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The Archaeology of Becoming the Human Animal

Erica Gittins
Independent Scholar
ericagittins@gmail.com

Abstract
In the archaeology of early prehistory, human-animal relations are often understood in terms of economy or evolution. Our various hominin ancestors are understood in terms of their development away from non-human animals, while animals themselves are considered as a resource or raw material. But people's understandings of their own interactions with animals would not have been in these terms: real interactions with animals—including hunting, killing, and eating them—were significant, intimate acts. Using the work of Deleuze and Guatarri, Derrida, Haraway, and others it is possible to suggest alternative ways in which past people may have understood their relationships to animals.

Keywords
prehistory, economy, evolution, interaction, Deleuze and Guatarri, Derrida, Haraway, origin, food sharing, Pincevent, Magdalenian, Upper Palaeolithic

Introduction

Human-animal relations are tacitly and explicitly considered to be an essential part of our archaeological origin story (Binford, 1981; Fudge, 2002; Gittins, 2006; Haraway, 1989; Pagden, 1982; Stoczkowski, 1994). Without non-human animals there would be nothing for us to evolve away from; nothing to eat to expand our brains (Moeller-Gorman, 2008); nothing to hunt to organize our societies around; nothing against which to demonstrate our ever-evolving skills (Bogucki, 1999). This is a one-way relationship of evolution and exploitation: although our evolutionary story and notions of what separates us from the animals are rarely discussed alongside economic exploitation of animal populations, they are in fact entirely interlinked. When writing about hunter-gatherers in the past, we are speaking for the animal populations we perceive in the archaeology as well as for the human populations, whether we recognize it or not.

When considering the nature of human-animal relations in prehistory, two particular issues confront us. The first concerns the seemingly predictable roles

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that animals play—as economic necessities as essential as fire, shelter, sex, and trade, and also as symbols. The second lies with the apparently unchanging nature of this role: whether wild or domestic, it can always be said that at a fundamental level animals provide food and other materials, and that any other cultural traditions or social relationships that develop around their hunting or keeping are merely variations in an otherwise human-led continuum. It is not often argued that animals have changed the course of history or taken an intentional role. In most archaeological analyses, it is difficult to see the relationship as a reflexive or didactic one.

In the Upper Palaeolithic, animals are generally located within analyses of resource and food procurement, concerned with such things as seasonal mobility and/or herd following, where human-animal interaction concerns humans exploiting a basic resource (for example Burke, 2000; Castel et al., 2006). Anthropological examples indicate that the hunting and processing of animals are symbolically significant to hunter-gather societies (in for instance the historic period arctic: Murray, 2000; Cachel, 2000), but it is difficult to avoid slotting archaeological evidence into these existing patterns rather than the archaeological evidence itself providing new perspectives. This is primarily because animals are considered *alive* in anthropological examples but thoroughly *dead* by the time archaeologists get to them, as though their literal physical death ended their role, particularly their social influence.

The problem of "animal" is not restricted to archaeology. The crisis of humanism resulting from decades of critical theory in combination with a "radical revaluation of the status of nonhuman animals that has taken place in society at large" have left humanities struggling to catch up (Wolfe, 2003, p. xi). Posthumanism raises many interesting questions, but without archaeological examination it may lack historical perspective. After all, Derrida (1989) has described the question of the animal as an old anxiety.

Monolithic Humans

It is a peculiar aspect of the human-animal relationship that this relationship is both most readily accepted and historically situated when viewed in evolutionary terms. In this way, the animal, eternal and external, exists outside our human borders, unchanging in its meaning. Simultaneously it may also be found within us, as something in our past, a historical fact that we evolved away from.

On the surface it seems that the two situations, animals as a part of our evolutionary history, and animals as something that we use and eat, are quite separate. However, they are both aspects of the same phenomenon, which is the attempt to define human beings as something rooted in nature but also

apart. At its most inclusive "human beings" may be seen as an outgrowth or protrusion from a recognized lineage, but it is one with definable characteristics. A full discussion of human nature is outside the scope of this paper, but I do want to emphasize that those boundaries and definitions are at least permeable and moveable.

