

What follows is the text of a presentation that I prepared for the Arse Electronika conference in San Francisco in September of 2011. Of course, at that time I was serving time as a political prisoner of the Amerikan police state – and thus could not present my paper in person. The AE team presented it for me, so whilst I was locked up my words and thoughts were thereby set free. I have made some minor stylistic, formatting, and grammatical edits to the original text – which I think will help the flow of the document in this online form. However, I've resisted the temptation for a fuller rewrite. Instead, this essay has been expanded into a book-length review of the subject, entitled the Deep Symbiosis Manifesto, which is scheduled for publication in the fall of 2012. Details on the DS Manifesto – and the work of the Deep Symbiosis Institute – can be found at deepsymbiosis.org.

WITCHUNT 2010

...or, the bastard offspring of Kafka & Orwell

I'm going to tell you a story today. Ok, well, it actually won't be me who is doing the actual telling - I'm sitting in federal prison, not for any actual crime or because I've been convicted of anything, but because I dared to ask challenging questions about fundamental issues... but I'm getting ahead of myself already. Right now, I'm a political prisoner and I'm writing this from a federal prison in Texas. A colleague has been kind enough to read this presentation on my behalf at this conference, but I suppose we can still say it's my story.

The story I'm telling you today is both deeply personal, and pregnant with all manner of lessons that have a broader resonance across the communities and social worlds we all share. It's a personal story, because the specific trajectory of how I - as a researcher and activist - have come to be a political prisoner of the United States federal government is unique and specific and irredeemably involuted and filled with odd digressions and, frankly, bogged-down with the sorts of complexities and contradictions and "you-won't-believe-this-happened-and-neither-can-I-but-it-did-happen" turns of events that don't make for a simple, linear, obvious narrative flow. From what I've seen, that's how real life actually works: it's rarely as clean and simple as we come to expect from watching TeeVee or reading detective stories. In real life, sometimes the "good guys" who carry badges end up doing genuinely evil things, and sometimes the "bad guys" (as branded by mainstream society) are the ones who are busting their ass to help construct a more

positive future. Worse yet, sometimes the ones doing evil convince themselves (and others) they're doing good... and the whole thing gets complex and challenging and takes work to understand and unpack. However, the good thing about reality is that it's **real** - and we can learn much from real events as they unfold in the real world. I'm a big believer in reality, as it were... and this story is as real as it gets.

What we can learn from this story is of profound importance to many people sitting in this room listening to this presentation - and to many folks who will, in due course, read these words as they are shared elsewhere. I hesitate to do so, but I'm going to go ahead and cite the words of Pastor Niemoller, remember him? He was an anti-fascist activist who was sent to the concentration camps – and nearly executed - by the Nazis as a result of his (eventual) stance against the regime, and he penned those classic lines about "first they came for the communists, but I wasn't a communist so I did nothing... then they came for the gays, but I wasn't gay so I did nothing... and when they came for me, there nobody left to stand in their way." I'm paraphrasing, because - well, because it's not so simple to check quotes when working from within a federal prison. In any case, I suspect most of you know the quote; it's quite famous.¹

He's speaking to a crucial element of anti-fascist political reality: if we stand aside and allow "those weird people" (who are in some way more weird/unconventional/unpopular than ourselves) to be victimized and assaulted by an overweening central police state - figuring that, really, it's probably best not to get involved and besides it's not our fight and furthermore those weird people are sort of weird and do weird things and ask weird questions and surely what's being done to them can't ever happen to less-

¹ The exact text of the quotation is as follows:

*Als die Nazis die Kommunisten holten,
habe ich geschwiegen;
ich war ja kein Kommunist.*

*Als sie die Sozialdemokraten einsperrten,
habe ich geschwiegen;
ich war ja kein Sozialdemokrat.*

*Als sie die Gewerkschafter holten,
habe ich nicht protestiert;
ich war ja kein Gewerkschafter.*

*Als sie die Juden holten,
habe ich geschwiegen;
ich war ja kein Jude.*

*Als sie mich holten,
gab es keinen mehr, der protestierte."*

(source: http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Martin_Niem%C3%B6ller)

weird people like us anyway, can it? - then, by the inexorable game theoretic logic of the flow of events, when it comes time for our own brand of unconventional-ness to be targeted, nobody else will stand with us against exactly that kind of mob-rule targeting we once turned our attention from, using the same logic we used when we ourselves were deciding not to get involved.

In other words, I'm saying that you can look at what's been done to me, during Witchunt 2010, and see a template for expansion into future attacks against all sorts of researchers and activists who touch on controversial subjects. Whether you care about the kinds of issues that I, personally, care deeply about - and I do hope I'll convince you to care about those, just to be clear - or not, I hope you'll care about the tactical mechanics of how the full force and capacity for monopolized violence of the United States government can be brought to bear on political activism, academic research, and non-criminal minority lifestyles. I hope you'll care that a U.S. District Court judge has sentenced someone to three years in federal prison without ever "bothering" to charge them with a crime, after extensively citing their political activism and research interests in open court. I hope you'll care how disinformation is created and disseminated by corrupt members of law enforcement, fed to the modern version of yellow journalism - the dying, mainstream print newspapers - and used as a weapon in effort to silence voices of dissent. I hope you'll care that the same U.S. District Court judge has issued a censorship order requiring me to, well to hack is the only word for it, a series of legal news websites in order to censor them, remove them from public availability, or face additional years as a U.S. political prisoner if I refuse to assist in this censorship programme he has engineered.

In other words, I hope you'll care about what's been done during Witchunt 2010 because we've every reason to believe that the tools deployed against cutting-edge folks like me will, once honed, be deployed more broadly, more deeply, and more frequently against folks like you. Now that the SWAT team has been sent to destroy my home and family, how long until a SWAT team shows up at the home of someone sitting in this room? Are you prepared for what happens if a rogue federal law enforcement officer decides your research, or activism, or lifestyle, is "immoral" and authorizes extra-legal violence to silence you, destroy your family, shut down your research, demolish your activist campaigns? My goal is to help you be prepared, to help you understand the tools that were used against me, and to help all of us defend against what we will see is creeping moral totalitarianism... a sort that Orwell, we can imagine, would have found himself nauseated to witness.

But before we get to SWAT teams and solitary confinement and federal judges issuing censorship orders - and hate groups riding the wave of Witchhunt 2010 for fun and profit - we need some context, and a place to begin. That brings us back to the particulars of my own life's trajectory, and in this part of the story I'd like to frame out exactly how I came to be in the cross-hairs of moral demagogues and hate-engorged bigots by the day in April of 2010 when the machinegun-toting thugs showed up at my home. And when I look at how things have progressed, and where I can really say the trajectory begins, I think we come back to the asking of questions. Questions, you see, can have tremendous - even revolutionary - power. We like to think of high-horsepower cognitive projects as involving the creation of detailed, internally-consistent, hefty conceptual structures that purport to explain some chunk of the Real World in which we find ourselves situated. These structures take lots of work to create, to build, and to buttress as they seek to explain more and more of how things work. There's a degree of inductive logic involved in creating them, and still more deductive grunt work to flesh them out. But it's new questions - and the abductive nature of a deeply incisive question - that can sweep away entire structures of explanatory bluster and open new vistas for understanding and awareness. One good question, in other words, is worth a thousand self-referential platitudes.

"It's very difficult to talk about this stuff in a civilization which is, oh, at least 70% insane in its major premises about the nature of man and the nature of relationships."

