

Coordonatori

Irina Frasin • George Bodi • Sonia Bulei • Codrin Dinu Vasiliu



Anthrozoology Studies
**Animal Life and
Human Culture**

PRESA UNIVERSITARĂ CLUJEANĂ

Animal Life and Human Culture Anthrozoology Studies

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Introducere

Irina Frasin*

Trăim alături de o multitudine de alte specii organizate în comunități frumoase și echilibrate, și tocmai acest echilibru este cel care susține viața așa cum o știm. Pentru mult timp am trecut cu vederea, sau pur și simplu nu am reușit să înțelegem în mod profund rolurile extrem de importante pe care le au alte animale în comunitatea vieții. Acest lucru a sărăcit nu doar mediul nostru, ci și modul nostru de a gândi. Pentru a depăși această dificultate, trebuie să facem efortul de a trece dincolo de istoriile centrate doar pe om și modul de a gândi doar antropocentric. Dacă vrem să prosperăm într-un univers în care recunoaștem valoarea tuturor speciilor, trebuie să învățăm să fim cetățeni care trăiesc alături de semenii noștri, umani și non-umani.

Toate aceste cerințe fac antrozologia mai dificilă decât alte discipline. Descrierile realiste ale vieților celorlalte animale necesită o privire mai largă, o minte deschisă și să fim întotdeauna conștienți de limitările abordărilor dintr-o singură perspectivă. Mulți oameni de știință au încercat noi modalități de a asculta animalele și de a înțelege realitățile lor individuale și sociale. Dar numai abordările științifice uni-disciplinare nu pot rezolva toate problemele în ceea ce privește cunoașterea realităților celorlalte animale. Avem nevoie și de filozofie, psihologie, istorie, poezie, pentru a ne da seama că limitele înțelegerii noastre nu sunt o scuză pentru a ne îndepărta de acești *Ceialți* misterioși și necunoscuți.

Astăzi vedem mai clar limitările și pericolele tradiției europene dominate de antropocentrism. De aceea una dintre cele mai provocatoare părți ale antrozologiei este recunoașterea limitărilor noastre umane cu privire la cât de mult putem ști despre viețile altor animale. Pentru a putea înțelege mai bine, și a încerca să gândim în modalități noi și diferite, putem căuta îndrumări în înțelepciunea și observațiile diferitelor culturi arhaice și indigene despre celelalte ființe vii. Deoarece modul în care înțelegem, facem și folosim știința este influențat de cultură și tradiție, este absolut necesar să ne lărgim perspectivele și să alternăm punctele de vedere. Din acest

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motiv, antrozologia face eforturi pentru a reduce distanțele dintre diferite discipline și pentru a folosi punctele comune din cercetările din științele sociale și umaniste și științele naturii. Antrozologia pune sub semnul întrebării compartimentarea și separarea cu speranța de a ajunge la o viziune mai holistică a vieții în care celelalte ființe vii își au locul și rolul în lumea dominată de oameni.

Cu acest scop volumul de față reunește studii din domenii variate și diverse (de la filosofie, psihologie și artă la etologie și drept) cu speranța de a contribui la o nouă înțelegere a celorlalte animale și a lumii non-umane în general. Explorând noi modalități de a relaționa cu *Ceilalți* și prezentând felul în care subiectivitatea și agentitatea ființelor non-umane influențează (sau pot influența, atunci când sunt observate și luate în seamă) modul în care oamenii le înțeleg, le valorizează și interacționează cu ele, volumul oferă noi perspective sau pur și simplu alternative la modul în care animalele sunt văzute în societatea de consum. Este important să înțelegem că modul tradițional în care vedeam lumea non-umană, și care ne-a permis exploatarea ei fără limite sau remușcări, nu este singura perspectivă sau posibilitate de a înțelege și interacționa. Pe măsură ce începem să relaționăm cu celelalte animale drept subiecți descoperim că este posibil ca aceștia să joace roluri mult mai active în comunitățile pe care le construim.

Studiile care deschid acest volum analizează modalitățile în care echilibrul de care ne-am bucurat pentru foarte mult timp a fost afectat tocmai datorită neînțelegerii importanței legăturilor dintre noi, oameni, animale non-umane și mediu. Încetinirea ritmului tuturor activităților din timpul pandemiei de COVID-19 a constituit un prilej de meditație și de interogare a modului în care ne-am condus viața, activitățile și am înțeles natura și celelalte animale. Plecând de la faptul că suferința oamenilor și a celorlalte animale sunt legate, **Marco Adda** explorează și introduce noi concepte în lucrarea sa: *antropauză, antrozoolgia și symbiocen*. În studiul semnat de **Laurie Sellars, Kimberly Bernotas** și **Jeff Sebo** sunt de asemenea explorate și analizate modurile în care am putea promova bunăstarea noastră comună, oameni, ființe non-umane și întreaga natură.

Următoarele texte sunt focalizate pe interacțiuni particulare cu anumite specii de animale și în anumite contexte, analizând modul în care relațiile (atât la nivel concret, cât și la nivel cultural) sunt construite și reconfigurate. În *Becoming Primates*, **Paride Bollettin** privește relațiile și interdependențele în construirea acestora între oameni (localnici și primatologi) și primate (maimuțe capucin) în Brazilia. Pentru a înțelege

celelalte primate, oamenii trebuie să facă efortul de a depăși limitele specifice speciei pentru a ajunge dincolo de descrierile și punctele de vedere pur antropocentrice și a-i include pe *Ceilalți* ca adevărați subiecți în relație. În studiul pe care îl face în Nepal, **Michelle Szydowski** este preocupată de modalități de a obține consimțământul elefanților cu care lucrează. Deși nicio comisie de etică nu impune încă această solicitare, autoarea consideră esențial pentru orice studiu antrozologic, care implică lucrul cu animale din alte specii, să fie găsite modalități de a le solicita și obține consimțământul. În textul semnat de **Abu B. Siddiq** și **Suleyman Şanlı** este explorată relația păstorilor din sud-estul Anatoliei cu animalele lor de fermă. Prin studii de caz extrem de interesante autorii arată că relațiile dintre păstori și animalele alături de care trăiesc sunt extrem de asemănătoare cu relațiile pe care le formăm și noi cu animalele alături de care trăim – animalele noastre de companie. Dacă animalele noastre de companie, pe care le vedem ca membrii ai familiei, nu au absolut nicio valență utilitară, cu atât mai interesant sunt de înțeles relațiile dintre păstori și animalele pe care le cresc pentru utilitatea lor, căci acestea își păstrează întreaga ambiguitate, complexitate și dualitate. Următoarele două studii se referă la relația noastră cu pisicile. **Kristine Hill** explorează felul în care sunt reprezentate pisicile hoinare / comunitare în *mass-media* și *social-media* și modalitățile în care percepțiile noastre sunt astfel influențate. Procesul prin care pisicile sunt reprezentate ca ucigași ai faunei sălbatice și dăunători favorizează îndepărtarea lor în percepțiile comune de la imaginea de iubite animale de companie și membri de familie. Astfel acestea devin *Ceilalți*, ușor de ucis și/sau eliminat. În următorul studiu, **Irina Frasin** investighează relația dintre pisici și femei de la primele reprezentări, la zeitățile egiptene, vrăjitoarele din Evul Mediu până în ziua de astăzi când încă suntem convingși de legătura specială dintre cele două. Textul semnat de **George Bodi** și **Loredana Solcan** analizează imagistica și semnificația șarpelui în preistorie. Autorii ne arată dificultățile procesului de interpretare și ne amintesc că civilizația noastră nu este doar rezultatul modului în care oamenii s-au înstăpânit asupra mediului ci și a modului în care mediul i-a influențat și/sau dominat pe aceștia. Toate aceste lucrări ne arată beneficiile încercărilor de a conceptualiza animalele non-umane în modalități noi și diferite. Dacă începem să-i recunoaștem pe cei diferiți, pe celelalte animale ca subiecți deplini și nu doar ca simple obiecte, cum au fost văzuți timp atât de îndelungat, avem promisiunea dezvoltării unor relații intersubiective și interspecifice absolut fascinante.

Același lucru este valabil și pentru următoarele texte care privesc relația dintre noi, oamenii, animalele non-umane și artă. Textul semnat de **Jessica Ullrich** se concentrează pe artă în general și rolul și locul pe care celelalte animale l-au jucat și continuă să îl joace în artă. Autoarea ne amintește de rolul pasiv jucat de animale în artă până acum (cel de modele, metafore, simboluri, etc) și ne prezintă posibilitățile ce se deschid atunci când animalele sunt văzute ca subiecți, ca ființe inteligente, sensibile și creative. Noile genuri de artă, arta interspecifică, sau arta pentru celelalte animale, ar putea fi noi modalități de a depăși excepționalismul uman și de a învăța să trăim împreună într-un univers multispecific. Textul semnat de **Codrin Dinu Vasiliu** are în prim plan biofotografia, concept explorat de autor și în volumul precedent (Studii de antrozologie. Etica și lumea non-umană) și investigat și acum în mai mult detaliu drept o modalitate de a deconstrui discursurile și reprezentările tradiționale ale celorlalte animale.

Următoarele trei studii privesc animalele non-umane și opresiunea, exploatarea, cruzimea și criminalitatea. Textul semnat de **Cătălina Răducu** are în vedere oprimarea și obiectualizarea interconectate, dintre femei și ființele non-umane. Practici sociale și culturale înrudite le-au negat dreptul la autonomie și le-au refuzat un tratament de grijă și respect. Dacă pentru femei situația s-a schimbat (cel puțin la nivel conceptual) textul ne aduce speranța că prin conștientizarea suferinței comune vom reuși să trecem dincolo, către recunoașterea ca ființe depline și demne de respect a tuturor animalelor. Studiul **Aurorei Hrițuleac** analizează partea întunecată a relației copiilor cu animalele, explorând legăturile dintre neglijența și abuzul copiilor și tratamentele crude ale animalelor. Speranța stă în prevenție, în încurajarea empatiei, altruismului și a tuturor comportamentelor prosociale în detrimentul narcisismului, competiției și lăcomiei. Textul următor, semnat de **Dorin Dumitran** și **Alina Rusu**, privește interpretarea unor cazuri concrete de cruzime și abuz față de animale și oameni. Începând cu o analiză extrem de detaliată a fenomenului de cruzime asupra animalelor și a altor relații negative cu celelalte animale, studiul subliniază importanța analizei din perspective multiple a situațiilor de abuz asupra animalelor (umane și non-umane, căci violența este interconectată). Așa cum vedem clar din toate aceste studii există incontestabile legături între exploatarea celorlalte animale și violența și oprimarea semenilor noștri. Descifrarea acestor conexiuni și aducerea lor la lumină poate aduce speranța într-o lume în care acest mare domeniu al celor diferiți, al **Celorlalți** care pot fi exploatați și expuși oricăror tratamente, va începe să-și piardă puterea.

Ultimele două texte descriu modalitățile în care astăzi credem că celelalte animale percep, gândesc și înțeleg lumea. Chiar și simpla încercare de înțelegere a perspectivelor diferite ne va îmbogăți întotdeauna cunoașterea. Studiul semnat de **Liviu Măgurianu** și **Daniel Măgurianu** pleacă de la analiza felului în care realitatea exterioară este determinată de simțurile pe care le avem. Prin urmare aceasta este extrem de diferită pentru indivizi din specii diferite, locuind medii diferite și fiind înzestrate cu organe de simț diferite – ne apropiem de conceptul de *umwelt*. Autorii subliniază însă ceea ce avem cu toții în comun și anume conștiința de sine, acea conștiință fundamentală a faptului că existăm. Textul **Felciei Ceaușu** cercetează mintea celorlalte animale, posibilitatea lor de a avea credințe, dorințe și alte stări mentale.

Toate lucrările din acest volum au în comun încercarea de a pune sub semnul întrebării supremația umană. Iar încercarea de a oferi modalități alternative de a înțelege și a trăi împreună cu animale din specii diferite în respect și grijă, oferă promisiunea posibilității unui viitor diferit. Faptul că atitudinile publicului față de celelalte animale devin din ce în ce mai complexe pe măsură ce sunt exprimate din ce în ce mai clar și mai larg preocupări pentru bunăstarea animalelor nu poate decât să ne bucure și să ne ofere speranță. Prin volumul de față dorim să promovăm întrebări și neliniști legate de exploatarea celorlalte animale și a mediului. Trebuie să învățăm să gândim diferit și să încercăm să schimbăm paradigma în care relaționăm cu *Ceialți* ca simple obiecte, cu una în care putem genera relații intersubiective cu celelalte animale ca subiecți conștienți. Sperăm ca preocuparea pentru înțelegerea și bunăstarea tuturor celorlalte ființe (atât umane cât și non-umane) să aibă un impact cât mai vizibil în transformarea relațiilor pe care le avem cu cei diferiți.

Recognising Anthrozoalgia on the Way to the Symbiocene

Marco Adda*

Abstract

Humans' suffering often relates to other-than-human animals. It may be the case of professionals or volunteers experiencing compassion fatigue, local people witnessing the culling of dogs, the global community reacting to animals killed by hunters, or people suffering due to their unexpressed animality. Scenarios are numerous and the spectrum of human distress is also vast. Sometimes sorrow for animals is evident and conscious; in other cases, people live their pain unconsciously and silently. This paper examines and introduces some terms and perspectives. It features emotional distresses as anthrozoological concerns. Exposes animals as a human embodied experience. The Anthropause further paved the transition to the Symbiocene. Anthrozoalgia recognises the human suffering for other animals and reflects the change. Dogs accompany humans thoroughly and mirror their status.

Keywords: Anthrozoalgia, Anthrozoology, Covid-19, Anthropause, Symbiocene, Solastalgia, Animals, Dogs, Free-ranging dogs, Psychology

Anthropocene and the Anthropause

The term *Anthropocene* is part of the discussion of the human-environment interaction. It refers to an epoch describing humans' tremendous impact on the environment (Crutzen 2002; 2006; Lewis et al. 2015). Whether the Anthropocene started with domestication, during the industrial revolution, or in the second half of the 20th century is debated. Other-than-human animal domestication is a debated and biased concept (Adda 2021a, 121-122; Szydlowski 2022). However, there is agreement that humans critically affect the environment and other species. (Cooper et al. 2018) The *Anthropocene* is the epoch in which we live now, the age of humans dominating and exploiting the world.

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The 2020's Covid-19 pandemic caused a global shock. People worldwide faced various challenges, from losing a beloved to the financial crisis, from psychological and mental burdens (Aknin et al. 2021) to many other forms of distress. Since the Covid-19 outbreak, emotional pain has been on the rise. Many people are experiencing compassion fatigue and various types of suffering related to humans and animals. Humans' relationships with pets have inevitably changed (Dinu Vasiliu, 2020).

Anthropause is a term first coined by Rutz and colleagues in the journal *Nature Ecology & Evolution* (Rutz et al. 2020). It describes the pandemic's pause on human mobility and operations, mainly travels worldwide or people just moving around their area. The period of lockdowns, also defined as *Covid-cene* (Adda 2020), presented a never before seen set of circumstances. Researchers and organisations gathered unprecedented amounts of data on the effects of human activities across different ecosystems, species, and geographic regions. The Covid-19 lockdown and the *Anthropause* allowed a snapshot of the *Anthropocene* and provided us with the opportunity to observe the world while human activities were halted. That contingency brought an immediate benefit to the environment and wildlife (Figure 1).

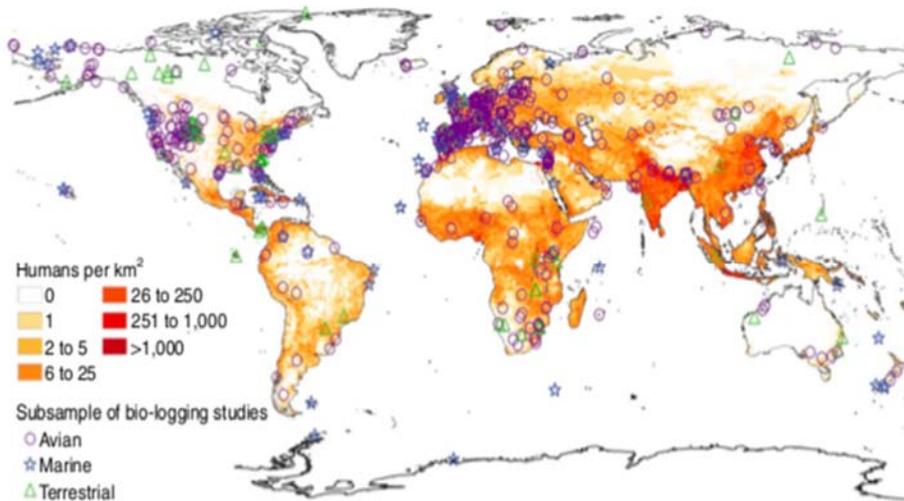


Figure 1 – Rutz et al. 2020, p. 1157.

During the lockdown in 2020, vegetation thrived, and wildlife did too. We are still observing the effects of the *Anthropause* on humans, nature, and other animals. For example, while people were restricted for long periods, they had the opportunity to encounter in their neighbourhood deer, coyotes, wild boars, wild cats, monkeys, and snakes. The *Anthropause* provided some humans with renewed attention to animals and wildlife. Other-than-human species re-entering the human space allowed a reconnection of humans with nature. That represented a vital opportunity for humans to witness how other species behave and experience the human landscape. In other words, the recent pandemic and the *Anthropause* allowed humans to experiment with how the world would be if human activities stopped. Urban rewilding reflects the thriving of vegetation and wildlife during the lockdown, and it is featured in popular and scientific observations worldwide (*Los Angeles Times*; Manenti et al. 2020; Rutz et al. 2020) (Figure 2). The lockdown and relevant decrease in human action also improved seismic investigations. (Arroyo-Solórzano et al., 2021)

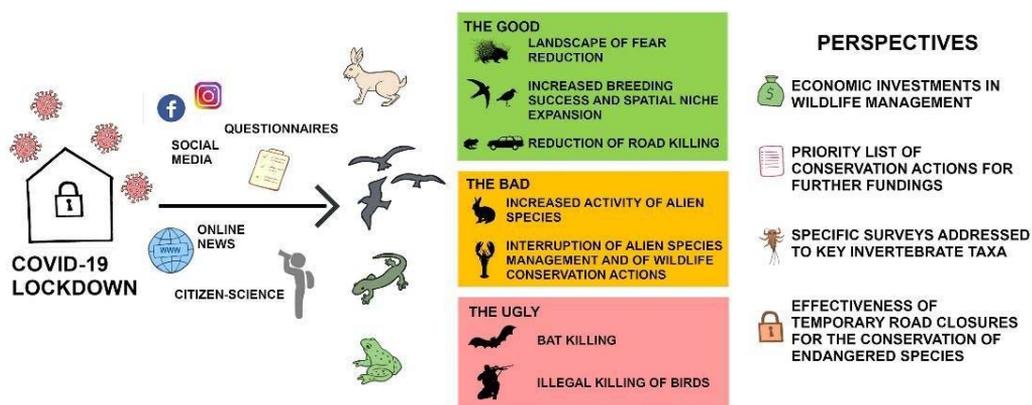


Figure 2 - Manenti et al. 2020, p. 3.

Also, there are contexts where wildlife suffered from the absence of humans. For many animals, the pandemic lockdown resulted in a threat. This is the case of animals killed by poachers and those who rely on ecotourism as a relevant source of conservation efforts (*Wired*). This aspect is relevant, deserves specific attention, and is not investigated in this essay.

A world without humans

The *Anthropause* fosters the imagination of a world without humans. Studied by some already (Tarizzo 2012), the *Anthropause* may turn into a thoughtful speculative biology and evolution exercise.

In 1981 Douglas Dixon wrote *After Man: A Zoology of the Future*, a book on speculative evolution illustrated with powerful and inspiring images, believable creatures supported by ecology, and evolutionary theories (Dixon 1981). The book's premise is simple: take the Earth today, remove the humans, and let evolution take its course for 50 million years. What new animals would evolve? A few years later, the same author published *Man After Man: An Anthropology of the Future* (Dixon 1990), speculating on the evolution of our species over the next five million years.

Alan Weisman's futuristic eco-fantasy book, *The World without Us* (Weisman 2007), is another thought experiment in speculative biology and ecology. It outlines how cities and houses would deteriorate, how long human-made artefacts would last, and how remaining life forms would evolve, guessing that residential neighbourhoods would become forests within 500 years and that radioactive waste, bronze statues, and plastic would be among the longest-lasting evidence of human presence on planet Earth.

The book *A Dog's World. Imagining the Lives of Dogs in a World without Humans* (Pierce and Bekoff 2021) is another beautiful thought experiment of speculative biology, wondering, for example, how dogs would redistribute if humans went missing. Dogs would likely adapt to new and different ecological scenarios, find new resources, and change behaviour and appearance to cope with the different environments. Would these post-human dogs, as the authors call them, form groups? And what would happen between dogs and other species? Would they coexist, cooperate, or compete? Through fascinating and convincing reasoning, Pierce and Bekoff foresee that the dogs would entirely adapt to a world without humans and within three canine generations - less than 50 years (Figure 3). *A Dog's World* is "a necessary book that, through a visionary horizon, a metaphor if you prefer, acknowledges many aspects of dogs often overlooked. It conveys some crucial questions at the centre of our thoughtfulness" (Adda 2021b, 11-14).

While intercepting the future, we deepen our understanding of the present. We need new terms to redefine and refine our perception of the world. *Anthropocene*, *Anthropause*, *Covid-cene* are some initial responses.



Figure 3 - A free-ranging Bali juvenile dog scavenging on daily offerings. (Sayan, Bali, 2015). Photo Marco Adda / AEDC Archive

A bridge to the Symbiocene

Is the *Anthropause* a break or the end of the Anthropocene? Does the *Covid-cene* mark the entering of a new era?

Glenn Albrecht argues that the next era in human history might be the *Symbiocene* (from the Greek symbiosis or companionship), namely, living together for a common benefit (humans and the environment) and fostering hope for a better period of Earth's history (Albrecht 2016; *Psychoterratica*). The blended term also finds resonance in other scholars' work (Prescott and Loga 2017). Albrecht also coined the term *Solastalgia* (Albrecht 2005; 2012), describing human distress for the environment, namely, the lived experience of negative environmental change as an emergent form of mental distress. Earth's distress links human physical, mental, and spiritual pain and *Solastalgia* is one emergent form of mental anguish. Another question arises, however. Given that we identify several forms of human distress for the environment, what describes similar human distresses for animals? Said otherwise, 1) is the *Anthropause* the crucial line marking that transition to the *Symbiocene*? 2) What about animals through the change to the *Symbiocene*?

Anthrozoalgia

Diverse moral valuation and treatment are core issues in the discussion around animals and are observed across several contexts (Caviola et al. 2020; Herzog 2010; Joy 2010). Scholars and professionals consider the discrimination toward animals an expression of speciesism, as

described in philosophy (Horta 2010) and psychology (Caviola & Capraro 2020; Dhont et al. 2020; Plous 2003), among others. Being humans in a more-than-human world urges refreshed considerations and renewed perspectives (see Adams 2020). People believing in human supremacy over animals typically show less moral concern for animals (Krings et al. 2021). Others are susceptible to animal causes. For example, those who are directly involved with animals as professionals or volunteers may experience what is known as compassion fatigue. The phenomenon is extensively observed in animals passionate (Figley and Roop 2006), social workers, and other professionals (Bride et al. 2007; Figley 1995; Sabo 2011). Many live their pain silently, not knowing how to identify what's happening to them. There are many forms of distress tying humans to animals. With that premise, we urge a primary term, an 'umbrella' which collects the human suffering for other species. We need to stretch our awareness around the human pain relating to other-than-human animals and identify it in all its forms.

For several decades, we have been exploring and seeking a new understanding of the human-animal bond (Brown 2004), pet attachment, and empathy toward animals (Rusu et al. 2019). Learning about pain for animals is critical within that process. Here I introduce the term *Anthrozooalgia* to describe human nostalgia, pain, and distress for animal-related matters. There are numerous forms of human (anthro) for animals (zoo) related suffering (algia). As well as for the environment and mother earth, animal pain and suffering are linked to human physical, emotional, and spiritual distress. That requires acknowledgment. It includes existing and emerging distresses. The disconnection from wildlife, the misery of animal trafficking and trades (Sollund 2013), the desperation for not expressing one's animality (Courtney et al. 2018; Gerbasi et al. 2008; 2017), the loss of animals during disasters - especially for children (Travis 2014), the debate around meat slaughter and consumption (Backa 2020), and the contradictions in tourist meat-eating (Mkono 2015), are just some among the many expressions of *Anthrozooalgia*. While significant efforts need to be invested in identifying and validating its many forms, I define *Anthrozooalgia* in some of its connotations here. The list is not exhaustive, the elements are proposed in random order, and the titles can be further refined.

1. Animal suffering

This aspect generally relates to humans' pet companions or free-ranging animals exposed to an essential human presence. People, in those contexts, suffer from animals being sick or injured.

2. Animals out of reach

Some people suffer from the inability to reach/encounter certain animals. This is a sort of nostalgia for animals, a sense of frustration and feeling disconnected from animals, e.g., wildlife. Feeling disconnected from other animals and nature is widely experienced. That reflects the loss of our animality.

3. Animality discrimination

A tremendous sense of frustration emerges for not being able to express one's animality. Being discriminated against and bullied for one's animality paves the way to depression and suicidal patterns. *Furries*, *Therians* and *Otherkin* are vital examples of this scenario.

4. Mourning

Some may take years to mourn and process the loss of a companion animal passed away. That may also relate to free-ranging or wild animals with whom a human has interacted, directly or indirectly. It may also be the case of an animal that has been taken away from a family member, disappeared, or stolen.

5. Icon animals

The global community, mainly active on social media and following international news, may suffer when famous animals pass away. When the loss of an animal relates to a natural cause, the suffering is accompanied by sadness. However, anger and hate are involved when a famous animal dies for futile reasons, such as when killed by a hunter. It is the case of the wolf Spitfire (2018), the wolf Takaya¹ (2020), Cecil the Lion (2015), and the dog Lennox (2012), among others. Collective distress erupts following the unconceivable killing of those icon animals, generating global grudge and collective anger.

¹ A prominent example of *Anthrozoalgia* and collective mourning for an animal's disappearance is the case of the wolf Takaya. Following Takaya's death in 2020, every year on 24 March, the anniversary of the sad event, people gather in person and online for a collective howling. The ritual consists of howling together, has a cathartic power, and supports the mourning process. Thousands participate every year worldwide. The initiative supports the memory of Takaya and all other wolves and animals killed for futile reasons.

6. *Animal politics*

While some humans expropriate animals' land, others suffer for that and fall into an 'ecological sense of guilt.'

7. *Animals in disasters*

When animals go lost, dispersed, missing, or die throughout a disaster, that generates widespread suffering. Widespread participation in funds collection to support animals reflects the sense of frustration experienced by many. The action of donating triggers a cathartic sense of relief. The current war in Ukraine and the terrifying dispersion of animals is also an example of this form of *Anthrozoologia*.

8. *Animal exploitation*

Abuse and exploitation of animals trigger the frustration and suffering of many people. It is the case of animals restrained in experimental and pharmaceutical research laboratories - not necessarily mistreated and yet 'imprisoned' by humans; animals forced into fights, and others.

9. *Animal consumption*

Massive exploitation and abuse of animals for meat production generate widespread frustration and suffering. In the last decades, attention has grown around this delicate topic, with an exploding number of people no longer consuming animal products worldwide.

10. *Animal restriction*

Those animals in shelters, zoos, bio-parks, circuses, or other restricting contexts generate a sense of injustice and suffering in some people.

The transition toward a new epoch relies on vital experiences gathered throughout the *Anthropocene*. The advent of ethology (the study of animal behaviour), animal welfare, animal cognition, and compassionate conservation throughout the 20th century reflect a sensibility for animals - although that may have remained unidentified in many cases. That sensibility laid the floor for a transformation. Humans have become more empathetic toward animal sentience (Proctor et al. 2013) and consciousness (Birch et al. 2020), and are willing to redesign their space by including animals. Empathy for animals and the re-discussion of species identity link to posthumanism and the discourse around anti-humanism and anti-anthropocentrism (See Braidotti 2016). A pressing need to shorten the

distance between human and other species emerge in many contexts and experiences, as we witness, for example, in the performing arts and the emerging field of Performance Philosophy (Cull 2014; 2015).

The need for and formulation of new terms, concepts, and practices on human-animal relations may be complementary to the “animal turn”, as it raised in the last decade in the sciences and humanities (Shapiro 2017). While shaping Anthrozoalgia provides a further frame for exploring the human-animal interaction, the connection to animals here is embodied in the human emotional and psycho-social-spiritual experience. The articulated horizon of cases to consider, investigate and comprehend in Anthrozoalgia, adds to a necessary and irrevocable “call for a critical and social psychology of human-animal relations” (Adams 2017). A trans-species psychology (Bradshaw & Watkins 2006) may shed light on both the animals’ experience of the world and the human’s embodied experience of animals.

Anthrozoalgia further contributes to the advancement of the *Symbiocene*. On the other end, though, *Anthrozoalgia* is the resulting force of the *Symbiocene*. It increases attention to humans’ empathy for animals. Humans rediscuss their presence in the world and reframe the species as part of a whole, not as a supremacist force over others.



Figure 4 – Anthrozoalgia visual representation. Photo AEDC

Dogs, the perpetual humans’ mirror

The pandemic *Anthropause* has been a stressful time with rising depression, confusion, solitude, and a sense of oppression. The impact of the pandemic on human health is terrifying. Apart from those affected by the virus per se, there is a surprising number of people worldwide suffering psychological and mental consequences. Leo Sher relates

Studies indicate that the COVID-19 pandemic is associated with distress, anxiety, fear of contagion, depression, and insomnia in the general population and among healthcare professionals. Social isolation, anxiety, fear of contagion, uncertainty, chronic stress, and economic difficulties may lead to the development or exacerbation of depression, anxiety, substance use, and other psychiatric disorders in vulnerable populations including individuals with pre-existing psychiatric disorders and people who reside in high COVID-19 prevalence areas. Stress-related psychiatric conditions including mood and substance use disorders are associated with suicidal behavior. COVID-19 survivors may also be at elevated suicide risk. The COVID-19 crisis may increase suicide rates during and after the pandemic. Mental health consequences of the COVID-19 crisis including suicidal behavior are likely to be present for a long time and peak later than the actual pandemic. (Sher 2020, 707)

Amid such a crisis, dogs rescued humans. Dogs accompanied humans for thousands of years, throughout what is known as domestication, and have been involved in various ways in humans' life and rituals (Bejenaru and Bodi 2015; Ellen and Fukui 1996; Morey 2006; Price 1984; Sergis 2010; Siddiq et al. 2021). The more humans have experienced numerous forms of stress in the last century, the more they have looked at companion dogs as a possible form of support. Notably, humans and dogs synchronise, and "dogs, to a certain extent, mirror the stress level of their owners" (Sundman et al. 2019, 1). Also, the benefits that humans get from animal attachment are primarily known (Meehan et al. 2017; Thompson et al. 2014). In fact, during the pandemic, we witnessed a rise in dog adoptions and fostering (Ho et al. 2021; Morgan et al. 2020) for many people were seeking emotional support throughout their self-quarantine (*Futurity*). An exponential increase in price for the dog food industry occurred, and dog-related stock market companies exponentially increased their profits. Breeders sold out of all their puppies. Shelters emptied, too, and dogs found provisional comfort as members of a human family. The sudden increase of dogs' adoptions – among the benefits provided to both dogs and people, also paved the way for some forms of *Anthrozoalgia*. While domestic violence has increased among people, violence and abuse of dogs have also

increased. As well, dogs did not have enough time for themselves during lockdown due to the continuous presence of their human family members and over-solicitation. Thus, dogs have suffered from a lack of privacy, as did many humans. Following the lockdown, dogs developed separation anxiety and other behavioural issues, especially those receiving constant attention from their humans. In the long run, significant consequences have been observed in dogs, such as critical changes in behaviour, abandonments on the street, massive sending of dogs back to animal organisations, and shelters filling up again (*BBC, The Canberra Times, The Washington Post*).

Additionally, there were moments when dogs were believed to be carriers of the Covid-19 virus. Many were abandoned, and some were killed. That doesn't just reflect dog suffering but this is also a form of *Anthrozoalgia* as people globally were tormented by the mistreatment of those dogs for their presumed guilt. On the other hand, dogs were employed to detect Covid-19 in some airports. (*CBS News; The Guardian; Unrric*) Once again, dogs mirror humans' contradictory behaviour, and we may wonder whether those events reveal other forms of *Anthrozoalgia*.

Further, it is interesting to note that in parallel to dogs' and other animals' explosion in adoption, the pandemic also resulted in a remarkable increase in plant purchases (*Think*), with houseplants filling the voids in our social lives with an influx of flora. That further reflects humans' need to rebalance their distance from nature (Frasin 2020) and rewilding (Adda 2021a).