"We are not just rather like animals; we *are* animals" (Midgley, 1978, p. xiii). This succinctly describes the central concern of the human-animal relationship, particularly our developmental one. Questions of human identity have frequently related to the distinction between humans and animals, since before the Enlightenment (Fudge, 1999), and for many Darwin's confirmation of our Ape descent brought with it the undeniable and anxious potential of animal or bestial qualities lurking within every human (Fudge, 1999; Newton, 1999). However, during the Enlightenment, the wild man humans emerged from being external, in the farthest distances of colonial travel, to internal (Gittins, 2006), because "man" became a historical subject, an object of study that also embodied transcendental qualities (Foucault, 1984). There was, and is, an idea of a universal human, an original ancestor at war with his environment in a struggle for survival (Stoczowski, 1994) and from which we are all descended, embodying both animal and rationalistic behaviors.

For modern anthropologists, the definite distinction between *Homo sapiens sapiens* and any of its animal or hominin ancestors is openly problematic, as none of our "traits" can reliably be described as unique to us: "defining what we mean by 'human' is not a straightforward task" (Stringer & Andrews, 2005, p. 130). Unfortunately, this does not mean that the Enlightenment universal human—embodying both animal and more noble rational human qualities—has gone away (Gittins, 2006). Furthermore, because it is universal, it describes people in the Upper Palaeolithic as being essentially the same, so that one individual is completely interchangeable with another.

Monolithic Animals

> Now that I am here, says Red Peter, in my tuxedo and bow tie and black pants with a hole cut through the seat for my tail to poke through (I keep it turned away from you, you do not see it), now that I am here, what is there for me to do? Do I in fact have a choice? If I do not subject my discourse to reason, whatever it is, what is left but for me to gibber and emote and knock over my water glass and generally make a monkey of myself? (Coetzee, 1999, p. 26)

After including animals or perhaps just *animality* in the discussion, recognizing them remains a difficult issue. We can perhaps start by recognizing their

diversity, their multiplicity. Derrida describes the grouping together of "*all the living things* that man does not recognize as his fellows, his neighbours or his brothers" as a crime, the failing that sees "the infinite space that separates the lizard from the dog, the protozoon from the dolphin, the shark from the lamb, the parrot from the chimpanzee" as nothing, the deliberate homogenization of multiple living things (Derrida, 2002, p. 402).

The solution to this is not a question of "giving speech back to the animals" (Derrida, 2002; Haraway, 2008) but rather a matter of recognizing their existence outside of our ability to describe them, outside of describing them through either thought or language (Derrida, 2002) to give them power or capability that we would recognize—the "being able, having the power to give, to die, to bury one's dead. . . ." (Derrida, 2002, p. 395). Animals can have none of these things, unless it is "an effect of the human order, that is, by contagion, appropriation, domestication" (Derrida, 2003, p. 123).

Derrida (2003) points to Bentham's question to Descartes: the question with animals is not "can they talk or reason?" but "can they suffer?" (p. 396). Derrida argues that this side steps the need for abilities or techniques, and answers the issue with a certain passivity, a not-being-able, a vulnerability, a non-power. As "suffering is a possibility without power" (Derrida, 2002, p. 28), the question becomes one of reaction or response: does an animal merely react, or does it respond? Wolfe (2003) and Haraway (2008) have applauded the role that ethics has to play in this argument, and for its criticism of the age-old "scandal" that machine-animals are capable of reaction only (Haraway, 2008, p. 20), but Haraway has argued that suffering in itself might not be the best place to start when considering positive knowledge of animals. Derrida, she argues, did not consider an alternative form of engagement, "one that risked knowing something more about cats and *how to look back*, perhaps even scientifically, biologically, and *therefore* also philosophically and intimately" (Haraway, 2008, p. 20).

But this still leaves us with a problem. Scientific and biological knowledge of animals of course carries with it the risk of reaction not response, making animals subject to reason. It is, however, unavoidable: archaeology is a reason-based approach, a direct inheritor of the Enlightenment. Have we really defeated animals with reason (Coetzee, 1999), or is it possible to include them in such humanist discourses as archaeology? How are we to perceive animals and human-animals in the archaeological record? In what ways do we exist with animals? Are we being close to them, alongside them, coming after them with hunting, training, taming, succession, or inheritance? Animals both precede and proceed us, "The animal is there before me, there close to me, there in front of me—I who am following after it. It surrounds me" (Derrida, 2002, p. 380).