- Gregory Bateson

As a youngster growing up surrounded by the nonhuman world - I learned to ride horses when I was 2 years old, began foxhunting when I was 3, started a successful competitive riding career when I was 6, and was surrounded by not only dogs and horses but chickens and raccoons and pet birds and hamsters and rats and snakes and fish and just about any living thing you can imagine, during my childhood. I grew up living a life deeply immersed in the flow of life beyond humanity's boundaries. And, as a mildly autistic person, I found that the sometimes-frustrating spirals of human interactions left something to be desired when placed in comparison with the honest, genuine, direct nature in which relationships of trust and reciprocal respect are generally constructed beyond humanity's linguistically filigreed existence.

And, as I grew up and began to understand the terrible things that human beings do to nonhumans, all sorts of deep moral issues presented themselves to me. As a young teenager, I became a vegetarian after realizing that the meat everyone was so blissfully enjoying at the dinner table came not just from living beings, but from hideous factory farms. I started questioning why some people were so brutally cruel to the horses in their care - why "horse people" often treated their horses like mere pieces of

property. I saw that, for many people, dogs were disposable fashion accessories - something I couldn't possibly understand, as my own canine friends were as real to me (and, sometimes, more real - and more reliable) than any 2-legged friends. In short, I came to understand that human beings do intentionally cruel things to other species (and to other human beings, of course) - things that are simply unjustifiable, unnecessary, and therefore evil.

Certainly this was no novel discovery; I was following in the footsteps of Dr. Peter Singer (whose *Animal Liberation* was a life-changing book for me), as well as countless other philosophers throughout recorded human history who abhorred cruelty and needless violence towards other living beings. I joined PETA, I educated myself. I became, in short, a card-carrying member of the Animal Rights movement at an early age (and I still am). That's all well and good, and for me was a natural - perhaps inevitable - part of my development as a moral being.

"What we cannot speak about, we must pass over in silence."
- Ludwig Wittgenstein

But, at the same time, something was not making sense for me. In my own interactions with the horses and dogs and other critters who made up our extended family throughout my childhood, I of course did my best to be a good friend, good protector, and good colleague. I came to have a reputation for working well with "difficult" horses, horses who wouldn't countenance the kind of monotonously-repetitive work required of top-end hunter/jumper competition at the time. I developed my latent empathetic abilities, in other words, and felt myself to be doing right by my nonhuman companions. So what was the fly in the ointment? It came in the form of a simple question. The question is: if we love and respect and genuine care for the well-being of our non-human friends, why do we castrate them?

That's kind of a simple question, isn't it? Perhaps it seems like, further, a simplistic question to some listeners. We castrate them because, umm, we have to prevent "unwanted breedings." But if that's the case, why don't we castrate human beings when we don't want babies? What about vasectomies. Because I asked around, and we most certainly do NOT castrate human beings as a form of birth control. In fact, we consider it a horrific, violent crime to castrate 2-leggers. But I watched as nonhuman friends of mine were castrated, and I asked a simple question: why?

That was the question that carried me forward into the work I do today. It's the "question that cannot be asked," because it opens up not just a can of worms - but whole crates of cans of things much worse than worms.... warehouses full of crates. The more I asked that question (and related questions about hysterectomies, when I came to understand the biology a bit better), the more troubled I became. The answers I got were, to be frank, complete bullshit. The answers contradicted themselves. Or they didn't make any sense, even as standalone answers. Then, as I learned to do literature searches on the academic research, I found out that most of the answers I'd been fed when young were flat-out wrong. Objective reality failed to align with their fundamental assumptions. It was an ugly mess.

From that question, I began to ask more questions. I found more places where the answers just didn't make any sense. And, in time, I began my own research efforts in order to understand what was really going on. I am still doing that research today. But, at core, it all traces back to that simple question: why do we castrate those we claim to love?

That question was the start, for me, of a decades-long process of peeling back various layers of misunderstanding, misdirection, counter-factual assumptions, and - finally - unsustainable beliefs in the shining uniqueness and moral perfection of Homo sapiens. It may seem like an odd question to lead down such a road, but the question served as a skeleton key for a whole range of white-hot issues that otherwise remain largely outside of our discourse on "animal rights," human morality, and the meaning of being a living, sentient, caring, empathetic critter on this damaged planet of ours.

To start, the question opened up a world of false assumptions about the status of non-human social mammals. Remember, this was back in the early 1980s and the world back then had a decidedly different tilt. In middle school biology, I was "informed" that humans were the only tool-using species (now known to be false), the only species with emotions (laughably false), the only ones who communicated with language (right on the cusp of being proved false: see dolphins, elephants, Corvids, etc.), and the only ones who could "feel pain" (bizarrely, a core tenet of Cartesian philosophy). And, of course, the only ones with "souls." Part of that package which caught my eye was the odd belief that humans were the only species who "enjoyed sex." To a teenager, that's a pretty noteworthy statement, isn't it? I thought, really? That's... astonishing. Of course, it's also wrong - but at the time I was fascinated by how this could be. It seemed, shall we say, counter-intuitive.

Then there was the whole line of argument that being fully sexual was "bad for animals" in a physical sense. This was the explanation I got when I first started asking the castration question. "Oh, honey, he'll be so much happier without all that nonsense in his life... plus, of course, testosterone is bad for him - it's only right to 'fix' (and I began to mistrust that ugly little euphemism right off the bat; it's just too cute, too curt, too obviously hiding something, isn't it?) him so he can live a healthy and long life." So evolution (I'd read Darwin around the time of my 12th birthday) made critters with parts of their bodies - entire organ systems - which actually harm the organism and are best addressed by surgically removing them? Again, this seemed both counter-intuitive and almost anti-evolutionary to my way of thinking. I was a kid, but I was asking questions.

By college, my questions began turning to the human side of the equation. Humans are animals (we're not plants, and certainly not minerals), so the more I chewed on the question of animal behavior and biology, the more I wondered how humans fit into all of this. I took a degree in cultural anthropology, shifting over from biology so I could wrap my hands around these bipedal, hairless primates. I studied the structural functionalists, the post-structuralists, the relativists, and the hard-nosed empiricists. I read my Saussure, and Levi-Strauss, and Weber, and Bourdieu, and of course my Durkheim. I waded through countless ethnographies. Along the way, I came to see the astonishing diversity of human cultural expressions - but, underneath it all, there's always the reciprocal systems of interchange, kin relationships, reproductive association, and friendship. There were things that were qualitatively different about humans... but not that many. Mostly, humans started to look more and more like the other social mammals, to me, but with some fascinating twists. I came out of my years of cultural anthropology with a deeper awareness of what makes humans human, and lots more questions about how nonhumans manifest many of the things that we studied in the ethnographies of humanity.

From there, as I continued my professional career in the background, as it were, I dove into the field of cognitive ethology. Did other species have cultural systems, reciprocity structures, and the like? Was the construction of meaning uniquely human (and that lead through the deep thickets of deconstructional thought - rewarding, but man is some of that writing awful!)? At the same time, I began to study the praxis of human/non-human interactions in a less theoretic way. I began a career training and campaigning national-level field trial retrievers.

I explored the question of epistemology, from a canine perspective, by seeing how retrievers model their understanding of abstract concepts in the space of field trial competition training. I saw more

questions come to the fore: how is it that we are able to partner with this extraordinary species - *Canis familiaris* - familiar, perhaps, but still utterly mysterious in their ways? Can we ever really see the world through their eyes, or are we forever trapped in our primate brains? I learned what the word "umwelt" means, and thought about how it would be to live life as a bat (pace Nagel et al.). I had some success in field-trial competition, became obsessed with the poetry of human/canine working partnerships. I dreamt of field trial training, doodled training exercises on napkins at business lunches. Along the way, I became more and more convinced that I was still failing to understand the deeper issues, to ask the right questions.

