nickel, whose proposal we take inspiration from, see Hoeltje 2017. Nickel 2018 replies. A nearby proposal is the semantics of van Rooij and Schulz 2020 where generics express what is typical.

Fig. 1

Exceptions come in two varieties as well. There are GENUINE EXCEPTIONS (the normal *F*s that are not *G*), and MERELY APPARENT EXCEPTIONS (the non-normal *F*s that are not *G*). We can compare a non-albino raven that is white with an albino. The former falsifies the generic that all ravens are black. The latter does not because albinism owes to a congenital defect.

Though other generalizations—say, ⌜Most *F*s are *G*⌝ or ⌜Many *F*s are *G*⌝—tolerate exceptions, generics tolerate even more. Indeed, they admit *massive* exceptions—a very small number of the Fs may be G even when ⌜*F*s are *G*⌝ is true. Consider (7), a favorite in the literature:

(7) Sea turtles are long-lived.

Sea turtles overwhelmingly die as hatchlings. And yet, those that do not are among the most long-lived of beasts. So genericity cannot be understood statistically, unlike other non-universal generalizations.[16] The non-statistical meaning is explained, rather, by a normality-based semantics. What holds of the normal *F*s may not hold of most *F*s. Furthermore, what holds of the normal *F*s may not hold of any *F*s. (8) helps illustrate.

(8) Lions have manes.

Note its truth. Now consider (8) in a future where no lions presently have manes because a diabolical gang of shavers have tracked down every lion and buzzed off their manes. (8) would remain true even though the universal generalization *All lions have manes* would be false.

So generic generalizations are set apart in that they state, non-statistically, which normal members of a kind have which properties. In doing so, their truth or falsity tell us more than merely statistical generalizations. What is true of all or most members of a kind may not tell us anything deeper about that kind. Consider *All sea turtles are within 10 million miles of a tree*. But genericity allows us to say and thereby do more than proffer which quantity of which things have which properties. Generics allow us to characterize a kind by specifying an intimate connection, given what is normal, between belonging to a kind and

[16] Cohen 1999*a*, 1999*b*, 2001, 2004 disagrees and offers a probabilistic semantics for generics. See Nickel 2016, 4.2 for critical discussion. Though nothing about generic animalism requires it to be paired with a normality-based semantics, such a semantics helps to facilitate our diagnosis in §4 for why the counterexamples fail.

bearing a property. In short, we can speak in the metaphysical voice and classify by using generics.

But what is normality (or typicality or characteristicness)? Answers vary in form. Statistical answers may be initially intuitive, but the normality underwriting generic generalizations is non-statistical. Another answer is needed.[17] We don't fill that need here. This might, we grant, feel like cheating. We have introduced a tool and are about to put it to substantial use, but have declined to answer a burning question about it. Though we sympathize with such a reaction, not all burning questions are ones to which we owe the salve.

Consider a parallel.[18] We often use modal notions like possibility or necessity in expressing generalizations. We grasp such notions quickly and intuitively. In philosophy and elsewhere, articulating a theory in modal vocabulary can clarify its commitments. But *what is modality?* is not a question everyone must answer. That is a question about the backdrop a theory is set against and it can be answered by others at another time. Quantification is another parallel. We often use universal or existential quantification in expressing generalizations. Their use is understood with ease, and we struggle to articulate theories without them. And yet, *What is quantification?* is also not a question everyone wielding quantificational notions needs to answer. Few using them have ever stopped to wonder, for example, whether universal quantification is a property of properties or equivalent to infinitary conjunction. Nor need they.

Another example will seal the point. Generalizations in science are often expressed generically: *electrons are negatively charged* and *chickens lay eggs*. Some scientific generalizations expressed generically are perhaps best understood as loose talk. But many generalizations, especially those in the special sciences (*e.g.* biology, neuroscience, psychology, or geography), cannot be.[19] They admit of exceptions. Chickens lay eggs, but no rooster does. To strengthen the generic to a universal generalization is to render them false. A familiar way to maintain the truth of such generalizations is to posit that they tacitly involve a ceteris paribus clause. That clause covers the exceptions. What, though, is a ceteris paribus clause? One burgeoning proposal is that such clauses involve normality either directly or through generic quantification.[20] Such generalizations should be understood as stating that normal *F*s are *G*. Suppose the proposal is

[17] See Millikan 1984, Schurz 2001, Foot 2001, McGrath 2005, and Nickel 2008, 2016 for various answers. van Rooij and Schulz 2020 offer a related theory of typicality.
[18] Inspired by Nickel 2016.
[19] Pietroski and Rey 1995 offer an especially forceful defense of this claim.
[20] See Schurz 2001, 2004, Smith 2006, Nickel 2010, 2014, 2016, Unterhuber 2014, and Claveau and Girard 2019. Relatedly, see Wachbroit 1994 for a discussion of the importance of normality to the biological sciences.

correct. It follows that scientists, especially special scientists, traffic in normality in the ordinary business of classification. They owe us no theory of normality simpliciter.