Intimacy and Death

Following Coetzee's (1999) character Elizabeth Costello in *The Lives of Animals*, it is worth asking whether one can imagine oneself into the place of an animal. It does seem easier to empathize with their death and suffering than with their life, as if those were the aspects of experience that we share. It is, as Elizabeth Costello points out, because like Nagel we think we need to be able to experience bat-life through the sense modalities of a bat.

> But he is wrong; or at least sending us down a false trail. To be a living bat is to be full of being; being fully a bat is like being fully a human, which is also to be full of being. Bat-being in the first case, human-being in the second, maybe; but those are secondary considerations. To be full of being is to live as a body-soul. (Coetzee, 1999, p. 45)

Perhaps it is not the accuracy that counts but the attempt, the willingness. Upper Palaeolithic people may have imagined themselves as the animals they saw all the time: given that Magdalenian art may involve the repetition of many lines in its production (Aujolat, 1995), it is possible that the artists were *feeling* their way into being-animal as much as simply representing them.

However, even this empathetic approach, at least for a modern archaeologist, carries with it a certain platonic quality. Imagining a mythic or literary animal is not the same as meeting the gaze of a real one; it lacks the reality of the intense relationship of a companion animal (Haraway, 2008). Real interactions with animals are historically specific, intimate events. Hunting, killing, and eating them are also historically significant, intimate acts. Describing them is not, but perhaps it is possible to glimpse something of this interaction in the archaeological record.

Animism, Art, and Archaeology

The animist revision in anthropology provides endless examples of indigenous groups who perceive the world as being full of human-animals, or animal-humans: living beings in the same way that humans are (Harvey, 2005; Bird-David, 1999). These beings are persons that can relate and communicate, participate in ceremonies, have their own laws (Bird-David, 1999). Animals are taken as capable of doing things "towards humans": "Animist observations suggest that much of what animals do, whether or not humans are watching or implicated, is intentional, planned, and purposive. Animals choose" (Harvey, 2005, p. 101). Hunting abounds with ritual and respect, concerning the potential souls of the animals killed, their transformation, their emotional responses (Harvey, 2005; Murray, 2000; Renouf, 2000).

Such studies expand the concept of personhood available to researchers in the Upper Palaeolithic, but they are not focused on the more "mundane" (Haraway, 2008) aspects of life, referring instead to ritual and social differentiation. It is difficult to see the influence of such practices on sites where butchery marks on bones and the spatial activities of human beings are the primary sources of evidence. Under these circumstances, food and tool manufacture are considered to be the paramount areas of analysis, with production of ornaments of secondary significance (Castel et al., 2006; Leroi-Gourhan & Brézillon, 1972). This occurs as a direct result of drawing a distinction between economic and symbolic, between the necessities of food production and the niceties of art. At the risk of oversimplification, the human-animal relationship has suffered the same reductionist tendencies that have existed in the rest of archaeology, and those inroads that have been made towards a more reflexive approach rarely include early prehistory. Although the symbolic potential of cave and mobiliary art has long been recognized, the human-animal relationship outside of surviving depictions remains broadly economic in nature.

Using the archaeology of the Magdalenian, with specific reference to the Paris Basin, and "becoming-animal" from Deleuze and Guattari's (1980) *A Thousand Plateaus*, I will demonstrate that the human-animal interaction was essential not because of its economic and evolutionary importance but precisely because of its complexity and immediacy and its effects on human society and the cycle of becoming-animal that was a part of Magdalenian society. Following from Haraway's (2008) essential critique of Deleuze and Guatarri's view of "petty individuated animals", I want to emphasize the mundane, everyday, cyclical nature of these interactions between wild animals and humans in the directionless practice of living. Many studies focus on animals fitting into human society as generalities (Birke, 2009), and given the nature of the evidence, to some extent this replication is difficult to avoid, but with the archaeological evidence it is possible to include the animal context on an equal footing with the human.

Animal Multiplicity

Both Derrida, and Deleuze and Guattari have emphasized plurality (Derrida, 2002; Deleuze & Guattari, 1980) and multiplicity as antidotes to the "singular figure of animality that is simply opposed to humanity" (Derrida, 2002, p. 415). Similarly, for Deleuze and Guattari (1980), multiplicity describes many potential fields of planes of meaning that might apply to animals, or more specifically becoming-animals. Multiplicity was created precisely in order to escape the abstract opposition between the multiple and the one,

rather than seeing it as a "numerical fragment of a Lost Unity or Totality" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980, p. 32).