I realized, more and more, that the interface between humans and nonhumans is a fractal boundary: the closer we look, the more detail there is to see. I became fascinated with the manner in which we conceptualize these relationships, how they evolve over time, how they become more than each species' participant alone. I imported young stallions from Germany, with no "training" under their belt, and decided to see if I could do better at building world-class showjumpers based on an orthogonally different approach to human/equine partnerships. I asked more questions: about our moral obligations to other species, as partners. About what it means to be a genuinely good friend to someone who has more legs than we do. About how this relates to the human concepts of "ownership." And, of course, about how it is that we can do all this and think about all this but still be expected, like a splinter shot thru otherwise-healthy tissue, to castrate our partners along the way. I became more and more convinced not only that the original question wasn't answerable in any conventional sense, but that there were profound moral implications at play. I stopped castrating my partners, though I'm not sure exactly where along the way this became self-evidently required as part of my ongoing exploration of these issues. The decision flowed from everything I'd learned.

At around this time, I also began my PhD. work in complex systems theory, with a doctoral subject of "quantitative theories of consciousness." In other words, I was sucked right into the event horizon of the so-called consciousness question. After more than a decade of swimming in those near-limitlessly broad and deep literary waters, yet more questions rose to the surface of my thinking. Are humans unique in being conscious? Is consciousness something that's genuinely internal to an entity, or is it also inextricably linked to the external social world in which it is constituted? What could it mean to construct a consciousness-detecting technology, one that could be applied to other species - other minds - in an objective way? Of course, such questions bring us face-to face with the puzzles of sentience, of self-awareness, of socio-emotive constitution, and of essential identity. I began to see how these questions run through not only the study of non-human persons, but also - soon enough - will be part of how we think

about non-biological "people" of a software-ish nature. As is so often the case, the more I learned about these things, the more I came to question whether I understood the fundamentals on which it's all based.

It was also in those years that I began to actively seek out examples of people who have found ways to engage in qualitatively different relationships with non-human partners. To me, it's these interaction examples that can often act as negative test-cases to the more far-fetched claims of human uniqueness - as one analytic example. I've sought out people who have demonstrated extraordinary capabilities to form full-bandwidth empathetic bonds with other species, in particular. Such examples can come from gifted equine mentors, people who form almost-psychic bonds with canines, and those who have seemingly put themselves fully inside the social world of marine mammals. These people exist. They are rarely the ones you see on TeeVee, or read about in the conventional press. They tend to live their lives, and express their gifts, far from the limelight. They are, almost without exception, shy about interactions with other human beings. Building trust with them, such that they will open up and share of their life's experiences, can take years - or decades. And, not coincidentally, a big percentage of them are zoophiles.

Now is where the decades' worth of question-asking on my part brought me eye-to-eye with the brutal realities of human politics, human bigotry, and human hatred. For folks who are listening today and might not be facile with the term, zoophiles are human beings whose primary social, emotional, intellectual, and/or physical bonds are with non-human partners. The 'press catnip' part of this is, of course, the possibility for sexual relationships that span species boundaries (but only if one of those species is a human being, oddly enough - nobody really gets worked up over ligers, or horse/donkey hybrids, or coyote/wolf pairings).

But, zoophilia as properly defined is no more "about sex" than human same-gender pair bondings are merely about who puts what body part where. That's not to say sex isn't relevant to the discussion; in a real sense, my own seminal question springs from a sexual issue (*viz.*, the morality of castration). Since my research entered these waters, I've not shied away from seeking to understand, to chart, and to grasp the element of sexuality implicit in zoophilia. Re-using a metaphor, sexuality is a skeleton key that unlocks a vast room filled with astonishing new analytic tools: mirror-neuron mediated empathy and the extension of body map awareness; socio-emotional symbiosis; physical mutualism; radically transfigured epistemological frameworks; profound re-imaginings of what language is or can be. But, sadly, sex can become the be-all and end-all of any kind of popular interest in the subject of zoophilia... and that perhaps understates the

degree to which conventional society is fascinated, obsessed, and simultaneously repulsed/attracted to the idea of cross-species sexuality (with humanity as one of the species involved).

My interest in understanding zoophilia, thus, dates back more than a decade and has evolved, shifted, expanded, and contracted over the years. Along the way, I've built a level of trust with individuals around the world who have helped me to gain a more fundamental awareness of the subject. I will say with simple sincerity that there is perhaps no other researcher in the world today who has gained this access, explored these areas, and been able to synthesize these fundamentally ethnographic findings as I have in the last 15 years. Some of these findings I have published publicly. Others, I have used to fuel further research as I seek to broaden the scope of questions I am asking, and to refine my conceptual apparatus as my fundamental assumptions have been consistently challenged and re-challenged in due course.

Increasingly, I have come to conclude that there's something here that cuts to the heart of a wide range of issues that span a diverse range of academic subject areas: consciousness studies, human sexuality, psychology (both human and nonhuman), social theory, cultural studies, artistic creativity, linguistics (which I think is ripe for a radical overturning, one perhaps already in works), political theory, morality, ethics, spirituality... the list starts to seem grocery-ish, admittedly. But that's what I've seen, and it's what has kept me digging deeper and deeper despite the obstacles and barriers that have appeared, with increasing regularity, over the years.

And what obstacles they've been. Already in the 1990s, I was exposed to the brutality and oozing evil of human beings who feel they are granted license to attack an unpopular minority such as zoophiles. In my contacts with members of the zoophile community, I saw them targeted by opportunistic predators. Having been raised with a profound moral imperative to act when someone defenseless is being attacked without mercy, I found myself drawn inexorably into these instances of violent attacks against that community. I was first "outed" as a zoophile (putatively) after I refused to aid in the targeting of a young man who was part of my investigations, back in the late 1990s.

The ultimatum was simple: hand over his personal information so he could be "outed" and savaged, or I would be "outed" in his place. I told the extortionist he could go fuck himself (verbatim), and sure enough he generated hundreds of pages of libelous nonsense to "destroy" me. My life was forever altered, and from that point forward it would always be "assumed" that I was, myself, a zoophile. For years, I fought that assumptive designation - telling and re-telling the story of my targeting because I would

not throw under the bus a young man who was part of my own research project. Eventually, I learned that it was pointless to fight this rear-guard battle; once something is "said" on the interweb, it's said forever.

I went forward with my life. For a time in the early 2000s, I swore off the research, turning more to computer science and questions of computational complexity. But I came back - I'd see hints of something powerful in what I was exploring, and the latent academic in me always compelled me back into the fray. I wanted to learn more, get a deeper view, see a broader range of what exists out there (incidentally, I still do). I'd been burned - badly - by my research interest in zoophilia, but I was not permanently deterred.

At about that time, I began to engage in informal collaborations with other researchers who were coming to explore the subject - often from within academic psychology. I came to act as a liaison between many researchers who, lacking the credibility and trust within the zoophile community, could not engage directly in such research. I was happy to provide that bridge, and a sheaf of published and heavily-cited papers came out of that work. This was part of no plan on my behalf; like so much in life, it happened with a seemingly independent, internal logic all its own. In other words, I'd started to become involved...

"Involvement is the first step towards understanding."
- Robert Baer (retired CIA analyst)

Throughout, I've seen and learned amazing things, wondrous things, frightening things, and - sometimes - awful things. The world is not all light; there is much darkness there. This is true of the zoophile community just as it is true of any human community. It is not all wine and roses. There are some genuinely bad people in that community, and some of them have done bad things. However, they are the minority in that community and, over time, I have seen those bad people be pushed more and more to the side. Throughout, I have eschewed the role of apologist for that community - aggressively so. If anything, I have chosen to be quite publicly critical of what I have seen, when I have learned of things that are simply not acceptable to me. So much have I been publicly critical of such examples of genuine wrongdoing, that some might say I have been more of a critic of the community than someone who is broadly supportive. So be it.