Summarizing, generics enable a special kind of generalization. On the view we prefer, they involve quantification and say something of items that are normal (or typical or characteristic). They are thus compatible with exceptions, provided that those exceptions are abnormal. Generics, finally, are specially suited to classification. It is natural, then, to wonder how generics may be used to classify beings like us.

3. Generic animalism

Animalists concur that animals are what we are. But how is that to be spelled out? In extant literature, *animalism* takes many forms:

> Campbell and McMahan (2016, 229): "Animalism is the view that each of us—each individual of the kind of which we are necessarily and most fundamentally members—is numerically identical to a human organism."
>
> Johnston (2016, 87): "*Animal* is one of our substance kinds, *i.e.* every human person is always in fact an animal, and there is no possible future deviating from any point in his or her existence in which they are not animals."
>
> Olson (2003, 318-319): "When I say that we are animals, I mean that each of us is numerically identical with an animal."
>
> Parfit (2012, 12): "When Animalists entered this debate, their main claim was that such psychological criteria of identity are seriously mistaken, because we are human animals, so that our criterion of identity must be biological."

These classifications are not the same.[21] Some explicitly make modal or temporal commitments; others do not. Critics tend to state animalism in stronger terms. But there is uniformity too. Three of these characterizations of animalism describe it as an unrestricted universal generalization—a claim about *all* or *each* or *every* human person. Let's reserve UNRESTRICTED ANIMALISM to name this way of developing animalism.

Animalism is sometimes introduced in a way that invites a generic reading, perhaps later to be replaced with a more demanding thesis like one of those collected above. For example:

> Blatti (2006, 162): "Advocates of the view known as 'animalism' make the following straightforward claim: we are animals"[22]

The *we* in *we are animals* clearly denotes a kind—our kind—as opposed to denoting a particular group of two or more people from the context. In this way, it contrasts strongly with *We are at a basketball game*, where *we* denotes a particular batch of individuals. Still other authors offer formulations of animalism that seem plainly generic, even to readers not prone to linguistic reflection:

> Bailey (2015, 869): "… it is a generic truth that we are animals."
>
> Johaansson (2007, 205): "All typical human persons are identical with animals or… all or nearly all human persons are identical with animals".
>
> Olson (2016, 146): "Animalism is the view that you and I and other *normal* human people are animals—biological organisms".

In these instances, animalism is formulated as something like an exception-admitting generic rather than a universal generalization. These

[21] More quotations further illustrate both variety and conformity in definitions of animalism. Johaansson 2016, 284, emphasis original: "Animalism does not say anything about [angels and gods]; it is concerned with people like you and I… This consideration suggests that animalism could… be defined as the view that all *human* people are animals." But see his 2007, 205, discussed below. Reid 2016, 253: "Animalism holds that we are each numerically identical to a particular human animal…" Snowdon 1991, 111: "… I shall simply stipulate that [animalism] involves *two* claims. The first is that we are identical to certain animals… the second… is that anything which is an animal must be an animal, and the self-same animal, at all times it exists. Given that the view claims both of these things, it is committed to the claim that *we must* be animals, and the self-same animals, at all times we exist."

[22] See also Blatti 2019: "Expressed in logical notation and individualized, [animalism] is sometimes presented in the following form: $\Box(\forall x)$(x is a human person$\rightarrow$x is an animal)."

formulations of animalism say what *we* are but do not explicitly say what *all human persons* are.

Let us be more explicit. All generalizations can be represented with a tripartite structure consisting of a quantifier, restrictor, and scope: [$Q(x,\ldots, z)$ [$R(x,\ldots, z)$] [$S(x,\ldots, z)$]].[23] The quantifier Q specifies a quantity like *all*, *some*, or *most*. The restrictor R limits the domain of the quantifier. It constrains which entities the quantifier is about. The scope S identifies the properties attributed to the entities in the restrictor. Altogether, a generalization with a tripartite structure is true if and only if the quantity of Rs specified by Q are S. Taking both the restrictor and the scope to be sets allows us to understand the quantifier as imposing a requirement on how R and S are related. For example, *all* or *every* requires the restrictor to be a subset of the scope. So *all food courts serve delicious food* is true when the set of food courts is a subset of the set of places that serve delicious food.