The very concept of becoming-animal relates to monolithic categories of knowledge or ideas of the animal. A becoming-animal "always involves a pack, a band, a population, a peopling, in short, a multiplicity" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980, p. 239). This relates to Deleuze's notion that "there is no identity, and in repetition nothing is ever the same. Rather, there is only difference: copies are something new, everything is constantly changing, and reality is a becoming not a being" (Roffe, 2002). Therefore, every animal is fundamentally a band or a pack, although this pack may have different modes of being.

Becoming-animal is becoming intense. A becoming is not

> a correspondence between relations. But neither is it a resemblance, an imitation, or, at the limit, an identification . . . To become is not to progress or regress along a series. Above all becoming does not occur in the imagination . . . Becomings-animal are neither dreams nor phantasies. They are perfectly real. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980, p. 238)

Deleuze and Guattari are not saying that the human becomes an animal any more than the animal becomes something else. Becomings produce nothing other than themselves: "what is real is the becoming itself, the block of becoming, not the supposedly fixed terms through which that block passes" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980, p. 238). These combinations are neither genetic nor structural, they are interkingdoms, unnatural participations.

Potentially then, a becoming-animal is very real, an experience, but it is not prescribed, never the same twice; it is an interaction, an almost inevitable one. Given that the divide between animals and humans is moveable, permeable, or non-existent depending on how it is viewed, a becoming-animal is always possible.

Humans Following Animals in the Magdalenian

The societies of the Upper Palaeolithic in France were probably highly mobile. Having analyzed evidence from the Dordogne, the Gironde, and the Massif Central and Pyrenees, Burke (2000) concludes that neither herd following nor a simple seasonal round were likely: "humans used different hunting strategies to accommodate seasonal shifts in the subsistence base, rather than adopt a more mobile pattern of residence" (p. 34). There is another way of putting this, that Magdalenians were aware of what the herds and other animals were doing, and when they might be doing it. In order to be flexible, the people of

this era must have known their animals well. Whether or not they literally followed herds, it is evident that they adjusted their behavior in ways that fitted animals and not the other way around. "Thus the availability of reindeer as a resource for hunters depends on how they position themselves in the landscape relative to the migration pattern of reindeer herds" (Audouze & Enloe, 1991, p. 63).

Reindeer were of central importance to the Magdalenian economy (Audouze & Enloe, 1991), and it is accepted that reindeer are migratory when population densities are high enough (Burke, 2000; Audouze & Enloe, 1991). This phenomenon of migration provided hunters with an opportunity to exploit large numbers at once, in a "mass kill". Such interactions are archaeologically known at the Magdalenian site of Pincevent in the Paris Basin and from earlier periods, such as at Meindorf (Bokelmann, 1991). But it is a model of interaction, and it is recognized as such: "In reality, the ethnographic cases are more complex than the model, with the acquisition of numerous different resources dictating a more complicated organization of subsistence economy" (Audouze & Enloe, 1991, p. 64).

But there is even more to this than meets the eye. The question of dependency is never raised; Magdalenian people merely *exploit* animal populations. The way Magdalenians organized their societies and did what they did was intimately affected by the ways animals behaved and responded themselves *as such*, to their environments, to each other, to people. Another way to say this is that Magdalenians knew animals well, as well as they knew each other, but they responded *to* animals rather than merely reacted to them.

Section 36

Pincevent is one of a group of sites in the Paris Basin dating to the Magdalenian. Audouze (1987) refers to it as a "cultural entity" defined by its lithic industry, simple bone tool industry, and the similarity of the open-air settlements (p. 183). She argues that most similarities between living floors derive from technological and economic behavior common to all Magdalenian hunters in the region; differences from seasonal and functional factors (Audouze, 1987, p. 183). Audouze states that the settlements of the Paris Basin reveal the same type of behavior concerning the use of fire, the localization of an activity area near the hearth, the processing of game, and the disposal of refuse. In most cases, they are characterized by an absence of obvious architectural features typical of the region. This absence is not only due to the short duration of the settlements (Audouze, 1987, p. 196).