*"Who the song would understand
Needs must seek the song's own land."*
- Goethe

These sorts of interactions have, inexorably for me, lead to the aforementioned involvement. Insofar as I have become a sort of ethnographer of the zoophile community, I have come to practice a form of "engaged anthropology" in doing so. Rather than standing aside and being the Platonic "objective" observer of same, I have engaged myself along the way. At first tentatively, and then over time with increased moral assurance, I have stood against the more brutal and hate-driven attacks against individuals whom I have come to know over the years of my research. This decision to stand tall was never an overt decision, but rather more of an emergent process for me. As I was raised, and as I am proud to carry myself as an adult, my own moral imperative is to act when I am able to act in preventing harm to others - of whatever species.

This personal moral imperative has, in another sphere of life, lead me to decades of successful rescue work, with both dogs and horses. It goes without saying that such rescue work is an essential part of who I am; I was an active rescue participant before rescue was cool, as it were.

With humans, my moral imperative to resist injustice and hatred has often resulted in my choice to stand against bullies, against bigots, and against those who seek easy victims on which to exercise their own violent personal demons. Often, those stances have cost me personally - and I am in prison today as a result of one. Irrespective, such choices are a fundamental part of who I am. In a very real sense, they are also a central part of my research methodology: I do not simply lurk in the shadows and observe. I also will act when acting is the only justifiable choice.

During these years of my research and engaged anthropological interactions with that community, I was also walking a long and complex path in my own personal life. After my best friend killed himself in 2003 (I've been a fixed-object/BASE jumper since the late 1990s, and watched a whole squadron of my friends go to their graves in a sport that is all too well-known for eating its own young), I "broke bad" and became involved in a successful US/Canadian narcotics smuggling operation. When one of our customers "flipped" and wore a wire on me during several months' worth of in-person meetings, I was arrested in February of 2005 with a load of product in my truck. Ironically, the DEA agents who arrested me somehow neglected to have a drug-sniffing dog available to "validate" their search of my vehicle... nor did they have a warrant to search my truck.

This resulted in the authorities "arresting" me illegally, holding me in handcuffs for more than an hour with no valid legal reason for doing so. After firing one corrupt attorney who I caught embezzling laundered drug money from my client account (attorney Jeff Steinborn, of Seattle), I was fortunate to find an honest attorney who negotiated a fair deal with an honest U.S. prosecutor. I agreed to three years of prison time, did my time, and walked out with no baggage. At that time, I made a firm choice to avoid the drugs business in the future. (ironically, since that time, the second-tier prosecutor on the case has changed her story and attempted to brand me as a "cooperator" as an explanation for the sentence I received; we can only assume that she lacks the integrity to honestly acknowledge the colossal screw-up that resulted in my being arrested without sufficient legal grounds: I was told at the time that if word got out of that screw-up, "heads would roll" in the relevant agencies; I've kept my word to remain silent on this issue, until now - now I must speak up, to correct the false accusations that this prosecutor - Susan Roe, see below - has made against me.)

I did warn about the twists and turns this story takes, but bear with me. We're getting somewhere now. Before I was imprisoned, and during my imprisonment, one of the showjumping stallions who I personally trained, mentored, and competed successfully with since the late 1990s - Exitpoint Capone I is his full name - was coming to be one of the most successful showjumping horses in the world. He was also part of my research efforts, as my approach to his career was directly animated by what I'd been learning in the years of study thus far. Of course, he was not castrated - but that was far from the only place where I actively diverged from how the "horse world" treats successful showjumpers.

Throughout his career with me, his needs always came first. His training was structured to be a positive, rewarding experience - and his natural pride in his skills, his athleticism, and his expertise was used as the core of his competitive framework. That, combined with human-level focus on nutritional excellence, rest/recovery phases, periodic training cycles, quality sleeping arrangements... and 10,000 other tiny details, resulted in Capone becoming a world-beating competitor. (in 2007, after my release, he was stolen from my barn in broad daylight by an ex-partner in the smuggling operation - Corinne Super, of Langley BC, who initially recruited me; we are still fighting in Canadian courts to recover him from this thief... but that's another story, for another day).

By 2009, my research efforts were continuing apace. I was involved in an upcoming article to be published by *Scientific American*, on the increasing "consensus" (that's *SciAm's* word) that zoophilia is a legitimate sexual orientation in human beings. Contributions to other academic journals, popular

publications, and leading-edge conferences (including Arse Electronika) were resulting in increasing collaborative work with researchers in related fields. Further, I had begun linking my academic work more deeply into efforts in the field of computational sentience studies, seeing a future confluence of biologic and non-biologic sentience systems as all but inevitable. It was during this productive phase of my ongoing work that Witchunt 2010 began.

"I have no doubt we shall win, but the road is long, and red with monstrous martyrdoms."
- Oscar Wilde

In the fall of 2009, I was made aware of the case of James Tait. Tait had been arrested and thrown in jail in Tennessee, and colleagues of mine were concerned that - astonishingly - he had received no copy of an indictment, no charges filed against him, nothing. It appeared that, in all substantive respects, he'd been kidnapped by corrupt local law enforcement officials under the direction of Detective Terry Chandler. Further, his "public defender," Michele Vanderee (undergraduate & law degree, University of Tennessee), was shown to be actively cooperating with local sheriff's deputies in suppressing knowledge of his illegal imprisonment.

To the best anyone can reconstruct, Chandler and his cronies decided to target Tait out of purely personal, bigoted hatred of who he was: Tait had been named in the 2005 Enumclaw incident, in Washington state (which would itself result in the now-infamous "Enumclaw witchunt" law being passed in that state by a mob-frenzied legislature unconcerned with flagrant unconstitutionality; see below). Rather than "bothering" to charge him with any crimes, Chandler and crew simply threw him in prison, crowed to the local press about how they were persecuting someone unpopular and, and pushed Tait to "name names" and bring others into the witchunt. Tait, to his credit, refused to cooperate. Eventually I was put in contact with him, and I began efforts to find a local attorney who could effectively represent him (Ms. Vanderee was clearly working against her "client's" interests, and was complicit in his illegal imprisonment every step of the way).

My decision to involve myself, by helping Tait to hire a competent attorney, is the proximate cause of my status as a political prisoner today. It has been stated in open court that both Chandler and - bizarrely - Tait's own (putative) attorney, Michele Vanderee, vowed to "get me," to "destroy Spink," and to do anything to punish me for "daring" (their own word) to question the illegal imprisonment of Tait. Yes,

these are supposedly the "good guys," the ones who carry badges and are paid by taxpayers to assist in the "administration of justice." Once they had set their sights on me, the witchhunt had begun in earnest.

We now know that, during the winter of 2009/2010 an inexperienced junior probation officer named Jeffy Robson (who had been assigned to oversee my supervised release, which dated from my old smuggling case) was notified of my assistance in locating a competent attorney to represent Tait, in Tennessee. Taking what we might call a generously-broad view of what "supervised release" entails, Robson promptly became fanatically obsessed with me. He combed each and every mention of my name on the internet (which number more than a few), began stalking the company I co-founded and served as Chief Technology Officer - Baneki Privacy Computing - (which provides secure, encrypted routing services to customers worldwide). One thing, oddly, he never bothered to do was call me, meet me, visit my home, or have any direct contact with me whatsoever. This is our tax dollars at work: Jeffy Robson, surfing the internet all winter long, obsessing about my personal life, academic research, and work in encryption technology.