The case of free-ranging dogs

The 20th century has seen a progressive disappearance of free-ranging dogs from cities. In many areas worldwide, the removal and restriction of dogs have been considered an improvement of civilisation. Consistent with that, developing countries may be inclined to follow a similar pattern, unaware of the cultural heritage and environmental relevance dogs may represent to their communities (Adda 2018). That is the case for free-ranging dogs in Bali, Bucharest, Naples, and Lisbon, among others. For example, in his *The City is More Than Human: An Animal History of Seattle*, Frederick L. Brown portrays the changes in animal management that occurred in Seattle throughout the 20th century (Brown 2017)². Chapter four mainly focuses on dogs (and cats) management. Dogs

² The compelling work can be found as a Ph.D. dissertation, too: *Cows in the Commons, Dogs on the Lawn: A History of Animals in Seattle*.

were legally allowed to roam the city's streets until 1958, when the 'leash law', following increasing public pressure, ended the canine privilege to free-roam.

As the freedom of dogs diminished (by law), and that of cats as well (by practice), the intensity of the relationship between humans and pets grew. The numbers of dogs and cats rose, and more of them now lived within the private space of homes. Dogs and cats became more important to humans, even as humans became more important to dogs and cats. (Brown 2017, 150)

Brown also notes that restrictions on dogs were happening across America, and the removal of dogs from streets was considered part of progressive and well-managed cities.

Those premises are functional to consider another similar scenario, more recent, where dogs were progressively removed from the streets - although not completely. It is the case of Bali, Indonesia, where, between 2008 and 2018, the government - and some locals, eliminated thousands of free-ranging dogs, with venomous darts and poisoned food. Such aggression was triggered by a rabies outbreak in 2008 and dramatically reduced the canine population from approximately 800,000 to approximately 150,000. Many individuals and organisations were active in saving dogs and promoting rabies education throughout those years. Those efforts reflected the desperate need to persuade the government and people not to kill the dogs, as well as to reassure the community not to mistreat dogs. Despite massive culling being ineffective against the long-term control of the rabies virus (Hiby 2013; Tenzin et al. 2015), the indiscriminate killing continued. With that premise, the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic outbreak and the chaotic and unclear news reporting dogs as potential carriers of the Covid-19 virus echoed strongly in the memory of people living in Bali. Additionally, the deliberate killing of bats was occurring around Indonesia to (supposedly) prevent the spread of the coronavirus (*South China Morning Post*). That further conditioned the public opinion of the Balinese. A general panic was rapidly aroused, and free-ranging dogs were suddenly mistreated or persecuted. It is worth reminding that Bali dogs live both as companions and in free-ranging lifestyles (Corrieri et al. 2018). Several organisations immediately responded by explaining to people that dogs were not a threat to humans (AEDC). Fortunately, the alerts on dogs being virus carriers dissolved globally, and Bali dogs did not pay a high cost this time. A core study on dogs in Bali and Covid-19 was also crucial to determine the harmlessness of dogs and decrease the concern for both the government and the community (Suharsono et al. 2021).

A critical drop in tourism and development in Bali contributed to a less aggressive approach towards dogs during Covid-19. During the decade from 2008 to 2018, the island of Bali experienced an exponentially growing curve in development and tourism, with free-ranging dogs seen as an element of disturbance to the image of decency that the then government of Bali wanted to flaunt. Thus, the rabies outbreak in 2008 coincided with the need to clean up the island from such an abundance of free-ranging dogs. However, that perspective did not consider the uniqueness of Bali dogs, an endemic canine population (Adda 2016; Corrieri et al. 2018; Irion et al. 2005). The severe persecution of dogs fostered various forms of *Anthrozoalgia*. Throughout the many events of dogs disappearing, killing, vaccinating, feeding, and adopting, among others, many individuals and organisations were involved in the cause to save the dogs. Many people were tormented by the killing of dogs and their suffering and disappearance. Conversely, during the Covid-19 period, in 2020 and 2021, the island of Bali was isolated and closed to tourism. Many development projects stopped and workers, mostly from other areas of Indonesia, returned to their villages. Lastly, a critical decline in economies further paralysed all the businesses (*Aljazeera*.) In such an urgent scenario, dogs were not seen as an element of disturbance and were not targeted as they previously had been. Lastly, and significantly, a change in the government of Bali also contributed to a different approach, with Pak (Sir) I Wayan Koster, the new governor elected on 5 September 2018, more sensitive to the animal cause than his predecessor, Pak I Made Mangku Pastika, who is remembered as a persecutor of dogs, ‘coincidentally’ in charge from 2008 to 2018.

Nonetheless, many free-ranging and companion dogs disappeared during the pandemic lockdown due to the dog meat trade (Personal communications, 2020-2021). As with some wildlife suffering from the lockdown and the absence of humans, dogs in Bali have paid their price, with resources decreasing and locals, likely non-Balinese, identifying dogs as a relatively easily accessible food source. Additionally, the lack of tourism and the closing of almost every restaurant resulted in a critical drop in human-derived food. Thankfully, animal welfare organisations have been active in feeding free-ranging dogs (*People*).

The case of free-ranging Bali dogs harassed during Covid-19 reflects other issues, including dogs in India and other areas where free-ranging dogs are present, as another example of dogs being mirrors of human hysteria, confusion, and panic during the pandemic.

Conclusions

The *Covid-cene*, alias the *Anthropause*, might represent a bridge to the *Symbiocene*, a turning point to addressing climate challenges and reimagining and co-designing the future with other species. The *Symbiocene* epoch makes critical the inclusiveness of other species and environmental awareness. Those purposes carry both ethical and health-related duties. *Solastalgia* and *Anthrozoalgia* will grow and reflect human distress for other species and the environment. Identifying *Anthrozoalgia* invokes a world where we fully recognise and validate the distress humans experience for other species. It may expand our comprehension of human essence and the underlying links of humans with other species and nature. *Anthrozoalgia*, as a term and concept, requires further reflections and considerations.

The separation from animals and nature is a form of collective stress, although it is perceived by just a segment of the global population. That is a form of psychozoologic syndrome, a discomfort, a condition of anthrozoanxiety – anxiety for the health of animals or the stress and suffering of animals by humans. The *Anthropause* allowed a release of this form of collective stress to some degree. With lockdowns worldwide, while people were restricted, animals expanded with wildlife extending their range into suburban and urban spaces. To some extent, the pandemic and the *Anthropause* alleviated the burden of those suffering from the deep separation from animals and nature. It endorsed a moment of reconnection. Animals again entered the space ‘of humans’ and fostered a rediscovering and deeper appreciation for nature. The *Anthropause* allowed for some relief, in that wildlife reached us, and some people experienced forms of life never encountered before, providing an opportunity to remember we are not alone on this planet. That is an essential achievement for those who are sensitive to these aspects.

A remarkable study asserts that ‘initial qualitative and quantitative data arising from this serendipitous global quasi-experimental perturbation highlights the dual role humans play in threatening and protecting species and ecosystems’ (Bates et al. 2021). While addressing the climate challenge, deepening our understanding of humans impacting the planet, raising our attention to non-human animals, and stretching our sympathy and empathy for non-human animals, what type of future should we imagine? What kind of future could we co-design? It is our responsibility to raise attention to the emotional components.

Dogs, once again, are the mirror of human behaviour, hysteria, contradiction, and beauty. They reflect humanity's many faces under different circumstances, geographies, and cultures. Dogs, once again, provide a window into human psychology and society, with free-ranging dogs as the core to studying human economies, politics, and behaviour (Adda 2021a; 2020). The case of free-ranging dogs of Bali further confirms those values.

The global lockdown and the *Anthropause* mark an existential crisis: the disconnection of humans from the environment, from animals, and themselves as a whole species. The disconnection is counterbalanced by deep concern, which also causes several forms of collective suffering. The times in which we live demand adults become self-critical and foster reflection and action in support of the environment, animals, and humans. Further, we must invest in the education of children, youth, and adolescents. The unprecedented times experienced throughout the Covid-19 pandemic have dismantled human exceptionalism, urging a paradigm change, from the vision of humans as a unique and super-elite inhabitant to humans as guests of planet Earth.

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One Health, COVID-19, and a Right to Health for Human and Nonhuman Animals

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Abstract

COVID-19 is a reminder that human, nonhuman, and environmental health are linked, and so efforts to improve human, nonhuman, and environmental health should be linked as well. But current efforts to link these issues fall short by not doing enough for humans, not doing enough for nonhumans, and focusing narrowly on health instead of expansively on health, welfare, and rights. This paper surveys the case for respecting and promoting human and nonhuman welfare, health, and rights simultaneously. It then surveys the impacts of COVID-19 on human and nonhuman populations and proposes steps that humans can take to respect and promote human and nonhuman health, welfare, and rights ethically and effectively in this context.

Keywords: Animal rights, Human rights, Health ethics, One Health, COVID-19

1. Introduction

COVID-19 makes all too apparent the many links between human and nonhuman health, welfare, and rights. While stories about the origin of COVID-19 vary, one common story is that COVID-19 originated in bats, then spread to other animals, then spread to humans at a live market in

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Wuhan, China (Shereen et al. 2020; for an alternative theory about the origins of COVID-19, see Bolsen, Palm, and Kingsland 2020). More generally, wild animals carry an estimated 10,000 viruses that have the potential to spread to humans (Carlson et al. 2019). Human exploitation and extermination of animals in factory farming (that is, intensive animal farming), deforestation, the wildlife trade, and other such industries not only increase the risk that existing diseases will spread, but also increase the risk that novel diseases will develop (Jones et al. 2013; Aguirre et al. 2020).

As a result of these links, many people now support One Health, a policy framework that seeks to promote human, nonhuman, and environmental health simultaneously. According to this framework, since human, nonhuman, and environmental health are linked, efforts to promote human, nonhuman, and environmental health should be linked as well (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention n.d.). For instance, many people believe that we should reform practices such as factory farming, deforestation, and the wildlife trade to reduce the risk of disease spread (Jones et al. 2013; Aguirre et al. 2020). Many people also believe that learning about nonhuman health will allow us to learn about human health too and that improving nonhuman health will allow us to improve human health too (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention n.d.).

For all these reasons, One Health is a step in the right direction. At the same time, One Health, as standardly interpreted, is not enough to address all the risks of health threats such as pandemics. It falls short for humans, since it does not do enough to mitigate the risks that factory farming, deforestation, the wildlife trade, and other such practices impose on humanity, and it fails to recognize the connections between human health and human rights. It also falls short for nonhumans, since it treats nonhuman health as important, mainly for the sake of humans rather than primarily for the sake of nonhumans, and, as with humans, it fails to recognize the connections between nonhuman health and nonhuman rights.

This paper argues that the COVID-19 pandemic illustrates the need for an expanded One Health. In particular, not only does human use of nonhumans increase the risk of health threats such as pandemics, but health threats such as pandemics also increase nonhuman suffering, both directly, via outbreaks, and indirectly, via increased exploitation and extermination of nonhuman animals. Thus, mitigating and adapting to health threats such as pandemics requires thinking about human and nonhuman health, welfare, and rights holistically and structurally, so that

we can develop solutions that improve lives across species rather than improving some lives by worsening others.

We begin the paper by making the case for human and nonhuman legal rights, including a human and nonhuman legal right to health. We then survey the limits of One Health for human and nonhuman health, welfare, and rights. Next, we examine the impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on captive and wild animals. Finally, we outline a series of steps that the international community can take to respect and promote human and nonhuman health, welfare, and rights simultaneously. Since our aim is to show the connections across many issues, we aim for breadth rather than depth in this paper. But we hope that this general discussion will be useful for framing and motivating the next steps.

2. A human and nonhuman right to health

The human right to health is enshrined in international law, arising from the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). This treaty, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1966, commits member states to grant humans a wide range of legal rights, including the rights to work, family, education, health, and an adequate standard of living (United Nations (General Assembly) 1966b). This treaty is part of the International Bill of Human Rights, which also includes the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (United Nations (General Assembly) 1948; United Nations (General Assembly) 1966a). While far from perfect, these documents together establish a strong commitment to human health, welfare, rights, and justice.

The human right to health in the ICESCR is stated in particularly strong terms. It recognizes “the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health” (United Nations (General Assembly) 1966b, art. 12(1)). It also commits member states to the pursuit of concrete steps toward this goal, including the reduction of infant mortality, the improvement of the environment, the prevention of outbreaks, and the “creation of conditions which would assure to all medical service and medical attention in the event of sickness” (United Nations (General Assembly) 1966b, art. 12(2)(d)). These commitments are important since they make clear that improving public health requires a combination of individualized care and structural change that makes individualized care less necessary.

As with many modern legal rights documents, the ICESCR states that these human rights are grounded in our shared humanity. For example, the document recognizes “the inherent dignity” and “equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family,” as well as “the obligation of States under the Charter of the United Nations to promote universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and freedoms” (United Nations (General Assembly) 1966b, preamble). This language implies that all and only members of the species *Homo sapiens* merit legal rights and that humans merit these legal rights by virtue of their species membership. In fact, the document makes this idea explicit by stating that “these rights derive from the inherent dignity of the human person” (United Nations (General Assembly) 1966b, preamble).

Seen from one perspective, the idea that all and only humans merit legal rights is highly progressive. In a world where humans harm, kill, and neglect one another on a regular basis, the aspiration to treat *all* humans with “inherent dignity” and “inalienable rights” is important. However, seen from another perspective, the idea that only humans merit legal rights is not nearly progressive enough. In a world where humans harm, kill, and neglect nonhuman animals on a regular basis as well (and at a much higher scale), the aspiration to treat *only* humans with “inherent dignity” and “inalienable rights” erases more than 99% of the victims of human activity, including captive and wild animals.

In part, for this reason, many moral, legal, and political theorists are now starting to challenge the assumption that only humans can have legal rights (Andrews et al. 2019; Cochrane 2020; Donaldson and Kymlicka 2011; Francione 1995; Nussbaum 2006; Wise 2000). According to these scholars, membership in the species *Homo sapiens* is not an acceptable basis for legal rights. Species are nothing more than abstract taxonomic categories that scientists use to explain particular facts about evolution, cognition, and behavior. There is significant variation within species, significant overlap across species, and significant change in species over time. There is no good reason to hold that membership in this kind of taxonomic category can, in itself, be necessary or sufficient for the possession of legal rights, including the right to health (Andrews et al. 2019, 13–40).

Similarly, according to these scholars, membership in the species *Homo sapiens* is not acceptable as a necessary condition for legal rights. One might think that only humans can have legal rights because abstract language and reason are necessary for legal rights, and only humans have abstract language and reason. But whether or not this claim about language

and reason is true, the claim about legal rights is false. For instance, humans develop the capacity for language and reason only gradually, some lose this capacity later in life, and others never develop it at all. Yet even if humans lack *legal duties* in these moments, they still have *legal rights* in these moments, because they still have relevant interests and needs (Andrews et al. 2019, 41–60).

What these considerations reveal is that if someone has interests and needs, then they merit legal rights that protect their interests and needs. And while animal rights scholars might disagree about what it takes to have interests and needs in the relevant sense, they generally agree that consciousness, emotionality, a sense of self, or bonds of care are sufficient. This conception of legal rights includes all humans without treating membership in the species *Homo sapiens* as the basis of legal rights. Yet it also includes many nonhumans, including the billions of captive animals and the trillions of wild animals humanity kills each year, since, after all, many of these animals have relevant capacities and relationships as well (Andrews et al. 2019, 77–100).

While there are many other views to consider, the general upshot is that there is no non-arbitrary conception of the basis for legal rights that includes all and only humans. The species membership view includes all and only humans in an arbitrary way, and alternative views can include *all* humans or *only* humans, but not both. And while a view that includes only humans might initially seem tempting, this kind of view is ultimately incompatible with the idea of universal human rights and justice. Thus, the only acceptable kind of view about the basis for legal rights includes humans and nonhumans alike, since only this kind of view is both non-arbitrary and compatible with the idea of universal human rights and justice (Singer 1975; Regan 1983).

Of course, to say that humans and nonhumans alike should have legal rights is not to say that they should have all the same legal rights, or that they should all have legal rights of the same strength. For example, insofar as members of different species have different interests, needs, and vulnerabilities, they might merit different legal rights accordingly. Moreover, insofar as members of some species have stronger interests, needs, and vulnerabilities than members of other species, they might merit stronger legal rights to protect those interests, needs, and vulnerabilities accordingly. So, humans can extend legal rights to humans and nonhumans alike without collapsing legally relevant distinctions among them (Kagan 2019; Sebo 2022).

In any case, while nonhuman animals might not have an interest in, or need for, all the legal rights contained within the ICESCR, they do have an interest in, and need for, mental and physical health. For humans and nonhumans alike, mental and physical health are basic goods that facilitate the pursuit of many other goods, and achieving the highest attainable standard of mental and physical health requires a combination of individualized care and structural change (Rawls 1971, 54-117). So insofar as nonhuman animals merit legal rights at all, a right to health as described in the ICESCR is plausible among them. It is worth asking what it might mean to respect such a legal right—and how far away humans are from doing so at present.

3. The nature and limits of One Health

One Health is a policy framework that seeks to promote human, nonhuman, and environmental health simultaneously. For example, the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations describes One Health as an “integrated approach” that recognizes that “the health of animals, people, plants and the environment is interconnected,” and it claims to promote One Health “in work on food security, sustainable agriculture, food safety, antimicrobial resistance (AMR), nutrition, animal and plant health, fisheries, and livelihoods” (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations n.d.). While One Health can improve our understanding of many practices, it will be enough for present purposes to consider three: factory farming, deforestation, and the wildlife trade.

Take factory farming first. Humans currently breed and kill more than 100 billion farmed animals (land and aquatic) annually for food (Schlottmann and Sebo 2019, 1). Not only does this practice harm nonhumans, but it also harms humans in many ways. For example, many factory farms dump untreated waste in local environments, causing workers and community members to suffer from mental and physical health impacts (Pachirat 2013). Additionally, since factory farms place nonhuman animals in close proximity with one another in cramped, toxic environments, and since many factory farms also use antibiotics to prevent the spread of disease, they create the ideal conditions for antimicrobial-resistant pathogens to develop and spread (Akhtar 2012, 86-116).

Now, take deforestation. Humans have already cleared an estimated 40% of forested land for agriculture and other purposes, and rates of deforestation are increasing in many regions (Brancalion et al. 2020). Not only does deforestation harm many animals—an estimated 80% of

terrestrial species live in forests—but it also harms humans in many ways (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations 2020b). For example, deforestation can pollute the land, water, and air near forests, harming humans who rely on these natural resources for food, water, or income. It also increases the risk of zoonotic disease spread by increasing interaction between humans and nonhumans and by reducing biodiversity, which functions as a buffer for the spread of zoonotic diseases (Akhtar 2012, 61-63; Sehgal 2010).

Finally, take the wildlife trade. Humans capture many wild animals—potentially trillions if we count aquatic animals—to sell for food, medicine, and other purposes every year. This activity harms many nonhumans, who suffer during capture, transport, captivity, and interactions with humans. It also harms many humans, since it increases the risk of zoonotic disease spread, not only to new nonhuman populations but also to human populations (Akhtar 2012, 52-85; Aguirre et al. 2020). Indeed, as noted in the introduction, the wildlife trade might be complicit in the COVID-19 pandemic, since the virus might have spread from one wild animal to another animal, and then spread again to humans in a live market, via the wildlife trade.

Importantly, COVID-19 is not the only disease that might have spread to humans through our treatment of other animals. The 2009 H1N1 pandemic, the 2003 SARS epidemic, and many other outbreaks seem to have resulted from practices that involve harming and killing animals in these ways as well (Gibbs, Armstrong, and Downie 2009; Xu et al. 2004). Moreover, these risks are linked. For instance, since animal agriculture is a leading contributor to deforestation, it increases the risk of pandemics not only directly, via its use of antibiotics and intensive confinement, but also indirectly, via its contribution to biodiversity loss and human-nonhuman contact (Sebo 2022, 40-65). We need to think about these issues holistically and structurally to see all these links.

Part of what makes One Health powerful, then, is that it draws attention to how practices such as factory farming, deforestation, and the wildlife trade are harming humans and nonhumans simultaneously, and, as a result, it draws attention to the need for solutions that can reduce and repair harms for humans and nonhumans simultaneously. That said, standard interpretations of One Health are limited in at least three related ways (Bonilla-Aldana, Dhama, and Rodriguez-Morales 2020; Cunningham, Daszak, and Wood 2017; Evans and Leighton 2014). They do not do enough for humans, they do not do enough for nonhumans, and they focus narrowly

on health rather than more expansively on health, welfare, and rights. This includes human welfare and rights as well as nonhuman welfare and rights.

First, One Health, on standard interpretations, does not do enough for humans. While many people use the One Health framework to advocate for reforms to harmful practices, such as limits on antibiotic use, these reforms are not enough to solve the problem (Marchant-Forde and Boyle 2020; Silbergeld 2019). For example, part of how factory farming impacts global health is through antibiotic use, but another part of how it impacts global health is by producing too much waste for the planet to absorb and by contributing to the health risks involved with deforestation (Schlottmann and Sebo 2019, 70-129). Unless we are willing to not only *reform* but also *reduce* or *replace* our use of animals for food and income, there is a limit to how much progress we can make for human health.

Second, One Health, on standard interpretations, does not do enough for nonhumans. One Health treats nonhuman animals as having only instrumental value. According to this approach, humans should learn about nonhuman health to learn about human health as a result, and humans should improve nonhuman health to improve human health as a result. But humans might not have reason to learn about nonhuman health or improve nonhuman health otherwise. As a result, humans might not only neglect nonhuman health in many cases but might also harm nonhuman health in many cases, for instance by “culling” farmed animals or wild animals when doing so appears to benefit human health.

Third, and relatedly, One Health, on standard interpretations, focuses narrowly on health rather than expansively on health, welfare, and rights. When human health is seen as merely a good to promote rather than a basic right, it might seem easier to sacrifice in many cases. Similarly, when nonhuman health is seen merely as a good to promote *for humans* rather than a basic right *for nonhumans*, it might seem *much* easier to sacrifice in many cases. To promote human and nonhuman health in the right kind of way, then, humans must view this project not only as a matter of promoting human health but also as a matter of respecting human and nonhuman legal rights, including the legal right to health (One Welfare 2021; Phoenix Zones Initiative 2021).

The upshot is that assessing the impacts of global health threats such as pandemics requires assessing the impacts on human and nonhuman health, welfare, and rights together. This includes not only the impacts of outbreaks but also the impacts of related disruptions. To see how this might work, the next four sections examine some of the impacts of COVID-19 on

animals. In particular, we show that COVID-19 has impacted animals not only by exposing them to zoonotic disease but also by both increasing and decreasing human neglect, exploitation, and extermination of particular animals. We need to consider all these impacts, good and bad, to know how to proceed.

4. COVID-19 and farmed animals

In April 2020, reports of widespread COVID-19 infections among US slaughterhouse workers — many of whom are low-income people, people of color, or undocumented immigrants who do not have easy access to health care — began to emerge (Taylor, Boulos, and Almond 2020, 31707–31708). The conditions in meat-processing plants facilitate the rapid spread of airborne pathogens: workers typically stand close to one another during long shifts and might also share transportation and housing (Waltenburg et al. 2020, 887–888). As of September 2, 2021, at least 59,148 meatpacking workers, 18,793 food-processing workers, and 13,773 farmworkers had contracted COVID-19 and at least 466 workers in those industries had died from COVID-19 in the United States alone (Douglas 2021). There is evidence that this industry fueled a significant community spread far beyond plant workers as well (Taylor, Boulos, and Almond 2020).

Many other countries experienced similar problems. For instance, at least 1,000 humans associated with mink farms or mink pelting have contracted COVID-19 in Europe (World Health Organization 2020). Transmission between minks and humans has also produced variants of COVID-19, some of which may be less susceptible to antibodies (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, World Organization for Animal Health, and World Health Organization 2021, 7-8). Farmers and workers have endured other hardships during this time as well. For instance, many farmers needed to “cull” farmed animals due to slaughterhouse shutdowns and reported experiencing mental health issues as a result (Kevany 2020b). Many have also experienced economic hardship, since they lost income during shutdowns, though many received compensation for these losses (Milne 2021).

COVID-19 has also had profound impacts on farmed animals, some of which have been more salient for humans than others. The pandemic disrupted the transport and slaughter of animals used for food. For instance, border shutdowns in Europe created long queues of trucks transporting live animals internationally, and some animals were subjected to waiting periods of up to 18 hours (van der Zee 2020). Additionally, when

farmers had to “cull” farmed animals due to temporary slaughterhouse closures, many used particularly brutal methods: for example, animals were gassed, shot, overdosed, electrocuted, beaten, suffocated, and subjected to ventilation shutdowns, among other methods (Kevany 2020a).

This pandemic has been particularly impactful for farmed animals who are vulnerable to contracting COVID-19 (Gorman 2020). For example, minks can contract, spread, and suffer and die from COVID-19, and they are particularly vulnerable in factory farms since they are forced to live in cramped conditions and are already vulnerable to diseases (Guy 2020). As a result, thousands of minks have died from the virus, and millions more have been “culled” (Guy 2020). For instance, in the largest cull of the pandemic to date, the Danish government recommended the extermination of approximately 17 million minks after discovering that a mutated COVID-19 variant was transmitted from minks back to humans (Hookway 2020).

COVID-19 has also impacted fisheries and aquaculture. Restaurant shutdowns decreased demand for seafood, and restrictions disrupted fishing industry supply chains. Many commercial fishing activities were reduced, and global fishing activity had decreased by 6.5% in April 2020 compared to previous years. COVID-19 restrictions have also hampered fisheries assessments, forcing scientists to postpone observation programs and management meetings. Meanwhile, the impact on aquaculture has varied by region, the fishes farmed, and characteristics of individual farms. Aquaculturists unable to sell fishes face increased feeding costs to keep fishes alive, leading some to implement growth-slowing measures to conserve supplies (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations 2020a, 2; Wright 2020).

5. COVID-19 and lab animals

As of September 8, 2021, approximately 41.1% of the global population had received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2021b; Our World in Data 2021). The vaccine is an incredible accomplishment, and to the degree that animal research was necessary to accomplish this goal, we should count that as a benefit of animal research. At the same time, we can question whether animal research was, in fact, necessary to accomplish this goal. After all, nonhuman health is an unreliable model for human health, and so we can expect this research method to regularly produce false positives and negatives for both efficacy and toxicity (Akhtar 2012, 140-150). In addition, the wide range of presentations of COVID-19 made the task of identifying

analogous animal models particularly difficult (Lakdawala and Menachery 2020).

Moreover, not only is animal research potentially unreliable (as well as increasingly outdated as other methods, such as organ-on-a-chip research, become available), but it can also slow vaccine development (Akhtar 2012, 132-167). In general, animal research during preclinical stages of vaccine development can take anywhere from 18 to 30 months (Calina et al. 2020, 5). As a result, the first two vaccine candidates to be approved for use in the United States “skipped” this preclinical phase entirely and instead tested vaccines on human and nonhuman animals concurrently (Calina et al. 2020; Dupuy 2020). The success of running these trials concurrently raises the question of whether the resources used to run animal trials might have been better spent elsewhere.

In any case, in addition to asking how much good animal research does, we also need to ask how much harm animal research does, as well as whether animal research violates rights. According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, experimental research related to COVID-19 has involved cats, dogs, ferrets, fruit bats, hamsters, tree shrews, mice, pigs, chickens, and ducks (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2021a). Researchers have also infected nonhuman primates, including rhesus and cynomolgus macaques, grivets, and common marmosets with COVID-19 to try to model human infection (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2021a). And while not all animals infected with COVID-19 become sick, many—including common marmosets, cynomolgus macaques, ferrets, grivets, hamsters, and rhesus macaques—do (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2021a; Muñoz-Fontela et al. 2020).

Humans have harmed nonhumans in other ways in the course of producing COVID-19 treatments and vaccines. For instance, squalene, a boosting agent harvested from shark livers, is used in at least one major vaccine candidate (Wu 2020). Blood harvested from horseshoe crabs was used to test COVID-19 vaccine candidates too (Arnold 2020). That said, determining the net effects on sharks and horseshoe crabs is difficult. For instance, drug makers have stated that squalene is harvested from sharks caught for other purposes but are not transparent about their suppliers (Wu 2020). They have also stated that COVID-19 will not unduly burden horseshoe crab populations, but even if so, it would still be harming horseshoe crabs (Arnold 2020).

The pandemic has also impacted lab animals that were not used in COVID-19 research, with mixed results for the animals. For instance, in the

spring of 2020, universities reduced on-site activity to meet social distancing requirements during the pandemic (Scott-Reid 2020). With fewer staff to care for lab animals, many institutions reportedly exterminated them (Scott-Reid 2020). Such killings occur when experiments are completed in normal times, but the pandemic led to unusually large culls. However, determining the net effects of these changes on animals is difficult, since, as with farming, it can be difficult to tell whether an earlier death is good or bad for animals who would be used, harmed, and killed for human purposes either way.

6. COVID-19 and companion animals

At the start of COVID-19, companion animals were reportedly a source of stress for many humans. For instance, many humans were concerned that companion animals might be vectors for COVID-19 and that they might expose humans and nonhumans alike to COVID-19. Many other humans were concerned that they might not be able to properly care for companion animals, for instance, due to illness, death, or economic hardship. At the same time, companion animals were reportedly a source of relief for many humans during difficult times. If nothing else, the opportunity to spend more time with one's family, including companion animals, can make an otherwise isolating time easier to endure.

Some companion animals have benefited from the COVID-19 pandemic, while others have suffered. Fosters, adoptions, and sales of companion animals have increased during the pandemic, to the point where many shelters and rescues have struggled to keep up with the demand (Kavin 2020). As a result, many companion animals have benefited from adoption and from spending more time with human guardians. But even in cases where animals benefit from increased interaction, there is a risk that many will experience separation anxiety when humans spend less time at home after the pandemic. There is also a risk that many will be abandoned after the pandemic, though the extent of this risk is not yet clear (Levenson 2021).

Additionally, not all companion animals have benefited from increased interaction during the pandemic. First, while many humans ordinarily see companion animals as family, we can easily switch to seeing companion animals as "pests" during a pandemic. And even though COVID-19 appears to be rare, mild, and asymptomatic in companion animals, fear of disease can still increase the risk of violence or abandonment (Parry 2020). At the start of the pandemic, fear of contracting COVID-19 led to a

rise in abandonments in some countries (Parry 2020, 2). In many cases, this fear also made it difficult for human guardians who contract COVID-19 to find temporary homes for their companion animals during quarantine and recovery (Nir 2020).

Relatedly, when humans suffer during a pandemic, companion animals can suffer as well. For instance, when humans contracted COVID-19 at the start of the pandemic, many companion animals were taken in by shelters (Nir 2020). The social, psychological, and economic impacts of COVID-19 can also increase risks for companion animals. For example, while many companion animals might enjoy additional affection from humans, many others might be overwhelmed by additional affection, and, of course, some might also experience additional abuse. Moreover, an economic recession can increase rates of surrender or euthanasia of companion animals as humans are no longer able or willing to properly care for them (van Dobbenburgh and De Briyne 2020).

Animal rescues and shelters—along with institutions like sanctuaries—can face other problems during a pandemic too. When social and economic disruptions occur, these institutions can be particularly vulnerable because of how much they depend on donations and volunteers. With fewer donations, there will be less compensation for staff and less food and medicine for animals. And with fewer volunteers, there will be less support for staff and care for animals. As a result, as in all of the other cases discussed above, a pandemic can lead not only to increased deprivation for animals in captivity but also to increased rates of euthanasia when no alternatives are available.

7. COVID-19 and wild animals

In some respects, the COVID-19 pandemic has had the same effects on wild animals as companion animals, but in other respects, it has had the opposite effects. For instance, whereas social distancing might lead to increased interaction with many companion animals, it might lead to decreased interaction with many wild animals. This can be good for humans in some ways but bad for us in other ways. When there are fewer cars on the road, we benefit not only from less air, light, and noise pollution but also from fewer vehicle collisions with nonhumans (Derryberry et al. 2020; Nguyen et al. 2020). At the same time, when humans depend on, say, wildlife tourism for income, they might experience economic hardship during social distancing (Lindsey et al. 2020).

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on wild animals has been similarly mixed. On one hand, many wild animals have benefited from the social and economic changes produced by the pandemic. Insofar as humans were staying home, wild animals were able to explore cities, roads, canals, and other spaces more, prompting the media to publish (in some cases overblown) stories about wild animals “reclaiming” these spaces. This can be good for animals, as bees, birds, whales, and many others benefit from a quieter planet (Gerretsen 2020; Schuster 2020). And of course, given that tens of millions of animals are killed in vehicle collisions every year, animals stand to benefit from fewer vehicles on the road as well (Nguyen et al. 2020).