Accordingly, the difference between generic and unrestricted animalism is a difference in the tripartite structure that elucidates the view. Where GEN is the covert quantifier contributed by genericity, the difference can be represented as follows.[24]

> GENERIC ANIMALISM (*V*.1)
> We are human animals.
> (GEN x)[human-person(x)][human-animal(x)]
>
> UNRESTRICTED ANIMALISM
> We are human animals.
> ($\forall x$)[human-person(x)] [human-animal(x)]

That is the only difference. Generic and unrestricted animalism are otherwise entirely alike. To classify what we are, both predicate identity with our human animals. Each states that to be one of us is to be a human animal. No more, no less.

The nitty-gritty of generic animalism therefore depends on the semantics of the quantifier GEN. Since we have adopted a normality-based semantics, GEN

[23] Such a representation should not be regarded as the logical form of the statements discussed, but as a metalinguistic representation that displays commonalities between varieties of quantification in different languages. See Lewis 1975, Kamp 1981, and Heim 1982 for earlier uses of tripartite structures and Partee 1995 for discussion.
[24] A wrinkle: *human animals* is a bare plural too. This raises the question of whether *we are animals* is best understood as involving two generics such that it is about normal persons being normal animals. We do not explore this question here.

simplifies to universal quantification concerned exclusively with members that are normal (or typical or characteristic).

> GENERIC ANIMALISM (*V*.2)
> We are human animals.
> $(\forall x)$[normal-human-person(x)] [human-animal(x)]

That concern for the normal ensures that generic animalism does more than just say what a quantity of human persons are. It conveys that there is a special connection between being a human person and being an animal: it is what normal members of the kind human person are. But which thesis should the animalist adopt?

4. The importance of being generic

We'll now introduce eight arguments against animalism that display a common form. They begin with cases designed to elicit judgments about what is true in the case. From those judgments, the falsity of animalism is said to follow.[25] Here are five opening objections.

> TRANSPLANT
> Were your cerebrum to be removed from your skull and implanted into a nearby human animal, *you* would move with it. But no human animal would move. So you are no human animal. Animalism is therefore false.[26]

> REMNANT
> Were your cerebrum removed from your skull and sustained in a vat, it may or may not be you. It would be a wholly organic person, though, and not an animal. So it need not be the case that all wholly organic persons are animals. Animalism is therefore false.[27]

> DICEPHALUS
> Some zygotes divide incompletely and result in parapagus dicephalus twins, a condition where two human persons "share" just one human animal. So there is not exactly one human animal for every human person. But the inference from "every human person is identical to an animal" to "for every human person, there is exactly one animal to which that human person is identical" is plainly valid. So not every human person is identical to a human animal. Animalism is therefore false.[28]

[25] Snowdon 2003 offers a helpful taxonomy of objections to animalism.
[26] See Shoemaker 1963, 2004, Parfit 1971 and Williams 1970.
[27] See Johnston 2016.
[28] McMahan 2002: 35–9 and 1998 and Campbell and McMahan 2016. For discussion, see Boyle forthcoming.

DISSOCIATIVE IDENTITY

Some actual human animals house more than one human person in cases of dissociative identity disorder or when the corpus callosum has been severed. So there is not exactly one human animal for every human person. But the inference from "every human person is identical to an animal" – animalism, that is – to "for every human person, there is exactly one animal to which that human person is identical" is plainly valid. So not every human person is a human animal. Animalism is therefore false.[29]

CYBORG

You are paralyzed. Fortunately, your surgeon has connected your brain to robotic limbs of silicone and steel. You can move them at will similar to how you could once move your organic arms and legs. Because you integrate these non-organic extensions, they are parts of you (or perhaps you are constituted by something of which they are now parts). But they are not parts of your animal, nor is your animal constituted by something of which they are now parts. For animals are living things made of flesh and blood and not silicone and steel. You are not that animal. Animalism is therefore false.[30]

And here are three objections that are more speculative and fanciful.

TRANSPORTER

Were you to hop into a Star Trek-style transporter, a complete blueprint of your body would be thrown across space. And the item appearing planetside would indeed be you. But it wouldn't be biologically or physically continuous with the animal that was annihilated upon stepping into the transporter. Since you could, in this fashion, part ways with your animal, you are not that animal. Animalism is therefore false.[31]

MEMORY LOSS

Were you to fall asleep and lose all memory, you would, strictly speaking, cease to exist. The animal with which you are most intimately connected would continue to exist; it'd be the thing waking up without any memories that is biologically continuous with the organism that fell asleep the night before. But it would not be you; for you wouldn't be anything at all. Since you could, in this fashion, part ways with your animal, you are not that animal. Animalism is therefore false.[32]

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[29] See Wilkes 1988 and Reid 2016. For penetrating discussion of metaphysical and clinical connections, see Gunnarsson 2009.

[30] Baker 2016: 58-61. See also Baker 2013 and Duncan forthcoming.

[31] Shoemaker 1984: 108-110.