At some point over the winter, it must have become clear to Robson that - despite his bizarre stalking of me - I don't actually engage in any kind of criminal behavior. All the hundreds of hours of wasted surveillance, and it turns out that I'm simply a researcher and writer with, as he would later complain in open court, "unusual opinions on a wide variety of topics." To get from there to a full-scale witchhunt, there clearly needed to be something more done. And that something more, it turned out, would come in the form of what seemed an innocuous request: a visit from a community contact.

In the early spring of 2010, I was contacted by an individual familiar with my research work, my published writings, and my longstanding interest in genuinely respectful multi-species family arrangements. He indicated to me that he hoped to visit my farm in person, to see firsthand my approach to managing my canine family - a group of dogs, some rescued and some imported from Europe - as well as the stallions in my care. I receive such requests fairly frequently - from researchers and curious knowledge-seekers alike. I've always maintained an "open farm" policy: anyone who wants to visit is welcome, with the only request that the coordinate their visits in advance rather than just showing up unannounced. This visitor did that. His name was Stephen Clarke.

Here in the story I am going to stick only to the objective, specific facts, while leaving unstated some conclusions which - most folks will likely agree - are so obvious as to be almost impossible to ignore.

On the last day of Clarke's visit, 20 heavily-armed SWAT team members showed up at my house. Although they would not tell me why they were there (as they handcuffed me), it turned out it was due to an alleged violation of my supervised release conditions. The law cited was the aforementioned Enumclaw Witchunt statute. But, of course, I'm not in violation of that statute - despite how broadly it was worded, it simply doesn't cover anything about the facts on my farm.

The SWAT team, which arrived complete with a horse trailer (and who were caught on videotape reminding each other to "get the one that's worth all the money," meaning the stallion Capone... one of those "now it makes sense" data points leading to some ugly corruption conclusions). While I was clear of the Witchunt statute, it soon became clear that Clarke was not. Unbeknownst to me, Clarke was "conveniently" in possession of a video camera containing footage of cross-species sexual activity, some of it involving the dogs on my farm. "Conveniently," this footage was provided to the SWAT team almost immediately. From there, the witchhunt picked up steam...

At the time, I was sitting in solitary confinement in a federal jail (why solitary confinement? Anyone's guess, to be honest - draw your own conclusions). However, I'm confident that - since I've not actually done anything wrong - the Feds are barking up an empty tree. That confidence continues when, finally, I can meet with my attorney and he tells me that Clarke has pled guilty to the Witchunt statute. However, when we review the video footage found on Clarke's camera, I am - of course - not on the footage. Nowhere. My voice is audible in the background, in the distance. And, to be crystal clear, there is no abuse of anyone on the tape.

Next, Clarke signs a statement confirming that I didn't know what he did, didn't authorize it, wasn't involved. Case closed, my attorney naturally concludes. We push for a hearing in front of a judge, unprepared for what comes next. The attack that Robson started now pulls in Ms. Susan Roe, the second-tier prosecutor on my old smuggling case. Apparently, she bears me a terrible grudge: she feels I "got off easy" on that case - even though she was part of the team that signed off on the plea agreement - as a result of the cock-up surrounding my smuggling arrest. Now, she sees a chance to "get even." The witchhunt accelerates further. Susan Roe, it turns out, has decided to start feeding disinformation to a gullible local press. This becomes an integral part of her strategy to force me to "plead guilty" - to what, she never says (shades of Tait's situation, in Tennessee). The law has become merely a vehicle for her to express her personal vendettas, just as it's become a tool for Robson to let his own hatreds loose.

Roe's feeding of the local press results in a stream of what would be - in other circumstances - laughably counter-factual lies, smears, and bizarre fantasies being printed as "facts." Not one of these "journalists" ever contacts me, or my attorney, to fact-check anything. The witchhunt is in full swing. The stories feed on themselves and expand - aided, quietly, by Susan Roe every step of the way. "Unnamed sources" are cited. Roe spreads rumors of "pending indictments" for new crimes - which never happen. I know little of this, at the time, since I'm still locked in solitary confinement. We only learn about them, later, when Roe offers to "take the pressure off in the press" if I'll agree to "plead guilty" (to what?) and make the whole thing go away. I refuse, of course. Around the same time, she attempts to get me to agree to allow her (and her allies at the badly-misnamed Whatcom County "Humane" Society, and in particular Laura Clark - who seems hell-bent on killing our dogs) to have unimpeded ability to kill the dogs that were stolen from my home the day the SWAT team arrived. (another story-within-a-story here is the ongoing litigation against the aforementioned "Humane" society, in which we sued them to prevent them from killing the very dogs they claimed to want to "protect" - as of today, we do not know which, or how many, of the dogs who shared my family life have been killed by this monster-in-savior's clothing, Laura Clark.)

Basically, what happens throughout the summer is that I continue to point out, via my attorney, that I've not been charged with any crime, convicted of any crime, or had the right to defend myself in open court against any such charges - nor have I had the fundamental American right to contest the constitutionality of the Enumclaw Witchhunt statute. It becomes clear, instead, that Susan Roe's strategy is to "violate" me under the pretext that I ran afoul of the Enumclaw Witchhunt law (without any actual, objective evidence to back this up - save the perjured statement she extracted from Clarke, see below). When we challenge this farce in court, the presiding judge blithely remarks that "we do that to people all the time" (i.e. put them in prison for "new criminal conduct" without ever, you know, bothering to charge them with a crime).

We refuse to engage in a kangaroo court mockery of a real trial - with actual jurors, actual evidentiary standards, and so on - and insist that if they want to bring Enumclaw Witchhunt charges against me, they must go through the hassle of actually charging me under said statute. Fearing the inevitable ruling that said Witchhunt statute is unconstitutional (almost laughably so - it's been the subject of numerous law-review articles pointing out how badly it fails any test of constitutional muster), I'm railroaded through these hearings and sent to prison for "violating" the Witchhunt statute - but never actually charged with it. And, yes, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals eventually ok's this bizarre Catch-22 in full. In an unpublished opinion, that court essentially washes its hands of the whole mess.

What's the clincher that allows for this "violation" claim to stick? On the day of my evidentiary hearing in Federal court, Susan Roe arrives with a "hot off the printer" (her words) revision of Clarke's previous statement (the one that which he passed a lie-detector test after signing) which absolved me of any wrongdoing or knowledge of his actions. This one, the story's now flipped 180 degrees. Now, I was involved - video evidence to the contrary. Obviously, the revised version of his statement is a sham. With no time to prepare, I am faced with the choice: do we drag him onto the stand, prove he's contradicted himself, and perhaps cause him to be charged with perjury? I choose a different path. We point out, on the record, the obvious inconsistencies between Susan Roe's musical-chairs statements from Clarke. We point out that it makes a mockery of any credibility the statements may have - obviously, the revision has been produced under coercion (Susan Roe holds Clarke in solitary confinement for several months after he finishes serving the 30 days he gets after pleading guilty to five counts under the Enumclaw Witchunt statute - remember that number: 30 days).

