Twitter Thread by Kintsugi



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While lack of consent due to power imabalance is a common reason for opposing bestiality, it often comes from a place not grounded in either consistency and/or observable evidence.

I'll provide a response to @nilbold's concerns in hopes of a fruitful exchange of information.

> the issue of bestiality is one of consent and an uneven power dynamic that leads to abuse
>
> a horse dick dildo doesn't make someone a zoophile
>
> yes this is the 500th time this discourse has surfaced since 1998
>
> furries please, i'm begging you, there's more important things afoot
>
> — nude antifa kobold (@nilbold) January 8, 2021

RAINN has a rather serviceable model for sexual consent for humans: https://t.co/0gelDI53Fa

And Planned Parenthood has a more comprehensive one: https://t.co/8QQ1GsyGGT https://t.co/PQKkYcpftl

What's interesting is that both models fit and can be successfully applied to...

- **Freely given.** Consenting is a choice you make without pressure, manipulation, or under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- **Reversible.** Anyone can change their mind about what they feel like doing, anytime. Even if you've done it before, and even if you're both naked in bed.
- **Informed.** You can only consent to something if you have the full story. For example, if someone says they'll use a condom and then they don't, there isn't full consent.
- **Enthusiastic.** When it comes to sex, you should only do stuff you WANT to do, not things that you feel you're expected to do.
- **Specific.** Saying yes to one thing (like going to the bedroom to make out) doesn't mean you've said yes to others (like having sex).

nonhuman animals regardless of if their prospective partners are of the same species or not. https://t.co/wrE2jLPWHp

Now we need to explore power imbalance in human sexual relationships to understand what degrees of power imbalance are tolerated or not, and why.

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We must also note that "Power Imbalance" does not inherently mean bad things. There are Negative or Harmful Power Imbalances (like when the powerful have complete control over vital resources and the powerless are aware of this) and there are Positive or Growth Power Imbalances

(Like when one is an expert martial artist and teaches their SO how to defend themselves).

Power exists in all relationships. Having power means to have a sense of control, to have choices and the ability to influence our environment and others.

https://t.co/Jd7cLPXRx1

Is there such a thing as a positive power struggle?

While the idea of a power struggle or imbalance indicates something negative, not all power struggles are destructive. While the beginning stages of love might have you feeling as though you've found your "other half", relationships consist of two unique people who have different opinions, beliefs and viewpoints.

Naturally, there will be times that there is an imbalance in your relationship, however - there are some types of power struggles that allow growth within the relationship and encourage a deeper understanding and respect for each other.

According to psychiatrist Kurt Smith , a positive power struggle is one that ultimately results in the growth of the relationship. While the struggle is still a struggle, by the end of it, you will have reached an understanding of which lines can be crossed, which cannot and how much each partner is able to compromise.

Here we see that power differentials seem to revolve around uniquely human social-psychological concepts like peer pressure, expectations, and concerns about social image. If you look into the literature on power dynamics, you find very little of the same harmful power

differentials that can be applied to nonhumans. However much of the positive aspects that are associated with beneficial power differences and power equality can be found in interspecies relations.

So what power do humans have over animals?

That depends on many factors like the specific animal, human, living situation, personal histories, ect. But generally we can agree that humans often have superior, specific types of intelligence like pattern recognition and meta cognition. Humans also have more political power,

social power (in human societies), and financial power. All of these can create moral issues between two humans if the gaps are big enough, so obviously they must similarly be issues with interspecies relations, right? No, actually. First, we have to ask why these imbalances are

problematic in the first place? Because we tolerate plenty of imbalances like physical strength gaps between partners, financial gaps, and extreme age gaps so long as both are legal adults. A strength imbalance should be a more immediate worry than an intelligence imbalance

seeing as the ability to physically pin and restrain someone offers little recourse unless the victim is a trained combatant. So the imbalances of power that we care about seem to be about the likelihood of harm being produced, not just the mere existence of possible harm.

What is the animal under pressure from? What pressures are specifically involved? Here are a couple of possible answers:

1) Survival Dependency. This argument states that since domesticated animals, like dependent humans, cannot survive on their own and require a human caretaker

to live, the pressures to conform to the caretaker's wishes or desires are intrinsically linked to their survival which affects the decisions of the dependent whether these pressures are used overtly or exist subtly.