On the other hand, many other wild animals have been harmed by the social and economic changes produced by the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, the pandemic led to a substantial increase in single-use plastics (Patrício Silva et al. 2021). Humans have relied more on plastic bags for shopping, delivery, and take-out, and we have also relied more on personal protective equipment such as face masks. While some of these changes have reduced the spread of COVID-19, they have also increased plastic pollution, as well as other kinds of pollution that can harm wild animals. For instance, when humans throw away face masks without cutting the ear loops, nonhuman animals can easily get tangled up in the loops and suffer or die.

Reduced tourism has also had mixed effects on wild animals. US wildlife agencies have reported increases in hunting and trapping licences since the pandemic began (Hayes 2020). Raja Ampat, a popular Indonesian dive site, is a good example of these mixed effects. Shark, manta ray, and sea turtle populations have increased, likely in response to fewer dive boats in the area (Dye 2020). However, fees from tourists, which fund conservation law enforcement, have also decreased (Dye 2020). Meanwhile, poaching has intensified in areas where communities rely on international tourism for income and conservation, and animals who rely on food from tourists, such as Thai macaques, have faced possible starvation without their usual food sources (Gebicki 2020; Paxton 2020).

Of course, many wild animals are also vulnerable to zoonotic diseases. So, during a pandemic, many wild animals are not only at risk of contracting the relevant disease but also at risk of being seen as “pests” and treated accordingly (Gillespie and Leendertz 2020, 497). While humans tend to be responsible for zoonotic disease spread, we also tend to blame nonhumans rather than ourselves for the resulting outbreaks. For instance, bats are important not only intrinsically but also instrumentally, because of their

contributions to ecosystems (MacFarlane and Rocha 2020). But since many humans see bats as a possible origin of COVID-19, there is a risk that violence against bats will increase or that support for bats will decrease in the wake of the pandemic.

8. Lessons for the future

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the myriad ways in which human and nonhuman animal health, welfare, and rights are linked. The virus might have come from the wildlife trade, which brings humans and nonhumans into close contact. And as of September 8, 2021, the virus has infected more than 221 million humans and killed over 4.5 million humans (World Health Organization 2021). In one sense, then, the pandemic underscores the importance of nonhuman health because of its impact on human health. If we want to reduce the frequency and intensity of future pandemics, then we should either regulate or abolish the wildlife trade, which might have led to this pandemic, as well as factory farming and deforestation, which can easily lead to others.

But if human and nonhuman animals alike deserve a right to health, then the COVID-19 pandemic underscores a broader set of lessons as well. Nonhumans matter for health threats such as pandemics not only because our exploitation and extermination of nonhumans via factory farming, deforestation, and the wildlife trade contribute to these threats, but also because these threats contribute to nonhuman suffering and death. Moreover, health threats harm nonhumans not only directly, by increasing the risk of outbreaks, but also indirectly, by increasing the risk that humans will harm nonhumans in the search for food, medicine, or income, as well as because humans are either unable or unwilling to care for nonhumans during crises.

Thus, if humans want to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of health threats such as pandemics in an effective and inclusive manner, then we need to address all of these impacts. That is, we need to reduce our use of animals as part of our mitigation efforts and increase our support for animals as part of our adaptation efforts. And insofar as we do this work, we need to address not only the direct harms that pandemics can impose on animals, such as the harm of illness but also the indirect harms that pandemics can impose on animals, including the harm of increased exploitation or extermination. This requires promoting human and nonhuman health, welfare, and rights simultaneously, including but not limited to the right to health.

This discussion makes it clear that addressing the harms of pandemics is not a simple matter of restoring the status quo that existed prior to COVID-19. After all, this status quo was massively and unnecessarily harmful for humans and nonhumans alike. And while many humans and nonhumans suffered more during the pandemic, many also likely suffered less, either because they received more affection (as with some companion animals) or less abuse (as with many other captive or wild animals). Therefore, learning the right lessons from this pandemic requires creating a new status quo by attempting to mitigate the negative impacts while building on the positive impacts of this disruption.

Since it would take much more space to fully explore the implications of this discussion, we will close by noting six implications here. First, and generally, humans should extend a legal right to health to humans and nonhumans alike. Following the ICESCR, this legal right to health would ideally commit states to recognize “the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health” and to take concrete steps toward this goal. And while different concrete steps will make sense for different species, as a general matter they should reflect the reality that promoting public health requires a combination of individualized care and structural change that makes individualized care less necessary.

Second, and relatedly, humans should revise and expand policy frameworks such as One Health to consider human and nonhuman health, welfare, and rights (including the right to health) holistically and structurally. We should consider these issues holistically so that we can improve human and nonhuman lives simultaneously, rather than, say, improve human lives by worsening nonhuman lives unnecessarily. And we should think about these issues structurally so that we can track how our basic social, political, and economic systems reinforce the status quo and how changing them can disrupt the status quo, for instance by transitioning from animal-based food systems to humane, healthful, and sustainable plant-based alternatives.

Third, and as a result, humans should research our impacts on human and nonhuman populations and should include human and nonhuman health, welfare, and rights considerations in impact assessments. Many people are increasing their support for academic research in nonhuman health and welfare for this reason. Additionally, some cities, such as Mexico City and New York City, have created animal welfare offices so that humans can be empowered to represent the interests of nonhumans in policy discussions (Humane Society International 2017; Mayor’s Office of Animal

Welfare n.d.). While states can and should do much more to increase representation for other animals, even these first steps can have a major impact on health and environmental policy.

Fourth, insofar as humans include nonhumans in impact assessments, humans should also include nonhumans in policy decisions regarding education, employment, and social services. As states build more healthful and sustainable food, energy, and transportation systems, they can work to build more humane food, energy, and transportation systems too, and they can expand opportunities for doing that work. This can include expanded opportunities for veterinary education and employment so that humans have more opportunities to care for wild animals in addition to particular kinds of captive animals. The more states invest in such work, the more they can improve the lives of humans and nonhumans as a result (Trevejo 2009).

Fifth, and relatedly, humans should include animals in decisions about infrastructure. In the same way that states can transition to more humane, healthful, and sustainable food, energy, and transportation systems, at the same time, they can also transition to more humane, healthful, and sustainable lived environments. For instance, insofar as states require building materials to be energy efficient, they can also require that building materials be animal friendly, such as by reducing collisions with birds. And to the extent that states expand urban parks for beautification and clean air and water, they can also install habitats, feeding stations, and water stations for the nonhuman animals they expect to reside in these spaces (for a similar discussion, see Donaldson and Kymlicka 2011).

Finally, and in general, humans should stop punishing nonhuman animals for human-caused problems. At present, humans kill captive and wild animals alike for a wide range of reasons, including but not limited to food, medicine, income, and disease containment. This approach is incompatible with nonhuman health, welfare, and rights. Before humans can support nonhumans in achieving the “highest attainable standard of physical and mental health,” we must first support them in achieving at least a *minimal* standard of physical and mental health, such as by not killing them unnecessarily and by not using them in such high numbers that killing them during a disruption is seen as necessary.

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Becoming Primates: Ethnographic Notes on the Production of Human and Other- than-human Multispecies Collectives

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Abstract

This work describes how the recognition of a relational engagement affects the description of multispecies human and other-than-human primate collective in two ethnographic cases. The first focuses on the Mebengokré of Brazilian Amazon and their relation with the kukoi, capuchins monkeys, as the actualization of alternative possibilities ranging from a prey-predator to a ritual relation. The second turns on primatologists studying capuchins monkeys in northeast Brazil as objectivated units in scientific reports, but also as engaged in direct and subjective relations during their fieldwork. The thesis is that, in both cases, despite the divergent taxonomic recognition, the core basis of the effective and affective relation is the reciprocal influence in the common becoming of human and other-than-human primates. The consequence is that such common becoming implies an ethnographic effort able to cross specie-specific frontiers in order to move beyond the anthropocentric description and include other-than-humans as proper subjects.

Keywords: Primates, Amerindians, Primatologists, Becoming, Multispecies

Introduction

Throughout the history of anthropology, scholars have dedicated great attention to human and other-than-human animal collectives (i.e., Morgan 1868, Evans-Pritchard 1940, Geertz 1972, Ohnuki-Tierney 1987,

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Lawrence 1982). These collectives have been more recently described as the result of a reciprocal “phylogenetic enculturation” (Hare et al. 2002), highlighting the reciprocal influence among involved species and their transformation according to a mutual adaptation. Although these processes have been described using different meanings for the term “animal” (Ingold 1994), they agree on the centrality of animals in the human experience. This has been appointed inclusive in the evolution of *Homo sapiens* as the result of miscegenation with other hominid species (Paabo 2014). Some authors specifically emphasised animals as “good to think with”, as proposed by Claude Lévi-Strauss (1962), who defined their importance in terms of useful tools for the *Pensée sauvage*. As symbols, animals, along with other-than-human primates among them, have a key function in the classification of alterity (Leach 1964), acting as a logical category for ordering the World (Douglas 1970). Other authors underlined animals' value as “good to eat”, as stated by Marvin Harris (1985), who described their material values. The more recent discussion, however, focuses more on the “common life” of humans and other animals in common collectives, so that they are experienced as “good to live with”, as suggested by Donna Haraway (1989).

More recently, anthropologists and animal behaviourists have moved toward a blurring of boundaries between humans and other-than-humans, and a more plural description of their collectives. This approach is proposed as capable of building up inter-disciplinary (and inter-epistemological as well as inter-ontological) dialogues, and the inclusion of the animals' “points of view” in ethnographic enquiry (Knight 2005). This possibility has been also discussed in primatology (Riley 2013; Waters, Bell and Setchell 2018). If the specificity of the “human nature” is grounded on the ways it organises its interspecific relations (Tsing 2012), it emerges the necessity to proliferate the descriptions bridging the gaps between human and other-than-humans, and between scientific and not-scientific experiences, including indigenous ones. Consequently, the other-than-human agency should not be reduced to the simple attribution of an agency similar to the humans' one, instead it should be acknowledged as a core point for multiplying relations and possibilities producing the “being alive” (Ingold 2011). It is a multiplication that brings together a necessary revision of methodological, epistemological, philosophical, ethical, and ontological mobilized concepts.

These debates have generated a wide panorama of discussions in recent years, in anthropology and beyond. An example is the so-called “ontological turn”. This indicates an intensive regime of differences among

the various Worlds in which diverse beings live, with the consequence that the ethnography should focus on describing these other realities (Carrithers et al. 2010; Kelly 2014). Another example is the proposal for a “multispecies ethnography”. This proposes to open the ethnographic effort toward other-than-humans acting and being acted for political, social, and cultural forces (Kirksey and Helmreich 2010; Kirksey 2014). Despite the diverse possibilities, it is important to relieve that the inclusion of other-than-humans affects the ethnographic effort toward a more plural and affective dimension (Bollettin 2021).

In this panorama, I will describe here how some other-than-human primates, specifically *Cebus spp.*, are experienced and described among the Mebengokré, an Amerindian people of central Brazil, and among a group of primatologists engaged in studying their behaviour. In Western-scientific taxonomy, *Cebus spp.* are new-tropical primates part of the Cebidae family and of the Haplorhini Suborder (Fragaszy, Visalberghi and Fedigan 2004), and their “name” derives from the Greek word *Kébos*, a term used for denoting primates with a long tail. Due to their ambiguous classification as a frontier between “humanity” and “animality” in Western-knowledge practices (Corbey 2005), as well as in Amerindians’ ones (Bollettin 2020a), other-than-human primates are exceptional candidates for discussing the diverse forms of experiencing human and other-than-human animal collectives.

The Mebengokré and kukoi

Despite the great attention dedicated to the relations between human and other-than-human among Amerindians in the anthropological literature, including in the panorama animals, plants, but also invisible beings, few works focused specifically on human and other-than-human primates collectives. Anyhow, the pervasiveness of such collectives is evident by the various mentions that can be mapped in such literature (for bibliographic reviews see: Cormier 2006, Bollettin 2020a, Urbani and Lizzaralde 2020). In this work, I would like to describe such multispecies collectives as experienced among the Mebengokré of the Trincadeira-Bacaja Indigenous Land, with whom I have been collaborating since 2005 (Bollettin 2020b). They sum around two thousand people, divided in twenty villages, spread across this Indigenous Land, located in central Brazil, in the State of Pará, and which covers a surface of approximately 1.500.000 hectares, mostly covered by dense primary and secondary rainforests, riverine forests, and wetlands. Their relations with other-than-human

primates (using here the Western-scientific taxonomy) assume diverse configurations since in their land there are diverse beings identified by the Western-scientific taxonomy as primates species. Among these beings, the Mebengokré especially engage in a wide range of relations with the *kukoi*, as they call the members of this Western-hegemonic taxonomy, namely *Cebus spp.* Another species inhabiting the region, for example, is the *kubyn*, the *Alouatta spp.* To describe these engagements involving the Mebengokré and the *kukoi*, some brief examples can be useful.

The *wayangá*, as the Mebengokré call the polysemic subjects known as “shamans” among anthropologists (Bollettin 2020b), are responsible for obtaining names from the other-than-human collectives such as fishes and other animals. These names are later circulated among the other members of the community, contributing to the formation of their subjectivities (Bollettin 2012). From the *kukoi*, the *wayangá* specifically obtain those names defined as *bixaere alias* playful, which do not fall into the category of *mei* names, the “beautiful” names that are attributed during the *metoro*, events that anthropologists describe as rituals or parties. *Bixaere* names, on the contrary, are used in moments of relaxation, when people engage in playful, relaxed relationships, or when they want to make fun of someone. This is the case, for example, of the name Kukoitioké (which can be translated as “big brave monkey”) they once attributed to me as a joke for my questions about their relations with the monkeys.

In another direction, also some masks used in some specific *metoro* are called *Kukoi* and are described as particularly powerful and dangerous. These worries, along with the use of masks, are a common feature among diverse Amerindians (Barcelos Neto 2012) since they are recognized as having a subjective agency that can dangerously affect both those wearing them and those looking at them. I report here the history of these masks among the Mebengokré as my host at the Mrōtidjam village told me in 2009:

For the metoro Kukoi, everyone has to agree to get it right. In the past, two women stayed at home alone and they said to a friend: “Let's go there to get the things of man”. So they started walking along the side of the house and they arrived where an old man was. The woman asked him, “What are you doing?”. He replied: “I made an arrow.”. So she asked: “Where's Grandma?”. He answered: “She's in the garden”. So she again: “I come from there”. Meanwhile, the people have already started to get together and they began to join the women who were in front of [the dances]. So they were following the women and someone went to call the others in the forest. The lord of the Kukoi mask arrived and he entered into

the mask. He said: "We got to be many". The ancients didn't know anything so people killed the woman. Then people stayed with her until her husband arrived. When he was arriving, the lord of the Kukoi mask hit him in the face. So they beat him. So the man killed one of them and the others came out of the masks and he killed them one by one, he killed many. For this reason, we no longer make the metoro Kukoi. Until that time we did it a little and then we stopped, we continued to do it a little bit and then we stopped. So that is the story.

This *metoro* has already been described as a naming ritual among the Mebengokré, for girls with the prefix of the name Kôkô-, and for boys with the prefix of the name Katob- (Vidal 1977). In this case, however, it is not specifically described as being a nomination event. Being as it may, the appropriation of the names from the other-than-human primates mentioned above seems to confirm the virtual possibility of such association, creating a bridge between the appropriation of *mei* names from the *kukoi* (so beyond the *bixaere* ones) and the Kukoi masks. It is worth mentioning that the Mebengokré described me the shape of these as having the visual appearance of a capuchin monkey, *Cebus spp.*, when my host showed me one of these masks, he was housing in his residence, extracting it from a bed sheet in a moment when we were alone. He associated the two feathers' ornaments placed on the lateral ends above the mask with the two horns characteristic of these male primates' physiognomy. In any case, the association between monkeys, masks, and names highlights the consistency of the relations with other-than-human primates in the Mebengokré experience.

But the relations with the *kukoi* also move to an alternative path. The Mebengokré hunt the *kukoi* on some occasions, but they do not organize hunting expeditions with the specific purpose of hunting them, as it happens among other Amerindian people (Bollettin 2020a). The rarity of these specific hunts can be related to the fact that these games are subject to strict dietary rules, being avoided by all women and by men who have newborn children. Anyhow, as described by a Mebengokré friend on different occasions, the *kukoi* meat is tasteful, and the hunt is not so difficult, since these primates are gluttonous of *ingá*, a plant common on the riversides and consequently accessible both by the water and the forest (it is a plant of the *Fabaceae* family, *Mimosoideae* subfamily, in the Western-scientific taxonomy). As he explicitly stated, in this way it is easy to hunt them when they are busy eating these plants.

Additionally, sometimes, when the *kukoi* mother is hunted, the Mebengokré take the cubs to the village, feeding and raising them. It is

important to remark that the possibility to “adopt” such cubs is not for everybody, but it is specific to a family, part of their *kukradjá*. The *kukradjá* defines a variety of material goods and immaterial attributes, that can be both individual or shared by a collective, in this last case of a family or of all the Mebengokré. It is described by the Mebengokré as what defines the specific subjectivity of individuals and collectives, and it includes the names mentioned above (Bollettin 2020b). Interestingly, the Mebengokré use the term *kukradjá* also for defining what anthropologists call “culture”. The “adoption” of the *kukoi* cubs, for example, is a prerogative of another Mebengokré friend’s family. On two occasions I saw his family taking care of two of them. The first took place in 2011 when one of his nephews captured a cub during a hunting expedition, and in that case, I was later informed that the *kukoi* baby lived in the village for a short while after I left, being unfortunately killed by one of the family’s dogs. The second took place at the end of 2019 when they participated in a *metoro* bringing with them the *kukoi* cub, and in this case, they let me know that after some months it left the village and went back to the forest.

The connection with the experience of the *kukradjá* is not merely limited to the human dimension. In this direction, the Mebengokré also recognise that *kukoi* have their own *kukradjá*. The Mebengokré friend mentioned above who described to me their dietary habits, for example, once we matched with a group of the *kukoi* in the forest, also explained to me that they live in very large groups composed of numerous individuals (what the Western-scientific primatology describes as poly-familiar groups). The aforementioned Mebengokré friend explained to me that this conviviality is expressed by their ability to communicate with each other using their own “language” (the definition he used to describe what the Western-scientific primatology describes as vocalizations). Interestingly, it would be exactly this language what the *wajangá* can understand in order to be able to acquire names for the humans. Clearly, the Mebengokré recognise a complex intermingled panorama of possibilities to make effective the relations between people and *kukoi*, moving on diverse and interpenetrated dimensions. Before moving on, however, it is interesting to introduce a complementary case.

Primatologists and *Cebus* spp.

In this section, I would like to introduce another ethnographic experience, this time realized with a team of primatologists studying *Cebus* spp. behaviour in the Bahia State, northeast of Brazil. This team was

composed of a PhD candidate from a prestigious German institution and two research assistants (two biology graduates, young women, one from the USA and the other one from the UK). They developed a research project aimed at studying how pregnancy, lactation, and baby care affect behavioural patterns among the *Sapajus xanthosternos*. These are a *Cebus spp.* classified as “critically endangered” by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (Canale et al. 2021).

The PhD candidate decided to enrol on a PhD program in Primatology after former studies in Primate Conservation and Wildlife Management. She already had previous experience in doing research with other-than-human primates in West Africa in a “monkey park” and working with other-than-human primates in captivity in a European rescue centre. When asked, she explained that her motivation for engaging in a PhD was to develop further her competencies: “I believe that during a PhD I will be able to obtain stronger skills in behavioural observations of primates”. She repeatedly described such skills as potentially useful knowledge for her future plans of working in a reserve with other-than-human primates “in nature” (the primatological technical definition she used for referring to populations not living in captivity): “I would like to work with not-habituated primates, as they can be found in nature, so I can help to conserve them working in a wildlife reserve”. Her goal, consequently, was to obtain specific competencies for working with other-than-human primates not living in captivity and to contribute to their “conservation”, skills that would have fulfilled her desire of being recognized as a specialised professional and of working in a reserve.

At the beginning of their effort, the construction of the research project was oriented to the preoccupation with the concept of “originality”. This concept, by itself, was described by the PhD candidate and her supervisor as crucial for the approval of the project in the institution, for the possibility of future publication of results, and for obtaining research funds. In this direction, they decided on the topic since it has been the object of a limited number of previous primatological and behavioural studies. Additionally, for a similar reason, they decided to focus on a “flag species” in order to, as they stated, “have a stronger proposal”. A flag species is conceived as a species able to attract the attention of both the academic audience, due to the limited number of previous studies, as well as of the wider audience since it is in danger of extinction (Jepson and Barua 2015). As the PhD candidate was already living in Brazil at the time, they opted for focusing on a primate species living in the same region. The chosen

candidate was *Sapajus xanthosternos* since this species is under-represented in primatological literature and because of its conservation status.

Once they decided on the target species and the specific topic of the research, they began to search for a place where to develop it. Due to her previous contacts, the PhD student identified a location in the northeast seaside of Bahia State: the estuary of the Itapicuru River. The place is characterized by the presence of extensive well-preserved mangroves, as well as beach vegetation, shrubby thicket-like forests, sand dunes, but also anthropogenic landscapes such as coconut plantations and cattle ranches (Tng et al. 2021). The local environment hosts not only *Sapajus xanthosternos* but also other endangered species such as *Buteogallus aequinoctialis*, a near-threatened predatory bird, and *Pyrrhura grisipectus*, an endangered parakeet species (Renck et al. 2022). Additionally, local inhabitants report frequent meetings with these other-than-human primates, when women go in the mangroves for crab fishing, or people navigate along the estuary, in the coconut plantations where these primates drink coconut water, and, more rarely, in their own gardens where these primates come to eat fruits. Although their elusiveness with humans is reportedly one of the main reasons for the reduced number of studies of these primates in “nature”, local people reports seemed to indicate that primates groups could be easily encountered.

Anyhow, after a couple of weeks of surveys searching for these primates with local guides, the reduced number of meetings and data collected induced the PhD candidate and her supervisor in Germany to search for another more promising place. They identified the Forestall Reserve of Poço Escuro, an urban park located in the city of Vitoria da Conquista, almost eight hundred kilometres in the south from the anterior site and also in the Bahia State. In the Reserve, previous studies had been conducted on a local population of capuchin monkeys, the same genre of the *Sapajus xanthosternos* (Gonzaga dos Santos and Martinez 2015). Once there, they learnt from the local caretaker that these primates had been “introduced” in the place and, more importantly, that the first individuals were not all *Sapajus xanthosternos*, some were other *Cebus spp.* This caused concern about the possibility of cross-breeding between the species, with the consequent presence of “hybrid” individuals. This possibility highlighted the controversial identification of species according to the diverse human actors and their scientific approaches (Zachos 2016). If for the Forestall Reserve staff the other-than-human primates in the place were

Sapajus xanthosternos, for the more rigorous taxonomists (as the supervisor) they should have been considered hybrids, due to the possible interbreeding processes in the generation of actual living individuals.

Consequently, this controversial status of the local other-than-human primates forced them to search for another place where to do the fieldwork. Finally, they identified a fazenda (large farm), named Santa Rosa, located in the Municipality of Dias D'Avila, on the riverside of the Jacuipe River. This fazenda produces mostly cattle and eucalyptus trees, but the riverside is still covered by a remnant of the Atlantic Forest since, as explained by a fazenda's worker, it is sometimes flooded and consequently "not productive". The worker described that two groups of *macacos pregos* (the Portuguese translation for capuchins monkeys) were living in that patch of forest on the riverside. Once the Ph.D. candidate had the chance to observe and take some pictures of them, she and her supervisor identified them as *Sapajus xanthosternos* due to their typical yellow belly (with an undiscussed morphological evaluation not used in the previous case).

Once the place was identified, the PhD candidate was joined by the two research assistants, and they began to record primates' behavioural patterns. For doing this, they used well-known primatological behavioural recording methods (Altmann 1974, Setchell and Curtis 2012), namely, individual continuous sampling, in which the same individual is observed continually in her/his activities recording the time spent in each one and the sequentiality of the activities; group scan sampling, in which the group is observed at fixed intervals of time recording the more shared behaviour to describe the overall activity of the group; and ad libitum records, in which the aim is to register all the occurrences of specific behaviours, in this case of risky and social ones. Despite collected data being recorded in spreadsheets as numbers (time of observations, number of activities, etc.), the research team attributed specific names to the other-than-human primates individuals so they were able to recognize them. These were attributed according to the specific and visible physical features: Broken Ear, Short Tail, Little Black, etc. When asked, the team's members described their strategy as crucial for the identification of specific individuals. This was, according to them, a necessary condition for the possibility of recording the behavioural patterns of females during pregnancy, lactation, and in the presence of their new-borns at an individual level to be compared with both their behaviour in absence of the focused conditions and with the overall behavioural patterns of the group.

Additionally, they related this strategy with the possibility of recognizing specific individual attitudes towards the human observers. In this sense, they emphasised that some *Sapajus xanthosternos* individuals were more prone to run away when the human observers were approaching, while others, less scared, were more “tolerant” of accepting the human presence. This process is called “habituation” in primatology and is defined as the “status” to be achieved in which the other-than-human primates are unafraid of the human (primatologist) observer (Hanson and Ryley 2018). This was described as an unavoidable condition for the research since it could have enabled them to effectively make the expected observation of primates behaviours. The identification of individuals, through names, would have also permitted them to assess the evolution of this habituation process.

In this second ethnographic example, as in the previous one, we can recognise a multiplicity of relations that are activated and that move the agencies of different actors involved. These work at a personal dimension, explicitly in terms of expectations of gaining primatological skills, as well as in the context of naming the other-than-human primates. But they also operate at a collective dimension, expressed in the reference to the previous studies and in the mobilization of specific professional methods, as well as in the emphasis on the “habituation” of the *Sapajus xanthosternos*. For deepening these relations, it is relevant to observe them in connection with the ones experienced by the Mebengokré described above, which is the focus of the next section.

Becoming primates

Despite their clear and evident differences, in terms of environmental, social, epistemological, relational, and ontological dimensions, the two ethnographic cases described in this work seem to indicate similar processes. In both of them, the relations between humans and other-than-human primates appear to be flexible and diversified. Moreover, such relations seem to be made effective according to complementary and plural experiences of the “otherness” embodied by the other-than-human primates. In this sense, it appears necessary to focus on these multiple pluralities, which are eminently “bio-social” (Ingold and Palsson 2014). To access these pluralities it is helpful to consider the concomitant endless movements in which the actors are merged. To do this, I would like to resume the idea of multiple animals as proposed by Deleuze and Guattari (1987).

As we have seen in the previous descriptions, the relations involving humans and other-than-humans primates shape and are shaped by multiple forces, such as individual, social, political, epistemological, ethical, ontological, etc. Being as such, this type of relations works both at a conscious or perceived level and at an unconscious or implicit one. Using a vocabulary extracted by Deleuze and Guattari (1987), we can apply the ideas of “molar” to the first and “molecular” to the second level. In this direction, the first works to “territorialize”, while the second level aims to “deterritorialize” the humans and the other-than-humans involved. The narratives constructed about these experiences are working, consequently, on a double level of a continuous overdetermination, with other-than-humans as affected by what humans think to know about them, and underdetermination, with other-than-humans as unrecognized so to become generic ones (Ravindranathan 2000).

These movements are crucial in Deleuze’s and Guattari’s (1987) proposal of the co-presence of three types of “animals” in the human experience. The first one is the Oedipal animal, which is individualized and sentimentalized. This is the case of the *kukoi* infants among the Mebengokré, adopted after the killing of their mothers during hunting parties. On the counterpart, this is also the case for the humans, who receive the names from the *kukoi*, through the mediation of the *wayanga*. Among the primatologists, the relation seems to be specular. Oedipus *Sapajus xanthosternos* receive names from humans. Conversely, humans are “adopted” when they accept to be “habituated”, so letting the first stay close to them.

The second type of animal identified by Deleuze and Guattari is the Jungian, or “archetypal” one, which is present as an “idea” in myths and rituals. Among the Mebengokré this is the case of the *kukoi* when these are preys. Avoided due to formalized alimentary taboos, they incorporate the ideal danger associated with them that can be contagious via their ingestion. Vice versa, humans are the *kukoi* archetypal beings once it is recognized their possession of a proper language. The *kaben mei*, the “good speech”, is a crucial aspect for the identification of human sociality among the Mebengokré (Bollettin 2020b). The *kukoi* language, consequently, would work as a human attribute enabling them to affirm themselves as “social beings”. Among the primatologists, the *Sapajus xanthosternos* are archetypal once they are assumed as a flagship species since they are associated with what would permit the PhD project to become original and consequently get approved and funded. Meanwhile, also humans can be

seen as archetypal to these other-than-human primates. This happens when they provide the material required to humans for identifying specific “behaviours”. The operation of classifying the plurality of actions empirically expressed by each other-than-human primate individuals can be seen as the actualization of the virtual potentiality embedded in the categories mobilized for their systematisation. These categories provide the boxes where are fixed the qualities and attitudes of *Sapajus xanthosternos*.

There is the third animal type, however, the one in which the two philosophers (Deleuze and Guattari 1987) recognise the “becoming-animal” in action. This is the “demoniac animal”, described as having an evolving and flexible quality. Being in a constantly changing and mutation flow, they associate it with the idea of the “becoming”, which consists in the deconstruction of subjects’ identity in itself and not only with their changes from one status to another. Not a linear structure in which subjects pass from one status or quality to another, but a dense multiplicity from which it is not possible to separate the statuses. As such, these movements take place via “contagion”, the transcendence of the interspecific borders. Trying to apply this category to the Mebengokré and *kukoi* relations, we can observe what happens with the Kukoi masks. These are at the same time both *kukoi*, as of the visual identification of the lateral ends above the mask with the two horns on the head of the *kukoi*; and humans, since they are wearing the masks and can potentially lose control and become dangerous. Masks’ effectiveness in the *metoro* is derived from this intrinsic multiplicity, something that makes it irrelevant to define if they are a certain something or something else. They are at the border, both at the same time, and this quality is what Deleuze and Guattari describe as the “becoming”. Among the primatologists and the *Sapajus xanthosternos*, their common “becoming” can be recognised in the data fixed in the spreadsheets. These data, collected by applying specific methodologies, are, at the same time, the other-than-human primates, actualized in the patterns of their behaviours, as well as the humans, actualized in their skills to produce the primatological observations. Being at the same time one and another, these quantitative data obliterate the dynamic and multiple processes through which they have been realized. Their efficacy, as before, resides in this duality since being intrinsically multiple is what enables them and makes them effective for the humans to be primatologists and for the *Sapajus xanthosternos* to be other-than-human primates.

Clearly, the concept of “becoming” as proposed by Deleuze and Guattari is far more complex and sophisticated than what I have resumed

here (see for example Burns 2007, Biehl and Locke 2010, Cimatti 2020). It is not the aim of this work, however, to discuss this idea in detail. What I have tried to highlight here is the productivity to take human and other-than-human collectives in their multiplicity, plurality, and flexibility. As indicated above, assuming this effort requires rethinking the epistemological, ontological, and axiological tools mobilized, moving beyond the anthropocentric dimension that characterises a large part of the Western tradition (Agamben 2004). The idea of “becoming” as proposed by Deleuze and Guattari (1987), emphasising the generative power of multiplicity and impermanence seems to offer a promising tool for accessing the dynamics of the pure relation in which the involved actors, in their immanent differences, are reciprocally situating in a flow between what they were and what they are not yet (Deleuze 1995). This reciprocity allows rethinking the human priority in the observation of multispecies collectives. Mebengokré and *kukoi*, primatologists and *Sapajus xanthosternos* are reciprocally constituted and reciprocally transformed. None of them can be assumed as being here and now as a separate entity, none can exist without the relational World. Their impermanence could offer interesting new approaches to both intellectual concerns, such as what is defined by the concept of “species”, and political ones, such as an effective ethical engagement for the recognition of values of diversity and plurality in times of critical socio-environmental dangers.

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Asking Consent from Pachyderm Persons: Facing Ethical Complexities in Multispecies Research

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Abstract

Practicing multispecies research in Nepal highlighted several areas where otherthanhuman participants are overlooked, from the ethics approval process through publication. For example, humans who are unable to read participant consent forms are offered a verbal explanation (often in their primary language) in the hopes of garnering informed consent. However, there was no consideration of how one might explain the project to otherthanhuman participants, how to offer information in their primary language, gauge their consent, or even how to ensure their safety during the project and during writing up. Instead, researchers must rely upon experience with and embodied knowledge of pachyderms (and the country of Nepal) to “ask consent” of pachyderm participants and often pachyderm-mahout co-working pairs. To gain perspective on pachyderm health, well-being, and the care afforded to them by their human co-workers, this study began with a study of global academic knowledge of elephant biological needs. This information was then balanced with Nepal-specific husbandry traditions and the individual needs of elephant participants. This paper discusses the methods used to ask for the consent of non-human participants, how both pachyderms and humans perceived or responded to these attempts and how the lessons learned might be applied to other anthrozoological, biological, or interdisciplinary fieldwork.