The judge brushes off these minor details aside and promptly lectures me about my political views, my academic research and - in particular - my strong support for encryption and for the right of Americans (enshrined by law, and by court precedent) to use such encryption to protect themselves against eavesdroppers. Remember, I'm the CTO of an encryption-service company. The judge will have none of that: in his mind, using encryption is "proof" that "you must be hiding something really bad" (I am paraphrasing, but his exact language is available in the court transcript for those curious). He repeats this. This followed on the extensive hyperventilating that Susan Roe did, in pre-trial filings, when the subject of encryption came up. "Baneki" - that's the company I co-founded that, through its now-independent subsidiary Cryptocloud, provides VPN-based secure routing service to customers, activists, and business worldwide - "is in the business of selling secrecy," she darkly intoned. As if that's somehow forbidden in the United Police State of Amerika.

One can only assume that she is a subscriber to the newly-fashionable interpretation of privacy rights which holds that the U.S. government enjoys fiat power to keep everything it does secret, whilst actual human beings are stripped of all privacy protections against an increasingly rapacious, surveillance-obsessed, extra-legal federal power. Repeated efforts are made to force me to shut down Baneki's VPN service, or to provide information so that government goons could snoop on the private network - for me to disclose confidential customer information to the fed goons. My response, again verbatim: go fuck yourselves. We have a right - not just a legal right, but a fundamental natural right - to protect ourselves,

our communities, and our families from lawless government surveillance and harassment. Encryption makes that hypothetical right tangible. Encryption works. And, as I saw clearly in the mouth-foaming rage Ms. Roe directed at Baneki's successful encryption services, the government deeply fears user-friendly, widely-available network encryption service. They also fear people, like me, who help to provide those services and who will never, ever bend if pressure is placed on them to compromise the integrity of the privacy gained therefrom.

Additionally, prior to my kangaroo-court hearing (not a trial, since I'm not charged with any crime, remember), I am put under pressure to "cooperate" and name names of zoophiles with whom I have had correspondence during my research over the years. I flatly refuse. This infuriates Susan Roe, who is clearly heart-set on expanding the witchhunt. In fact, she's pre-announced to the press the "fact" that there will be "numerous other indictments" of other people - no indictments ever happen, of course. In fact, nobody (aside from Clarke, obviously) is ever charged with any crime. But that's not how the tabloid press reports things.

The *Seattle Times*, in particular, is mouth-foaming keen to print any false rumor Susan Roe sends their way. Apparently, the fantasy version of the story helps to sell newspapers - something they're clearly having trouble doing in recent years. Facts? Reality? Mere obstacles in the path of a juicy - fake - story! This dynamic reaches its apotheosis when the *Seattle Times* (and a particularly seedy, desperate local paper called the *Bellingham Herald*) get fed the "fact" (from Susan Roe?) that there were "mice slathered in Vaseline" found in my home. Mice? Yes, field mice rescued from one of my dogs (who has a habit of catching them for sport), and then returned to the farm fields near our home. Vaseline? Zero. However, the temptation of a rehash of the old (and discredited: see snopes.com) Richard Gere urban legend about hamsters and orifices is too tempting to resist. This bullshit nonsense becomes "fact," and the *Seattle Times* proudly prints it up. Susan Roe, one must imagine, is creepily pleased.

When it's all over and done - by the end of the hearing about whether I've violated of my supervised release - the presiding judge has thrown the rules of evidentiary credibility out the window. He's lectured me about my politics. He's indicated he feels encryption is an assumptive indicator of guilt. In due course, he declares me "un-recalcitrant," unrepentant (for what?), and needing to be "punished" - and sentences me to three years in federal prison. No crime. No charges. No reliable witness. No independent evidence. Nothing. Further - and astonishingly - the judge signs off on a one-of-a-kind, unprecedented censorship order. He orders me to take steps to censor, in entirety, more than 20 perfectly-legal,

Constitutionally-protected news and discussion websites. They include not only Baneki's encryption-service pages (baneki.com, cryptocloud.net, etc.), but also Baneki's highly-respected cultureghost.org discussion forum, and even the torrentfreak.com filesharing-news website, based in Europe.

The witchhunt has now reached its peak.

That's right - I now face a U.S. court order to censor all these websites (irrespective of whether I have any control over, involvement in, access to, or - needless to say - actual ownership interest in - any of them). If I fail to engage in this censorship - which, definitionally, I'd have to implement by hacking the sites and illegally deleting them - I face two more years in federal prison. Obviously, I will never cooperate in any way with this flagrantly-illegal censorship order. I will proudly serve two more years as a political prisoner before I will become a piece of the growing American censorship apparatus. It's anyone's guess how this will play out upon my release. But, in the end, that's what happens in front of a federal judge: 3 years in prison for no crime committed, and a censorship order to shut down dozens of legal websites.

"The fact that you can only do a little is no excuse for doing nothing."
- John LeCarre

Now, you might wonder which brave, chest-thumping civil liberties and free speech nonprofits saw this unfolding and stepped in to add their weight to the side of free speech, anti-censorship, and genuine civil liberties. The answer would be: none. That's right: zero. I made repeated outreach attempts to the local and national chapters of the ACLU (to which my family has proudly belonged, as the proverbial "card-carrying members," since the 1960s), and was consistently rebuffed. The case was "not politically palatable," I was told. So much for courage, and for the ACLU's integrity. How about journalists, writers, or even bloggers who smelled a rotting fish and began to question the government-generated narrative? None. How about Dan Savage, Editor of Seattle's *The Stranger*, a weekly freebie paper - and "Savage Love" columnist - with whom I've corresponded repeatedly over the years? I did reach out to him. He never replied, never wrote a word about Witchunt 2010. Pointedly quiet. Everyone was, it appears, silenced by the (virtual) torch-carrying mob that Witchunt 2010, fed by government goons, generated in its wake. No dissenting opinion was accepted, no voice was raised in protest.

None, that is, at an organizational level. At a personal level, there has been profound, heartwarming, and ongoing support. From individuals involved in my research, from friends, from

colleagues, from professionals in related fields, even from legal scholars... I've received genuine support. Often, they have showed great courage in that support. And my family has been deeply supportive. However, without exception, they've all asked that such support be kept "on the down-low," as it were. Fearful of the tendency of the Witchhunt to expand to any new targets fed into its ravenous maw, they've all had to keep their support private. While I understand this and respect it, I also see how it's fed into the witchhunt itself. I have been fortunate to have so many stand strong with me throughout this lynch-mob ordeal, however I've seen the price we've all paid in defends of facts and respect for genuine diversity.

And that brings us, finally, to the nadir of what was already an ugly process. During the darkest days of the witchhunt, there came forth (from under what rocks one can only imagine) a cadre of anti-zoophile, zoophobic bigots whose viciousness, whose personal bile, whose shameless eagerness to use any means to feed their own hatreds cannot properly be put into words. As I was constrained from any public replies to anything at the time - due to concerns over our inevitable legal appeals - I had a perfect spectator's view of these hate-engorged monsters, unconstrained by any opposing force. The ringleader of these vicious, violent, zoophobic bigots, who - we've since learned - has a long and sordid history of fundraising fraud for nonexistent "horse rescue" groups that vanish under the glare of outside investigation - even put a PayPal button on her hate website so people could "donate" to help pay her personal expenses. Hatred as a full-time quasi-career choice, eh?

I'm choosing not to name-names on these bigots, as it's clear they crave nothing more than to slipstream along in my wake in terms of publicity and, creepier still, at least two of them - both sad, lonely, unsuccessful middle-aged women - have quite obviously developed scorned-woman feelings of unrequired attachment to me for complex psychological reasons that I don't even want to begin to understand. No thanks. But the executive summary is that there's some deeply ugly, troubled, broken people out there who come out of the woodwork in times of extreme brutality and seem to spread their dark wings and thrive in the atmosphere of lies, anger, violence, hatred, and distrust that generates itself around any sort of genuinely moral-panic style witchhunt. These people are scary, but at a deeper level they're actually very, very sad. They are the Platonic form of opportunistic, deeply damaged bullies. They truly need help.