[32] This style of objection is inspired by Locke's case of the "Day and the Night-man". See Locke's *Essay*, 2.27.23. We are neutral about whether Locke himself endorsed a purely memorial theory of personal identity. Memory Loss may not be pure fantasy; for a real case along these lines see Aviv 2018.

BODY SWAP

You could "switch animals" with someone else. By magic or science, you could wake up in their body and they in yours. As long as you maintained psychological continuity of the right kind across this swap, it really would be *you* over there in that new body. But your animal can't switch animals. The animal that was once yours is not biologically continuous with the animal that would be yours post-swap. You can survive a procedure your animal cannot, and since you and your animal thus have different modal profiles, you are not that animal. Animalism is therefore false.[33]

What's to say about these eight case-based objections? We will offer a unified reply to them all after some observations.

Each objection is based on a case that, on the surface, is abnormal (or atypical or non-characteristic). It is not as though remnant cerebra, transplanted brains, or dicephalus twinning figure into the narratives of typical human persons. These cases are quite clearly outliers. Body swaps and transporter beams stray even farther from what is characteristic of human persons. Such cases aren't even clearly possible, it has seemed to many.

Additionally, each argument targets a strong formulation of animalism. The first four target an animalism according to which *all* human persons are animals. The latter four target an animalism according to which human animals have criteria of identity over time that are purely biological. Many animalists deny that hypothesis. Some animalists maintain that nothing has criteria of identity over time (and so human animals do not).[34] Others maintain that human animals have purely psychological (and not biological) criteria of identity over time, and yet others say that human animals have *mixed* biological and psychological criteria of identity over time.[35] To our minds, then, Cyborg, Transporter, Memory Loss, and Body Swap have already been answered. The first four objections are more troubling and require different treatment. They challenge formulations of animalism unburdened by biological criteria of identity over time.

Finally, some of these arguments are better than others. The modal skeptic (of which more later), for example, will look askance at Transplant, Remnant, Transporter, Memory Loss, and Body Swap: what right have we to be so sure that these cases are possible, much less what would follow if they were? But Dicephalus and Dissociative Identity cannot be dismissed so easily. For there are *actual* cases of Dicephalus and Dissociative Identity. And even between these two

[33] Williams 1970. On some specifications of this case it is a variant of Transplant.
[34] Merricks 1998.
[35] Animalists who endorse purely biological criteria, purely psychological criteria, a mixed approach, or no criteria at all, include, respectively, Olson 1997, Sharpe 2015, Madden 2011, 2016, and Merricks 1998.

actual cases, there are distinctions. It is much more plausible to maintain the "two persons" judgement in the Dicephalus case than in Dissociative Identity. To verify this, one need only watch a documentary about Abigail and Brittany Hensel and observe the rich variety with which they live their lives.

With these observations in place, we now argue that generic animalism is safe from all eight objections. Recall that generic animalism does not entail that all human persons are animals. This is crucial. That universal generalization is explicitly the thesis targeted by Transplant, Remnant, Dicephalus, and Dissociative Identity. Even if these objections are sound, they don't take aim at generic animalism. Put differently, each of the objections above takes this broad form:

(9) If we are animals, then all human persons are human animals.
(10) If all human persons are human animals, then such-and-such a case is not possible or actual.
(11) But such-and-such a case is either possible or actual
(12) Therefore, not all human persons are human animals
(13) Therefore, we are not animals.

We nip arguments like these straight at the bud. For what we've shown so far, (9) is plainly false. A universal generalization does not follow from generic animalism. Recall some of our earlier examples. *Sea turtles are long-lived* is true but *all sea turtles are long-lived* is false because most sea turtles die shortly after birth.

All of this vindicates generic animalism. But the generic animalist can go a step further. We can offer a principled diagnosis of why no objection along these lines succeeds.

Recall that in our preferred normality-based semantics, generics express generalizations about members of our kind that are normal (or typical or characteristic). We declined in §2 to offer a full theory of normality. But we can still partially distinguish normal human persons from non-normal human persons without that full theory, and without thereby committing to a particular answer to the question of personal ontology. We will do this by identifying paradigm (and perhaps necessary) dimensions of normality and showing that they go unsatisfied in each of the anti-animalist's arsenal of cases.[36]

Normality isn't an all-or-nothing affair. Nickel (2008, 2016) makes the important observation that it can be measured along various dimensions. An albino raven,

[36] Thanks to a referee for pressing us on this issue.

for example, may be normal along the dimension of *being able to fly*, but be abnormal along the dimension of *color*. We propose that biology, environment, and psychology are three important dimensions along which to evaluate human persons for normality. Attention to them uncovers paradigm (or perhaps necessary) features of normal human persons. We will not offer an analysis of these dimensions, but instead illustrate with instances.