Keywords: Anthrozoology, Consent, Elephants, Ethics, Multispecies

Introduction

Captive Asian elephants (*Elephas maximus*) exist in a liminal space throughout their range countries. They represent a connection to the past,

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to godhood, and to shared labour with humans (*Homo sapiens*) (Kharel 2002; Ramanathapillai 2009; Sukumar 2003, 2016). It is this shared labor that has become the topic of much debate over the last two decades, leading researchers to view the work of elephants through a variety of lenses. Elephants' work may be viewed as exploitation (Coulter 2016, 81), the pinnacle of Singer's (2009) speciesism, as co-work, or simply as traditional practice (Lehnhardt and Galloway 2008; Sukumar 2003).

Some scholars believe that elephants 'willingly collude in their captivity' (Locke 2011, 36), or negotiate and consent to shared labor (Laine 2019, 86). Of course, in many countries including Nepal (Gautam and Khatiwada 2011; see also Hart and Sundar 2000; Szydlowski 2021), India (see Varma 2008), Myanmar (see Mar, et al. 2012), Thailand (see Bansiddhi, et al. 2020; Kontogeorgopoulos 2009), and Laos (see Laine 2019; Maurer, et al. 2021), elephants are captured and subjected to an often violent and traumatic breaking ceremony prior to "choosing" such affiliations (Garrison 2016; Rizzolo and Bradshaw 2016).¹ Elephants in captive situations may lose both their individuality and their status as members of an endangered species, and instead be transformed into lively commodities (Barua 2017; Haraway 2008), 'meaty machines,' or 'undead capital' (Saha 2017, 172-173). Perhaps it is what Malumud (2013, 39) describes as humanity's 'sense of entitlement' to the use of otherthanhuman animal labor, even when faced with resistance (Coulter 2016; Guenther, 2020) or decreased health and welfare (see Szydlowski 2022), which is the impetus for its continuation.

Lorimer (2010, 503) argues that rather than focusing on finding a 'universal solution' for working elephants, we instead seek to improve the well-being of each individual elephant, in each unique working situation. Likewise, Kopnina (2017) argues that rather than focusing on species protection (especially under the guise of conservation), we instead focus on the welfare of individual otherthanhuman animals. To that end, I have spent the last decade working with individual elephants within Nepal and examining their relationships both with individual humans and the wider elephant-human community in the hopes of improving their welfare.

However, my experience preparing for and conducting such multispecies research highlighted several areas within the institutional

¹ I would therefore argue that, like other captive populations such as human prisoners, enslaved peoples, or captive wildlife in roadside attractions, elephants may instead represent a vulnerable and marginalized community in need of reconsideration through the lenses of interspecies equality and ecological justice (Kopnina 2017:336; Naess 1973).

review and research processes where otherthanhuman participants are ignored, overlooked, or directly excluded. From the initial ethics application process through the dissemination of results in both academic and non-academic arenas, otherthanhuman animals were un- or under-represented (see Mills 2010; Ferdowsian, et al. 2020; Oliver 2021; Szydowski, et al. *in review*). For example, the ethics application required a list of all potential bodily and emotional harm that might befall humans choosing to participate in this research, including the potential for job loss or physical abuse resulting from mahouts who could potentially share information painting their employers in a negative light. The forms also required a list of potential harm to the *researcher* resulting from zoonotic disease, accidents from interactions with other species, and even mental challenges from a sense of seclusion which might be faced “in the field.” However, there was no required consideration regarding the safety of otherthanhuman participants during the project, the writing up, or the dissemination of results. I was bothered by this lack of institutional consideration for both the bodily safety and privacy rights of otherthanhuman participants.

Furthermore, while navigating the ethics review process, it became clear that obtaining well-documented informed consent from human participants was key to institutional approval. Participant information and consent forms are a requirement of universities, medical research facilities, funding bodies, and external laboratories (see European Commission 2018; National Research Council [NRC] 2011; UK Research Council 2021). These forms *must* include a description of the purpose for research, as well as the procedures which will be followed, documentation outlining the duration of the study, and an assessment of any potential risks to the humans involved (NRC 2012).² Those humans who are unable to read participant forms are offered a verbal explanation (commonly in their primary language) in the hopes of garnering informed consent (see below). However, at no time was I asked to consider how to explain my project to otherthanhuman participants, how I might offer information in their primary language, or how to gauge their level of interest in or consent to participation. Despite these omissions, ethical approval was granted.

² Complications may also arise from attempts to define study duration to a species whose sense of temporality is different from our own (see Mendl and Paul 2008 or Schrader, 2012, for example)?

Mills (2010) and Ferdowsian, et al. (2020), argue that this practice of protecting humans while ignoring other species is simply an attempt to maintain the status quo of human exceptionalism. This ‘ideological bias’ (Ferdowsian 2020, 23) threatens the objectivity of both human and otherthanhuman animal research ethics. In addition, this anthropocentric slant may silence the voices of otherthanhuman participants in research and devalue their contribution to knowledge. Thus, academics from a variety of disciplines have called for a reconsideration of both the ethical review and consent processes to focus more upon participant agency, safety, and representation rather than simply risk management for institutions (see Ashall, et al. 2017; Soulsbury, et al. 2020; Van Patter and Blattner 2020; Varga 2013). As an anthrozoologist practicing multispecies ethnography, I desire to understand and represent the needs, desires, and perspectives of *all* research participants, not just my human interlocuters. This approach attempts to view all research participants as having equally valid viewpoints, equally responsible for the creation of meaning, and as equally worthy and autonomous agents (Lien and Pálsson 2021; Kirksey and Helmreich 2010). Therefore, it seemed untoward to include otherthanhuman animals in my work without attempting to obtain their basic consent for participation.

How does one obtain consent from an elephant? It begins with an understanding of the contexts in which elephant-human relations occur, as well as the biological and sociological motivations behind them. This required an in-depth study of the historical basis for living with elephants, experience with Nepalese culture and beliefs, and detailed research into the global academic knowledge base regarding elephant biological, social, and emotional needs. This academic information was then balanced with Nepal-specific husbandry traditions, indigenous knowledge, and consideration of the unique situation found within each *hattisar* (elephant stable). It required time becoming-with (Haraway 2008) both mahouts and elephants on their own terms, learning to speak elephant body language, understand inviting noises or gestures, and recognize ambivalence or anger. Rather than simply inserting myself into their personal space, I offered pachyderm persons the chance to “approve” my approaches, my interactions, and my presence in their homes and workplaces, just as I would human participants. Whether consent was (or could be) truly gained remains unclear. The following discussion outlines my attempts to seek consent from pachyderm participants, the ways in which pachyderms and humans perceived or responded to these attempts, and how the lessons I learnt

might be applied to other biological, anthrozoological, and multispecies fieldwork.

The Language of Consent

Allow me a brief aside regarding language, as the variable definition and use of words such as “welfare,” “care,” and even “elephant” have been a common thread throughout my research (see Hill, et al. in press; Oxley Heaney, et al. 2022; Szydlowski 2021; Szydlowski et al. 2022). Words are notoriously flexible, their meaning and their ability to represent reality (or truth) depend upon the location of their use as well as the culture of both speaker and listener (Mol 2008; Wittgenstein 1958). Because one’s choice of language matters, I was conscious of the descriptive terms which I applied to each research participant. Unwilling to refer to elephants simply as “animals” – a contentious term throughout anthrozoological literature thanks to its dependence on human exceptionalism (see Mills 2010, for example) – I instead referred to all interlocutors as “people,” “persons,” or via personal pronouns (see Szydlowski, 2021). In this way, I acknowledged that members of both *Elephas maximus* and *Homo sapiens* were equal participants in the creation of shared meaning. However, this practice created some confusion among those humans with whom I was working and speaking. Thus, I began to use the neologisms “pachyderm person” or “human person.” These terms were equally influenced by Piers Locke’s (2016) work on ‘animals, persons, gods’, discussions surrounding non-human personhood rights and labels with my students in the US, and my sense of elephants as intrinsically valuable beings co-working, co-creating, co-researching, and co-evolving alongside human persons.

Likewise, the term “consent” can be a contentious one. Consent requires the voluntary approval of or agreement to an action, typically one proposed by another actant (Merriam-Webster). In academic research and clinical trials on humans, “informed consent” is the standard requirement for participation (NIH 2020). As a legal term, informed consent represents an ongoing, evolving approval process rather than a set endpoint. The garnering of such consent requires a relationship in which one party offers information, including information about potential benefits and risks, to another party who then decides whether to engage. The consent process requires that new information be provided as it arises, allowing participants to continually reconsider their involvement.

Obtaining written consent, especially before the onset of research, from human participants is therefore not an ideal solution. As de Koenig

(2019, 171) explains, written consent does not represent an ongoing process, it is rather an end point, which does not allow for true consideration of dynamic situations (such as evolving safety concerns, legislation shifts, arguments between researcher and subject, political upheavals, natural disasters, or loss of family or social structure). Instead, de Koning (2019) argues that research should rely on trust and responsibility. Oral consent, therefore, is far more effective at ensuring an ongoing process of giving and receiving consent.

Legally, such informed written or oral consent can only be given by human adults. In the case of children, oral agreement is labelled “assent.” Like informed consent, assent requires that an explanation be offered in language *which the participant can understand*, and enough comprehension of a situation to allow children to decide whether to participate in a study (NIH 2020). Asking for assent creates a sense of control over the process and may provide feelings of value for participants; it is meant to remind us ‘that children should be treated with dignity and respect’ (Diekema 2006, S10). However, because assent still relies on communication, it becomes a murkier and murkier concept as the participant’s ability to communicate declines. For example, assent is simply not required from a child too young (or too disabled) to understand verbal explanations (NIH 2020). Yet, some academics choose to use human children as a parallel for otherthanhuman animals in discussions of consent, applying arguments from ethicists which allow for surrogate decisionmakers or alternative definitions of assent (Ferdowsian, et al. 2020; Fenton 2014). Ferdowsian et al., (2020) and Fenton (2014) suggest that using protections offered to these most vulnerable human populations might be a starting point for protecting otherthanhuman participants. However, even these protections can fail. For example, if a clinical trial provides enough benefit to the child, it can legally be performed (with the permission of legal guardians), even if it causes extreme pain or distress which results in the child asking to stop (NIH 2020; Fenton 2014). In these cases, the withdrawal of assent can be legally ignored.

Considering *umwelt*

Working knowledge of the ‘consent capacity’ of each human participant is required to ensure their protection during research (US-DHHS, 2009:np). Assessing this capacity is considered even more important in those with a limited ability to verbally communicate, as any ‘unwillingness to take part’ should be seen as a failure to assent or as direct

dissent (US-DHHS, 2009:np). Likewise, a working knowledge of the *umwelt*³ (von Uexküll and Winthrop-Young 2010) of one's otherthanhuman participants is needed to overcome the ethical dilemma of "using" individuals without their express consent, or if one hopes to identify unspoken assent or dissent. As such, a 'reappraisal of the moral significance' of otherthanhuman animal participants is long overdue (Fenton 2014, 131). This reappraisal needs to consider the unique ways in which individuals perceive their environment, their communication styles, and history. Only then might a researcher recognize expressions of both assent and dissent. Allowing the right to dissent, according to Fenton (2014, 135), 'maximally respects' otherthanhuman animals by acknowledging their agency and accepting their desire to refrain from participation in activities that are painful, harmful, or simply undesirable. This respect includes allowing otherthanhuman animals to refrain from participation even if participation is deemed "in their best interests." Of course, this means that researchers may fail to achieve significant results thanks to the dissent of research participants (Fenton 2014).

Researchers must also acknowledge that a lack of *dissent* does not indicate *consent* (Diekema 2006). Rather, dissent indicates an unwillingness to take part and has been documented in a variety of species involved in research (Fenton 2014; Ferdowsian, et al. 2020). Dissent from otherthanhuman species may be expressed in a variety of ways, which Guenther (2020) describes as 'resistance.' This resistance may involve actions from refusal to comply with directions to threat postures, or simply an unwillingness to move or acknowledge the presence of others. In other cases, resistance might include attack. This type of dissent may result in retributory harm (often via physical abuse) to the dissenting party (Coulter 2016), as in the case of elephants in Nepal (Szydlowski 2021). In addition, other issues such as learned helplessness, stress, poor health, or decreased welfare further impact the ability to actively dissent (Fenton 2014). All these issues were present in the stables of Nepal during my research and were reflexively considered regarding the ability of pachyderm persons to offer consent.

A desire to obtain assent may also result in researchers unintentionally (or purposely) characterizing evidence as assent that might instead be better described as "coercion." For example, the use of positive

³ The German word *umwelt* directly translates to "environment," but is used in philosophical and anthrozoological writing to indicate a being's method of perceiving their environment (von Uexküll and Winthrop-Young 2010).

reinforcement training (PRT) may provide researchers with a way to make it appear that consent has been offered (Fenton 2014). While PRT, when practiced as designed, allows for dissent, and respects the agency of otherthanhuman animals to break off encounters, it can also be used to coerce participants beyond their normal comfort level or beyond initial expressions of dissent (Fenton 2014). Likewise, the use of enticements, such as food treats, must be carefully examined (Van Patter and Blattner 2020). While these treats might be considered a way to build trust, they may instead lead to ‘adapted preferences’ (Fenton 2014; Van Patter and Blattner 2020, 182). Therefore, reflexivity is required from those researchers observing otherthanhuman animals in PRT or enticement situations.

Garnering consent from pachyderm persons

Garnering consent from otherthanhuman animals requires an understanding of species and individual beings. De Waal (2011, 199) suggests that by observing individuals interacting with their environment, we can gain insight into their emotional states, and by extension their needs and desires. To that end, I spent a great deal of time simply watching elephants as they navigated their daily lives. I noted individual preferences for physical distancing from humans, differing energy levels throughout the day, times when stress or pain seemed to peak, primary locations for rest or feeding, etc. I also observed mahout interactions with each elephant, noting changes in their physical approach, vocalizations, and demeanor. As the humans who spent the most time with each elephant, these mahouts seemed aware of individual elephant preferences and varied their communication styles for individual pachyderm coworkers. Likewise, pachyderm persons exhibited different styles of communication (see below), activity levels, or “patience” with each mahout.

It is important to note that thanks to changes in traditions and loss of a familial aspect of elephant husbandry, mahout knowledge of and husbandry towards elephants has changed over the past several decades (Kontogeorgopoulos 2020; Szydlowski 2021; Varma 2008). Many of these mahouts now work with elephants due to a lack of other options rather than through patriarchal influence; they are members of low castes, immigrants, or members of otherwise marginalized communities. Mahouts face discrimination, low wages, and long work hours. Many current mahouts have little embodied knowledge of elephants, or are young, inexperienced, or temporary (Kontogeorgopoulos 2020; Szydlowski 2021; Varma 2008). Some are violent, aggressive, or demeaning toward their pachyderm

coworkers, requiring me to note aspects of negative body language or fearful interactions so I could avoid inducing stress when conversing with elephants. In addition, these captive elephants regularly have their bodily privacy (Moore 2003) compromised during interactions with mahouts and tourists. Chains, ropes, metal hooks, axes, riding platforms, as well as humans, are regularly imposed upon pachyderm bodies.

One must also acknowledge that the pachyderm participants in this study were held captive – having little say in their day-to-day activities, living conditions, choice in foods or companions, etc. Foucauldian (1975) observational control, ongoing surveillance under the guise of protection (Braverman 2012), and constant exposure to the shifting (and possibly confusing) body language or gaze of onlookers (Holland et al. 2017) impacts the ability of these pachyderm persons to consent. This surveilled captivity may not allow elephants to make ‘informed decisions free of undue influence’ such as intimidation, fear, or stress (US-DHSS nd, Part B, Section 1; Ferdowsian, et al. 2020). Whereas humans in captivity, such as prisoners incarcerated thanks to perceived transgressions against society, would find themselves *more* rather than *less* protected by laws governing research participation (Gostin, et al. 2007), elephants - held captive thanks to their usefulness rather than any transgressive behavior - instead face fewer legal protections than their wild conspecifics (see Kharel, 2002; Szydlowski, 2021).⁴ As such, captive elephants should perhaps be given greater consideration in attempts to secure consent if we hope to counteract speciesist treatment (Singer, 2009; Ferdowsian 2020). For these reasons, it felt even more important to obtain consent before entering these pachyderms’ personal space. Asking for such consent begins with an understanding of elephant *umwelt*.

Seeking consent from pachyderm persons

Elephants are highly social beings, and as such use numerous senses to interact with each other and their environment. These senses allow them to identify individuals, determine the physical states of others, and communicate information regarding factual data and affective states. To that end, I presented myself to each elephant through a variety of sensory pathways as I attempted to continually renegotiate consent to my presence. For example, elephants have impressive hearing and auditory recall,

⁴ Regarding their daily food rations, exercise, and access to water as well as the requirements for inclusion in research.

recognizing the individual voices of conspecifics over a kilometer away; they can also vary their responses in answer to the unique questions or statements received from others (McComb, et al. 2000). Some elephants (albeit wild African elephants [*Loxodonta Africana*]) have demonstrated the capacity to identify ethnicity, age, and gender from human voices (McComb, et al. 2014). This skill appears reliant on the identification of potentially “dangerous” languages (i.e., those spoken by elephant hunting tribes) and sex (men were more likely to be hunters in the study area) rather than individual vocal tone (McComb, et al. 2014). Further study may be warranted to determine if elephants in Nepal (where mahouts are nearly exclusively male) are more likely to consent to the approach of female humans.

Elephant hearing and auditory memory are important communication tools, and thus I chose to verbally “announce myself” as I neared each stable. Arriving on foot enabled me to provide longer approach times, and the use of vocal cues allowed pachyderm participants (and mahouts) to become familiar with my voice and remember me between visits. Verbal cues also allowed visually impaired elephants, several of whom reside in Nepal, a longer period to consider my approach and determine their level of consent. These verbal cues seemed natural to me, as a member of a species heavily reliant on social communication, they likely fulfilled my social need to “say hello” when meeting new people (see Krivonos and Knapp, 1975).

Elephants also use chemical communication and touch to identify individuals and advertise emotional or physiological states. For example, they use their sense of smell in learning tasks, and have a long-term scent memory (Arvidsson, et al. 2012). Elephants use their entire body as a sensory organ, interacting with conspecifics, the environment, and members of other species. I wanted to engage with both touch and smell as important elephant communication pathways to help determine consent. Thus, as I drew near to each stable, I paused at several points beyond the stable boundaries to allow my scent to reach the elephants within. When I finally entered the stable, I paused slightly outside trunk reach, to allow for an olfactory exploration, while maintaining my own bodily integrity in case consent was not offered or violent dissent occurred.

Elephant trunks are sensitive enough to feel a change of 0.25mm of pressure, and I considered this as I sought consent (Dehnhardt, et al. 1997). After allowing the olfactory exploration above, I responded to the tactile cues of each pachyderm participant, a consideration I am unwilling to offer

many of my human participants.⁵ If my hands were sniffed, I rolled them over and gently touched a trunk with a finger. If consent was granted through continued tactile and olfactory exploration of my hands and arms, I approached further, touching the side of her trunk with the back of my hand. This consent seeking typically continued until the elephant withdrew her trunk and resumed whatever activity she was occupied with upon my approach. In these cases, I considered consent obtained and found an observation point within the stable and quietly conducted observational research.

In some cases, the pachyderm person continued to seek physical contact, or make clear her desires and request action on my part. For example, repeated trunk pointing at browse or grass outside their reach indicated a desire for my assistance in obtaining these items, which I provided. Some elephants requested vigorous rubbing of sore joints, scratches behind ears, and one juvenile asked for a drink from my water bottle.

Consent not granted

For the most part, the elephants in Nepalese *hattisars* were interested in my presence, due in part to their long-shared association with or habituation to humans. They largely allowed me to enter their spaces and lives, accompany them as they travelled to work, or watch as they ate their meals. There were times when my presence was NOT consented to, however, and I had to relocate my body. One medium-sized male, Gajah (a pseudonym), clearly made his feeling known. As I approached this stable, the human property owner, whom I had contacted earlier to set up a meeting, welcomed me, and offered me a seat about 50 yards from the male elephant, in order that I might gather biological and behavioral data from mahouts and others working at the facility. Collecting this data first offered resident elephants the opportunity to become familiar with my scents and sounds. However, Gajah was unhappy with the presence of any humans on the day of my visit and vocalized loudly when approached by mahouts attempting to offer him food. Gajah spread his ears, snorted, and stomped. He rocked back and forth, grabbing at the mahouts, and wrestling away any sticks, hoses, or other implements wielded by humans. I could feel, not hear,

⁵ My upbringing was one which required respectful personal distance from others. When faced with human participants with differing senses of personal space, I do attempt to embrace the current cultural norms of my host country. I reflexively acknowledge that my cultural baggage may impact my initial response to human touch.

his rumbling as it vibrated through the ground and into my chest. As I watched, mahouts attempted to toss food as far as possible into Gajah's stable from outside trunk's reach. But Gajah was not interested in eating and rejected these offerings. When he became fully aware of our presence across the yard, he suggested we leave by throwing corn stalks, sticks and debris our way. He continued to vocalize, using his trunk to search his surroundings for heavier items to throw. I suggested that we move away, rapidly.

Out of respect for his dissent, biographical information was instead obtained through stories shared by local stakeholders rather than through my presence in Gajah's stable. Of course, the use of Gajah's data warrants further privacy and ethical consideration since he did not specifically consent to the sharing of his biography. Does his lack of awareness that his information is being shared inhibit his "right" to control the flow of information? Will my stories of Gajah result in other researchers or tourists attempting to enter his stable? Further consideration is needed.

Conclusions

Obtaining consent is a complex process and requires ongoing negotiation if one wishes to ethically engage research participants. When undertaking multispecies research, seeking consent is further complicated by differences in language, understanding, social and biological needs. A working knowledge of the *umwelt* of one's participants is necessary to overcome barriers to consent and identify useful communication pathways. For research involving elephants, the use of sound, touch, and smell may provide interspecies communication opportunities.

Consent appeared easier to identify in some elephant individuals, particularly curious juveniles who approach seeking attention, bananas, or physical attention. However, many of the elephants who at first appeared to consent to their daily activities, such as carrying grasses, having their nails trimmed, standing still while humans load and unload, or indulging researchers within their stable spaces may instead simply be enduring human demands out of fear of retribution. Some may suffer mental consequences related to captivity or be emotionally "broken." Having been trained exclusively using dominance methods, many of the elephants participating in this fieldwork appeared more like prisoners or enslaved persons, cycling through their daily activities without fully engaging with their surroundings or each other.

Obtaining consent from vulnerable human populations, such as prisoners, carries additional responsibility and greater concern for institutional review boards. As captives, they may not have the ability to make a voluntary decision to consent, but rather be coerced or influenced. I considered this notion throughout my time in Nepal and attempted to ascertain whether the pachyderm persons in my study could, in fact, offer consent. In many cases, there was no clear answer. Research which considers participants of all species as equally worthy and autonomous agents will require new ways of seeking consent, and the methods discussed here may be applicable to other anthrozoological, biological, or interdisciplinary fieldwork.

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Human – Food Animal Emotional Bond: Case Studies from Southeastern Turkey

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Süleyman Şanlı**

Abstract

Humans and food animals have been in a mutual relationship for over 10 millennia. For a variety of purposes (e.g., livelihood, food, labor) humans are more dependent on food animals than on pets. Today, there is also empirical evidence for complex emotional, social and cognitive functioning among common food animals such as sheep, pigs, goats, cows and chicken. Yet, most of the anthrozoological projects have been focused on pets so far. Here, we present individual case studies on emotional bonds and the complex relationship between humans and food animals (mainly sheep, goats and cows). Through ethnographic fieldwork in pastoral villages of southeastern Turkey, we demonstrate human–food animal emotional bonds, which are similar to pet–human bonds in urban societies. Shepherds sometimes name certain sheep and goats after their own children. Some shepherds feel considerably depressed and suffer from prolonged–grief after the loss, death or selling of their animals. Many shepherds often dream about their favorite animals, and many become emotional remembering the memories of certain animals with which they had close bonds. Some never slaughter any animals from their own herds, as they cannot endure seeing the pain, suffering, and the blood of the animals they raised with love and care. Some frame and keep the photographs of particular sheep, goats and cows, as if they were photographs of people. Certain sheep, goats or cattle also show deep affections towards their shepherds. Due to their bond with shepherds, they also achieve higher rank, often act as leaders in their herds, share food, and listen to the lullaby, flute or songs of their shepherds. As shepherds raise their herds knowing that these animals will eventually be sold and slaughtered, they often form friendship and bond with some of their animals seeking for true companionship in their hard-working life. This way, the human–food animal relationships in rural southeastern Turkey become complex, conflicting, and dualistic.

Keywords: Food animal, Pastoralism, Shepherd–animal bond, Anthrozoology, Ethnography, Southeastern Turkey

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1. Introduction

Four particular food animals (e.g., sheep, goat, cow and pig) were domesticated in the course of our initial sedentary life, during the Early Neolithic period (PPNB) around 9th millennium BC (Hongo et al., 2009; Peters et al., 2016; Zeder, 2012). Ever since, these animals have been living around our households, providing the vital protein source and economic prosperity for our civilizations, and having multi-purpose interactions with us (Siddiq, 2019). However, despite the growing interest on our relations and interactions with pets, mainly of dogs and cats (e.g., Alba & Haslam, 2015; Anderson & Olson, 2006; Connell et al., 2019; Evans-Wilday et al., 2018; Gosling et al., 2010; Gosse & Barnes, 1994; Kobayashi et al., 2017; Liu et al., 2019; Mertens, 1991; Minke, 2017; Mitchell & Sinkhorn, 2014; Perrine & Osbourne, 1998; Stambach & Turner, 1999; Taylor et al., 2004), our complex relations and interactions with food animals — in particular, sheep, goat, cow and pig — is still a neglected field in the anthrozoological projects. This study aims to explore human–food animal relationships in traditional pastoral societies. To achieve this, we have conducted ethnographic fieldwork in pastoral villages in Mardin, southeastern Turkey (the uppermost part of the Fertile Crescent) — because of the key role played by the region in the emergence and spread of the earliest pastoral practices (Hammer & Arbuckle, 2017; Hongo et al., 2009), and traditional pastoralism still being the most important means of local subsistence system (Şanlı & Siddiq, 2018; Siddiq, 2017, 2022; Siddiq & Şanlı, 2020).

Mardin is located at the Turkish-Syrian frontier, on the western part of the Tigris Basin, at the uppermost part of Ancient Mesopotamia. It is bordered by Diyarbakır and Batman on the north, Siirt and Şırnak on the east, Şanlıurfa on the west and Syria on the south. The region stands on the southern slopes of a broad highland and extensive limestone plateaus with an average elevation of around 1052 meters (Siddiq, 2022). Nowadays the region is a semi-humid area in the continental climate zone experiencing very hot summers and cold winters with occasional snow. Although short-term drought is not uncommon, profound sunlight and seasonal rain commonly make the region a perfect pastoral ground (Siddiq, 2017). Hence, it is likely that Mardin has a long tradition of pastoral practices apparently from the beginning of animal domestication. Zooarchaeological and historical evidence also indicate animal management and pastoral practices in the region for millennia (Hammer & Arbuckle, 2017; Hongo et al., 2009; Siddiq, 2022). The vegetation is mostly covered by steppe oak, sometimes with meadow and pasture lands in small valleys between hills and small to

medium-sized mountains of Anti-Taurus Mountains – making the region, rather than agricultural practices, more suitable for caprine pastoralism (Figure 1). As a result, pastoralism has still remained the basic means of subsistence in the region.

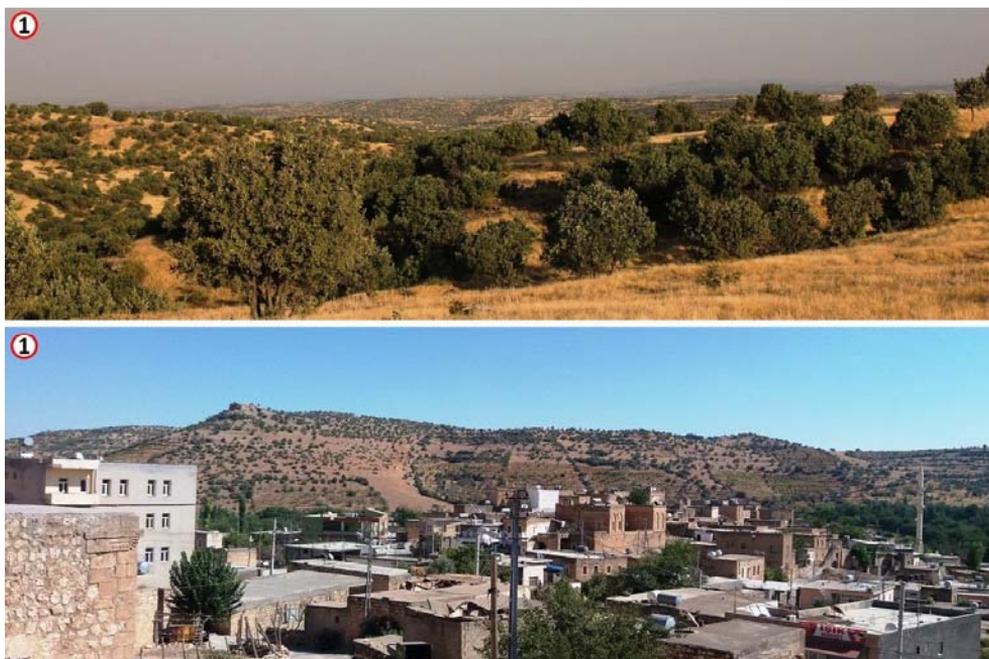


Figure 1. Vegetation and landscape of the study area: 1) general topography shows the hilly landscape of the Anti-Taurus Mountains covered with oak forest; 2) a typical settlement in rural Mardin (© A. B. Siddiq).

In addition to two Neolithic sites Çemka Höyük and Boncuklu Tarla in Mardin, Körtiktepe, Hasankeyf Höyük, Hallan Çemi Tepesi, Demirköy Höyük, and Güsir Höyük along the Tigris stand among the earliest sedentary villages in the world, and are located in the close vicinity of Mardin. The region is also considered to be ancient land ruled and inhabited by various kingdoms and civilization including the Mitannians, Assyrians, Armenians, Medes, Persians, Romans, Byzantines, Abbasids, Seljuks, Artuqids, and Ottomans (Siddiq, 2022). For centuries, it has been hosting different ethno-religious and tribal groups, although the present population is predominantly an Arab-Kurdish mix, with some small and scattered populations of Assyrian Christians and Yazidis. All of these local tribal groups have mainly depended on pastoral subsistence throughout history.

The main objective of this study lies in observing the shepherds' emotional state about the food animals they raise. We have primarily focused on four main questions: (i) How pet-human relationships in urban areas differ from human-food animal relationship in rural areas? (ii) Do rural people, who are more connected to the natural world, have a deeper sense of bonding with their animals than the urban people do? (iii) Can we have emotional attachment with food animals because of our greater effort, care and involvement?, and (iv) In regard to human-animal bond, what is the extent of feelings and psychological state do the shepherds have, as they basically earn their living on food animals?

While finding answers for these questions with the help of individual case studies, we have also dealt with shepherds' ideas and viewpoints about animal personhood as well as shepherds' memories and emotions about certain food animals — mainly sheep, goats and cows — whom they raised a long time ago. Hence, this study sheds some light both on our understanding of human-food emotional bonds as well as on the shepherd-animal complex relationships in pastoral societies.

2. Methods

Mardin province is currently divided by 10 administrative districts. Due to the density of urban areas, the provincial district (i.e., Artuklu) was excluded from the study. Therefore, ethnographic fieldwork was conducted only in the remote rural areas of the 9 districts (Figure 2). Among them, the villages in the Dargeçit, Midyat, Ömerli, Savur, Mazıdağı, Derik and Yeşilli districts were located in the mountainous landscape of the Tur Abdin plateau in the Anti-Taurus Mountain range. Because of the rugged topography, the size of the herd in most e villages in the plateau comprised up to 30 to 40 sheep and goats. By contrast, all villages in Kızıltepe and Nusaybin districts under this project were located in the Mesopotamian plain, allowing maintenance of larger herds up to 300-400 sheep and goats. Based on this comparison, we were able to see the main differences in pastoral subsistence, as well as different types and factors in human-food animal interactions.

With a combination of quantitative and qualitative data, a mixed method of research technique was applied throughout the study (Creswell, 2014; Leavy, 2017). Here, however, we mainly present qualitative data of shepherd-food animal relationship, primarily focusing on emotional attachment, companionship and mental happiness, perception of animal personhood, taboo, long-term memory, and grief. In this regard, exploring

individual case studies of male and female shepherds living in rural remote areas was the primary motivation of the fieldwork.