So then that's how things would up, last summer. Afterwards, there's the expected echoes and reports of ongoing battle on the legal front, in terms of our appeals of the witchhunt's non-criminal imprisonment and the censorship order and whatnot. There's a slow-but-steady preparation for what is expected to be a maelstrom of civil litigation; I'm constrained in going into details on much of this, except

to say that it's illegal for federal law-enforcement officials to intentionally deprive U.S. citizens of their civil rights, and that defamation is an actionable wrong under civil tort law, and that RICO has a civil element which has very powerful discovery tools. And that federal prosecutors who break the law by – where do we even start? – suborning perjury, obstructing justice, tampering with evidence, engaging in witness coercion... all flagrantly, intentionally, shamelessly... she deserves to be disbarred and forbidden from practicing law ever again. Further, she should be prosecuted for the multiple felonies she committed (see list just cited), and – once convicted by a jury of her own peers – sentenced to an appropriate term in prison. Plus supervised release, of course. What's good for the goose is certainly appropriate for the gander, no? I believe that NOBODY is above the law – particularly prosecutors who are sworn to uphold the Constitution and to defend those laws. When they break the law – flagrantly, repeatedly, shamelessly – they must be held legally accountable. To me, this is beyond question. I am doing everything possible to ensure this happens... although, of course, what prosecutor prosecutes other prosecutors? Not many.

There have been times I've thought to step away from the civil litigation we're pursuing, since it's in some senses a distraction from the work I do and from the priorities in my own life. But, honestly, I was raised to defend myself because if we fail to defend ourselves then we encourage bullies in the future to target others with their childish brutality. I was raised to ensure accountability when people make decisions - not just my decisions, but the decisions of others who might seek to harm those I love and care for. Right or wrong, that's also part of who I am. Time will tell whether pursuing such claims proves to be wise, or foolish. However, it's inevitably as far as I'm concerned.

That's the story that I wanted to tell you today. There's plenty of digressions and personal asides, and it doesn't always follow a nice, smooth narrative flow. But it has the unalloyed benefit of being true. I derive much personal strength from maintaining as clear a distinction as possible between facts, and fantasies. Fantasies can also be powerful, but in a different way. Facts, objective reality... they tell us how things actually are, not how we want them to be. This story is real. It happened to me. I think there's value in others coming to understand how it took place, because I don't think it's a story that's, at a deeper level, unique to me. Some of the details are unique to me: not many folks listening to this are likely to become involved in international, helicopter-based narcotics smuggling operations and thus end up on federal supervised release, for example.

However, I am sure I'm not the only person in this room (even though I'm not physically in this room, of course) who explores subject areas that might be considered by conventional American society -

or a rogue federal prosecutor, or a corrupt local Detective - to be "morally wrong," as involving un-askable questions, am I? What questions are you asking, in your own work, that might lead you down a path on which one of the bad apples - the apples who will set aside professionalism, personal integrity, and fundamental honesty in order to use the tools of "law enforcement" and criminal punishment in this country for their own perverted ends - has opportunity to lash out at you? What will you do if that lashing-out commences? What lessons can you learn from what I've experienced, during Witchunt 2010?

Naturally - prison being a good place for reflective thinking, if it's anything - I've thought quite a bit about the proverbial Lessons Learned, and I've boiled them down to three. These are three lessons that, I think, have a broad applicability and which are supported by the facts of what I've lived through.

1. Don't count on anyone else, in today's day and age, "coming to your rescue" unless you're already tightly affiliated with a particular organization in advance of a witchhunt-style attack. For those of us who are independent researchers, who don't seek out a faculty (or student) position at an academic institution, we're particularly vulnerable. We might, as I have, collaborate extensively with other researchers who do have such homes - but, when the shit hits the proverbial fan, that doesn't count for much. So either hook up with an academic entity which you can confidently predict will stand by you in the event of a witchhunt, or find some other safety net, institutionally, in order to have a fallback. Trying to get any such institutions - or even self-styled brave defenders like the ACLU - onside to aid in your defense after the witchhunt starts is a hopeless task.

2. Take steps to proactively defend yourself against a potential witchhunt in advance, in tactical terms. Ensure your documents, research notes, and other valuables are stored offsite from where you live and work, and/or backed-up securely. The goons who invaded my home have tried to brand every paper, file, document, and book in my home office as "contraband" and avoid returning it to me (this is called "theft" in legal terms, as an aside). Obviously, silencing my words and work was a core goal of the attack against me. Had I not backups of those files, I'd be sunk. Further, the same goons were fanatically intent on rifling through my electronic records as well. Fortunately, encryption works - TrueCrypt, in particular, for full-disk-encryption - and their efforts failed spectacularly. If you do not defend yourself tactically, you leave yourself, your colleagues, and your research participants at risk during a witchhunt. Don't count on "the law" to police itself; it won't.

3. Ensure that you have plans in place to continue your public communications - even if you're surrounded by machinegun-toting, jackbooted thugs, handcuffed, and locked in solitary confinement for a month (as I was). Entrust friends or colleagues with words to publish in the event you are "vanished" by the goons. Have an attorney ready to help defend you, who can ensure you aren't silenced along the way. Do not ever expect "the press" to honestly report on what is being done to you - they are tools of repression in such cases, and will revel in acting as channels for disseminating disinformation against you, fed to them by the censors and thugs. Route around the mainstream/tabloid press. Speak in your own words. Your words are powerful; they are what the authorities fear, why they target us in the first place. Words ask questions; questions have power; answers have power. All are words. Keep your channels open so you can continue to work, and speak, even during a witchhunt. We transcend the witchhunt insofar as we are able to keep doing good, productive work - no matter what.

As for me, personally, I've learned more from this than I can express in this presentation. Some of what I have learned is hard and brutal - I've seen my faith in "the system" (of legal protections, of rule of law) in this country whittled down to less than a nub. I've seen a small number of friends and colleagues turn on me when the witchhunt raged at its most extreme. I've seen the anti-zoophile, zoophobic bigots reify the worst, most sordid elements of humanity's ugly underside. At the same time, I've seen much that has increased my confidence in genuine work, genuine study, and genuine progress towards positive futures for us all, of all species. Even my time as a political prisoner, behind bars, has resulted in unexpected breakthroughs, learning, new connections, and new understandings. But that story, of how my time locked-up has progressed, is one for another day.

In summary, it's the questions we don't ask that leave us living in the most profound ignorance: ignorance of ourselves, ignorance of our role on this living world, ignorance of the deeper interconnectedness of the universe. As researchers, as activists, and as thinking beings it is our moral obligation to ask difficult questions, to probe for deeper understanding, to work towards genuine (not surface-level, solipsistic) self-understanding. Asking such questions may not lead us down easy paths; it may involve sacrifice, and it may stir up ugly reactions from some of the hate-engorged bottom-feeders of our strange species. That changes nothing about the obligation. Were we to fail in asking such questions, we would be left profoundly ignorant of life itself. It reminds me of an old joke, as retold by DFW:

"This wise old whiskey fish swims up to three young fish and goes, 'Morning, boys, how's the water?' and swims away; and the three young fish watch him swim away and look at each other and go, 'What the fuck is water?' and swim away."

- David Foster Wallace, *Infinite Jest*

"Animals are good to think with."