This argument loses the battle on 2 fronts. 1st is that

domesticated animals are entirely capable of surviving on their own (80% of all dogs are feral, look at wild horses, pigs that become so successful as invasive species from escaping farms, ect.) So they are not necessarily dependent on a human caretaker for survival, nor would

they understand that they are dependent on a human caretaker if this were the case which is the second failure of this argument. It anthropomorphizes animals to have a human typical psychological reasoning of the situation where no evidence exists to support this notion. Animals

can't know they need humans to live, hence why they still gather resources and look for food on their own, so there's not a pressure in this area.

2) Trained Sex. The animal is put under pressure by training or conditioning, the promise of reward or punishment if they do or

don't have sex.

This argument has merit only in the cases of punishment for the animal's refusal (or solicitation of it, as many pet owners punish animals for exhibiting sexual behaviour) to sex, which is abuse by definition and no zoosexual I know of condones this nor do the

ones studied by Miletski, Dr. Beetz, and Williams and Weinberg.

However, and as uncomfortable as I personally am about training for sex, I see no inherent wrong so long as both the methods don't infringe on animal welfare and the sex acts don't either.

(Veterinarian, Ethologist, and Animal Ethics PhD Stine B Christiansen convinced me of this: https://t.co/TCcWstax7h) For instance if a dog consumes too much peanut butter and becomes sick, that's a welfare issue regardless of if it was spread on genitals, hands, or the ground.

Or if the animal is trained to do something like tolerate uncomfortable or painful objects being inserted into them (unless they are necessary medical instruments), then that would be a welfare issue. Yet much like the Danish Animal Ethics and Veterinary councils point out,

rewarding an animal for engaging in a harmless activity is not itself a welfare violation. Although most zoosexuals claim that no training is necessary since sex is intrinsically rewarding, and veterinary and animal expert observations corroborate on this.

I'll address the intelligence gap, seeing as that is likely the go to justification you're thinking of for prohibiting bestiality. So why do animals need the same level of certain cognitive abilities as a specific species of ape? What is that supposed to accomplish,

what's the goal for sexual consent in having those capabilities? The best answer to these questions are: "Because it allows the subject to weigh the potential consequences of the interaction against what they value or care about. If the consequences are undesirable and infringe

on their values, they can be aware of that and refuse the interaction." But animals already do this when choosing mates of their own species. The intelligence difference is only a factor when it is used to take advantage of *treat unfairly for personal gain* the less capable

partner, remembering that sex is not inherently unfair or harmful. If you commit that this gap is intrinsically harmful to sexual interactions, there needs to be a cut off point for each gap in each different type of intelligence, and justifications for why that gap size is

chosen over another gap size. Like if we prohibit humans from having sexual interactions with Japanese Macaques, why not also prohibit Japanese Macaques from having sexual interactions with Sika Deer? Or prohibit cats and rabbits from mounting?

Or all of the other numerous cases of interspecies sex? And why not prohibit different dog breeds with vast gaps in their intelligences like border collies and bulldogs from having sex?

Your concept of power imbalance also applies in veterinary practices like stimulating female animals when artificially inseminating them. Or is it okay because those humans aren't sexually stimulating animals to orgasm for (human and animal) pleasure?

As Antonio M. Haynes (who received a B.A., magna cum laude, from the University of Rochester and a J.D., magna cum laude, Order of the Coif, from Cornell Law School) points out, uneven power dynamics exist in every relationship. https://t.co/idS6GcqNRu

VI. COERCION AND CONTEXT?

While the most oft-stated justifications for prohibiting bestiality are plagued by irrational inconsistencies, a different theory may actually provide a basis for regulating bestiality and may also bring coherence to the entire realm of sexuality legislation. What may underlie society's desire to prohibit bestiality is the notion that there is something deeply troubling with sexual relationships of unequal power. These relationships are infused with the possibility of coercion.[149]

That is not to say, however, that unequal power alone can be the definitive criterion. Interactions between adults and children, patients and their caretakers, the intellectually disabled and persons of superior intelligence, generally have unequal power and thus are potentially coercive.[150] But, so are "most adult heterosexual [relationships]

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years-old and as high as 21-years-old. *See id.* at 10, 23–24 tbl.1.1 (charting ages of consent from 1885 to 1999 and age spans in the fifty states in 1999).

[146] *See* Haynes, *supra* note 144, at 374 ("The age of consent represents the solemn legislative judgment that minors are mature enough to appreciate the potential consequences of their sexual activity . . . .").