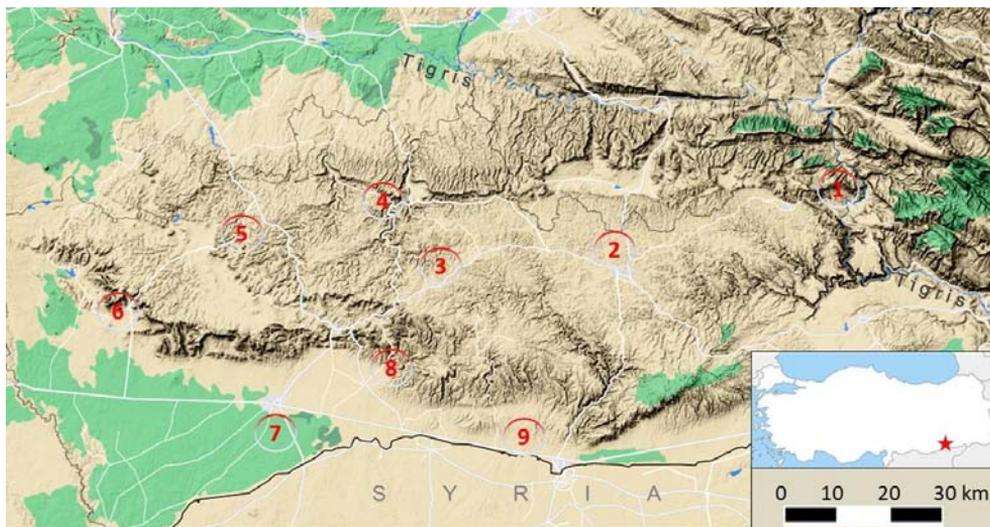


Figure 2. Location and topography of the study area: 1) Dargeçit cluster; 2) Midyat cluster; 3) Ömerli cluster; 4) Savur cluster; 5) Mazıdağı cluster; 6) Derik cluster; 7) Kızıltepe cluster; 8) Yeşilli cluster; and 9) Nusaybin cluster; star marks the location study area in southeastern Anatolia region of Turkey (© A. B. Siddiq).

Ethnographic fieldworks, supplemented with an open-ended questionnaire, were carried out throughout the seasons, between 2017 and 2021. The ethnographic interviewing and narrative analysis were done following the methods described by Barbara Sherman Heyl (Heyl, 2001). Case study analysis was carried out after the method of Ken Plummer (Plummer, 2001). Household interviews and short-time participant observations also provided supplementary information to the holistic picture of human-food animal relationships in the pastoral villages.

To construct a more reliable general picture, 3-5 pastoral villages were randomly selected from each of the 8 districts. Numerous case studies were recorded from each village; however, on average, 5-20 case studies were randomly selected from each district – primarily to avoid repetitions and similarities of the pattern of human-animal interactions. Traditional paper-pencil questionnaire methods were applied in the data collection process. During the face-to-face field interviews, questions were explained to participants from hard copies of the questionnaires. The questionnaire was

not designed to test any particular hypotheses but mainly to acquire qualitative data on various aspects of emotional bonds between shepherds and food animals. Interviews lasted between two and three hours at the household location, and between two and four, even five hours in the pasture land.

There was no formal ethical approval required in this research. However, as a basic part of pre-field preparation, the head (*muhtar*) of the local council of every village as well as the families were informed about the field visits. Although use and publication of name and identity was permitted by all shepherds, following codes of anthropological ethics the initial abbreviations of their full name (e.g., A.E.Ö. = Aslı Erim Özkan) were used in the present study.

3. Case studies

3.1. Case studies from Dargeçit cluster

F.C. is a 32-year old woman from Suçatı village who has a small herd of 16 goats, representing the only economic source of her family. She said that she does not buy too many animals because it is too hard for her to raise more animals in harsh winter. She said that once she had a goat named “Çale”. The goat lived in her herd for 6 years. About two years ago, Çale became sick and F.C. had no choice but to slaughter her. F.C. said that she cried a lot because Çale was her best friend and she also gave a lot of milk. F.C. became very upset while talking about Çale. “I cannot forget Çale’s face till today, she was like a child to me, and I think I will never be able to forget her” F.C. was grieving as if she had lost a loved one from her family.

H.O., a 50-year old woman, also from Suçatı village, has a herd of about 50 sheep. She said she likes sheep because they are smaller and give more milk. She said that in the past she had cows in her herd. She particularly remembered a cow that used to follow her wherever she went in the village. However, due to the financial crisis, she had to sell the cow to the local butchers. H.O. said that after selling the cow she cried for a whole day. H.O. does not grieve for her cow but she was grieving for her donkey named “Ker-e-Sipi”. The donkey lived in her household for over twenty years. It was like her son, helping her carry firewood and water day after day. Ker-e-Sipi died because of illness and H.O. was very sad for many weeks.

H.A. is a 30-year old woman from the same village. At present she has 2 cows and 4 horses. She showed very strong feelings for her animals. She

said all cows and horses are like her own children. She said that about twelve years ago she had a horse that she loved very much. The horse was sick throughout an entire year, but H.A. looked after him for days and nights. However, despite all of her care, the horse eventually died. H.A. was in grief for a long time. She said, “The horse was very calm with me and loved me so much. It was like my first child”. H.A. and her family buried the horse on the hill over their village, as if they buried one of their family members. She said, “Animals also have spirits like we do. Whenever I look at or go around the hill I feel distressed, I feel my horse’s spirit around me”. In the past H.A. had sheep and her children used to bring lambs in their beds and sleep with them. During the interview she was happily recalling the memories of many of her favorite animals from the past years, including “Altın”, “Işık”, and “Ceylan”.

M.A. is a 72-year old woman from Sümer village who showed very strong affection for her animals. Currently, her family has a herd of over 100 adult sheep. She said she still loves spending the whole day with animals. During the interview she was glad to tell us about her affection for animals. “Many years ago I had six ewes I loved very much, but I had to sell them during the sacrifice festival. I still feel sorry for them and I wish I had kept them with me for some more years. I also love goats. I still remember some of my favorite goats, in particular, “Çole”, “Beşika”, and “Kole”. I have so many good memories with them. Particularly, I still remember one of my cows, Zer. Sometimes I see Zer in my dreams and she smiles”. She said she never wanted to sell her animals unless she had to. She said if she could she would keep and live with her sheep and goats just like children want to spend time with each other and play outside.

3.2. Case studies from Midyat cluster

Ş.B., is a 32-year old shepherd from Yolbaşı village. At present he has 18 cows, 4 horses, and 6 goats. He thinks his animals also love him as he loves them. He said he had a ewe which he sold about 11 years ago. He had a very special bond with the ewe and he still cannot forget it. Ş.B. thinks that even after these years he will be able to recognize that ewe and her offspring within a herd of hundreds of sheep. However, he was not sure if they would recognize him. Ş.B. thinks animals are like people, they all have personhood, emotions and feelings, and they are happy or sad as humans are. He said, “You know, there is no kinship in animals; in this sense, animals are better than humans as they can have more freedom than us”. Ş.B. said that all members in his family are respectful to animals and some

sheep, goats and cows were treated like human members of their family. For example, when he was a boy, his grandfather had a cow that had lived with their family for about 20 years. They never intended to sell or slaughter the cow; instead, they properly buried her when she died of old age.

K.A., is a 52-year old woman from Mercimekli village. She said that she raises animals because not only do they provide economic benefits, but also she has strong compassion for them. She claimed that even when she sells her sheep and goats, the animals always remember her throughout their life because she raises them with great love. She particularly loves one of her cows which she named after her daughter “Halime”. K.A. said, “My daughter also has a good relationship with “Halime”. The day before my daughter got married, she went to Halime and told her that she was leaving, and the cow started to cry. It cried for a week”. Whenever K.A. calls the name “Halime”, the cow reacts as if it is her daughter. Every evening, after completing all household chores, K.A. spends time with “Halime” and sings her a lullaby. She also has a ewe named “Garip”, which is often welcome inside her house and enjoys her company while working in the kitchen or doing other household chores.

H.A., a 63-year old shepherd from Mercimekli village, has a big herd of over 400 sheep and more than 50 goats. He loves his animals very much because God said to love them. He has three cows named “Ceylan”, “Meryem” and “Diyar”, and two young calves. He said he loves the calves more than his grandchildren. “I take them on my lap and kiss them. Every day after morning prayers I always go to the barn and spend some time with them. My cows wait for me and can smell me even from behind the door” he said. He continued, “I eventually have to sell my animals since this is our way of earning our livelihood and this is the nature of life, yet every time I sell my animals I become distressed for several days”. With his long experience of pastoral practices, H.A. convinced himself to believe that animals are cleverer than humans. He said, “Animals are smarter than humans. They have stronger spirits than humans. Smart animals always make stronger bonds with their shepherds. If I could be a king or an affluent person, I would never want to sell any of my sheep or goats”.

L.A., an 80-year old woman from Mercimekli village, spent all her life looking after animals. She still has 3 cows and two ewes she looks after by herself. She said that she cannot help but spend time, look after and love her sheep, goats and cows with great enthusiasm. She thinks animals have emotions just like human beings. She treats her cows and sheep as her children. She said, “I love my ewe “Şar” so much that, although I will have

to sell all of my cows and sheep, I will never sell Şar. I got old and I will keep her with me as long as I live”.

A.Ü., an 81-year old woman from Barıştepe village, still looks after a cow to make ends meet. “I love her very much. We are just two good friends”, she said. Long time ago she had a ewe named “Arna”. She said she had a close bond and true friendship with Arna. Every summer she used to take Arna to a sacred place called “şeğ tereba” so that she could pray to God for Arna and other animals to be healthy throughout the year. One day her father sold Arna without asking her, and she was grief-stricken. But, after a few days, Arna suddenly came back home, escaping from the new owner. “That was one of the best moments in my life” A.Ü. smiled. Her father agreed not to sell Arna anymore and she died of old age. In the past, A.Ü.’s family had many sheep. In those days her family never slaughtered any animals from their own herd. “Whenever we needed meat, we used to buy sheep or goats from neighbors. “You cannot tolerate seeing the blood or cook the meat of an animal which you raised with love and compassion, can you?” she asked.

3.3. Case studies from Ömerli cluster

H.A. is a 43-year old woman from Yaylatepe village. Currently, she has 22 sheep, 14 goats, 3 cows, a horse and a dog. H.A. loves to name her animals. She named the horse “Karamel”, the dog “Ravte”, and one of her cows “Leyla” after her best friend. “You know, animals are warm-hearted beings like humans. It is true that life leaves us no choice but selling them or earning our living by using their lives, but I have always wanted to keep my sheep and goats alive as long as possible” she said. Her husband once sold four sheep from their herd without asking her. She was in a huff with him for a long time as she truly loved those sheep and wanted to keep them for some more years. H.A. said she still remembers the faces of those sheep and wishes them to be around.

N.Ç. is a 26-year old newlywed woman from Yaylatepe. She has a cow named “Derya”. “I think Derya is the smartest cow in this whole village” she continued, “Whenever I say Derya pull your leg, she pulls; whenever I like say come, she follows me; if I say do not eat, she stops eating”. N.Ç. thinks her cows have strong feelings for her and they never forget or do not want to leave her. She said if she has to leave her village or live in the town, she will rather take “Derya” with her and never give up looking after her.

B.Ç., is a 31-year old woman from the same village. At present she is raising about 70 sheep, 55-60 goats and 5 cows. However, she loves goats

the most. She has three favorite goats “Nazlı”, “Hasine” and “Keçimaze”. She also had special bonds with several other goats in the past. Once, her family had no other option but to sell their herd. One of the goats had such a close attachment with B.Ç. that, although a year had passed, she came back home walking many kilometers alone. B.Ç. cried a lot seeing her goat after so long. “If my goats do not have emotions, how could they come to see me after so long and crossing miles of unknown territory?” she questioned with confidence.

A.D. is a 36-year old shepherd from Alıçlı village. At present he owns a very small herd of 11 sheep and 2 cows named “Kuşı” and “Arna”. A.D. was very upset because he had to sell his herd to repair his house not so long ago. A.D. expressed his love and compassion for his animals saying, “I treat them as my own children. My sheep and goats are very smart. Some of them are even smarter than humans. They always understand me. If I become angry, my animals instantly understand it and stop making noise” he continued, “If an animal does not have a mind or if it is not smart, it would never come home alone, or ever recognize us”. He emotionally said, “Although animals are not like people, they still have minds and feelings. We eat and exploit them as granted goods, but we can still raise them with love and compassion, because they never take anything but only give plenty to our life”.

E.F. is a 31-year old woman from Alıçlı village. She has only one cow named “Canan”. For some unknown reason, Canan’s calf suddenly died two months ago. “Both Canan and I cried a lot together”, she said sadly. E.F. thinks all animals have a mind of their own but cannot use it like humans; once an animal learns to communicate with humans it becomes hyperactive. “I am sure that my cow “Canan” has feelings like a human. She always listens to my words and does whatever I tell her to” she passionately said, “I see “Canan” as my child. If my economic condition does not get worse, I will never give up looking after her; no matter if I get ill or old, because I share my life with her”.

3.4. Case studies from Savur cluster

M.Ş.A., a 70-years old man from Yeşil Alan village, described the many memories he has with some particular sheep and goats. He said, “In my childhood we had three goats named “Bayrak”, “Niniko” and “Keriko”. They were my only friends and I loved them very much. I used to run and play with them all day long since they were three little kids. Once they all became sick and died on the same day. It was a traumatic shock for me and

I cried for many days. I still cannot forget them”. He continued, “When I was a young shepherd, there was a ewe in the herd. I named her “Gönül”. I used to tell her the story of my sufferings and everyday problems. She used to carefully listen to me. She always stayed with me in the pastureland; no matter how much I offended her, she would always come close and show love for me. As long as I live, I will forget “Gönül”. “There was also a goat named “Sosın”, her face still clear in front of my eyes”. He continued, “How can I ever forget her. I was looking after her for over nine years. We used to share our bread in the pastureland. “Sosın” got old to breed and I had no option but to sell her. Of course, I was upset for several weeks”. M.Ş.A. still has a herd of over 170 sheep and about 150 to 160 goats. When we asked if animals have emotional states, he answered, “Actually, I have seen that my sheep and goats have minds and feelings like any human being in the village. If you teach them to be like people they will act like people. Once I had 60 goats and I gave names to all of them. Each of them knew their own name, and whenever I called a particular goat with its name only that goat would come to me. I think God created different animals in different ways. Yet, just like humans, all animals have souls. Therefore, they will all go to paradise after their death. Animals have minds but do not have an opinion as humans do. Still they become sad, happy, and jealous just like us. For example, my goats have a kinship and family system similar to humans. Members of each family chat, play, eat and sleep together but do not go with others”. When asked if he were to become very rich provided that he gives up raising animals, he strongly opposed it. “If it is not for love, you cannot do it for so long only for money. My love for my children and my animals, sheep and goats, is always the same. I immediately notice if a sheep or goat is missing, I notice it because I know every individual’s face. I love to spend time with my sheep and goats in the mountains. When you do it, you get a feeling of true freedom; and I would like to have it until I die”.

B.Ç. is a 19-year old girl from Yeşil Alan. She said that she started looking after sheep and goats when she was 6. She said, “In my childhood we had a kid. I named it “Minoş”. The mother goat did not want to accept him for feeding. So, I had to take care of him. I used to feed “Minoş” milk with the bottle. He was growing up fast and I never let my father slaughter him. But after about two years of fighting, my father eventually sold him. I was so depressed that I cried for weeks thinking of “Minoş”. At present B.Ç.’s family has about 250 sheep and 6 goats, and she enjoys spending time with both sheep and goats. She said, “If I have a lot of money, I will buy a

lot of animals, because I think my sheep and goats are better friends than humans”.

E.K., a 39-year old shepherd from the same village, spent over 40 years in pastoralism. He had a ewe named “Kral”. The ewe was a true friend. Many shepherds wanted to buy it from him, but he never wanted to sell it. He kept “Kral” for over 12 years. But eventually he had to sell her due to some financial problems. All this time, E.K. framed a photo of “Kral” and kept it with the photographs of his other family members (Figure 3). He said, “Nobody can keep Kral’s place. She used to enjoy nobody’s company but mine. She used to laugh at me and have fun with me. In the summer pastureland we used to stay together. At night I would tie a rope around my leg and hers so that she could wake me up if something had happened to the herd”. When we asked if he is willing to give up pastoralism, he answered, “Even if you give me all of the villages in the region, I will never stop spending time with my sheep and goats”.



Figure 3. E.K., a 39-year old shepherd from Yeşil Alan village of Savur, holding the photo frame of his long-lost sheep “Kral” (© A. B. Siddiq).

3.5. Case studies from Mazıdağı cluster

S.N., a 36-year old shepherd from Balpınar village, has three dogs, one donkey, around 40 goats, and about 150 sheep. He said that he does not slaughter any sheep or goat from his herd. He buys instead or exchanges a sheep or goat from others to meet the needs of meat for his family. S.N. sees animals and humans as equals. He does not consider one species superior

to the other. He said, “Animals are always faithful to their owners. They have emotions that are similar to ours. Just like us, they cry for their mothers and babies, and do not leave their babies until they are grown. They also recognize the voice and smell of their mothers and their shepherds”.

R.G. is a 57-year old shepherd from Balpınar village. He has two cows, five dogs, one donkey, about 100 sheep and around 50 goats. His favorites are “Şeker”, a ewe, and “Kelo”, a ram. He said, “Everyone earns money, but the love I got from my animals can only be compared with the love of my children”. “Therefore, I will never give up raising animals, even if I become rich with a trillion TL” he continued.

V.Y., a 73-year old shepherd from the same village, is still keeping a big herd of over 100 sheep, 50 goats, 2 cows, 4 dogs and one donkey. He said that he does not have a problem slaughtering any ordinary sheep or goat from his herd, but he has never slaughtered or will ever be willing to slaughter his favorite sheep or goats. He said, “I already feel uncomfortable eating the meat of an animal I raised; therefore, I cannot bear the sight of slaughtering any of my animals. I love my cow “Mahri” so much that it would be impossible for me to see her being slaughtered”.

B.N. is a 56-year old woman from Balpınar village. She currently has 9 cows and a dog. She said that throughout her over 40 years of pastoral experience she understood that animals have feelings and instincts just like humans. She prefers having friendships with animals rather than humans; because she thinks, in most cases, animals are far better than humans. She said, “Animals are smarter and more compassionate than humans. In the past I used to raise sheep. In those days, instead of chatting with my neighbors, I preferred spending time with my ewes “Hasret”, “Gülistan”, “Cemile”, “Cane”, and my “Kümmeti”. At present I have cows and I love them more than anyone”.

3.6. Case studies from Derik cluster

A.S. is a 98-year old shepherd in Söğütözü village, who spent over 85 years of his life in the company of sheep and goats. He said that he likes his animals more than his children. He still raises a herd, and presents necklaces of semi-precious stones to his favorite sheep and goats like he gives his daughters. He wishes that after his death people should also bury a sheep next to him. He still misses many of his many favorite animals. However, one particular goat, a black goat named “Rakkan”, is still in his mind. The goat was with A.S. for 12 years, he has many great memories with her. A.S. said, “She was a true family member, I will never forget her. Once

she was sick, and my family members wanted to slaughter her. I asked them 'do not slaughter her, let her die and I will bury her.' But when I went to the mountains with the other animals, they eventually slaughtered her and distributed her meat to all the neighbors. Everybody ate Rakkan's meat but I could not even bear the sight of it. My neighbors and family members were mocking at me. But, after losing Rakkan I cried for many days like a child, as if I lost one of my children". While talking about Rakkan, the 98 year old A.S.'s eyes were full of tears.

I.S. is a 67-year old shepherd from Dumanlı village. He currently has 11 cows and about 300 sheep. He thinks he has been in pastoral practice out of necessity; otherwise, if he were rich, he would stop raising animals since it has been a very difficult business for him. He has compassion for sheep and goats and believes that animals have feelings like humans. He said, "Once we had a ram. Both my wife and I loved it very much. In the pastureland it used to sleep next to me and wake me up if there was a wolf attack or something unusual happened at night. We kept it for 9 years and eventually we had to sell it. My wife cried so much. I was also sad for several days".

Ş.S. is a 58-year old shepherd from Dumanlı village, currently raising 12 cows, about 30 sheep, 4 dogs and around 50 pigeons. In the past he used to have a larger herd of over 200 sheep and 200 goats. He thinks sheep and goats are very intelligent animals. He said, "Sheep and goats are smarter than 10-year old children. In the past we had a ewe named "Sebro". Whenever I called her name she instantly ran to me. When "Sebro" died, both my wife and I cried. I wish Sebro were playing around us again!" he continued, "We are poor, so we have to sell our animals. But every time we sell them, we get so upset". When we asked if he wishes to continue raising animals, he answered "I love to be with my animals. If God gives me a chance to come back to this world, I would like to be a shepherd again".

3.7. Case studies from Kızıltepe cluster

A.S. is a 51-year old woman from Karakuyu hamlet. Once she had a ram named "Kara Kar". She loved the ram so much that she could not bear to sell it. "Kara Kar" was with A.S. until his natural death and her family buried him in their garden. A.S. said that she still misses "Kara Kar" and would be so happy if a sheep like "Kara Kar" came to her family again. A.S. also had a ewe named "Serzer". She took the ewe from her father's home when she got married. To A.S., "Serzer" was a friend and a representative of her father's home. In her first year it gave birth to twin lambs; afterwards it

fell ill and died. A.S. buried the ewe outside of their house. A.S. said she still misses “Serzer” very much.

M.E. is the 63-year old headman (muhtar) of the Büyüktepe village. About 40 years ago he had a goat named “Teke”. The goat was as big as a small cow. “Teke” was never afraid of people and loved M.E. very much. It never left M.E. and always followed behind him. M.E. said with a smile, “When Teke followed me, the whole herd used to hang out with us”. One day the goat ate too much salt and got sick. “He ate about a sack of salt”, he said “And he was dying! So, we had no option but to slaughter him and distribute the meat to our neighbors. He was a good friend. I was very upset the whole day. My wife also cooked some meat and offered it to me at dinner. I vomited that night. I was very distressed for several days”, he said with a gloomy face.

H.S. is a 62-year old retired shepherd from Karakuyu hamlet. About 30 years ago he had a ram. When it was a little lamb it got sick. H.S. took good care of it for weeks. It got well and became his good friend. H.S.’s named the ram after his best friend Ali. “Ali” was in his herd for about 13 years. “Ali” eventually became very old and H.S.’s family had to sell him. H.S. said he was depressed after selling Ali. He said, “I loved him very much. I will never forget him”. H.S. also remembered two dogs named “Temiz” and “Bilen”. H.S. used to feed them milk every evening. Unfortunately, “Temiz” was killed in a traffic accident when he was 2 years old. H.S. cried a lot on the road in front of the dead Temiz. Everyone thought that one of his family members must have died. “Bilen” was with H.S. for many years and died from old age. H.S. buried them side by side. “They were like my two best friends”, said H.S. pointing to the burial place of the dogs.

A.A. is a 65-year old retired shepherd’s wife from Dikmen Village. At present she only has a few sheep and one cow. She said that, in the past, her family used to have 400-500 sheep and she remembers many particular sheep and goats that she loved like her own children. She said, “I had a goat whom I loved very much. Rather than being in pastureland she would stay home with me. Once many relatives visited our home, and my husband slaughtered her for the feast. I was distressed and cried for the whole day. I still remember her face”. We were moved by her expression. She continued, “I also had a ram. His name was “Serzer”. I loved him like my older son. But, unfortunately, we had to sell him. When my husband sold him, I cried a lot. I cried for a week. I still cannot forget him, and sometimes I see him in my dreams. I also cannot forget a ewe named Leyla. She was always with me for 8 years. However, there was drought and famine in the region in 1973, Leyla

became old and, although we did not want to, we had to sell her. I was in grief and extremely sad. For many weeks I suffered from depression”.

H.H. is a 61-year old shepherd from Hocaköy village. He believes that any sheep, goat or cow can think like humans, get angry, hate and suffer. He said that it is his culture to eat animal meat, but he always becomes very sad when seeing any animal being slaughtered. He said, “In the past we had many animals. Now I have only one cow to meet my needs. I generally like cows very much. I also like sheep. When I was a child, I had a very good friendship with a ewe which had a black head. Its name was “Kara”. It used to follow me everywhere I would go. We used to play together every day, from morning to evening. Unlike any other animal, my parents often allowed it to come inside our home. Even in my old age, I still miss her”.

F.B. is a 32-year woman from Hocaköy village of Kızıltepe. In the past they used to have a lot of sheep, but these days they only have 4 cows to make ends meet. She said she treats her cows as her own children. She also mentioned that although she was born and grew up in a culture that regularly slaughters and eats sheep and goats, throughout her life she feels miserable and distressed whenever she sees an animal being butchered. She said, “I cannot watch it. I feel sick. I never stay at a place where an animal is being sold or taken to the slaughterhouse. For example, I will never be able to butcher my cow “Bozê”, even if I will have to starve for months. I would rather sell her and buy some other food. It would be very difficult to see her in pain”. F.B. believes her cows have feelings just like humans. “They all have different personalities and behaviors like different people. If you observe carefully, you can see their deep feelings like any human being. I see them being happy, sad and angry similar to the human beings around me”.

H.E. is a 43-year old woman from Akziyaret village of Kızıltepe. At present she is looking after 2 cows. She has strong emotional feelings for her cows. She said, “My cows are no less than my children. For example, about 6 years ago we had a cow named “Ser Mezin”. We bought her when she was just a little calf. We looked after her for 3-4 years. About two years ago, she became very sick. For 20 days I looked after her day and night. I was not able to sleep at night because my “Ser Mezin” was sick. I was trying hard to make her eat something. But, unfortunately, she was not eating anything and not getting any better. Then we had no choice but to sell her to the local butchers in Kızıltepe. She did not want to leave us. She was mooing nervously. When “Ser Mezin” was butchered, I felt miserable and cried a lot. I still miss her and sometimes she appears in my dreams”. H.E.

thinks animals can think and understand just like humans. They also have feelings and can actually love, but cannot express it as they do not speak our language.

3.8. Case studies from Yeşilli cluster

A.Ç. is 46 year-old woman from Ovaköy village. Their family has a small barn and, to secure a decent income, they usually buy a few calves, raise them for 2 -3 years, and then sell them. At present they have 3 cows and a calf. A.Ç. has strong emotional feelings for all of them. She named her cows “Siltiko”, “Boncuk” and “Xılso”, and the calf “Miroke” after her grandson. However, Siltiko is her favorite and it also has stronger compassion for her (Figure 4). A.Ç. said she had been looking after Siltiko for 3 years and throughout this time she gave birth twice. Once Siltiko and her newborn calf had fever for a week and A.Ç. spent all nights in the barn with Siltiko. Her husband E. Ç. told her many times, “What is this, are you going to sleep in the barn?” Siltiko’s newborn calf died and A.Ç. was mourning and crying like a baby. Everybody thought that someone of her family had died. A.Ç. said that no one understood her feelings. Her family members and neighbor mocked her saying, “They are just animals, why are you so interested and emotionally attached to them?” A.Ç. said, “I do not care any of their mockery. I give them all my love to them as if they are my children. I sing for them and talk to them as if I am talking to my own children. Since my children are away and live in other cities, I spend all of my time with my cows, singing, explaining and telling everything to them. They also wait for my company. When I sing, they become calm and affectionately listen to me”. About a year ago, A.Ç.’s husband sold two cows. She was crying a lot when the butcher was taking them. The butcher was very surprised seeing her miserable condition and said, “If you are going to cry that much, my heart will never allow me to buy them. I am not going to take them as I am feeling very sorry for you”. “But eventually you have to sell your cows, because you raise them for money. This is your subsistence” she said. In one sacrifice feast, her husband slaughtered one of their own cows. A.Ç. got emotional and cried all day. Her family members and relatives found such attention and love an exaggeration. But, since they knew her condition, they did not insist A.Ç. to eat the meat. “How could ever swallow the meat of an animal you raised with so much love. You know, they are my children” she said, with tears welled up in her eyes.



Figure 4. A.Ç. and her favorite cow Siltıko from Ovaköy village of Yeşilli. A.Ç. spends all her leisure time with her cows, singing them lullabies and songs, and telling them every feeling she has. Siltıko and other cows also wait for A.Ç. and affectionately listen to her (© A. B. Siddiq).

S.Ç. is a 29-year old shepherd from Kütüklü village. Every family in his village has a large herd of sheep and goats, of 500-600 sheep and goats. There are about 300 inhabitants and about 9000 sheep and goats in their village; hence, each of them has to be responsible for about 30 sheep and goats per head. Everyone in the village spends their whole life with animals. All year round they graze their animals in the mountains. In 2-3 colder months of the year animals graze in the mountains during the day and stay in the pens at night. Throughout the rest of the year animals always stay in the mountains, and so do the shepherds with their animals. S.Ç. said that there are so many sheep and goats, along with lambs and kids, that none of them can afford to have any leisure time. However, sometimes shepherds can have special bonds with particular sheep or goats and remember them for many years. For example, about 10 years ago S.Ç. himself had special bonds with a ram. He said, “It was a very good ram. Everyone would instantly notice him. He was always with me, and would graze around me

in the mountains”. S.Ç. is still keeping the photographs of the ram in their family photo album (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Photographs of S.Ç. and his ram from his family photo album: 1) S.Ç. with the ram when it was young; 2) S.Ç. with the ram when it became old (© A. B. Siddiq).

3.9. Case studies from Nusaybin cluster

S.M. is an 81-year old woman from Kuşkaya village. She has 4 cows, over 250 sheep, 50-55 goats and 4 dogs. She said that she loves two ewes “Zerda” and “Soda” and a lamb “Beşira” the most. She said that, even at her very old age, she spends all her leisure time with them. She loves her animals and is very protective of them, because she believes that just like humans; animals also can suffer bad effects from the evil eye of bad people. She said, “Many years ago I had 7 sheep which I loved very much, as I now love Zerda and Soda. One day I was away for a few hours, when I came home I found all of my sheep got sick because the evil eye of one of my neighbors brought curse on them. They all died in a few days. I cried a lot. I still remember the faces of those sheep”.

H.Ç., a 63-year old shepherd from Kuşkaya village, has a large herd of over 375 sheep, about 30 goats and one cow. He has been a shepherd since his teenage years. He said that he loves animals very much and cannot endure to see their suffering. He said, “I love my animals as I love my children. My children also love them. They grow up playing with them and drinking their milk. I cannot see the pain and suffering of any animals. When I was child my father slaughtered a lamb while I was watching. It had

a very powerful effect on me. I used to scream after having nightmares. I could not sleep well for many years. Since then, my father never slaughtered any animals in our house”.

I.E. is a 53-year old shepherd from Güneyli village. He has a herd of 4 cows, 2 horses, one donkey, over 200 sheep, 11 goats and one dog. Among all animals he loves sheep and goats the most. He said, “I love being with them. They are the most beautiful creatures in the world. They are like our children, and some have been my true friends throughout my life. I still remember many of them. At present I have three ewes “Çaw Reş”, “Zeynep” and “Ayşe” which I love very much”. “I named “Zeynep” and “Ayşe” after my two daughters” he smiled. When we asked whether he would give up raising animals if he became very rich, he answered, “Never! They are the best things in my life. I would like to continue raising animals even when I am 100 years old”.

U.G. is a 76-year old shepherd from Aşağı Yeniköy village. He has spent 64 years in pastoralism. He remembers many sheep and goats which he had special bonds with. There is one cow he still cannot forget, “Çêlekê Zer” although she lived many years ago. He said, “I still miss Çêlekê Zer. I bought her as a little calf. I would sell her, but she loved me so much. I kept her for my children. She was such a calm and lovely cow, she never harmed anyone. My wife and children used to take good care of her”. “Çêlekê Zer” died of old age and U.G. and his family buried her outside their home.

4. Discussion

The pastoral villages in southeastern Turkey are heavily dependent on sheep, goats and cows, mainly for their regular needs and financial support (Siddiq & Şanlı, 2020; Thevenin, 2011). Only the rich people in Southeast Anatolia can afford to maintain a large herd of sheep. Animals bring wealth and social prestige for the shepherds. Selling and slaughtering their animals is a regular task. People care for their animals mostly to earn money and they consider them as their basic source of income (Siddiq, 2017). However, in a dualistic approach, many shepherds and their families are sometimes unwilling to sell or kill certain sheep, goats or cows. Besides the material benefits, they form emotional attachment with these particular animal individuals. Some often grieve and feel distressed after selling their animals, despite that they accept selling and slaughtering a sheep or goat as a natural rule in this world where different animals have different purposes. Hence, these intangible facts seem to be impossible to ignore while studying

human-animal relationship among pastoral villages in Southeastern Turkey.