BIOLOGY	ENVIRONMENT	PSYCHOLOGY
has a heart that pumps blood, two feet with five toes each, eyes that see, a large brain within a skull, twenty-three pairs of chromosomes, was born alive…	lives close to the surface of planet earth, requires food for nourishment, successfully perceives, regularly experiences gravitational force of about 1*g*, has hominid ancestors that lived in Africa, has a biological parent…	displays fear, curiosity, anger, or arousal under certain circumstances, seeks pleasure and avoids pain, displays one more-or-less stable (Big Five) personality…

Fig. 2

To be a normal (or typical or characteristic) human person in the target sense, we hypothesize, is to enjoy features like those detailed above.[37] To deviate from the list is to be non-normal to some degree. There is more to say here. But the above is a good start and will provide a reply to the objections to animalism canvassed above.[38]

One may wonder why the dimensions matter. Reflection on the question of what we are illuminates. That question is, as we suggested in §1, best understood as a query about how people relate to their animal bodies. This understanding

[37] We are purposely non-committal about the *precise* relation one must have to these features to be normal. It might be that properties associated with each dimension or disjunctions thereof are strictly necessary conditions on being a normal human person. We also envision a promising multi-factor approach. Perhaps being a normal human person does not strictly require having any one of these particular properties but nonetheless demands some suitably high aggregate "score" along these dimensions. For more on multi-factor approaches and their use in metaphysics, see Markosian (2008).

[38] Animalism is sometimes understood as prioritizing the biological dimension over the psychological. A table like Fig. 2 might therefore seem in tension with this prioritization by treating biological and psychological dimensions as equals in distinguishing normal human persons. But such prioritization, we submit, only needs to happen when forced to choose between biological or psychological dimensions. A forced choice happens only in abnormal cases. Since generic animalism concerns itself only with normal human persons, no prioritization is required.

provides a template for various theories. The dualist says that we relate to our animal bodies by way of embodiment; the constitutionalist, by constitution; the union dualist, by parthood; the animalist, by identity. By speaking to this person-body relation, a personal ontology elucidates how a human person is present in the natural world. A key question, then is this: which cases, for the purposes of understanding how a person is present in the world, qualify as normal (or typical or characteristic)? We submit that the three dimensions identified are relevant to such a determination. Evaluating a case along biological, environmental, and psychological dimensions illuminates whether the human person in the case is present within the world normally, and so whether the person is normal in a sense relevant to the question of what we are.

When evaluating generic answers to the question of what we are, normal human persons must be kept in mind. For only cases involving normal human persons could show that a generic generalization is not a correct answer to the question of personal ontology. Therein lies the reason why no case-based objection like the eight considered can succeed. Each case-based objection involves human persons that are abnormal (or abnormal or non-characteristic) along one or more of the three dimensions highlighted. In each case, some paradigm (or perhaps necessary) aspect of normality is missing.

Recall the cases. Transplant and Remnant involve abnormal biology: normal human brains are embedded within one skull and remain in that skull. Cyborg involves abnormal silicone and steel body modifications to ordinary biology. Remnant involves an abnormal environment too. Normal human beings perceive the world around them with eyes or ears and the like, not stimulation in a vat. Dicephalus involves abnormal biology of a different kind. If a conjoined twin manages to survive, the human persons involved are not typical: human persons don't share feet or internal organs with another but rather have their own.[39] Dissociative Identity involves abnormal psychology: insofar as it makes sense to talk about personality at all (as measured by the Big Five inventory, for example), typical human persons have just one each. Memory Loss, too, involves abnormal psychology; normal human beings remember at least some of the things that happen to them. Transporter involves abnormal environmental interaction; normal human beings move around by moving their animal bodies, not by

[39] Many non-animalists take dicephalic twins to be the most serious problem case. So let's belabor the point. Only 1 in 50,000 to 100,000 births involve conjoined twins, and only 11% of those are dicephalic. Most of those cases do not even survive. See Bondeson 2001 and Harma *et al* 2005. The underlying mechanism of conjoined twinning is unknown, but one hypothesis, noted by Kaufman 2004: 509, is that it results from an "*abnormal uterine environment* that may in some unknown way predispose to *abnormalities of zygote division* (emphasis added)."

beams. Body Swap involves abnormal biology; normal human persons stick to just one body for the duration of their existence.

Each of the objections to animalism, then, requires an actual or merely possible case that is abnormal (or atypical or non-characteristic) along some dimension or other. But generic claims like ⌜*F*s are *G*⌝ can only be falsified by normal exceptions. Recall Fig.1 from §2. The cases deployed by the anti-animalist do not belong to that category. They are, rather, cases of what were called abnormal exception. So their actuality or possibility is perfectly compatible with generic animalism.