Pincevent sat at the confluence of the Loing and Yonne rivers, on the edge of a low terrace close to a ford (Audouze, 1987, pp. 185-186) surrounded

by open cold steppe on gently rolling upland plateaux (Enloe, 2001, p. 189). The valley was a customary route for reindeer migrating between the Massif Central and the North of France, and a narrowing of the valley bottom here made it both a propitious reindeer crossing during the fall migration (accounting for the site's location) and for forming ice dams that resulted in gentle flooding (resulting in its preservation: Enloe, 2001, p. 189). Alluvial deposits preserved four levels of living-floors, all dating to the late Magdalenian. More than 10 campsite units have been excavated on level IV-20 (which includes Section 36).

At Section 36 the majority of the archaeological remains comprise agglomerations of faunal remains and lithics in more or less discrete areas around a number of large and smaller hearths, and in specific deliberately created deposition areas (Gittins, 2006). The site is extremely complex and has been described in much more detail than is appropriate here. I will focus briefly on the three main hearths (referred to as L115, T112, and V105) and the relationship of faunal distribution to other kinds of material culture on the site.

Human/Hearths

The hearths—particularly the three main examples—were like living things in that they had their own histories and interactions with people and other features on the site. The excavators talked about the hearths "aging": they were built and rebuilt over and over again using the same stone blocks. These blocks shattered as they were heated (there is some suggestion that the shattering was a deliberate effect) and were subsequently removed to deposition areas or reused in other hearths. Of the three main hearths V105 was the oldest, having a much greater weight of heat-fractured stone associated with it than was remaining in its border, while L115 was the youngest with the least amount of material built up around it.

The distributions of fractured stones from these hearths were broadly the same as that of the lithics and animal bone found at the site, and although it could be argued that heated stones were carried around the site or rejected to "rubbish" areas for purely functional reasons, the distributions are such that the stones appear to have been caught up in the social exchange as much as the other materials. Furthermore, the hearths and the patterns of use around them do not neatly tessellate with each other; one hearth is not interchangeable with another. Instead they clearly had their own unique ways of being, evident from the patterns of use around and between them.

Hearths V105 and T112 were situated close together, and between them was a dense diagonal spread of material (animal bone, flint, heated stones: the "communal dump") which refitted to many parts of the site but mostly to

these two hearths. I have argued elsewhere that this dump was not a simple drop-and-toss zone but rather represents a history of interaction between these two hearths that was deliberately public and deliberately left written on the ground (Gittins, 2006). This space was not structured or formalized since it could be written over at any time, but its importance is indicated by the constant reiteration and repetition of material deposition within it, and the human interactions that it indicates. In this sense this area—and the areas like it—is as important as the hearths themselves.

Hearths/Animals

Although reindeer were not the only animals present at the site, they were certainly the most numerous, with the minimum number of individuals being 43 and the average number per hearth being 12 (Audouze & Enloe, 1991), and important. The lithic assemblage demonstrates that in terms of function the site was geared towards the hunting, butchering, and processing of reindeer carcasses. The reindeer were killed away from site and primary butchery appears to have taken place before they were brought back to Section 36.

In general, the fauna is very fragmented, having been processed so heavily that even the second and first phalanges were broken to remove the marrow (Enloe, 2003). In its heavily processed state the bone is to be found all over the site and in all deposition areas, the excavators arguing that its light nature meant that it was more readily kicked around by the passage of human feet. However, Audouze and Enloe (1991) have argued that the refitting metacarpal pairs from individual animals can be found together in the same hearth, indicating that even smaller pieces remain in situ and that depositional patterns survive.

There is clear evidence of food sharing, in particular between hearths V105 and T112. The upper portions of forelimbs, meat rich, are known to have been shared between six hearths at Pincevent, including the V105, T112, and L115. Although Enloe (2003) has argued that this is a substantial amount of sharing, the actual number of examples is quite limited. Audouze and Enloe (1991) identify from the refits that the upper portions of forelimbs indicate partitioning or sharing of carcasses while the non-meaty lower portions were found paired at the same hearth "suggesting that meat rather than marrow was moving between domestic units" (p. 67).