In urban societies, people love their pets as they gradually build close relationships with them by investing a lot of time, effort, love and care (Blouin, 2012). In the pastoral villages of southeastern Turkey, most people are born within the density of food animals, and start spending time with animals since they are born. A majority of them start pastoral practices from their childhood and often form emotional attachment with particular animals. H.O. (50) and H.A. (30) from Dargeçit cluster; L.A. (80) and A.Ü. (81) from Midyat cluster; N.Ç. (26), B.Ç. (31) and E.F. (31) from Ömerli cluster; M.Ş.A. (70) and E.K. (49) from Savur cluster; A.S. (98), I.S. (67) and Ş.S. (58) from Derik cluster; M.E. (63), H.S. (62), A.A. (65) and H.E. (43) from Kızıltepe cluster; and U.G. (76) from Nusaybin cluster can be some best examples for this. Long-term attachment is likely to help forming deeper relationships between shepherds and certain animals from their herds. For example, A.S. (98) from Derik looked after Rakkan the goat for 12 years; E.K. (39) from Savur also did not sell “Kral” the sheep for over 12 years. F.C. (32) from Dargeçit raised her goat “Çale” for 6 years; H.S. (62) from Kızıltepe looked after Ali the ram for about 13 years; A.A. (65), also from Kızıltepe, looked after Leyla the ewe for 8 years; and Ş.B.’s grandfather from Midyat did not sell or slaughter a cow for about 20 years until it died of old age.

Play activity is characteristic of children, and across cultures children devote most of their time to it. Significance of play for children’s development is well accepted. It is usual that infants, toddlers, and preschoolers respond with highest interest to unfamiliar live animals compared to unfamiliar adult humans (Ricard & Allard, 1993). In the pastoral villages of the study area, children have more companionship and play support from domestic animals than their school friends, siblings or parents. They spend most of their day time with food animals. For adults, companionship with animals bring mental happiness and many positive psychological benefits including better social attachment, enhanced emotional support and a higher ability to overcome negativity caused by social rejection (McConnell et al., 2011; Minke, 2017; Mitchell & Sinkhorn, 2014; Stambach & Turner, 1999). In the study area, good examples for companionship with food animals and mental happiness can be found in the case of M.Ş.A. (70) and B.Ç. (19) from Savur; B.N. (56) from Mazıdağı; M.A. (70) from Dargeçit; K.A. (52) and L.A. (80) from Midyat; N.Ç. (26) from Ömerli; A.S. (51) and H.H. (61) from Kızıltepe; A.Ç. (46) and S.Ç. (29)

from Yeşilli; and S.M. (81) and I.E. (53) from Nusaybin cluster. Almost all of them had companionship with particular sheep, goats and cows, similar to the pet-human relationship in urban society. In most of cases, these shepherds name these animals, sometimes these are human names after their best friends or their children and grandchildren. In many cases (e.g., K.A. (52) from Midyat or H.E. (43) from Kızıltepe), animals seemed used to responding when hearing their names called out.

Giving name and treating with more personal touch was argued to increase milk production of farm animals (Bertenshaw & Rowlinson, 2009). However, even though the shepherds in the study area usually treat their animals with personal touch and love, they did not claim any significant difference in milk production or animal health by naming their animals. It was observed in the present study and in a number of previous studies as well that many shepherds in the region usually do not prefer naming their sheep or goats (Şanlı & Siddiq, 2018; Siddiq, 2017; Siddiq & Şanlı, 2020). If shepherds name a certain animal, they only do it after they form an emotional bond and companionship with them.

In urban life, subjective healing was argued to be associated with decent memory and remembrance of dead pets (often dogs and cats) (Kemp et al., 2016). In the study area, some shepherds never forget the good memories of the animals with which they formed friendships and bonds. They always remember and recall the memory of these individuals with great enthusiasm (Şanlı & Siddiq, 2018; Siddiq & Şanlı, 2020). In this regard, the cases of M.Ş.A. (70) and E.K. (49) from Savur; F.C. (32), H.O. (50) and H.A. (30) from Dargeçit; A.Ü. (81) from Midyat; A.S. (98) from Derik; H.S. (62) and A.A. (65) from Kızıltepe; and U.G. (76) from Nusaybin can be the best examples. Some shepherds and their family keep the photographs of these individuals on the walls of their home or in their family photo albums, as if they were their family members (e.g., Figure 3 and 4). Some shepherds and their family do not differentiate their relationships with these animals and the relationships with other human individuals. For example, A.Ü. (81) from Midyat remembered her long-lost friend “Arna”, the ewe like this: “She was like my heart. She always followed me at home. She used to understand me and interacted with me just like a human. Whenever I was stressed, sad, or bored, she always understood me and similarly she could see when I was happy. She even used to sulk like a human if I ever shouted at her. It has been a long time, but the memory of her is still fresh in my mind as I have the memories with my own children”.

Favorite animals are treated like shepherds' family members. Sometimes exceptional physical features or behaviors of a particular sheep or goat act as effective criteria to form close attachment with their shepherds. Some animals gradually become the favorite of their owners because of their capacity to be leaders of their herds (Siddiq & Şanlı, 2020). Once shepherds and these animals form close bondings, the animals always understand the mood of their shepherds. Many shepherds make their animals, especially sheep and goats, listen to music while grazing in the mountains. Some (in most cases, women) sing lullabies and songs to their favorite sheep, goats and cows. All of these people believe that their animals also listen carefully to the music played or to their songs and form closer bonds with them.

There is a wider debate about animal personhood (Rowlands, 2016; Wallach et al., 2020). According to the anthropocentric view, animal personhood is an unacceptable and invalid entity. However, to many some animals are “persons” according to their capacity of reflective awareness (Rowlands, 2016). To some shepherds in Southeastern Turkey, animals are just like humans. They have feelings, personalities and, even for some, animals have kinship with humans. For example, B.N. (56) from Mazıdağı argued that some of her sheep and goats are smarter and more compassionate than people. She said, “In the past I preferred spending time with my sheep “Hasret”, “Gülistan”, “Cemile”, “Cane”, and “Kümme” than chatting with my friends or neighbors”. H.A. (63) from Midyat believes animals are smarter and have stronger spirits than humans. Smart animals always make stronger bonds with their shepherds. F.B. (32) from Kızıltepe believes her cows have feelings and different personalities just like different people. Similarly, M.Ş.A. (70) from Savur said, “I have experienced that my sheep and goats have minds and feelings just like any human being in my village. I think God created different animals in different ways. But like humans all animals have a soul; and therefore, they will all go to paradise after their death. Animals have a mind but cannot express their opinion to humans. Still they become sad, happy and jealous, and have kinships just like us”.

Throughout the world taboos for eating animal meat are argued to be promoted by a variety of cross-cultural response factors including, socially-mediated ingestive conditioning and normative moralization (Meyer-Rochow, 2009; Navarrete & Fessler, 2003). In southeastern Turkey, taboos for eating food animals appear to be an emotion-mediated phenomenon, backed by long-term companionship. Many shepherds and their families do

not slaughter and eat the meat of the animals from their own herds. Instead, they buy and slaughter animals from other shepherds to meet the need of meat for their families. Most of these people said that it is very hard to eat the meat of animals raised with so much love and care. The case studies of A.S. (98) from Derik; S.N. (36) and V.Y. (73) from Mazıdağı; M.E. (63) and F.B. (32) from Kızıltepe; A.Ç. (46) from Yeşilli; and A.Ü. (81) from Midyat represent the best examples for this situation. For instance, A.Ü. (81) was describing her remorse as follows, “We usually do not slaughter any animal from our herd. But many years ago, my husband slaughtered a sheep from our herd. When they were slaughtering it, I was crying silently. The pathetic thing was that I had to cook the meat of my sheep. I still remember, I was cooking and wiping my eyes in the kitchen”. Similarly M.A. (72) from Dargeçit described a distressed memory she had for a goat as follows: “I had a goat named “Kole” and I loved her very much. The goat was like family to me. Unfortunately, about four years ago she got sick and due to pressure from everyone in my family, we had no option but to slaughter her. I cried a lot for more than a week, because she was my true friend. I still cannot forget her. Everyone in our family ate her meat, but I was not even able to go to the kitchen. You know, it hurts you a lot when you see people eating an animal that was loved, fed and looked after by you for a long time”. A.S. (98) remembered the bad fortune of his favorite goat “Rakkan” with great distress. “When Rakkan got sick at her old age, my family members wanted to slaughter her. I told them ‘do not slaughter her, let her die and I will bury her!’ But I was in the mountains grazing other animals, and they eventually slaughtered her and distributed the meat to all the neighbors. Everybody ate Rakkan’s meat but I could not even bear the sight of it. My neighbors and family members were mocking at me. But, after losing Rakkan I cried for many days like a child, as if I lost one of my children”, he softly said with tears welled up in his eyes.

In urban societies, the loss of a companion animal or a pet reportedly creates grief and negative impacts of post-traumatic stress disorders (Adrian & Stitt, 2017; Laing & Maylea, 2018; Spain et al., 2019). In southeastern Turkey, shepherds grieve if any of their favorite animals die or if they ever have to sell their favorite animals. They also show great sympathy and sorrow even for the loss of their neighbors’ animals. In this regard, A.Ü. (81) from Midyat; M.Ş.A. (70) and B.Ç. (19) from Savur; F.C. (32) and H.O. (50) from Dargeçit; A.S. (98) and Ş.S. (58) from Derik; and H.S. (62), A.A. (65) and H.E. (43) from Kızıltepe can be the best examples. A.Ü. (81) from Midyat described her feelings for one of her favorite sheep

“Arna” with great sorrow, as she said: “There are certain animals that instantly win a place right into your heart. I saw many animals die of illness, we raised thousands of animals and sold them, but some are still alive in my heart. One ewe was such a cute one that I adored it very much. I named her “Arna”. Every time I went to the pen, Arna somehow felt my presence behind the door and used to make cute bleats for me. Perhaps she could smell me. Unfortunately, she could not survive that winter. It is still too difficult to explain how much pain I felt after her death. I will never forget her very adorable face and wonderful eyes. I would be the happiest person in the world if Arna came back to me again”.

Overall, it can be argued that human-food animal bond in these pastoral villages is, to some extent, similar to pet-human relations in urban societies. In regard to the emotional bond from the human side we found that (i) some shepherds often treat certain sheep, goat and cows as their family members; (ii) some name particular animals after their own children or best (human) friends; (iii) some shepherds never forget the memories of certain sheep, goats or cows throughout their lives, they see these animals in their dreams, even at an old age; (iv) some never slaughter or eat the meat of the animals from their own herd – as it is extremely difficult for them to see the suffering and blood of the animals they raised with love and care; (v) some experience prolonged-grief for certain animals; (vi) some never wish to sell particular sheep, goats and cows, instead they will bury them when they die of old age; (vii) some sing songs and lullabies to their favorite animals; (viii) some families frame the photographs of particular sheep and goats, and keep them as photographs of people; (ix) some (older) shepherds claim that they love their sheep and goats more than their own children and grandchildren. In regard to the relation and attachment from the animal side, we have observed that (i) some sheep, goats and cows form close attachments with the shepherds and their families; (ii) these individuals are not pre-selected but – with the help of their unique behavior and special attachment with the shepherds – they gradually take a higher status in their herds; (iii) these individuals often act as the leaders of their herds, guide other animals or sleep beside their shepherds, or wake them up if any trouble occurs in the pastureland; (iv) being attached to same particular humans for many years, some sheep, goats and cows show emotional responses – such as affection, joy, love, anger and depression – for certain human individuals. Hence, we asked the question why slaughtering or selling an animal that was loved so much (Figure 6). The

answers appeared to be conflicting and dualistic, as the anthropocentric view appears to be at the center of all driving forces (Siddiq, 2021, fig. 1).

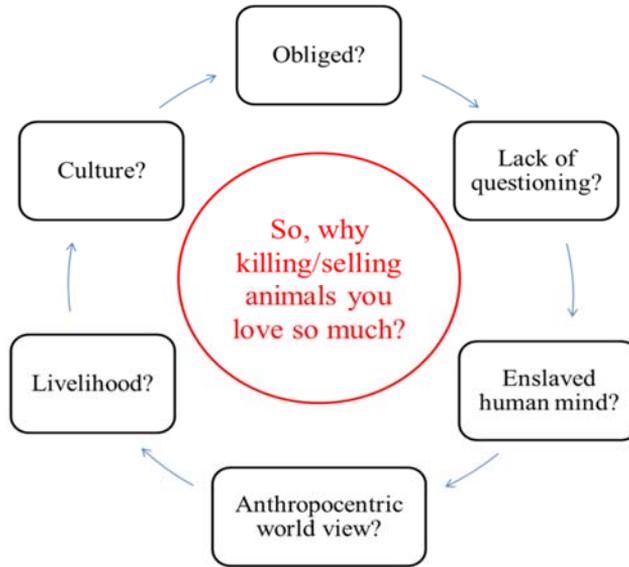


Figure 6. Various human-centric cultural entities and anthropocentric ethical grounds help forming the dualistic human-food animal bond in pastoral villages of southeastern Turkey (© A. B. Siddiq).

Although raising and selling food animals is their basic means of subsistence, some shepherds always become upset when they sell their animals. For example, H.O. (50) from Suaçtı village in Dargeçit said that although she did not want to sell a cow that she raised for many years, she eventually had to sell it to the local slaughterhouse as she was poor and badly needed the money. She said that she cried for a whole day as if one of her children left her forever. Similarly, H.A. from Mercemikli village expressed his feelings as follows: “I know that I raise my animals to earn money. Still, I cannot help but feel very lost whenever I sell them. For example, I still cannot forget some of my sheep that I sold about nine years ago. If I saw those sheep, although I do not know if they are still alive, I could recognize and identify them one by one even from a herd of a thousand sheep. I did not want to sell them, but you know, you have to sell your animals, because this is your profession!”

In conclusion, human-food animal bond in the pastoral villages of southeastern Turkey appears to be similar to the “pet-human bond” in urban society. No matter food animals or non-food animals, the emotional

bond between a human and an animal forms on compassion, and the amount of time and care spent. Shepherds and their family are well-aware and concerned that these animals will be eventually sold or butchered. Yet, they form emotional bonds with some of their animals since they offer true companionship in the shepherds' hard-working life. Nevertheless, memory and grief are inevitable in this relationship – similar to the memory and grief for pets in urban society. Hence, the human-food animal emotional bond in these pastoral villages can be regarded as complex, conflicting, and dualistic.

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Feral and out of Control: A Moral Panic over Free-roaming Cats?*

Kristine Hill**

Abstract

*Lynn et al., (2019) accused fellow scientists of misrepresenting free-roaming cats (*Felis catus*) by framing them as a global threat to biodiversity, rather than a localised threat to specific ecosystems. These authors asserted that the narrative created a ‘moral panic’ over free-roaming cats, which is escalated by emotive journalistic pieces read by audiences around the world. To test this empirically, I performed a thematic discourse analysis of user comments responding to five news articles, a magazine, and a YouTube video related to the topic of free-roaming cats. The discourses examined flow between conservationists, the media, and the public, and reflect the confused and convoluted ways in which people think about cats. Here I discuss how well the data fits the moral panic theory. I analyse how labels such as ‘feral’ serve to ‘other’ cats, rendering them objects of disdain and creating ‘folk devils’ that are deemed more killable than beloved companion animals of the same species.*

Keywords: Moral panic, Folk devils, Free-roaming cats, Feral

Introduction

The science demonstrates how cats (*Felis catus*) are a threat to many endemic species, especially in Australasia. Cats have been linked to 63 extinctions (40 birds, 21 mammals, and two reptile species) and pose a risk to many threatened and endangered vertebrates (Bellard, Genovesi, and Jeschke 2016; Doherty et al. 2016). Although the impacts of non-native animal species on endemic wildlife appear most severe on island ecosystems that lack natural predators (Medina et al. 2011; 2016), cats have been implicated in species decline in continental Australasia (Dickman 2009) and the USA too (Loss and Marra 2017; Marra and Santella 2016). In several continental regions domestic cat densities far exceed those of their native counterparts, potentially outcompeting African or European wildcat

* This paper is based on a chapter from the author’s Ph.D. thesis ‘A right to roam? A trans-species approach to understanding cat-human relations and social discourses associated with free-roaming urban cats (*Felis catus*)’ to be submitted to the University of Exeter, UK.

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species for resources or interbreeding with them (Beutel et al. 2017; Loss and Marra 2017). Loss and Marra (2017, 502) processed experimental data from multiple studies on the effect predation had on mainland vertebrate populations and concluded that ‘the domestic cat is among the most ubiquitous and environmentally damaging invasive predators on Earth.’ However, others argue that cats are not a conservation problem everywhere and the reality is much more nuanced (Lynn et al. 2019). It is beyond the scope of this paper to determine the extent to which predation by cats impacts global ecosystems, and it is not my intention to argue for or against the validity of the scientific data or any claims derived from those findings. This paper is concerned with how that information is framed, distributed, engaged with, and ultimately how these discourses impact cat-human relations.

Lynn et al., (2019) accused fellow scientists of creating a ‘moral panic’ over cats by misrepresenting free-roaming¹ cats and framing them as a global threat to biodiversity, rather than a localised threat to specific ecosystems. First coined by Cohen (1972, 9), a ‘moral panic’ describes a phenomenon whereby ‘a condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interest; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media.’ Lynn et al., (2019) may have used the more colloquial iteration of the term, and Rowe (2009) pointed to multiple examples of how the term ‘moral panic’ has entered the popular lexicon. Consequently, the term has reached the status of ‘catchphrase or cliché’ and is frequently deployed outside of academia to ‘to play down levels of threat and negative consequence, and to present anxieties, whether justified or not, as exaggerated and overblown’ (Rowe 2009, 23). However, as (Cohen 2011, vii) stressed, ‘calling something a “moral panic” does not imply that this something does not exist.’ A moral panic describes a phenomenon whereby something or someone is framed as transgressive (the ‘folk devil’) and subsequent reactions that are disproportionate to any real threat (Cohen 2011). This does not mean the threat or concern is absent, and Lynn et al., (2019) are not denying the impact cats have on some ecosystems. In this paper, I examine how the discourses taking place in the user comment sections of news articles and other media might support the notion of a moral panic over cats. Focusing on exchanges surrounding proposals to kill

¹ I apply the term free-roaming to any cat that roams freely, including companion animal pets and those who live independently from humans (free-living cats).

free-living cats, I describe the themes that emerged from my analysis and the language used to ‘other’ certain populations and separate them from companion animal cats.

Methods

This paper is based on research undertaken as part of my doctoral studies, affiliated with the University of Exeter, UK. Ethical approval was granted by the University of Exeter College of Social Science and International Studies (SSIS) Ethics Committee on 01/08/2019. The data comprises online comments, retrieved from the public domain, that are responses to either a YouTube video, a magazine article, or one of five news articles, reporting on predation by cats or discussing the merits of keeping companion animal cats indoors (Table 1). These comments were invariably anonymous (very few used what might be their real names), and any potentially identifying data were removed prior to analysis. To avoid influencing the discourse or provoking more discord, I did not participate in any of these discussions.

Data collection and sampling

The first set of comments retrieved were responses to a YouTube video shared by Jackson Galaxy on 21 August 2019 (GJ, Table 1). The video was chosen because the celebrity status of Jackson Galaxy² draws a large audience of cat lovers, providing scope for lively debate in the comments section. It was also selected because the topic directly addresses the issue of whether guardians should restrict the roaming of their companion cats. The first 1200 comments were included in the analysis because they represented all time zones within a 24hr post-release timeframe. The second source was actively sought out to collect responses on the same topic (restricting the roaming of companion animal cats) from a different readership. The chosen article was published in Science-Based Medicine (SBM), an online magazine exploring issues and controversies in the relationship between science and medicine. Additional comments were selected from online news sources that published articles related to free-living cats between January 2019 and October 2020. I sought to obtain a cross-section of comments that were representative of the various attitudes that exist towards cats. Articles were chosen that not only induced responses from cat-lovers and guardians,

² <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm4526894/bio>.

but also included voices from individuals concerned about wildlife predation and from people who generally disliked or were indifferent towards cats. The selection criteria for articles required that they were 1) published online by newspapers that allowed users' comments, 2) were written about free-roaming cats, 3) had greater than 50 comments, and 4) comments primarily from users based in the US, UK, Australia, and Canada. I targeted the Daily Mail Online because it allows user comments and requires users to register a country of residence before posting. Furthermore, the MailOnline is free to read and the second most visited English-language newspaper website worldwide (Ponsford 2018). While The Guardian is the topmost visited English-language newspaper website (Ponsford 2018), the comments sections have been disabled. I chose the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) online news platforms because these permit user comments and are also amongst the most visited news platforms worldwide (Turvill 2020; Ponsford 2018).

The first Daily Mail (UK) article presented research by Crowley, Cecchetti, and McDonald (2020a) on the attitudes of UK cat guardians towards their cat's predation habits (DMUKa, Table 1). The BBC article entitled 'Should cats be culled to stop extinctions?' (BBC, Table 1), was based on a peer-reviewed study that reported non-native species, including domestic cats, are a major threat to native insular species (Holmes et al. 2019). The Daily Mail (Australia) article centred around an image captured by scientists of a free-living cat carrying a sand goanna (DMAU, Table 1). The second Daily Mail (UK) article was based on research by Kays et al. (2020) reporting the effects of cat predation in North America (DMUKb, Table 1). The CBC article incorporated an interview with an urban ecologist involved in the Vancouver Cat Count project³, designed to determine how many cats are roaming the city and preying on bird populations (CBC, Table 1). The chosen articles generated comments that provided meso-insight into how information is received and processed in relation to individual experiences and perspectives. Overall, 36% of the comments were responding to other comments (sub-comments), although the engagement levels varied greatly between sources (Table 1). The difference between the total number of comments and unique handles indicates a few individuals were engaging with multiple threads.

³ <https://wildcams.ca/projects/bc-cat-count/>.

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Table 1. Overview of the comment data sources

Source code	Headline	Published	Media source (country)	Total comments	Unique handles	Sub-comments (% total)
GJ	Indoor Cat Vs. Outdoor Cat? ⁴	21 Aug 2019	YouTube (US)	1200	960	272 (23%)
SBM	The Great Outdoors (Debate) ⁵	18 May 2018	SBM Magazine (US)	172	77	135 (78%)
DM UKa	Are you a concerned protector, a tolerant guardian, or a freedom defender? ⁶	3 Sept 2020	Daily Mail (UK)	67	47	28 (42%)
BBC	Should cats be culled to stop extinctions? ⁷	28 Mar 2019	BBC (UK)	362	263	109 (30%)
DM AU	Frightening photo shows an enormous feral cat carrying a 6kg sand goanna ⁸	25 May 2020	Daily Mail (AU)	239	176	113 (47%)
DM UKb	Pet cats have a 'catastrophic impact' on local wildlife ⁹	11 Mar 2020	Daily Mail (UK)	359	235	182 (51%)

⁴ YouTube video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ZJ_qkklZyM.

⁵ <https://sciencebasedmedicine.org/the-great-outdoors-debate/>.

⁶ <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-8690573/Researchers-identify-five-types-cat-owner-quest-reduce-hunting-endangered-birds.html>.

⁷ <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-47721807>.

⁸ <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8353159/Enormous-feral-cat-captured-dead-sand-goanna-mouth-Australias-rugged-Simpson-Desert.html>.

⁹ <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-8100023/Cats-catastrophic-impact-local-wildlife-allowed-roam-free.html>.

Source code	Headline	Published	Media source (country)	Total comments	Unique handles	Sub-comments (% total)
CBC	'Cat count aims to map where felines are most active – and deadly – across Vancouver' ¹⁰	30 Aug 2020	CBC (CN)	77	42	41 (53%)
Total comments				2476	1800	880 (36%)

Holistic and thematic coding

Coding of qualitative data entails separating portions of data from their original context, labelling them based on a specific feature (coding) such that they can be retrieved and inspected together with similarly coded data (Saldaña 2013). This allows data to be decontextualized from its original context and re-contextualized into a theme. Furthermore, emerging themes can be used to inform and facilitate subsequent coding within an iterative process (Ayres 2008; Saldaña 2013). Complete comments were uploaded to an Excel sheet together with the source code and a chronological assigned number. For example, the first comment responding to the Jackson Galaxy video (GJ) is 'GJ1' and the fourth comment below the SBM article (SBM) is 'SMB4' and these identifiers are used throughout this paper. Aliases provided by the user remained associated with the identifiers so that comments from the same user account could be traced. Likewise, whether a text is a primary (responding directly to the source article) or a sub-comment (responding to another user comment) is traceable. Where available, the country of residence was also mapped to the identifier and comment text.

The 2,476 comments were first assigned to one or more of four coding groups (Figure 1). Group 1 (Cat) comments are those concerned with cat welfare, wellbeing, or feline rights, including comments regarding whether companion animal cats were better off kept indoors or allowed to roam. Group 2 (Wildlife) are comments related to the impact of cats on wildlife, and the focus of this paper. Group 3 (Neighbourhood) comments are focused on urban cats, complaints about nuisance behaviours, or

¹⁰<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/cat-count-aims-to-map-where-felines-are-most-active-and-deadly-across-vancouver-1.5704654>.

defending free-roaming community cats. The fourth group (off-topic) is a stand-alone coding group, meaning that comments assigned to this group did not overlap with comments coded to one or more of the first three (Cat, Wildlife, or Neighbourhood). Some comments in groups 1, 2, and 3, typically the more-lengthy ones, were assigned to more than one of these groupings.

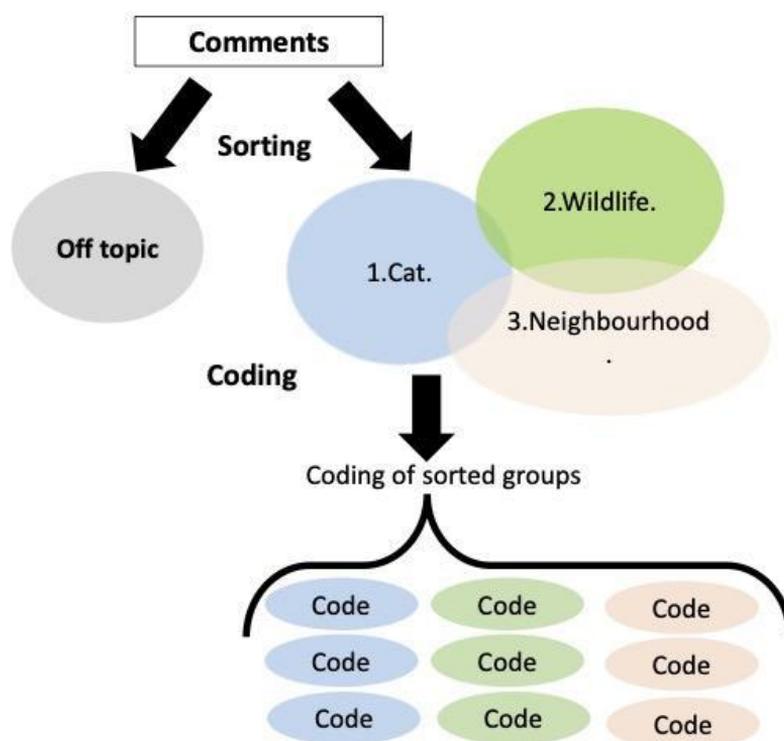


Figure 1. Pipeline for sorting and coding the comments from different sources.

Legend. Each comment was first coded as Off-topic, 1. Cat, 2. Wildlife, or 3. Neighbourhood. Following this initial sorting phase, comments within each coding group were independently and inductively coded.

Rather than split-up paragraphs or sentences from a given comment, comments were coded in their entirety to one or more groups. This holistic coding approach is particularly well-suited to the comment data, which are a mix of standalone responses to the original content and short exchanges between commenters that need to be considered as a contextual whole (Saldaña 2013). Once placed into their initial groupings, the comments within each group were subsequently thematically coded and analysed

independently (K. Hill, PhD Thesis). This paper focuses on the second group, which comprises comments related to the impact of cats on wildlife. Group 2 (Wildlife) comprises/ is composed of 368 comments spread across different sources (Table 2).

Table 2. The number of comments that fall into each category

Categories	Comment counts from each source							Total
	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	
Total*	1,200	172	67	391	239	359	77	2,505
1.Cat	800	58	22	6	5	53	13	957
2.Wildlife	41	26	14	144	53	68	22	368
3.Community	46	44	23	70	30	114	27	354
Off topic	325	59	13	185	164	140	20	905

* Because some comments were assigned to more than one category, the total is not the sum of all categories.

I applied a thematic coding strategy to identify themes that emerged from discourses surrounding predation by cats. Thematic analysis facilitates the search for themes that cumulate in a description of those themes (Ayres 2008; Braun and Clarke 2006). The data in my study was coded, re-coded, and coding categories refined as an iterative process. Where applicable, comments were coded to more than one theme. For example, the code ‘Leave the cats alone’ was often coupled with a belief that cats are exhibiting natural behaviours or are part of wildlife (‘Nature/cats are wildlife’).

Table 3. Examples of coded data

Code	Description	Examples sentences from comments given that code
‘Yes’	BBC comments only.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes (Given as a simple response to the headline ‘Should cats be culled to stop extinctions?’).
Debating impact on wildlife	Comments about the impact cat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not to mention the 3 billion (not exaggerated) birds that are hunted by outdoor cats every year (GJ3).

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Code	Description	Examples sentences from comments given that code
	predation has on wildlife.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • But cats actually aren't causing declines in bird populations (GJ142).
Cats 'murder' for fun	The assertion that cats are evil or cruel.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cats kill things for fun, they don't always choose to eat (DMUKb171). • Cats are awful, selfish killing machines.....they kill for fun, not just to eat (DMAU218).
Leave the cats alone!	Comments advocating for cats to be left alone.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are acting on their natural instincts, leave them be (DMUKb196) • They are now wild cats and should be left alone (DMAU179).
Nature/cats are wildlife	The belief that cats are part of nature.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I dont like that my cats kill wildlife, but this is nature (DMUKa44) • Cats are part of local wildlife (DMUKb153).
Lethal control is necessary	Comments that believe the killing of free-living cats is sometimes necessary.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Humane culling, and ideally eradication, is demonstrably one of the most effective and urgent ways to save species (BBC20). • There is little point getting squeamish about culling feral animals that damage vulnerable ecologies (BBC172).
TNR	Comments that are both pro and against trap-neuter-release programmes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are other ways to keep population under control. Neutering the males would be the best way (BBC199). • I can't understand the nutbags that think TNR is a good deal for anybody - wildlife or cats. I see so many ferals just like you're describing. Euthanasia IS humane (SBM23).
Anger at humans	Frustration at human arrogance and/or anger at the destructive nature of humans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typical human arrogance. We create all these problems, then "scientists" come up with the solution to kill more animals (BBC36). • Humans lay waste to whole environments and then harp on about cats being harmful (DMUKb175).

Code	Description	Examples sentences from comments given that code
Invasive discourse/non-native	Comments using terms such as invasive or non-native to describe cats.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic cats are an invasive species in the USA (GJ131). • Feral cats are invasive species and need to be approached as this and NOT protected (CBC43).
'Our' wildlife	Comments that use the term 'our' to describe wildlife.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm an animal lover, but I'm 100% in favour of culling all feral animals. They destroy our wildlife (BBC159). • THEY ARE KILLING OUR WILDLIFE (DMAU5).
Wildlife more important	Comments expressing the sentiment that wildlife is inherently more valuable than the lives of domestic cats.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ... if there is a great risk to indigenous wildlife. (BBC67). • Ban cats, lock them up indoors where they can't harm the wildlife (DMUKb154).
Scottish wildcats	Comments specifically mentioning wildcat species.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only a very few Scottish Wild Cats remain. They are threatened by competition with, and genetic swamping by, loose house cats (BBC246). • [cats are] a threat to the critically endangered Scottish wildcat through interbreeding (BBC319).
Confine cats to save wildlife	Comments asserting that companion cats should be confined to protect local wildlife.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ... lock them up indoors where they can't harm the wildlife (DMUKb145). • Cats don't belong in most places. It's selfish to the local environment to put them out (GJ691).

Results

Apart from the ‘Yes’ response to the BBC headline ‘Should cats be culled to stop extinctions?’ (Table 1), comments falling into each of the thematic categories can be found in the comment sections of multiple sources (Table 4). Similar themes emerged, regardless of the focus of the original source (cat welfare or wildlife predation). Discourses frequently diverged from the main message of the article or video, and, in many cases, the commenters appeared not to have read beyond the headline. Overall, 880/2,476 (36%) of comments were sub-comments responding to other users (Table 1). Within the Category 2 comments, examined here, 117/368 (32%) were also sub-comments. However, the level of user-user engagement varied considerably across sources, with the most engagement occurring in the comments section below the SBM article (Table 4).