What this shows is not just that (9) is unsupported or dubious. It is false. The common strategy deployed by anti-animalist arguments is destined to fail. Abnormal examples of human persons, even if actual, don't unseat generic animalism. Using these cases to undermine generic animalism is like pointing to NBA players to undermine the thesis that *human men typically clock in around 171cm*. Outliers, however intriguing they may be, simply don't supply the right kind of evidence.

Our approach compares favorably with many extant replies to the case-based objections. These replies are various and piecemeal, appealing to theories from fields as diverse as moral philosophy, modal epistemology, and mereology. In response to Transplant cases, for example, some animalists have attempted to identify hidden prudential considerations that accommodate typical judgements about the case but do not require the denial of animalism.[40] Others deny that Transporter or Body Swap cases are possible, or that we'd know what would be true, were such a scenario to unfold.[41] Some animalists maintain that brains and cerebra as composite objects do not exist, and so object to Transplant and Remnant.[42] Animalists could also help themselves to exotic metaphysical resources like contingent identity, and claim that though we are identical to certain animals, we could become identical to other things entirely, as when undergoing Body Swap.[43] By contrast, our treatment is uniform. We have denied (9) as the same faulty assumption underlying each case-based objection to animalism.

Are there good reasons to endorse animalism in the first place? We think so. The literature is brimming with positive arguments, and they comport well with

[40] Olson 1997: Chapter 3.
[41] van Inwagen 1997.
[42] van Inwagen 1990, Merricks 2001, Olson 2015 and 2016: 157-158. On whether this kind of restricted or nihilist theory of composition can succeed as intended, see Rettler 2018.
[43] To our knowledge, no animalist has taken this precise approach. On contingent identity, see Schwartz 2013.

generic formulation.[44] Consider the thinking animal argument from Snowdon (1990) and developed by Olson (2003). It starts with the idea that you think and that human animals think to eventually arrive at the conclusion that you are your animal. A generic formulation of both premises and conclusion comes easy: we (normal human persons) think. So also (normal) human animals. We are, therefore, those animals. Objections from non-normal cases—human persons who don't think, for example—will have no purchase against the relevant generic premise. Consider also a recent argument from Thornton and Bailey (forthcoming), which is explicitly generic in its formulation. It begins with the premise that some emotions are *somatic:* genuine states of animal bodies. The argument concludes that, since we are the things for which our emotions are states, we are human animals. As before, objections from non-normal cases —bodies that cannot exhibit somatic emotional states because they are flooded with serotonin inhibitors, for example—will not tell against the relevant generic premise. Accordingly, it's not just that these arguments are compatible with generic animalism. They thrive under it.

We conclude that animalism in its generic formulation is rather well off. It can help itself to extant arguments for animalism all while being invulnerable to eight case-based objections.

5. Objections to generic animalism

It's time to answer objections. Many have been implicitly answered. But bringing them to light will sharpen generic animalism and its commitments.

> GENERIC ANIMALISM IS UNFALSIFIABLE
> Generic animalism doesn't suffer from the defect of being too strong. It is, rather, too weak. For precisely because it resists refutation from case-based objections it *cannot be falsified*.

Not so, and twice over. First, on our preferred theory, the generic that ⌜*F*s are *G*⌝ may indeed be refuted by counterexample. Not just any *F* that isn't a *G* will do, however. What's needed is a *normal F* that isn't a *G*. What the anti-animalist owes, and what would indeed refute generic animalism, is a normal (or typical or characteristic) human person that isn't a human animal.

[44] Thanks to a referee for raising this issue. In addition to the two arguments discussed, see the Animal Ancestors Argument as in Blatti 2012, the Animal Interest Argument as in Bailey 2017, the Animality Argument as in Bailey 2016, and the Causal Powers Argument as in Licon 2012.

Second, generic animalism may be refuted in other ways too. For example, dualists have long maintained that only wholly immaterial things think. If we think, and animals are at least partly material, it would follow from these claims that we are not animals. And thus, animalism (in both generic and unrestricted form) would be refuted. Similarly, if there are no animals at all (perhaps because composition does not occur), and we exist, it would follow that we are not animals. And thus, animalism (in both generic and unrestricted form) would be refuted.

> GENERIC ANIMALISM IS UNINTERESTING
>
> Generic animalism is perhaps not a false thesis; its weak and permissive formulation assures this result. And yet it is, by the same token, utterly uninteresting.[45]

Not so, and twice over. First, generic animalism is interesting in part because it rules out a host of competing theories. If generic animalism is true, then it is not the case that, for example, we are brains, souls, or items constituted by but distinct from animals. A proponent of one of those theories would certainly be surprised to learn that the denial of their view was somehow trivial or uninteresting.