Food sharing in hunter gatherer societies is considered to be an aspect of their egalitarian nature, but the food sharing identified at Section 36 seems to indicate that it was the hearths with meaty portions that shared with each other rather than meat-rich sharing with meat-poor. It is possible that the close proximity of hearths T112 and V105 prompted this behavior as a

more intense social interaction may be evident from the presence of the communal dump between them. The relations between these two hearths are not straightforward: although lithics refit from many areas of the site and are clearly shared between many hearths, no such communication occurred between T112 and V105, which further suggests that the meat sharing that took place was as a result of a specific practice and not just part of a general redistribution of food and materials.

Food sharing evidence at Section 36 clearly indicates that it was a socially manipulable phenomenon. It is eminently possible that there was unequal access to meat, as within groups there would have been access to reindeer ranging from those who caught and carried out the primary butchery, those who might have also processed the meat and other products, and those who might have been entirely dependent on others. There is a quantity of other small game animal bones, which may indicate that other kinds of hunting were taking place, but this constitutes a very small overall percentage in the fauna (Leroi-Gourhan & Brézillon, 1972). If hearths are equal to social groups, then there does not seem to be much evidence of even or equal sharing of meat-bearing bones over the site. Enloe (2003) suggests that the less meat-rich metacarpal bones were consumed around the three main hearths, with the meat-bearing bones used for long-distance hearth sharing. Almost all of this meat-bearing bone sharing takes place between V105 and T112. However, if these are the encampments of successful hunters, then the act of sharing cannot be a straightforward reflection of economic need. Even if the meat was subsequently passed on to others, the act of sharing still appears driven by the relationship between V105 and T112.

The process of hunting an animal and killing him or her, taking him or her away from his or her group and into one's own gathering, is an intimate relationship. These individual reindeer would have had social influence and significance as such. Although they appear quite dead to us, they were still present as far as the Magdalenians were concerned, so that when they were brought back to site, the sharing of the important meaty parts was quite a formalized process and not something that happened without care or without meaning. The limited amount of sharing compared to the amount of meat present at Pincevent suggests this, as does the fact that the sharing that happened between hearths T112 and V105 did not automatically apply to all material types. This information combined with the evidence of the communal dump suggests that these hearths and the people around them were in an engagement or relationship where it was more appropriate to share animals than it was to share lithics. This in turn indicates that the Magdalenian's sense of identity was in some way bound up with the *presence* of reindeer, at this particular time, for

this particular interaction. Far from being just a calorific resource, *at the time* this was a process of becoming-animal where the multiplicity of being a reindeer/human was socially/politically/ideationally manipulable. However, this manipulation was not necessarily prescribed; it was historically immediate, a social interaction that was relevant at that time. Under another circumstance, if different people had built hearths near each other, the site would look completely different, and the interaction might have been completely different.

The gathering that took place at Section 36 was a social event, a gathering that was possible because of the gathering of reindeer. Humans were multiple with reindeer.

Conclusion

The archaeology of Section 36 allows us a historically located glimpse of one particular becoming-animal at one particular time. It also shows us that the modern concept of what is a person and what is an animal was not true for the entirety of human history. People of the Upper Palaeolithic did not merely reflect or mimic animal populations; they were intimately, socially linked to them.

I have suggested that humans were dependant on animals. There is no implication of determinism here; we have already seen that a variety of strategies were potentially employed by humans (Burke, 2000). However, humans *needed*, and still need, animals. Domestication has been seen as a substantial shift in power relations between humans and animals, and in the hunter-gatherer perception of animals from brothers to owned (Ingold, 2000). However, the necessity of animals and animality did not change. As Haraway (2008) has argued, this understanding of domestication as a disaster for animals is effectively mistaken. There is evidence for the domestication of wolves in the Magdalenian in Central Europe (Musil, 2000), where the author has argued that the methods of hunting used at the time also involved this domestication process. Furthermore, domestication should not be viewed as a historic event, a one-time occurrence that spread across the globe; it is still happening even now (Ratliff, 2011). Along with the preceding discussion, this illustrates that domestication may be better viewed as an outgrowth of an already complex and deep relationship, an always potential becoming-animal, rather than something inherently "unnatural".

From this brief examination of one piece of archaeology, it is difficult to say that animals could change history, could influence the outcomes of our lives now from their actions then, but I think it is *at least* possible to say that history would have been impossible without them.

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