Table 4. Counts of coding of Category 2 comments

	GJ	SBM	DM UKa	BBC	DM AU	DM UKb	CBC	Total
Total comments*	41	26	14	143	53	68	22	368
Percent of total comments that are sub-comments	24%	81%	29%	13%	40%	44%	55%	32%
Codes (see Table 3 for description)	GJ	SBM	DM UKa	BBC	DM AU	DM UKb	CBC	Total (count)
‘Yes’	-	-	-	15	-	-	-	15
Debating impact on wildlife	36	12	7	29	9	19	4	116
Cats ‘murder’ for fun	2	4	0	7	1	6	2	22
Leave the cats alone!	2	1	3	9	11	14	3	43

Nature/cats are wildlife	1	0	1	5	11	13	2	33
Lethal control is necessary	0	1	0	74	5	1	2	83
TNR (trap-neuter-release)	0	6	0	6	0	0	4	16
Anger at humans	0	3	6	39	7	13	3	71
Invasive discourse/ non-native	9	4	0	34	17	15	6	85
'Our' wildlife	0	0	0	5	7	2	0	14
Wildlife is more important	1	0	0	30	3	6	4	44
Scottish wildcats	0	0	0	6	0	2	0	8
Confine cats to save wildlife	36	6	6	8	4	9	3	72

* Because some comments were assigned to more than one code, the total number of comments from each source (columns) is less than the sum of all codes from that source.

Cats a global threat to biodiversity

Lynn et al., (2019) asserted that conservation scientists and the media are framing cats as a global threat to biodiversity, rather than a localised threat to specific ecosystems. Therefore, I first examined the discourses to ascertain the extent to which the public might perceive cats as a global environmental problem. Of the total 368 comments, 116 (32%) were coded as 'Debating the impact on wildlife' (Table 4), and were either explaining or questioning claims related to the negative effects of predation by cats. Of these, 93/116 (80%) asserted that free-roaming cats are always detrimental to wildlife at the population level. This was true even when the original topic was focused on feline welfare. In response to Jackson Galaxy's video on reasons to keep companion cats inside, there were multiple comments that

pointed out what was seen as an important omission. Namely, what they perceived as the negative impact cats have on local wildlife. Comments coded as 'Debating the impact on wildlife' appeared to be heavily influenced by mainstream conservationist discourse. For example, comments such as 'Conservationists have research on how damaging house cats are to the environment' (GJ1023) were not atypical. While some were speaking from areas where free-roaming cats have been implicated in wildlife population declines (based on qualifiers such as 'where I live in Australia...'), others spoke of cats being an ecological threat to wildlife everywhere. And amongst those vocally opposed to free-roaming cats, this was typically a blanket statement that ignored any local environmental contexts. In a thread that had already diverted the conversation away from the impact cats have on island ecosystems (the theme of the original article) to suburban companion cats, a comment stated '[cats] kill 275 million animals (of which 55 million are birds) a year in the UK' (BBC15). The figures quoted are derived from an extrapolation based on a study commissioned by the Mammal Society (Woods, McDonald, and Harris 2003), and are widely quoted by various bird enthusiast websites and blogs. However, these figures can be misleading without context or further analysis of the effects on population levels. Below the Jackson Galaxy YouTube clip, a sub-commenter joined the discourse on cat predation in North America by arguing that 'cats actually aren't causing declines in bird populations' and quoted the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) as saying that cats mostly catch sick and injured birds (GJ142). These are examples of the original context being overlooked, and the fact that RSPB speaks only for cat predation within the UK is not being fully acknowledged within the international discourses.

Only 23/116 (20%) of the comments attempted to counter the notion that cats are an ecological disaster. Cat guardians in the UK were most likely to quote the RSPB's stance that predation by cats does not affect bird population numbers (RSBP, n.d.). Six comments mentioned the RSPB to defend cats' right to roam (five of these were identified as being written by UK residents). However, UK bird enthusiasts were more critical of the RSPB's position on predation by cats. The very first comment below the BBC article jumped in with 'Interesting one for Chris Packham [¹¹] to answer: does he join the call for the culling of cats and risk the wrath of the RSPB's members?' (BBC1). The RSPB published the statement: 'Despite the large numbers of birds killed by cats in gardens, there is no clear scientific

¹¹ Chris Packham is an English naturalist, photographer, author, and well-known BBC presenter of nature-related TV shows, and vice president of the RSPB.

evidence that such mortality is causing bird populations to decline' (RSPB n.d., np). However, some comments spoke in conspiratorial terms regarding the RSPB stance cats and birds: 'If the RSPB is not in favour of culling cats that is because they hope not to offend potential members from among cat owners. They know the horrible "pet" animals destroy millions of wild birds and animals annually' (BBC70).

This response indicated that the author believes the RSPB are deliberately suppressing data that might be inflammatory to some of their membership. That this commenter (BBC70) added inverted commas to the term "pet" implied that they believed cats should not be kept as companion animals. It is noteworthy that these comments, as well as those objecting to any killing proposals, fail to acknowledge that any 'call to cull' would be restricted to the islands outlined in the BBC article and original paper, and not target cats in the UK. It could be that commenters are pre-empting the outcome of a moral panic (widespread bans on free-roaming cats). More likely it is that comments are emotive responses to inflammatory headlines and the responses such headlines invoke, especially to the BBC headline 'Should cats be culled to stop extinctions?' (Table 1).

In contrast to UK residents, people in the US are more inclined to keep their cats confined to their home property (Dabritz et al. 2006; Hall et al. 2016; Patronek, Beck, and Glickman 1997; Rochlitz 2005; Sandøe et al. 2017; Kasbaoui 2016; Foreman-Worsley et al. 2021). The discourse surrounding free-roaming in the US was distinctly different, with the belief that 'cats are an invasive species in the USA' (GJ131) and 'kill over 2 billion birds in the US every year!' (GJ110) more prominent. Even though comments identifiable as being from UK or US residents were responding to the same articles, the former were much more likely to defend free-roaming cats. Rather than being solely led by the media, the difference in attitudes could in part be explained by how the two major bird advocacy societies in the UK and the US, namely The RSPB and the National Audubon Society, address the issue of bird predation by cats. Marra and Santella (2016) provides a historical account of research demonstrating how bird declines correlate with free-roaming cat populations and the actions taken by the National Audubon Society to promote confinement of companion cats. In contrast, Marra and Santella (2016, 58) points out that 'the English are inclined to let their cats roam outdoors, and even the RSPB has an article posted on its website stating that free-ranging cats are not causing a problem and that their impacts represent compensatory mortality.' My data provides empirical evidence on how major bird organisations are

influencing the discourses, namely by providing the information cited in user comments to either agree or disagree with whatever the journalists or other commenters are claiming.

The war on cats

Several conservation solutions have been proposed and trialled, primarily in Australia, with the goal of reducing free-living cat populations. By far the most controversial solution was announced in 2015, when the Australian Government implemented a high-profile public policy that proposed killing two million ‘feral’ cats by 2020 (Commonwealth of Australia 2015). The policy focused on the recovery of populations of threatened endemic species but was dubbed the ‘War on Feral Cats’ by the international media (Lynn 2015). Cats, more than any other species targeted as ‘problematic’ by conservationists, have garnered international attention (Marra and Santella 2016). The phrase ‘War on Cats’ was adopted by those who opposed killing strategies, to garner support by reframing the policy as an attack on cats (Lynn 2015). The dominant discourse in my dataset appears to accept, sometimes reluctantly, that cats are invariably a threat to wildlife populations. Moral panic theory has been used to understand the ‘war on drugs’ (Hawdon 2001; Lord 2022) and the ‘war on terrorism’ (Walsh 2017) and the rhetoric of the ‘war on cats’ bears some similarity. In all these examples there exists a real threat and potential problem, but a moral panic generates generalised fear that is disproportionate and used to fuel prejudice and support ill-conceived or controversial policies (Walsh 2017). Proposed solutions to reduce cat predation are polarising, and this is evident within the comments analysed here. While non-lethal methods seemed to be preferred, some comments reluctantly (and a minority gleefully) recognised a need for drastic measures to control cat populations. Comments coded as supporting lethal measures for population control were mostly responding to the BBC article (75/83), whose headline asked whether cats should be ‘culled’ to save native wildlife (Table 1). However, ten comments from the other datasets also clearly supported lethal measures to reduce cat populations. Unsurprisingly, debates surrounding killing animals can get heated. In the comments section below the BBC article, the contents of one-fifth (81/391) of the comments had been removed by admin (leaving only the alias given by the author). Comments responding to these removed posts indicated that they were inflammatory personal attacks. When it comes to the management of free-living cat populations to protect endemic wildlife, few people are

wholly against any form of intervention, but many are averse to killing. Discourses ranged from ‘leave the cats alone’ to ‘eradicate all cats’ (within the ‘lethal control is necessary’ category, Table 4) and express a range of sentiments from redirected anger towards humans to notions of human exceptionalism and their role as ‘stewards of the planet.’

Stewards of the planet

‘We have a duty as stewards of the planet to restore and preserve the status quo where possible’ (BBC216).

The notion of humans as ‘stewards of the planet’ was a prominent theme within comments coded as ‘Lethal control is necessary’ (Table 4). Comments within this thematic grouping sometimes acknowledged human action as the cause of the problem, but the responsibility of redressing the balance was also seen as a human responsibility. Comments coded to this theme also placed a greater value on species deemed ‘native’ over domesticated species that have escaped human control (such as free-living cats). Both the framing of problems caused by free-roaming cats, and the solutions themselves are embedded in Western colonialism and human exceptionalism. Legitimised by religious teachings of the Abrahamic religions, the cultural belief in the legitimacy of human dominance is deeply ingrained in ‘Western’ societies (Hope and Jones 2014). Mainstream conservation ethic stems from this idea of control, and a perceived duty to protect and preserve a particular notion of ‘nature’ (Ingold 2000a). Comments did sometimes challenge the colonial legacy. A response to the BBC article reads: ‘Leave the decisions about handling invasive species to the Indigenous people who remain on the islands affected by those species’ (BBC387). However, native peoples are seen as ‘problematic’ for many conservationists because ‘they do not conform to the dominant conceptualization of conservation’ (Hurn 2012, 173). Rose (1995) studied Aboriginal¹² perceptions and attitudes towards ‘feral’ animals and found that, despite the recognition that these animals were introduced by Europeans, they were invariably viewed as ‘belonging to the country’ simply because their generation had grown up alongside them. According to Rose (1995, 128), Aboriginal people did not ‘separate the impact of feral animals from native species’, but instead viewed ‘the contemporary ecosystem as an

¹² Rose (1995) used the term ‘Aboriginal’ and I also adopted this too because Aboriginal people have expressed a preference over ‘Indigenous peoples’ being too broad a term: <https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/articles/indigenous-australians-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-people>.

integrated whole.’ Conversely, Western conservation scientists predominantly strive to preserve endemic ecosystems, but ignoring native voices is an exertion of colonial power. Head (2000, 165) emphasises how ‘colonisation of land and people is not simply an event that happened in 1788’, but ‘is a continuing process’ that is today ‘influenced by globalisation, environmentalism, expanding tourism, and increased Aboriginal power.’

The rhetoric of human exceptionalism, and the belief that humans have a duty to serve as stewards over nature, means assigning value to the lives of other species. Out of 368 comments, 72 (20%) clearly asserted the belief that companion animal cats should be kept indoors (‘Confine cats to save wildlife’, Table 4). Related to this, but also encompassing discourses on free-living cats, was the conviction that wildlife is inherently more valuable than cat lives. The belief that the value of wildlife lives supersede that of domestic cat lives was asserted in 44/368 (12%) of comments. Five commenters responding to the BBC article on killing cats, alluded to the issue of domestic cats interbreeding with endangered Scottish wildcat populations (Table 4). The Scottish wildcat is a type of European wildcat (*Felis silvestris silvestris*) that once thrived throughout Britain (Breitenmoser, Lanz, and Breitenmoser-Würsten 2019). However, this subspecies was hunted and persecuted by previous generations of humans and is now only found in remote areas of the Scottish Highlands and is in imminent danger of extinction (Breitenmoser, Lanz, and Breitenmoser-Würsten 2019; Main 2018). The remaining small population is under threat from interbreeding with feral domestic cat populations (Hubbard et al. 1992; Meredith et al. 2018), and several organisations have initiated programs to educate cat guardians and landowners¹³, specifically how to trap, neuter, vaccinate, and return (TNVR) free-living cats in key areas (Breitenmoser, Lanz, and Breitenmoser-Würsten 2019; Main 2018). However, some commenters believed more should be done because ‘one Scottish Wild Cat is worth more, ecologically speaking, than hundreds of loose house cats’ (BBC246). The term ‘loose’ also suggests this commenter believed cats should be confined and controlled.

Much of the conservationist literature on free-living cats comes from Australian-based studies, and these seem to dominate discourses regarding cats elsewhere. A combination of animal welfare and nature conservation law in contemporary Australia has ‘established a hierarchy of protection for wild animals, with rare, threatened, or endangered native animals receiving

¹³ See the Scottish Wildcat Action (SWA) website: <http://www.scottishwildcataction.org/>.

the highest levels of protection, plentiful native animals lying in the middle -sometimes well-protected, sometimes not-and introduced wild animals at the bottom' (White 2013, 453). Free-living ('feral') cats are at the bottom of the bottom. Their versatile diets, tolerance to a range of climates and habitats, high fecundity, and the fact they do not require access to free drinking water when live prey is available, have equipped the domestic cat to become a successful 'invader' (Bonnaud et al. 2011). The notion of 'our' wildlife was a central theme of discourse surrounding cats as 'invasive' species. The descendants of the European colonists in Australia have taken it upon themselves to attempt to reverse the damage caused by their ancestors. The dominant control discourse, promoted by the Australian Government (Commonwealth of Australia 2015; 2020), does not reflect upon or question the right to assume governorship over wildlife. Both domination and preservation discourses use language to justify their authority and assert control over nature. This language was reflected in the comments using the narrative of 'our' wildlife that was used by those hailing from Australia, North America, and the UK:

- Commenter from Australia: 'THEY ARE KILLING OUR WILDLIFE..... A PEST I HATE CATS' (DMAU5).
- Commenter from the US: 'Our wildlife doesn't stand a chance against these excellent murder machines' (BBC190)
- Commenter from the UK: 'they slaughter our birdies by the million every year' (BBC69).

Fluffy murders and folk devils

A moral panic is comprised of actors or institutions labelled as deviant (the folk devil), the 'moral entrepreneurs who do the active labelling, the state (the political apparatus, civil service, police, and magistracy/judiciary), the media and the mysterious court of public opinion' (Rowe 2009, 25). Folk devils are socially constructed as negative caricatures that create fear, incite prejudice, and are often built upon racist ideas (Ben-Yehuda 2017; Werbner 2013). There was no shortage of anti-cat sentiments, portraying cats as villains who 'murder' for fun (Table 4). In response to the BBC article, one comment reads: 'Cats are the only pet that can do what they like with no comeback, damage other gardens, kill wildlife, exert extreme cruelty on small animals, defecate on lawns, veg patches, etc' (BBC166). Another even went as far as calling cats 'a scourge on society' explaining how cats 'kill thousands of songbirds & other defenceless animals every year even though they do not need to do so' (BBC256). That

cats are described as evil, malicious creatures suggests they are taking on the persona of a folk devil, a central feature of a moral panic (Cohen 1972). Words such as ‘hunt’, ‘predate’, ‘cull’, and ‘murder’, are used by scientists, policymakers, animal rights activists, and the media to alternately legitimise or villainise the killing behaviours of both humans and other animals (Feber et al. 2017; Jepson 2008; Sutton and Taylor 2019; Cole 2011). Examples of these types of language usage can be found across datasets:

- ‘Cats are awful, selfish killing machines.....they kill for fun’ (DMAU218).
- ‘...murdering wildlife’ (GJ917).
- ‘...they slaughter our birdies’ (BBC69).
- ‘... [cats are] excellent murder machines’ (BBC190).

A common narrative shared amongst comments and sub-comments was that ‘unnatural’ was synonymous with ‘bad’ and ‘natural’ was inherently good. This is related to the notion that humans have a duty to remove ‘non-native’ animals from the landscape. The media and debates examined here are focused upon ‘Western’ voices and solutions that involve controlling or eradicating free-living cat populations. Subramaniam (2001) discussed the power of the media to influence culture, specifically with regard to the growing panic surrounding alien and exotic plants and animals. The overarching message demands ‘urgent action to stem the rise of exotic flora and fauna’ and Subramaniam (2001, 27) pointed out how ‘for anyone who is an immigrant or is familiar with the immigration process, the rhetoric is unmistakable.’ Feminist and postcolonial critics of the language used by conservation scientists have argued that ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ are co-constituted and exist simultaneously as both semiotic and material entities. These ideas are influenced by the scholarship of (Haraway 2016; 2003), who coined the term ‘nature-cultures’ to describe how ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ are inextricably interconnected and cannot exist in isolation. Essentially, any notion of ‘the natural environment’ stems from imaging a world without human presence (current or historical). However, nature is not external to humanity and nature-culture is a process, not a static condition. Ingold (2000b) warned against adopting terminology such as ‘the natural environment’ because it places humans outside the world and condones authoritarian intervention in world processes.

Coexistence over control?

‘Culling seems to be the default solution for a myriad of problems. No one has yet suggested we conduct a cull of the human population. Why not? Is the human animal too "precious"?’ (BBC288).

The author of the above comment may not have read the other nine BBC comments that suggested we do just that! While there is no reason to believe anyone was seriously suggesting killing humans, the anger and despair at the destructive nature of humans were evident. Some pointed to the irony of humans killing cats (and other animals) to save wildlife when humans are by far the most destructive of all species. Furthermore, it is not the fault of cats. The presence of non-native species on islands is linked to the presence of human settlements (Blackburn et al. 2004; Steadman 1995). Spatz et al., (2017) found that 95% of the human-inhabited islands contained ‘invasive’ vertebrates, compared to 45% of those uninhabited or minimally inhabited by humans. Likewise, it was humans who introduced the domestic cat to all mainland continents (Driscoll et al. 2009). Nonetheless, they are there now and have been there for some time.

‘Why, can't we live harmoniously with this planet and ALL its life instead of thinking we own it’ (BBC85).

Regarding the issue of managing unowned cats, there was also the sentiment that we should just ‘let nature get on with it’ (coded as Its nature/cats are wildlife, Table 4). The argument that cats are part of nature is interesting because, on the one hand, cats are considered a domesticated animal and threat to wildlife, yet sometimes viewed as semi-wild and a part of nature. There was the minority attitude that cats (and other invasive species) are part of a new ecology. Larson (2010, 25) agreed that there is a need for ‘a new story about invasive species’ because they are here to stay, and we need to learn to live with introduced species. Wallach and Ramp (2015, np) also advocated for ‘co-existence with feral cats’, pointing out that many ‘native’ species already successfully coexist with feral cats that, together with other introduced species, are now a functioning part of Australian ecosystems. However, these voices are a minority and are not amplified in the media or popular discourse.

Discussion

New media and modern moral panics

While it might be true that on a global scale that cats are detrimental to certain species (Doherty et al. 2016; Marra and Santella 2016; Woinarski,

Burbidge, and Harrison 2015), they are not a conservation problem everywhere (Lynn et al. 2019). If the latter message is not being sufficiently promoted, it may create the impression that all cats and all types of predations by cats are an ecological disaster. This is what Lynn et al. (2019) claimed is happening. However, both the BBC article (Table 1) and the original article (Holmes et al. 2019) state that the study was specific to island ecosystems. Nonetheless, the headline ‘Should cats be culled to stop extinctions?’ evoked responses addressing that question directly, and many of these comments appeared to have paid little attention to the content of the article. Although the BBC article discussed the issue of free-living cat populations on islands, the comments sections brought the debate into the suburbs of the UK. Some comments expressed concern that lethal measures of population control would find their way to UK towns, threatening the safety of the local cats. Others wished similar cat-control measures would be enacted in the UK and elsewhere: ‘Never mind [sic] the remote islands, we need total cat eradication everywhere, including big cities where they slaughter our birdies by the million every year’ (BBC69). Like many others, this commenter hijacked the comment section as a platform to pursue their own agenda, namely that all free-roaming cats should be outlawed.

Cohen (1972) and contemporaries viewed moral panics as primarily media events. However, how people engage with media sources has changed considerably during the digital age. The first change started almost three decades ago, with an increasing number of people around the world consuming news online, either from the digital outlets of established newspapers or newer digital-born news websites (Kalogeropoulos, Suiter, and Eisenegger 2019; Banaji and Cammaerts 2015). The second change is the increased interactivity and altered power dynamics of producers and consumers of news since the onset of social media (Hermida et al. 2012; Park and Kaye 2018). While it is not fully understood how social media shapes moral panics (Walsh 2020), social media has revolutionised how information is shared (Hermida et al. 2012). Nonetheless, major organisations still influence the discourse. Here I demonstrated how national bird protection organisations played a key role in the dissemination of information and were cited by many of the comments examined. Several unrelated comments from three different comment sections, none of which are about issues with cats in the UK (BBC, GJ, DMUKb), referenced the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) webpage. This UK-based organisation acknowledges that cats do kill birds, but stresses there is no evidence that they are responsible for declining bird

populations (RSPB n.d.). The RSPB's position reflects research that suggests cat predation does not impact upon population numbers in Europe (Thomas, Fellowes, and Baker 2012; Pavisse, Vangeluwe, and Clergeau 2019). Regardless of these reports and the RSPB stance, not everyone is convinced Britain's bird populations are not under threat from house cats. Nonetheless, compared to the US, UK residents were more likely to defend cats against accusations of bird species declines. This could in part be driven by the general assumption that cats need to roam to live full and happy lives, a belief that is more prominent amongst people in the UK than in the US (Dabritz et al. 2006; Hall et al. 2016; Patronek, Beck, and Glickman 1997; Rochlitz 2005; Sandøe et al. 2017; Kasbaoui 2016; Foreman-Worsley et al. 2021).

The problem with fluffy killers

As a species, the domestic cat occupies two distinct but often overlapping roles, ranging from invasive predator to beloved companion animal (Crowley, Cecchetti, and McDonald 2020b). Research conducted by Kellert (1980, 1984, 1985) found wild predators to be generally perceived as unfavourable, while domesticated predators scored highest for public acceptance. This could account for the conflicted attitudes toward cats explored here, or explain why cats receive more attention than other species targeted for conservationist strategies that entail killing. Although attitudes towards previously stigmatised apex predators, such as the wolf improved substantially over the past 30 years (George et al. 2016), tolerance for 'feral' species seems to have decreased (Farnworth, Watson, and Adams 2014; Nagy and Johnson 2013). The feral label frames a cat as inherently different from members of the same species who were raised as companion animals and live with humans.

'Calm down folks, there's a big difference between the little Fluffy you adore and a feral cat population. For a start, feral cats are NOT pets, they're wild animals' (BBC146).

Foucault (2008) described language as a form of control, whereby the act of naming objects, concepts, and persons defines them and imposes normative definitions of what that label confers. However, language is a social experience, with the meanings of words being shaped as they flow between social actors (Conley, O'Barr, and Riner 2019; Epstein 2008; Mol 2014; Foucault 1972). The discourses examined here flowed between conservationists, the media, and the public. Conservationist research and practice implicitly assign greater value to animals deemed 'native', and/or

endangered as a species (Wallach et al. 2020). How language is used within the rhetoric of control is problematic because it depersonalises or devalues individuals according to the ideologies of the dominant culture. From a conservationist perspective, populations are assigned greater value than the individual in efforts to protect endangered species and preserve biodiversity (Wallach et al. 2020). However, to make the lethal management strategies of species such as *Felis catus* more palatable there is the need to separate ‘other’ certain members of the species from beloved companion animals (hence ‘feral’) (Sutton and Taylor 2019; Hill et al. 2022; Holm 2020). The media plays a central role in defining the boundaries of classifications such as ‘feral’ that render groups of free-living animals more killable (Sutton and Taylor 2019).

‘I love my pets but when they go feral it's a different story’ (BBC131).

Within conservationist rhetoric, language is used to sidestep difficult ethical questions and render lethal control of some individuals more palatable (Crowley, Hinchliffe, and McDonald 2018; Sutton and Taylor 2019; Schuurman and Dirke 2020; Hill et al. 2022). The ‘feral’ prefix serves to denote certain cats as ‘other’ or ‘undesirable’ and thus devalues their life as less worthy or preserving. Similarly, terms such as ‘cull’ are used in place of ‘kill’ to imply a necessary action (Sutton and Taylor 2019). The ‘feral’ label allows free-living cats to be set apart from beloved companion animal cats. And the ‘feral’ cat becomes the transgressive folk devil who ‘murders’ wildlife and must be ‘culled’ to restore the ‘natural’ order.

A moral panic over cats?

Their lack of agency within the realms of human politics and media reporting makes non-human animals easy targets from which to construct folk devils. Several scholars have attempted to ‘bring in the animal’ to advance moral panic theory and understand human-animal conflicts in terms of animal deviance and victimhood (Mica 2010; Yates, Powell, and Beirne 2001; Howell and Taves 2021; Groling 2016; Cassidy and Mills 2012). The phenomenon of urban fox attacks has been described as a form of moral panic, which began with media reports of a suspected fox attack on 9-month-old twins asleep in their East London bedroom in 2010 (Cassidy and Mills 2012; Groling 2016). Fox advocates emphasised how this was unusual behaviour, but despite no increase in actual fox attacks, the menacing persona of the urban fox garnered nationwide attention (Cassidy and Mills 2012; Groling 2016). Essentially, the urban fox transgressed a human-defined boundary regarding how foxes ‘should’ behave. This

explains 'how an unrepresentative event can lead to such widespread and consistent media reporting' because the story 'taps into human fears concerning other species and the boundaries of human space' (Cassidy and Mills 2012, 18). Mica (2010) examined two cases of moral panics over free-living dog populations in Romania and Moldova. The first began in response to a 68-year-old Japanese businessman who died after being attacked by a dog in Bucharest in 2006. The latter occurred in response to the death of a 57-year-old man who was attacked by a pack of dogs in Chişinău in 2009. The Romanian case was similar to the previously mentioned moral panic over urban foxes, whereby the public reaction is a call for measures to eradicate the transgressive animal (or defend them). However, the Moldavian public opinion was much more concerned with the deviance of the city hall and local authorities in this matter of controlling free-roaming dogs (Mica 2010). Fear over extreme violence directed towards companion animals (e.g., cats) or leisure/sports animals (e.g., horses) can also become a source of moral panic. In 2015, what was later described as a moral panic erupted over the 'Croydon Cat Killer' who was believed to be a human who was viciously murdering and mutilating cats (Howell and Taves 2021). While the 'Croydon Cat Killer' deaths are now believed to have been the result of road traffic fatalities and dismemberment by urban foxes, a moral panic over horse maiming in rural England during the early 1990s did appear to have human perpetrators. What qualified the latter as a moral panic was the reporting and public reaction (particularly amongst the equine community) was not the result of increased incidents (Yates, Powell, and Beirne 2001). Incidences of attacks on horses and cattle were reported in previous decades to no lesser degrees, but the ones of the 1990s became highly publicised. In the case of the 'horse ripper', there was no folk devil. Some looked to blame those they perceived as a threat to their rural way of life, namely "New Age Travellers", "Hunt Saboteurs", "Eco-Warriors", "Refugees" and "Asylum Seekers" (Yates, Powell, and Beirne 2001, 10). Others feared the perpetrator could be someone they knew, a psychopath amidst their tight-knit community, and hysteria led to talk of devil-worshiping cults infiltrating the countryside and sacrificing innocent animals (Yates, Powell, and Beirne 2001).

Mica (2010, 46) proposed a typology of moral panics involving non-human animals: 1) those over 'transgressive animals' (e.g., urban foxes, Bucharest free-living dogs), 2) those 'about human deviance in which animals occupy the place of victim' (e.g., the Croydon Cat Killer and horse maiming), and 3) those caused by 'human deviance leading to transgressive

animals' (e.g., 'out of control' dogs). By examining user comments responding to articles about free-roaming cats and predation by cats, I examined how a moral panic framework is useful to understand the discourses surrounding free-roaming cats. The discourses analysed could be split between those blaming the cats (inherently transgressive animals) and those who blame humans for allowing cats to roam and procreate freely (human deviance leading to transgressive animals). The notion of a moral panic over cats loosely fits with what Goode and Ben-Yehuda (1994, 49) identified as five key features of a moral panic: concern, hostility, consensus, disproportionality, and volatility. Concern and hostility are certainly present and encouraged by journalistic pieces that use phrases and headlines like 'Cuddly Killer' (Angier 2013), 'Frightening', or 'Cat-astrophe' (Table 1). However, the comments analysed do not point to a majority consensus and are far from unified. Furthermore, while negative social reactions to free-roaming cats might be increasing, my data suggests an almost equal resistance to the feline folk devil trope. Likewise, the issue of free-living cats is not short-lived, but has been ongoing for decades (Marra and Santella 2016). On January 29, 2013, The New York Times ran a story with the headline 'That Cuddly Killer is Deadlier Than You Think' (Angier 2013) that discussed the findings of a peer-reviewed paper about the impact of free-roaming cats on wildlife in North America (Loss, Will, and Marra 2013). The online version of that article received over 1691 comments and 'ignited a firestorm' that received more attention than any other story, including a piece on the War in Afghanistan and global poverty (Marra and Santella 2016, 69). Within the next 24 hours, over 300 international news outlets picked up the story, and 'cat lovers and bird lovers – already at odds – finally had a public spotlight for debate' (Marra and Santella 2016, 69). The comments received in response to the 2013 article published in The New York Times (Angier 2013) were as polarising as the ones examined in this study, with some in favour of leash laws for companion cats, others calling for the killing of free-living cats, and yet others defending cats' rights to roam (Marra and Santella 2016, 69–71). Another key feature of moral panics is hastily enacted measures to combat a perceived threat and ameliorate public concerns (Garland 2008; Walsh 2017). In the case of free-roaming cats, the threat to wildlife can be weaponised by those who dislike cats trespassing on their properties or wandering around the neighbourhood, even in areas where wildlife populations are not under threat. It is not my intention to imply bylaws regarding roaming cats, particularly those that apply to parts of Australasia, are never grounded in

science. However, several bylaws have been deemed controversial, such as the ban on free-roaming cats that was recently approved by the city council in Akureyri, North Iceland (Ćirić 2021), and proposals to ban roaming cats in British Columbia, Canada (McElroy 2021). It is important that any issues surrounding free-roaming or free-living cats are approached sensibly and not driven by prejudice against cats.

Conclusions

In response to the Daily Mail article featuring a large free-living cat, caught on camera carrying a goanna, a comment reads ‘Why is this frightening? A wild animal with its’ prey in the desert?!’ (DMAU123). So, is a cat a wild animal or a transgressive domesticated species? In their paper, *Our Wild Companions: Domestic cats in the Anthropocene*, Crowley et al. (2020b), discuss the complicated and multifaceted relationships between cats, humans, and the environment. This complex, ambiguous, and often confused thinking about cats is manifest in my datasets, with cats being adored, abhorred, and perceived as invasive, unnatural, wild, and wild-like. Some see cats as lovable companions in need of our protection and others view them as villainous killers of wildlife. Discourses label cats as invasive, feral, wild, wildlife, domesticated, and undomesticated. Cats are sometimes referred to as ‘murderers’ rather than hunters, reaffirming beliefs that cats are ‘evil’ or kill for fun. How articles discussing the impact of cats on specific ecosystems are being used in discussions about neighbourhood cats does support the assertion that the media are creating a moral panic over free-roaming cats. This study finds that individuals who dislike cats trespassing on their properties, or consider free-living cats as uncouth, tend to use conservationist reports to justify their bias. Attitudes lead to actions and increasing anti-cat sentiments put social pressure on cat guardians to confine their cats which leads to opposition against those caring for free-living cats in the community. Luce (2013, 394) stressed that responsible journalism requires journalists to ‘think beyond the immediate limits of a story [and] to consider its wider impact’.

The way in which articles discussing the impact of cats in specific ecosystems are being used in discussions about neighbourhood cats supports the assertion that researchers and the media are contributing to a moral panic over free-roaming cats (Lynn et al. 2019). However, the discourse analysis says much more about how language is shaped and used to control how others (namely cats) are perceived and treated. Several scholars have linked terms like ‘feral’ to Foucauldian discourse, whereby

language is used to shape societies and define power relations (Holm 2020; Hillier et al. 2016; Hill et al. 2022). The discourses examined here lend credence to the power of ‘feral’ as a form of ‘othering’ and highlights how the term renders cats more killable. The ‘feral’ prefix has the power to support the cognitive dissonance necessary to differentiate ‘problem’ cats from beloved companion animals. Only by understanding how discourses surrounding free-roaming cats can become polarised, reactive, and inflexible, can we begin constructing ways to think more sensibly about cats. Any issues regarding the ecological impact of predation by cats need to be considered within the context of the local environment, and solutions tailored to unique circumstances. However, well-thought-out policies are hindered by moral panics, where rational thinking is replaced by indignation, outrage, anger, fear, and defensiveness. To address this, conservationist issues need to be disentangled from concerns regarding perceived nuisance behaviours. Furthermore, everyone needs to be cognisant of how conservationist studies can be weaponised by parties inherently opposed to free-roaming cats in their neighbourhood.