Second, generic animalism places us within a natural or scientific category. It says that we are animals, living things, members of a certain species. It thus vindicates one important naturalistic program, one according to which *we* are members or parts of the natural world. On generic animalism, there is a precise sense in which this is true. Non-naturalists would, again, be surprised to learn that the denial of their view was somehow trivial or uninteresting.

We acknowledge there are many interesting matters on which generic animalism is silent. But the goal was never to answer *every* interesting question about our kind. It was to resolve the question of personal ontology, and generic animalism does that.

> GENERIC ANIMALISM DOESN'T ANSWER THE QUESTION
>
> Animalism is peddled as an answer to the question of what we are. But generic animalism doesn't do this anymore than the unsatisfying answers mentioned at the paper's start. What the question demands is a theory of our nature, and a necessary feature of such a theory is that it includes *all* of us.

[45] See Duncan forthcoming for a version of this objection that applies to unrestricted and generic animalism alike.

The question of personal ontology invites a generic answer, just as *What color are ravens?* invites the generic *Ravens are black*. Our answer is like that. That answer also fills many, if not all, of the theoretical roles for a personal ontology that the unsatisfying answers mentioned at the start do not. Here are two illustrations. One thing you might want out of a theory of personal ontology is insight into what *you* are. You can do this, with generic animalism, by reasoning as follows: "We are animals. I am (presently) a human person that is normal. I am, therefore, (presently) an animal."[46] And so you can learn about yourself through generic animalism.

Human persons who are not normal (or typical or characteristic), we grant, cannot deploy such reasoning. They are outliers. So a person subjected to the horrors or delights of body swapping or cybernetic enhancement could not conclude from *we are animals* that they are an animal. But that is no more a problem for our theory than the fact that a phenomenally wealthy person—an outlier—could not derive truths about herself from an economic theory about the median taxpayer.[47] The median taxpayer is normal in salient ways; the phenomenally wealthy person is not.

Something else one wants out of a theory of personal ontology is direction for future inquiry into what we are. Generic animalism does that too. If we are animals, then one wishing to know more must learn about the scientific or natural category under which we fall—*animalia*. One can know more about what we are by learning about kidneys, serotonin receptors, synapses, capillaries, the secondary sexual characteristics of mammals, the deep evolutionary past of hominids, and so on.

The objector wants more, though. The objector wants to only hear answers that classify by universal generalization. But such philosophical gatekeeping is dubious. For an instructive parallel, consider the question of what species are from the philosophy of biology. In scientific practice, species or kinds need not be classified by properties had by all of their members. Biological classification without universal generalization is no newfangled innovation; it dates to at least

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[46] Our treatment of normality in §4 fell short of providing a *sufficient* condition for such. We relied there on paradigm or necessary conditions to dispatch objections. But a necessary condition is not enough for you to reason as above. To do *that*, you would first need evidence that you are a normal human person.

[47] Someone who is non-normal or atypical along the specified biological, environmental, or psychological dimensions would *not*, we emphasize, thereby fall out of the moral community or be less deserving of regard. Comparison to social scientific theory is instructive: that someone is an outlier in some respect (*e.g.* height, risk tolerance) may show she is atypical, but would not show anything at all about moral status. So also, observing that Abigail and Brittany Hensel are not normal or characteristic in one biological sense does not tell against their independent moral statuses.

the 18th century.[48] Nor is it obvious that species *could* be classified by universal generalization. One problem is posed by evolution. Species gradually change over time in response to selective pressures. Another is posed by *polytypic species* or kinds of organisms where members vary wildly. Problems such as these incline many to either opt for nihilist views on which there are no species, or non-nihilist views that classify by means of some non-universal generalization.[49] As a matter of plain empirical fact, then, there are convincing cases of classification without universal generalization. Insisting otherwise is more parochial than philosophical.

Reflection on the fact that items can be classified into species without universal generalization doesn't just *deflect* the objection. It broadly *supports* generic animalism as a thesis. Like other biological classifications, the species *homo sapiens* is not fixed by universal generalization; it admits of exceptions and outliers. And that is exactly the species into which animalism says we fall. A generic animalist approach ensures this result—it, too, admits of exceptions and outliers—and offers a precise diagnosis of why that result obtains.

Here ends our consideration of objections. Notice that none tell against the truth of generic animalism. They each claim in various ways that the theory is too weak or uninformative. But this is not a reason to deny the view. It is, at most, a reason to supplement it with auxiliary hypotheses.

6. Looking ahead

We have argued that animalists ought to go generic. Generic animalism enables us to classify what we are in a manner that cuts through eight case-based objections. But generic animalism is in fact a family of views. Its tree divides along a number of theoretical choice points. We close by highlighting some of the branches available.

