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*The Politics of Species. Reshaping our Relationships with Other Animals*  
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**Ane Møller Gabrielsen** Norwegian University of Science and  
Technology

*The Politics of Species. Reshaping our Relationship with Other Animals* is a collection of 20 essays with a shared objective: To reshape human attitudes towards other species. "Politics" is defined as "the activities that people engage in to define and exercise power, status, or authority, either among states or among groups within a state" (1), and it is clear that this collection represents a deeply critical view of the ways human beings exercise their power over animals. This view is further elaborated by authors with background from animal activism, science, social science and the humanities, who offer a broad range of approaches to human-animal relations and the question of animal ethics.

*The Politics of Species* consists of three main sections. The essays in the first section, "Moving beyond speciesism" explore the roots and effects of *speciesism*, i.e. human discrimination of other animal beings on account of their species membership, and argue in favour of non-hierarchical thinking about humans and other animals. Section two, "Sentience and agency" focuses on the emotional and cognitive capacities of different animal species in order to defend their status as moral beings, while the third section, "Toward respectful coexistence", explores the conditions for respectful coexistence between humans and animals through various approaches.

Although *The Politics of Species* is thematically situated within the emerging field of animal studies and its variants human-animal studies (HAS) and critical animal studies (CAS), human-animal relations are also relevant for science and technology studies and have been addressed by several STS-scholars. One example is Bruno Latour, who in *The Politics of Nature* (2004), argues for a "new constitution" that also takes the voices of non-humans into consideration. While *The Politics of Species* criticizes the political distinctions between humans and non-humans and calls for respectful coexistence, Latour's aim is to designate "the right way to compose a common world, the kind of world the Greeks called a *cosmos*" (Latour 2004, 8) through engaging a *collective* of humans and non-humans. Thus, the two books share a common theme.

A reworking of the relations between humans and non-humans is crucial for Latour's project, and the first section of *The Politics of Species* can be said to lay out the theoretical and philosophical framework for such a reworking by defining the limits for the non-human animals worthy of inclusion in the collective. The contributors to *The Politics of Species* could further be seen as examples of Latour's *spokepersons* (Latour 2004, 62)

who speak on behalf of the non-humans. The spokespersons differ in who they speak for, some speak on behalf of certain species like chimpanzees or dolphins, others speak for broader categories. An example of the latter is animal rights advocate Joan Dunayer, who states that the attempts to overcome speciesism has led to “new speciesism”, reserving rights and moral obligations only for those beings who are considered most similar to humans. Non-speciesism, Dunayer argues, must grant rights to life, liberty and property to all sentient beings, which for Dunayer include “all creatures with a nervous system” (30).

The essays in *The Politics of Species* convey an impressive amount of knowledge about animals and the mechanisms of exploitation and discrimination. However, as Latour stresses, spokespersons should always be treated with scepticism (Latour 2004, 62). One problematic aspect is that the line for moral inclusion is still drawn by the capacities recognizable as “human”. An example is “Human, dolphins, and moral inclusivity”, where behavioral neuroscientist Lori Marino argues that the obvious bodily differences between humans and cetaceans make it difficult to acknowledge how similar they actually are to humans in terms of intelligence, self-awareness and emotional and social complexity. Thus, as similarity with humans constitute the main moral criteria throughout most of the book, the spokespersons in *The Politics of Species* argue in favour of non-humans from a firm human standpoint and in a way that reproduces the human-animal dichotomy it tries to diminish.

However, there are exceptions. In “Entangled Empathy: An alternative approach to animal ethics”, philosopher and gender scholar Lori Gruen states that simply expanding the circle with (some) humans as the moral centre is not enough. “[I]n our magnanimous embrace of the other, we end up reconfiguring a dualism that will inevitably find some “other” to exclude”, Gruen writes (224), and suggests exercising moral agency not by including, but by *responding* to the multitude of beings we are already engaged and entangled with.

Another interesting essay is philosopher David Livingstone Smith’s “Indexically yours: why being human is more like being here than like being water”. According to Livingstone Smith, both those in favour of and those against the moral inclusion of non-humans confuse the human/non-human distinction with the distinction between *Homo sapiens* and other species. However, discrimination of “non-humans” is not simply a matter of discrimination on biological grounds, he argues, but rather a phenomenon rooted in the ways “human” is constructed through language. Thus, Livingstone Smith’s claim is not *that Homo sapiens* discriminate against other species, but rather that “we”, whoever we might be, tend to discriminate against “others”.

Gruen and Livingstone Smith’s approaches to animal ethics resonate with the work of another STS-scholar, Donna Haraway, who in *When Species Meet* (2008) relentlessly stresses that “[e]very being is a multi-species crowd” (Haraway 2008, 165) and “[t]o be one is always to be

come with many” (Haraway 2008, 4). This could be termed a *posthumanist* view on human-animal relations (Wolfe 2010), a view that is also present in cultural anthropologist Eben Kirksey’s contribution, “Interspecies love: being and becoming with a common ant, *Ectatomma ruidum* (Roger)”.

Referring to the works of Latour, Haraway and philosopher Isabelle Stenger, Kirksey describes the ants as “agents of cosmopolitical assembly, conscious beings who become involved with other creatures through relations of reciprocity, kinship and accountability” (165). As also humans are capable of being enrolled in these elaborate networks of relations, Kirksey suggests that “we should learn to better embrace species such as *Ectatomma*, cosmopolitical creatures that are good for humans to live with in common worlds” (175).

Kirksey’s account of the ants is the most explicitly STS-oriented essay in *The Politics of Species*. The ants are described as agents in material-semiotic networks (167), the larvae are viewed as obligatory passage points for food (168), and the building of “cosmopolitical worlds” through “political articulations” with plants and insects (173) resonates with Latour’s understanding of politics as “the entire set of tasks that allow the progressive composition of a common world” (Latour 2004, 53). It is somewhat amusing that it is the ants that fuse STS and animal studies. Latour once wrote that the acronym was the reason he chose to stay with the term actor-network theory, stating that “A.N.T. was perfectly fit for a blind, myopic, workaholic, trail-sniffing, and collective traveler. An ant writing for other ants, this fits my project very well!” (Latour 2005, 9). The ants also fit the project of *The Politics of Species*; through their interspecies associations, they offer a promising prospect of a multispecies politics for “respectful coexistence” in shared worlds, or *cosmos*.

## References

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