
CALL FOR PAPERS

Subjects and Objects of Law: A Workshop on Animals and Vulnerability

May 31, 2017

Moot Court, The Liberty Building, University of Leeds, United Kingdom

The **Center for Law & Social Justice at the University of Leeds School of Law** and the **Vulnerability and Human Condition Initiative at the Emory University School of Law** is delighted to launch a new series of interdisciplinary workshops aimed at exploring topics related to the **Subjects and Objects of Law**. These ongoing conversations will employ Vulnerability Theory to think through a range of issues around juridical personhood, legal subjectivity, and legal personality. The goal will be to explore the ‘sorting’ function and categories of law, as well as the origins and expressions of state responsibility which such categories produce. Using vulnerability analysis to engage both the epistemic and doctrinal registers of legal personhood will allow us to consider how the human and non-human are and have been constructed as the subjects and objects of law, spanning across time and cultures. Future topics are anticipated to include the jurisprudence of legal personality as it relates to: nature, the environment and ecosystems; business entities such as domestic and multi-national corporations; cities and municipalities; international governmental and non-governmental organizations; as well as those humans excluded from historical categories of full subjectivity including women, racial minorities, the disabled, colonized peoples and children.

The first meeting on the 31st May 2017 will focus on the legal construction of animals, with participants from all scholarly and activist disciplines invited to explore history, conflicts and debates around the inclusion/exclusion of animals within the category of legal persons. The lens of vulnerability and resilience has much to offer this discussion, by reframing the human-animal hierarchy from one of domination and control into mutual and reciprocal relations of dependency and responsibility. Scholars and advocates concerned about animal wellbeing have argued from rights- or interest-based perspectives that human use of animals should be prohibited; or, alternatively, that animals should be granted a status higher than property under the law, such as quasi- or living property or personhood. These arguments have serious limitations. Strong human rights or interests in using animals will always trump animal rights or interests. Similarly, animals treated as living property or persons under the law have competing claims with human persons, making it unlikely that animals will prevail.

This workshop invites participants to think outside frameworks of ‘rights’ in considering the legal identity of non-human persons. Vulnerability Theory is interested in the social identities which embed both human and non-human actors in our physical world. In thinking through legal identity as a social identity, we recognize that the significance of juridical personhood lies in the entitlements, duties and legal capacity that it produces. What, then, might be the consequence of extending this legal personality to animals and how would it reposition non-human animals in relationship to the state, to other non-human legal persons (such as corporations), to human beings and to the natural world? What new expressions of state and other forms of responsibility would it create? And what are the limitations of strategies linked to personhood? This inquiry extends beyond competing rights claims to engage animals as vulnerable legal subjects, while challenging divisions between ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ as constitutive legal and conceptual categories. It also asks us to regard animals as universally vulnerable, while turning our attention to the resilience that may be generated (or reduced) by reimagining animals as legal subjects, among other tools of recognition.

Vulnerability and Resilience Background Reading at:
<http://web.gs.emory.edu/vulnerability>

Submissions Procedure:

Email a proposal of several paragraphs as a Word or PDF document by March 6, 2017 to Rachel Ezrol, rezrol@emory.edu and Antony Butcher a.j.c.butcher@leeds.ac.uk

Decisions will be made by April 3, 2017 and working paper drafts will be due May 1, 2017 so they can be duplicated and distributed prior to the Workshop.

Workshop Details:

This will be an all-day workshop on Wednesday, May 31st at Leeds University.

The workshop is being convened by:

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