One branch concerns the semantics of genericity. Generic quantification does not merely tell us about the quantity of things; it tells us about the intimate connection between belonging to a kind and possessing a property. We opted for

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[48] Carl Linneaus, the 18th century founder of biological taxonomy, introduced *mammalia* and other non-universal organism kinds. His approach was to classify a species according to an exemplar or characteristic member. Though he is sometimes regarded as an essentialist, Winsor 2003: 392-393 details his non-essentialism and suggestively describes him thusly: "*he did not behave as a logician would have him do*, spreading on a table specimens of the ten species… then writing down whatever characters he notices they all have. Instead, he began by writing *a generic description* based upon only one species" (emphasis added).

[49] See Hull 1965 [1992], Ereshefsky 2000, and Richards 2010 for arguments against anti-essentialism, which, for our purpose, is the same as classification by universal generalization.

a semantics that unpacks that connection in terms of normality (or typicality or characteristicness) (§2). Other generic animalisms become available if one adopts an alternative semantic theory.[50] Relatedly, we were agnostic about normality *simpliciter*. But animalists may find that a new view takes shape within a particular account of normality.

Another branch concerns what distinguishes normal human persons. We partially distinguished normal human persons according to normal ways of relating to an animal body along biological, environmental, and psychological dimensions (§4). But other animalists could distinguish normal human persons differently[51] or, even if following our approach, could either highlight other dimensions of relating to an animal body or understand the importance of these dimensions differently. Each of these more specific accounts of normality would combine with the core thesis of generic animalism to generate a distinctive view.

A final branch concerns the logical strength of generic animalism. An under-discussed feature of genericity within semantics is its modal and temporal import[52]. *Honeydew melons are sweet* is true of honeydew melons in worlds beyond the actual and times beyond the present. But not all of them. As a result, generic animalism is not mandatorily a thesis about what we always have been or what we will always be. We might not have been animals in the past. And in the future, we might be something else that is an amalgam of silicone and flesh. Generic animalism is compatible with these options. Similarly, generic animalism is not a claim about what our kind is at all possible worlds. For all generic animalism is committed to, we are something else at distant worlds.

For modal and temporal skeptics, generic animalism can offer respite from metaphysics compelled by science fiction (*e.g.* transporter beams, duplication machines, split brain transplants). Consider the modal skeptic.[53] According to such, we simply aren't in a position to know whether these stories are indeed possible, whether they are consistent with the laws of nature, whether creatures like us could figure into them, or the truth of counterfactuals like *If your cerebrum were transplanted into another body, the host would have all your*

[50] On the view owed to Sterken 2015, a view where generics are context-sensitive along multiple dimensions, statements like *We are animals* may have a meaning akin to the meaning delivered by a normality-based semantics even though other generic generalizations will not. In other cases, we suspect it will be quite different. The view produced by pairing generic animalism with a more psychological account like Leslie 2008 is an example.
[51] As in Foot 2001, Ch. 3.
[52] Though see Eckardt 2000.
[53] A general form of modal skepticism appears in van Inwagen 1998. On skeptical stances that focus on thought experiments about personal identity, see Gendler 2002 and Wilkes 1988.

memories and thoughts. On this modal skepticism, abstruse metaphysical theories founded at least in part on claims about merely possible scenarios will not enjoy strong epistemic credentials. Generic animalism is the antidote. Parallel remarks apply to temporal skeptics who say we aren't in a position to know what we *were* (in the distant past, say) or what we *will be* (in the distant future).

But generic animalism is not just for the wary. It can be strengthened and combined with other metaphysical commitments. Note that formulations such as (14) are still generic.

(14) Necessarily, human persons are fundamentally human animals.

Though *necessarily* has been added to extend the animalist thesis to every possible world and *fundamentally* now specifies the way in which human persons are human animals, *human persons* remains a bare plural. It remains, on our favored understanding, a quantifier limited to human persons that are normal (or typical or characteristic). So what is alleged to be necessary by (14) is that normal human beings are fundamentally animals.

Can those who proffer different answers to the personal ontology question avail themselves of genericity? Without question. Rival non-nihilist views are arguably better off when stated as generic generalizations that cannot be refuted by cases from the margins. Animalism may gain the most, though, since so many of its detractors crucially deploy exotic cases.

We are far from being the first to encourage philosophy concerned with the normal (or typical or characteristic). We noted earlier a turn in the philosophy of science to understanding ceteris paribus laws as being backed by a conception of normality. We observe similar developments in epistemology.[54] Commenting directly on such an approach is beyond our present ambitions. Still, what we have done here further shows the productivity of such a method.

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[54] For example, see Leplin 2009 and Graham 2017 for theories of justification that involve normality, Sosa 2007 and Greco 2008 for discussion of competence with a normality condition, and Peet and Pitcovski 2018 and Littlejohn and Dutant 2020 for a theory of knowledge that has the same.

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