- Claude Levi-Strauss

As to the original question that launched this narrative - why do people, people who claim to love their nonhuman companions, choose to castrate them? - I've learned a thing or two about that question, too. People do this to their companions - to beings who trust them, who rely on them to chart a positive and healthy path through their shared lives - because of a fear. They may not have that fear themselves, consciously, but it's that fear which animates a system of thought that will simultaneously claim to "love" someone and then turn around to undertake the most brutal of genital mutilation on them, an amputation surgery considered horrific when done to any human being. The fear is that a fully-gendered, fully-present nonhuman companion carries with him - or her - the inescapable reality that our species overlap far more than they remain distinct.

"Everyone takes the limits of his own vision for the limits of the world."

- Arthur Schopenhauer

That fear of the genuine overlap, a fear that sees how close our lives are - the lives we share with our partner species, domestically and emotionally and physically and even spiritually - come to be when we engage in deeply reciprocal relationships like these... this fear causes some otherwise well-intentioned people to do terrible things to these victims of their unthinking actions. Perhaps some who do this do not fully understand what they do; perhaps they really do buy into the strange, contradictory, oddly-fragmented justifications for castration that are bandied about. Perhaps, in short, they really think they are "fixing" (that creepy, deeply dishonest euphemism again) those they love by mutilating them.

But... they're not. What they're doing is attempting to erase the gender of anything that's not human. That attempted erasing, born of a fear of the similarities we all share in being gendered, sexual social mammals, takes place with sharp knives. What is left is the pretense of gender - they talk of "furbabies" and "little darling baby boys" and other such creepily infantilized categories of being - but the genuine reality of fully-embodied gender is cut away. That's a profound removal. We, as humans, understand well the power of gender in ordering our social lives. Most human languages see gendered status spread across all nouns, tying together areas of grammar with the deep structural reality of binary (or

tertiary: see neuter gender) categories of being. We can imagine a chair, or a sky, or a hat having an intrinsic gender - if we're speakers of most languages. Gender is central to being a fully-actualized, adult social being with full agency and existence in a social world.

However, to turn around and attempt to carve away with a knife the gender of the beings who share our lives... this brutalist effort at erasure can only come about as the expression of a deep fear. A fear that, for all we put ourselves up on a high pedestal - a pedestal, naturally, of human design - and designate ourselves the highest species of all (height being a central concern of primates in determining social hierarchies)... a fear that, despite centuries of Western culture attempting to slice off humanity from the rest of the living world, we're all in fact part of the same warp and weave of social, mammalian life. Those who fear that fundamental reality can be easily convinced to engage in the genital mutilation of those they claim to love.

"Sexuality and spirit are the two vital poles of this natural life that flows into our physical being and becomes differentiated in it."

- Walter Benjamin

As for me, I've long since stopped castrating my friends and partners. I've stopped locking horses who are members of my family in tiny stalls with bars on all windows - Maximum Security Lockdown, something I know a bit about myself - for days and weeks and years of their lives, as if they were some sort of violent prisoners. I've come to see that relationships between different species can come to include levels of depth, and understanding, and expanded awareness, and caring, and trust, and - yes - of genuine love that are simply not possible until reciprocity is achieved not merely in words, but also in trustworthy actions. I don't claim to be perfect, and I still have much to learn - this is surely true. But that original question I asked, it has already revolutionized my understanding of what it is possible to be as a human being sharing life with other people who aren't human beings.

"The only true voyage, the only fountain of youth, would be found not in travelling to strange lands but in having different eyes, in seeing the universe with the eyes of another person, of a hundred others, and seeing the hundred universes each of them sees, what each of them is."

- Marcel Proust

I believe that asking questions is important, and I have found that initial question to have the power to change not only my own life but, I hope, the lives of many others - for the better, of all species - through the work we are doing. I say we, because in recent years I've been part of the founding of the

Deep Symbiosis Institute, which itself is dedicated to exploring, understanding, and spreading awareness of the essential role of deeply symbiotic, emotionally full-bandwidth cross-species relationships. The Institute is building on the decades of work I've done as I've sought to ask incisive questions, to seek revolutionary understanding, and to poke holes in fatuous bullshit when it comes to cross-species awareness. It's already grow bigger than just me or no own work, and I see great things in the future it can help to bring about. It's all come from that first question, and the courage to ask it - no matter where it's lead.

"Man is a small thing, and the night is large and full of wonder."
- Lord Dunsany

So here I sit, a political prisoner. I'll be locked up about as long as Oscar Wilde was locked up for being a "sodomite," back in the day (not so long ago) when people were put in prison for being gay. I'll be locked up for far less time than Nelson Mandela was locked up for his own work towards positive social change - though of course I'm no Nelson Mandela. I'll do about as much time as Ron Coronado did for his work in hunt-saboteur activism. Overall, I'd say that's extremely honorable company! In fact, I've come to see political imprisonment as part of a proud tradition, and while I never thought I'd be put in prison in the "land of the free" for asking my kinds of questions and engaging in my kind of research, here I am. I also never thought I'd be excoriated in print by fact-challenged journalists keen for the chance to spin up a lynch mob fervor... but that happened. So be it. If this work were easy, someone else would already be doing it.

I'm proud to serve my time as a result of the questions I've asked, the research I've done, and the decisions I've made to stand up for something larger than myself. If I have to serve more time in order to fight the censorship order I now face, I'll do that, too - proudly so. I know others have paid far more terrible prices for standing up and asking hard questions, demanding honest answers, and working for positive change around the world. What I face is tiny in comparison. The price I pay, I pay gladly. It is what I must do, and I am doing it.

I thank you for your time and attention, and I thank the Arse Electronika staff - and in particular Johannes - for all of the outstanding work they do, as well as for their support in my efforts to share the results of my own work. It has been an honor to present to you here, and I wish you and yours all the best. May your research, your investigations, your projects, and your efforts to nurture a better future for us all continue to be productive, rewarding, and successful on all levels. *Namaste.*

Most respectfully,

- D.B. LeConte-Spink

D.B. LeConte-Spink is a co-founder of Baneki Privacy Computing (baneki.com), a legendary incubator of radical socio-technologic projects and services, and a longtime researcher in the field of cross-species socio-emotive symbiosis. He has, in his own words, "served time as an American political prisoner as a result of my longtime academic interest in genuinely reciprocal models of human/non-human emotional bonding, social connectivity, and inter-species cooperation, as well as my longstanding work in the areas of free-speech, anti-censorship, and other privacy/encryption technologies; in 2010, I was sentenced to three years in federal prison, despite being neither charged with - nor convicted of - any actual crime, in a witchhunt-style orgy of demagoguery, hatred, and a hijacked 'justice system' targeted at me due to my ongoing political work and activism." Further information on Mr. LeConte-Spink's continuing work to oppose government-sponsored bigotry, anti-symbiosis hate groups, and global censorship efforts is available at cultureghost.org.

Mr. LeConte-Spink carries an MBA from the University of Chicago, a B.A. in cultural anthropology from Reed College, and has studied complex systems theory at the doctoral level. He is a fixed-object jumper who has opened exitpoints worldwide (BASE 715), a Zen Buddhist, a mentor to several International-level showjumping stallions, a longtime technology entrepreneur, a former operational member of a US/Canadian helicopter smuggling crew, a former organizer of underground electronic music gatherings in the Pacific Northwest, a co-founder of a successful purebred dog rescue group, and served proudly as a front-line activist for Earth First! during the ancient forest wars of the late 1980s. Currently, he pursues his academic interests as an independent researcher, having published extensively in numerous fields. He is the founder of both the Deep Symbiosis Institute (deepsymbiosis.org) and of Exitpoint Stallions Limitée (exitpoint.org). He can be reached via BanekiCTO[[at]]gmail[dot]com, 866.966.7445, 877-909-9988, or Twitter: @LeConteSpink.