[147] *See e.g.*, CONN. GEN. STAT. § 53a-71 (2012) ("A person is guilty of sexual assault in the second degree when such person engages in sexual intercourse with another person and . . . such other person is thirteen years of age or older but under sixteen years of age and the actor is more than three years older than such other person[.]").

[148] This argument does not rule out the possibility that children who have not yet reached puberty may derive pleasure from sexual contact. Instead, puberty itself serves as the beginning of one's sex drive. *See* Stephen B. Levine, *The Nature of Sexual Desire: A Clinician's Perspective*, 32 ARCHIVES SEXUAL BEHAV. 279, 280 (2003) (noting that sexual drive has a necessary "biological component [that] has an anatomy and neuroendocrine physiology"). Accordingly, whatever pleasure prepubescent children may derive from sexual contact is necessarily unrelated to their sex drive.

[149] *See e.g.*, BEIRNE, *supra* note 8, at 114 ("[S]exual assault against women differs from normal consensual sex because the former is sex obtained by one or some combination of physical, economic, psychological, or emotional coercion . . . .").

[150] *See* Catharine MacKinnon, SEXUAL HARASSMENT OF WORKING WOMEN: A CASE OF SEX DISCRIMINATION 54 (1979) (explaining that in settings of imbalanced power, coer-

There is a difference between human social power and standing, which humans care about and which affect them deeply, and power as a broader dynamic. No relationships would ever be permissible if we required power to be even since power is always uneven between two individuals in

at least several ways.

Also, healthy relationships don't focus on nor care about power, ask any psychologist. Power in relationships are what narcissists, abusers, and psychopaths care about. Otherwise the consequences of certain relationships is what deems them permissible.

Here are some in depth resources on the ethics of sexuality. I've taken screen shots of the most relevant points, but feel free to familiarize yourself with whatever is in here.

https://t.co/0OlKsT7fPR.

https://t.co/odeCqGhVi2

If Mappes's free and informed consent criterion of the morality of sexual activity is correct, we would still have to address several difficult questions. How specific must consent be? When one person agrees vaguely, and in the heat of the moment, with another person, "yes, let's have sex," the speaker has not necessarily consented to every type of sexual caress or coital position the second person might have in mind. And how explicit must consent be? Can consent be reliably implied by involuntarily behavior (moans, for example), and do nonverbal cues (erection, lubrication) decisively show that another person has consented to sex? Some philosophers insist that consent must be exceedingly specific as to the sexual acts to be carried out, and some would permit only explicit verbal consent, denying that body language by itself can do an adequate job of expressing the participant's desires and intentions. (See Alan Soble, "Antioch's 'Sexual Offense Policy'.")

Here is an excellent article on how respecting an animal's autonomy and right to consent or say no leads to a healthier and happier organism. There is not a justifiable reason sex should be any different.

https://t.co/JggooihOKf

What is more, the advice we'd gotten during those first crucial weeks after bringing Larkin home would prove devastating:

Don't comfort a fearful dog.

Don't let your dog walk in front of you.

Don't let your dog lead the walk.

Don't let your dog sniff on walks.

Don't let your dog pull on leash even if he's panicking and trying to flee.

Your dog needs discipline.

Your dog needs leadership.

You need to be the boss.

I can spend hours recounting all the things we tried that didn't work. Just thinking about those days and all the ways it could have been different but wasn't still brings me to my knees. It took months of trying, learning, reading

And here is a wonderful article discussing equine consent that focuses on offering choices, respecting "no", and being mindful of the wants and needs of each organism, and not arbitrarily using someone's "want" to trample the other's "want."

https://t.co/xMS2b9FarP

This interesting question, which came out of a post I shared on Facebook (here and here) about a yoga on horseback video that went viral recently, elicits differing opinions. Some claim that consent is a human construct linked to morality, and therefore cannot apply to animals philosophically or legally (calling it anthropomorphism). Others claim that since all mammals share a similar neurobiology, responses to safety, danger and life threat, experience emotions, are sentient and perceptive -- and that since both human and non-human animals can express "yes" and "no", aversion, attraction, fight, flee, freeze, fawn, collapse, submit, and make informed choices -- they can indeed "consent" or not (in their own way). **This second group suggests that to deny animals the ability to consent is anthropocentric and can be a way to justify the exploitation of non-human animals for the benefit of people.**

This article certainly will not resolve this debate, and its goal is not to malign or shame any particular horsemanship discipline,

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