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Of Cats and Women: A Cultural History of a Relationship

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Abstract

The relationship women share with cats and their love for them is undeniable. Since ancient times cats have been by our side, both physically and symbolically. Few creatures have the power to define us as cats do. For a while now, cat lady has been something of an identity, a label. Cat symbolism is complex and ambivalent. Since they were venerated in Ancient Egypt, Cats have gained archetypal power. The cat is both a solar symbol – as the goddess Bastet was the destroyer of the evil Apofis, and a lunar symbol – as the cat’s eyes reflect the sunlight like the moon. In ancient cultures the association between women and cats was something to be admired and celebrated. Bastet was a very positive goddess associated with love, creativity, fertility, music and popular festivities. In awe of the extraordinary resilience of Cats, the ancients held them in high respect. In the Middle Ages Cats started to be seen as a tool of the devil, the instrument and companion of witches. This may be associated with the patriarchal dissociation from nature, instincts – all associated with the feminine. Many cats were fore doomed because of that and superstitions related to black cats as bringers of misfortune still make black cats less adoptable even today. The paper follows our history together, both physically – from domestication to our homes today – and symbolically – from goddess and demon to our everyday beliefs and superstitions in the present.

Keywords: Women, Cats, Relationship, Culture, Superstition, Religion

Introduction

Many people love cats not because they recognize themselves in them, but rather because cats are so different from them; “they are other than us in the deepest level of their being. Having entered the human world, they allow us to look beyond it” (Gray 2020, 26). Cats entered our world a long

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time ago¹, on their own terms², and made us love them and admire them in ways few other animals ever did. Our history together is long and complex and we shall have a glimpse of that in an attempt to unravel the mystery of the celebrated, yet deeply misunderstood, connection between women and cats, or should I say cats and women?

I love cats. I admire their unworldly beauty, their graceful balance and soft movements, I am in awe of their way of finding a suitable place in our world. In truth, my companion cats have changed my life. Besides rearranging my daily routine, they have found ways to communicate their preferences, their nuisances and we have found a common language, a way to communicate, unspoiled by the species differences. All this challenged my usual, common assumptions about communication and species boundaries and pushed me to step a little further and start investigating the cat population in my neighbourhood (which in itself could make the subject of a lengthy study). I try to choose my words carefully as I am trying not to distort this experience. To say that “I take care” would surely not be a fair description for our relationship. It is far more complex than that, but, this way, I realised that interferences in the feral cats’ communities are never simple. Any interference generates ripples, consequences that we might find difficult, if not almost impossible to predict beforehand. However, the stereotype picturing stray and feral cats as victims of our neglect is far from being accurate. Of course, there are exceptions (for instance abandoned companion cats that become stray and are in need of help, etc.) but, in general, feral cat colonies fare just fine, in the shadow of our communities, if they are left undisturbed (this, of course, is impossible most of the time).

This investigation has therefore turned rather personal to me. I wish to make this very clear from the very beginning and keep the readers on guard against possible biases that might arise from such positioning. To uncover our special relationship, cats and people, I investigated our long shared history in order to shed some light on our present. It is equally interesting and inspiring to trace back common beliefs, to understand superstitions, to demystify stigma. We may imagine that we know cats and we understand our relationship, but if we transform into keener observers, into more skilled investigators we can see that our knowledge is not as precise and extensive as presumed and there is still plenty to discover. My

¹ Much longer than previously thought, as studies date back the domestication of cat somewhere more than 10.000 year ago.

² Many scientists consider that they have self-domesticated, but we shall dwell more on that in the **Our history together** chapter.

study invites you to ponder over common knowledge – some is the result of centuries of observation and discovery, some the result of hate or prejudice. We need to question common assumptions, to challenge common stereotypes, to assess our common beliefs, and thus we may discover the possibility of a new and more compassionate future together.

Cats have always made the subject of strong emotions: there are those who love and admire them passionately, but there are also people who hate and consider them nothing more than a nuisance. Some have interpreted the hate of cats as an expression of envy – the envy of some people who have to be content with their ordinary lives and have repressed feelings of creatures that are free and content with themselves. We shall have a look at that too, at the graceful lives of our feline friends, at their behaviour and strategies. But more importantly, we should let our love and admiration for our “fellow” / companion cats lead us to discover new ways to understand and relate to all the other non-humans. We should wonder why, while loving and protecting our cats, we still find it acceptable to leave millions of other non-humans prey to their miserable fates. A better understanding of our history together, our relationship and our special connection will hopefully lead us to reassess and re-evaluate our connection and interdependence with the non-human world in general. We should not only discuss, debate, understand but also act upon our new understanding.

Why the connection?

Cats have been pictured in many different ways along their long and complex history with us from gods to be worshipped to victims to be saved and everything in between. But all along, their association with women seems to be the most enduring; cats are women’s best friends, either symbolically, metaphorically or simply by sharing a really strong bond.

The fact that women have been, for such a long time, associated with cats shows a long-lasting gendered attitude toward cats. The “crazy cat lady” stereotype is, without any doubt, one of the most enduring images. Even to this day, we feel it’s power. It creeps between our judgements and into our reasoning and, to some extent, advises of the way we see cat hoarding, or women taking care of a larger number of cats, or single women sharing their lives with cats, and so on. Even if we know it is merely a prejudice, it is so deeply entrenched in our culture that it becomes hard to get away from its grip. This may explain the need to conduct behavioural studies to differentiate between cat and dog owners or to see whether cat owners are more predisposed to loneliness or depression.

And still the question remains: if this way of thinking is so deeply-rooted³ and cats have such a power to define an identity, we should be able to trace the roots and history of this connection. So, do women actually bond more easily with cats? And do cats really prefer women? The studies that show this theory as plausible should not deflect us from showing some caution. The symbolism of the cat-woman bond is so powerful that it might bias our judgements to some degree. However, we have countless studies that show that it's really women who prefer to have cats as companion animals⁴. Some of the most circulated explanations for this fact are the associations between cats and babies. The "cute response" generated by cats' faces (and also cats' bodies similar in size to that of a new-born baby) seem to trigger instinctive protective reactions. In addition to that, studies now show that real affectionate bonds are formed between cats and their guardians⁵. It is also seen that cats also prefer women; they tend to initiate contact and jump into their laps more often than in the case of men. It has been speculated that this might be the case because women take more time to communicate with their cats. On the other hand, cats are more sensitive to higher pitched sounds like women and children voices – so they might respond better to that. Furthermore, women again appear to be more susceptible to the influence of the so-called "solicitation purr" that is shown to have the same frequency as an infant's cry. Apart from all these baby-cat similarities, the bonds between cats and their guardians are very much influenced by the cats. They seem to know perfectly well how to communicate their needs and most cat guardians develop highly complex ritualised interactions with their cats. I myself can testify to this. I fit this pattern all very well. Further, another interesting notice about cat-guardian communication is that, generally, this communication is restricted to a particular cat-human pair. What I mean is that there is hardly a cat language that all cat lovers can know. More precisely, we have a cat-human language developed in certain specific situations. The complex rituals developed for

³ And this imagery is also largely found around the world – also pointing to its endurance and strong connection.

⁴ But this might also be biased by the long-lasting association of cats with femininity and cultural biases. It's possible that men tend to choose dogs as companions (dog is a man's best friend, isn't it?) because our societies teach them that this is the way to go. Now we see that more and more men begin to openly declare their love of cats. And there are also famous men who loved cats – but this association never caught on.

⁵ Irrespective of the fact that these guardians are women and men. What really makes a difference is the interaction, the time spent together and the communication. Even though so far women have apparently managed better in this matter, this still might be merely the result of cultural influence. For attachment of cats and owners, see Vitale et al. 2019.

communication are specific for the human-cat pairs. Cats influence their human guardians strongly and it's all together possible that women are simply more open, patient and tolerant to have this kind of relationship forming.

In my special case, one of my cats is very weary of men in general but she approaches all women (even the ones she's never seen before) with much confidence. Many studies have shown that this seems to be a general tendency – cats prefer to initiate contact with women. But this may also be because women, in general, tend to interact with their cats more than men usually do. So, it may be just habituation⁶.

Moreover, it could have to do with the way women tend to show affection. Cats are very tactile animals. They rub against each other when they meet to show friendship and strengthen their bonds. Accordingly, it may simply be that women and cats show affection in a similar way. If we add all the other forms of hardwiring that I talked about before, we may get to a perfect compatibility, ease of interaction and supportive relationship. This may explain, at least in part, the deep connection and enduring history shared by women and cats.

These associations may have been given birth to the strong connection between cats and the feminine, from the Egyptian goddesses to the modern stereotypes. Cats represented the feminine power and mystery, the creative force of nature and the universe. In ancient Egyptian religion, but also in Indian and Norse mythologies, cats have been associated with the positive, creative and fertile aspects of femininity. Cats, as we all know, are both prolific breeders and extremely good mothers. Thus, in ancient religions, these aspects were celebrated and glorified and cats became symbols of feminine power. This will also explain the mediaeval society's rejection of the cats as devil's companion and witches' *familiaris*. It is an expression of deep-rooted fear of feminine power and independence by the church. The more women were persecuted, the more negative associations the cats got. Women, for the most part in our history, have been considered "good" as long as they were submissive – good daughters, good wives, good mothers in patriarchal societies. The independent feminine spirit was feared, and the feminine power was deemed satanic. Thus followed the great persecutions, torture, killing and destructions of cats on such an unprecedented scale. The untameable cat was seen as a perfect symbol of the woman who refused to accept the male authority, the traditional wisdom and the righteous rules of

⁶ And in the case of my cat it may be just poor socialisation in the beginning of her life (before she got to me).

society. As the fear of the witches waned, the fear of the feminine remained. But as the witch trials left the scene, the single independent women (without the possibility of fending for themselves in the male dominated society) became a nuisance. So, cats and women with cats became a figure of ridicule. And thus, the cat lady symbol was born. And as the resentment against single women grew, so did the power of this stereotype. The unruly women, their independent and unsubmitive spirit became the subject of ridicule and they were portrayed as lonely, pitiful and bitter man-haters. But fortunately, this mockery and disdain, bound to discourage women from embracing their own power, was ultimately exposed for what it is. And even today we are talking about their power still lingering on. We still have superstitions about cats, especially black cats, as bringers of misfortune and the women who love and take care of cats still have to face the public disapproval. However, through the efforts of exposing stereotypes, cats today may no longer be seen as sole signs of loneliness, but also as symbols of independence.

Our history together

It is common knowledge that cats domesticated themselves out of the mutually beneficial coexistence with us, humans. Unlike dogs, they were not aimed to be tamed or domesticated. There are authors (Coli et al. 2016, 65) who are still questioning whether the cats were truly domesticated or just tamed since this process did not undergo the usual changes. It is true that most authors seem to consider cats somewhere half-way on the domestication scale; not wild, but not truly domestic either⁷. The morphological changes are also not so big between the wild and domestic cat; apart from the purposely design races (such as the brachycephalic ones), it is impossible to make the difference between a wild and domestic cat by simply looking at the skeleton. Moreover, even the genome of domestic cats differs only in a very small amount from their wild counterparts.

There were different ideas about how and when the domestication of the cat started. Today DNA analysis makes the story a little clearer and thus we know that the taming of cats must have started in the Fertile Crescent, somewhere more than 10.000 years ago. And all domestic cats descend

⁷ This might explain also why cats are doing so great left on their own; in just one generation they are back to being feral and fending for themselves (of course, genetically modified breeds are the exception).

from *Felis Silvestris Lybica*⁸ alone. The present theory is that cats spread from their Near Eastern location throughout the world with the first farmers, most probably as commensal animals.

Although traditionally ancient Egyptians have been credited with domesticating the cats (and even today it seems that we have two genetic lines of cats existing in the world, one from Middle East, and a second from Egypt – more numerous) today we have strong evidence that cats were living with humans much earlier.

The oldest identification of cat bones related to human settlements dates from the 11.600-year-old Hallan Çemi village (Turkey), where 58 wildcat bones were identified. In 2004, archaeologists discovered on the island of Cyprus a 9.500-year-old burial site of a human and a cat. Considering the fact that there are no native cats in Cyprus and the distance from the land is too significant to entertain the idea of cats swimming across the sea on their own, means that tamed / domesticated cats must have been brought there. We can assume that the bringing by the boat of a tame cat to Cyprus is an indication that proto-farmers were already living alongside cats. The sedentary life, the cultivation of grains and the rodents attracted to the human villages must have been a great chance for the opportunistic hunters, such as cats. Thus was the beginning of a mutually rewarding relationship. The interesting thing that the burial in close proximity of the cat and the human shows is that their relationship went far beyond mere utility. We may assume that an emotional involvement and attachment led to the decision to share the afterlife.

But upon zooarchaeological and genetic evidence, it is most likely that in ancient Egypt the cat attained its fully status as a permanent human companion. It is common knowledge today that ancient Egyptians loved cats. Until recently it was believed that the domestication of the cat actually started in ancient Egypt and spread around the world from there, mainly in the Roman Empire and than beyond. Today we know that, even if the domestication / taming of cats started much sooner and in the Middle East / Fertile Crescent, Egypt still played a crucial role. The raising of cats on such a large scale had a great impact on the domestic cat population, so significant that, in fact, today most of our cats can trace their origins back to Egypt.

⁸ There are five subspecies of wild cat and it was once believed that more than one species could have been tamed / domesticated in different locations. For more on cat domestication and dispersal see Coli et al. (2015-1016), Baca et al. 2018 and Driscill et al. 2007.

Ancient Egyptians loved animals in general, considered them great teachers, and for that stands their numerous deities with animal representations. The attributes of animal-headed gods, the way they were understood and revered shows clearly that the Egyptians were keen observers of the nature around them and excellent animal behaviourists. This is just one of the many things that makes the study of ancient gods so interesting.

The cat had a special place among Egyptian gods and goddesses. Feline representations appeared much earlier than the time the cult of the cat goddess Bastet was finally established. We have extremely beautiful tomb paintings representing cats, as well as a large number of amulets and other good-luck tokens, such as the so-called “magic knives”⁹. The exquisite painting from the Tomb of Nebamun, dating back to 1450 BCE, represents a hunting scene where the owner of the tomb is accompanied by his cat. It has been largely debated whether the tame cats of the ancient Egyptians could have been trained to assist humans for hunting. As the famous stereotype that cats can’t be trained is falling, there have been voices that argued that cats could have been used to scare the birds out of their nests so that the hunters could catch them easier. The other side is arguing more on the fact that tomb pictorial representations could rather express an ideal situation, where all the family members are represented in the sense of a perfect place rather than a real-life situation. Either way, cats were present in everyday Egyptian life, and, furthermore, they held a special place (this could go either way depending on how we choose to interpret the hunting scene).

It is well known that the Egyptian love for animals and their worship for certain species is associated with keeping and taking care of apparently large numbers of individuals in captive settings, usually around the temples. This was also the case of cats around the temples worshipping Bastet. Moreover, as the cult progressed and grown, Bastet gained her own city

⁹ These are representations of cats on ivory blades designed to “avert misfortune, including accidents, ill health, difficulties in childbirth, nightmares, and the threat of poisonous snakes and scorpions” (Serpell 2014, 89). This may be also traced to the myth where Ra is killing Apofis, the monster of the underworld in the shape of a cat; Ra is keeping the sunlight in his eyes – represented as a cat.

Bubastis¹⁰ and her own special festival¹¹ (so beautifully and in detail described by Herodotus). We can imagine the scale of temple catteries simply by looking at the extraordinary size of the cat cemeteries near Sakkara and Hermopolis. We also know the story of the 19 tons of cat mummies sent to England and used as fertiliser (it seems that only several mummies escaped that fate and are now in the British Museum). It is believed that the raising of cats on this sheer scale finally produced “a domestic strain more docile, sociable, and tolerant of living at high densities than its wild progenitor” (Serpell 2014, 89). The interesting thing studying cat mummies¹² is that most cats seemed to have died young (younger than 1 year old). Only 4% of the cat mummies¹³ are of older cats. So the common explanation is that those cats were kept only to be killed and mummified as offerings. Supporting this theory is the fact that some X-rayed cat mummies show that the kittens have their necks broken. For me, although the worshipping and killing of the same animal is not uncommon, the disturbing 4% raises questions. In the populations of feral cats, 4% is the number of cats reaching mature age. So I thought this may be more than just a simple coincidence. The high density of cats predisposes them to transmission of contagious diseases and, if the named kittens were sacrificed, in my opinion, were not just to create votive offerings, but to spare the colonies of more suffering¹⁴.

The earliest portraits of Bastet, dating from around 2800 BCE, show her as a woman with a lioness head. In time, Sekhmet (the lioness headed goddess) and Bastet began to be paired as complementary opposites (this is something quite common in Egyptian mythology). Bastet portrayed the protective and nurturing side of motherly love, while Sekhmet represented the dangerous and threatening aspects. The main attributes of the Cat-

¹⁰ Bast for the Egyptians, Bubastis for the Greeks, now Tel Basta, in the Nile Delta. Since Bastet can be translated as “She of the city of Bast”, it is hard to know whether the goddess got its name after the city or the city took that of the goddess. Nevertheless, this may be of lesser importance to us, as the focus of interest is on the fame and worship of the Cat-goddess that is practised on a large scale. Also, and equally important, is the large number of cats raised in temple catteries to fulfil the role of guardians, good-luck bringers for the followers of Bastet.

¹¹ Taking place in April and May, and, most likely, the largest and most important festival in Egypt.

¹² It is also interesting to notice that not all cat mummies contain cats. Some contain bones of animals belonging to other species and some are just textiles.

¹³ It is also important to make a distinction between cat mummies of famous cats (like the cats of pharaohs that have their own sarcophagus and offerings) and the cat mummy offerings to the temple of the cat-goddess.

¹⁴ This could be put to test by analysing the kitten mummies to look for signs of illness or viral remnants / markers in the mummies.

goddess are her sexual energy, motherhood, fertility and child-bearing. In contrast with Sekhmet, seen as “the fierce destroying heat of the sun’s rays” (Spence 1996, 147), Bastet was the “mild fertilizing heat of the sun” (idem, 148). We all know that cats love to bathe in the mild warmth of sunny rays – and the Egyptians knew that too well. Cats are also prolific breeders. This is what made them a symbol of fertility, creativity and motherly love. Even Herodotus observed that cats are a species with a great love for their young, and the mothers fearlessly protect their kittens. This made them very much loved and respected. Not without importance was their protection for the stock of grains, as Egypt was the grain basket of the Roman world at that time.

To really understand the status of the cats in ancient Egypt we can compare it to that of cows in India. The export of cats was forbidden¹⁵ and this might explain the relatively late arrival of cats in the Greek and Roman worlds. The death of a cat, even by accident, was punishable by death. Many people had cats in their homes and cherished them dearly and when the cat died, all family went into mourning¹⁶. They also had their cats mummified and buried in large cats’ cemeteries, according to their financial possibilities.

These cherished companions, celebrated and revered, symbols of fertility and maternity, continued to maintain their privileged status for a very long time¹⁷. As long as motherhood and female sexuality were a part of womanhood to be celebrated and not feared (as it later happened due to Christian religious influences), cats remained appreciated and loved. However, the gradual extinction of the cults of pagan gods and goddesses along with the rise and spread of the Christian faith produced a dramatic change in the attitude towards cats¹⁸. From being essentially positive symbols of female fertility and motherhood, they became the virtual antithesis – malevolent demons, agents of the Devil and the companions of witches.

¹⁵ We know many of these details from the *Histories* of Herodotus.

¹⁶ In sign of mourning, they shaved their eyebrows, also Herodotus informs us.

¹⁷ Cats were associated with fertility, maternity and protection in other cultures too. For instance, in Norse mythology – Freyja, goddess of fertility, motherhood and love rode a chariot pulled by two cats. And in India, Shashthi, the goddess of fertility is also associated with cats and has a cat face.

¹⁸ This attitude change accompanied the spread of Christianity. It is important to notice that the Islamic faith is not accompanied by the same “hate” and persecution of cats. Most probably because of the Prophet’s love for cats, these animals continued to be loved and cherished where the Islam spread. The caliphs took great care of feral and stray cats in the great metropolis of the Islamic world. This went hand in hand with the public attitudes of love and admiration for them.

It is well known that the early Christian priests and officials took great pains to suppress all the heretic or otherwise unorthodox beliefs. They took sometimes notoriously ruthless and cruel measures to eradicate all traces of pre-Christian religions and pagan cults. It is most likely that the cats got caught in the middle. Being so much loved and revered and so closely associated with fertility cults, they simply became victims of religious fervour and persecutions happening in the Middle Ages. Cats were also very closely associated with witchcraft – sometimes depicted as another form of heresy, as a form of Devil worship. For this reason, it was condemned as an opposition to the true faith. These views also became very popular among the general public. Folk culture absorbed these beliefs to such an extent that even today we can still see and understand the associations – for instance in the Halloween costumes and imagery.

It seems that the popularity and love for cats in the early religions and folklore worked to their detriment. A creature so much linked with womanhood and female goddesses could not have a brilliant fate in a patriarchal society and religion. A powerful element of misogyny underpinned the animosity toward cats. Witches and other heretical sects were believed to worship the Devil in the form of a cat. And, as mentioned before, from this time forward it looks that the cats kept being associated with the negative and dark forces. Thus, from benevolent symbols and carriers of good fortune they turned into malefic forces of the dark. This time in history is closely connected to the persecution of cats happening on a very large scale. Cats were despised and distrusted for their lack of deference, failure to acknowledge human dominion and reluctance to conform to human (especially male) standards of proper conduct.

There are two parts to the belief in this dark relationship: metamorphosis and *familiars*. In metamorphoses, women and cats change shape; women / witches become cats at night and in this shape, they are free to accomplish their evil deeds. If cats are wounded in their attempts to cause destruction then, in the morning, the women who shape-shifted overnight are believed to show the scars too. In 1424, a famous case happened – a shape changing witch, named Finicella was burned at the stake in Rome for attempting to kill a neighbour's child whom she visited in the shape of a cat. These kinds of stories became very popular in folk culture during the Middle Ages. But the diabolic role of the cat did not end here. The *familiars*¹⁹ were witches' partners and demonic companions sent to carry out their evil

¹⁹ The cat was not the only witch *familiar* (there could be other animal shapes), but it was the most famous.

deeds. They were sometimes seen as special gifts from Satan himself and they were believed to accompany generations of witches. Many cruelties done on cats were justified this way.

The most famous is the mediaeval festival of Ypres. In this city cats were used over winter to control the rodent infestation in the wool stores. With the coming of spring and the selling of the wool supplies, the cats became useless. Thus, after a procession during the festival, the cats were thrown from the highest tower. The whole city participated in the event²⁰. This is one of the best-known, if not the most famous event where animals were treated in this inhumane way. Their sacrifice was seen as an act purging the city of evil. Another famous event was the “cat-burning ceremony, celebrated in Paris each year on the eve of saint John’s Day” (Cohen 1994, 66). This event was even more cruel – cats, tied into bags, were burned at the stake. It was again a public celebration where all the city participated.

This idea that the death of an animal can cleanse the community of evil and restore it to its normal course it’s age old, but in mediaeval times cats took the lead role as scapegoats. “Animals, especially domestic ones, were sometimes the mirror image of the human community and the bearer of its guilt. [...] The idea that the boundary between the human and the animal was far from absolute, in conjunction with the hierarchical view, lay at the foundation of the legal symbolism of animals” (Cohen 1994, 70). Thus, on these feast days cats became symbols of driving out the devil himself. This is how we can explain the fervour and cruelty that the community put into punishing these innocent creatures.

All these negative associations with devil and misfortune, along with widespread persecutions of cats had a strong and powerful element of misogyny. As we all know, the Christian priesthood was excluding women in those times and, more than that, Christian doctrine is overwhelmingly male dominated. Combining this with ancient beliefs inherited from Aristotle, we get to understand why, for a very long time, women were considered the weaker, imperfect sex. It is not by coincidence that the women who failed to conform to the accepted norms were labelled as witches: the single, the elderly, the lonely. They were mistrusted and even hated for their inability to conform to accepted human standards of proper behaviour. Similarly, the cat “was despised and mistrusted for its lack of deference and its failure to acknowledge human dominion” (Serpell 2014,

²⁰ The festival still carries on to this day. Fortunately, now it involves puppet cats being thrown away. Nevertheless, this shows the power of the event to this very day.

99). Later, as the witch trials receded and the image of the single unconforming women became rather something to be pitied than feared, so too the way cat-women associations were perceived changed. Single women were a nuisance, and so were cats, unusual, unruly companions that created long lasting associations and strong stereotypes.

Some cat behaviour and philosophy

As I have just pointed out in the previous chapter, cats have never been fully domesticated. It is true that our cats today – as probably tamed cats from ancient Egypt and beyond – are able to tolerate and thrive in situations that would have dreaded their wild kin: they can tolerate, and even love the presence of humans and even unrelated cats²¹. But it was not always so and, even today, in feral cat colonies things look totally different.

From Egypt dates the oldest proof that cats have been fed milk by their human guardians²². In Abydos, dating from the Middle Kingdom, Flinders Petrie discovers 17 cat skeletons with small pot offerings originally containing milk, probably to feed them in the afterlife in the same way as in their terrestrial life. As we have seen, cats in ancient Egypt were treasured bringers of good fortune so keeping them content, both in their earthly life and beyond, was very important – to have them watch over the living was an important duty.

Recent research is breaking the traditional view of cats as solitary animals²³. In fact, cats are very social beings²⁴ forming very strong bonds with familiar individuals, most often their relatives. They have a whole range of communication tools (from sounds to smells and marking of all kinds), even if most of these still remain under our perceptive levels. The cats' extremely large "vocabulary" is testifying for her sociability. We are now only starting to understand the complex ways our felines communicate – if we continue this way, we will surely build more durable and satisfying

²¹ The problem of cats' sociability is a complicated issue and we'll refer in detail to it later in this chapter. For details see Marshall Thomas 2001. For more on our life with cats see Clutton-Brock 2014, Riccomini 2012, Bradshaw 2014 and Davis and Perry 2007.

²² Considering cats were venerated as gods and also were loved, cared for and respected in ways baffling and amazing for us today, it is really difficult to imagine the way ancient Egyptians referred to their relationship with their cats.

²³ This view may have been strongly influenced by the fact that cats are solitary hunters (and their prey is too small for sharing). But also, given that for a long time we have considered our companion cats as models for understanding cat behaviour. However, our pet cats live in completely artificial conditions, where they are separated from their mothers from an early age and forced to live together with unrelated cats.

²⁴ In natural and semi-natural conditions.

relationships with them. We are very much used to hierarchical systems²⁵ and this is why cat social organisation passed as irrelevant, or was simply unnoticed and misunderstood. Cat societies are not hierarchical, they are more like a wheel, having a matriarch in the centre. Feral and stray or farm cat colonies look egalitarian, but there are strong bonds forming between different members. Most importantly, cats do not have alpha specimens or leaders²⁶. Cat societies are matriarchal and we can count this as another reason for their long-time association with women.

The fact that not all cats – all members of the larger cat family – live in prides like groups (like the famous gregarious lions) has nothing to do with their sociability and all to do with their type of prey and food availability. Cats, as we all know, prey on small animals that are able to offer food supply for one individual and one meal. Cats do not hunt together – the lions are the only exception in the cat family. Cats are ambush predators; they stalk their prey for a very long time if that is the case and, at the right moment, they pounce for the kill. They are extremely patient (sometimes we tend to interpret this as stubbornness in the case of our home cats – but they simply know what they want and they have the determination to get it). They tend to take care just of themselves and their kittens (when this is the case). This is why, probably the fact that they are lonely hunters made us mistake them for loners in general.

All cats need large territories²⁷, rich in prey, to keep the food sources available. In general, the more meat one eats the larger territories they need²⁸; and cats are obligate carnivores and therefore to get the necessary nutrients, they can't rely on anything else but meat. So, they roam and mark their huge territories to be able to keep them. As cats are exquisite hunters, endowed with sharp, powerful claws and strong teeth, an open fight would be devastating – so they better warn their opponents away. But not only cats are skilled predators but they are also very strong and tough. Cats survive

²⁵ This may be another reason why cats have been associated with women. Those who like to be in control are hardly happy with an unruly cat.

²⁶ This may be the most important point in understanding why they are not submissive to humans. Cats are with us on their terms only and even today you can have the love of the cat only if she's free to share it. You simply cannot dominate a cat – this is why for a long time we believed that cats are untrainable. Today we know better! For more on the matter see Bradshaw and Ellis 2016 and Johnson-Bennett 2011 and 2016.

²⁷ Like all carnivores in general – the more meat one eats, the larger territory one needs. This is why humans cannot generally afford to eat much meat.

²⁸ This is why tigers are endangered; there is simply no more space / territory for them as human settlements are spreading more and more into the wild and as forests are cut to be exploited.

incredible accidents²⁹, and they tend to fall on their feet (due to their particular biology) and for that they are credited to have nine lives.

Compared to dogs, domestication did not alter cats as much. They have not changed so drastically and yet have adapted to living alongside us, and us alongside them. The most useful to us were the cats's hunting skills and, for this we just had to allure them (or we would rather say the abundance of house mice coming by our grain stocks allured the cats) and all we had to do was simply let them do their work. The bold cats took the challenge and thus our common history began. Even today, this discretion of the cat is her trademark. Cats simply made humans love them and "this is the true basis of feline domestication" (Gray 2020, 18).

Something very important to understand about the cats is that they are obligate carnivores, the meat-eating is a family trait. And this explains a lot about cat behaviour, culture and way of life making possible to trace parallels all along the cat family tree. "Meat-eating has formed cat bodies" (Marshall Thomas 2001, 11) and also the cat way of life, cat play, cat hunting strategies and cat territoriality. Furthermore, it has greatly influenced the way cats communicate – less vocal³⁰ (discrete purring, but sometimes even strident sounds, when the situation demands it) and more smell based.

"To be unseen and undetectable is a state that seems to suit the cat family" (Marshall Thomas 2001, 25). Thus the importance of grooming – as we all know (and most of us appreciate) cats are very clean animals. They always clean their coats of all traces of dirt and try to keep their trademark smell. They also cover their excrements to hide traces that they've ever been there. It is also important to keep in mind that, even if the cats are exquisite hunters, they are also prey for other stronger species. For these reasons (to hide from both predators and prey) it pays for the cats to keep a low profile. Moreover, and quite often, cats walk so quietly that they are almost inaudible (for us, and not only).

Cats generally pass for nocturnal hunters (thus their associations with malefic and dark forces), but, in fact, they are crepuscular. And this is mainly due to their vision biology that allows them to see in very deem light – this way they have a clear advantage over prey. Their famously glowing in the dark eyes represent one of their best-known hallmarks. This fact, that they have glowing eyes, had both positive and negative associations over

²⁹ We have countless examples of cats falling from very high places (like the 12th floor of a building) and surviving with just a few scratches, and many other extraordinary survival stories. For more stories check Hankings 2016 and Morgan 2017.

³⁰ At least by our standards, because the cat hearing capacities are by far more sensitive than ours – so, there might be a whole world of cat sounds awaiting discovery.

time – positive like in the case of the Egyptian god Ra killing the serpent of darkness Apofis and, negative, such as the case of witches, sorcery and other forces of the darkness.

We generally tend to oversimplify our relationship in terms of companionship for us and food and shelter for the cats, but this does not even start to scratch the surface of the long and affectionate (sometimes) relationship we share. As we learn more about all cats, their societies, ways of life, communication and anything else related to them, we find ways to explain things that have been known for a long time; or sometimes discover connections and affinities that were beyond our imagination. We love cats and some of us are even fascinated by cats. The complexity of topics uncovered by recent research in the field helps us better understand our friends and forge closer relationships that, in return, will give us further insight into their lives.

“Now, what cats do is a little mysterious – some of it thoroughly baffling. Other activities seem normal until we realize we really don’t understand the cat’s motivation, but are just interpreting it with our own inadequate cat sensitivity. (Always inadequate because we are not cats)” (Blackwell 2012, 16).

The cat as a symbol of femininity

“With their promiscuous ways and polygamous marriages, their intolerance of leaders and their exclusive living habits, cats are quite unlike our other animal slaves” (Marshall Thomas 2001, 97). Cats are independent, self-sufficient and this made us question the true nature of their domesticity. They came to live with us on their own terms and they were never submitted. Their way of life fascinated the ancients (specially the Egyptians as Herodotus so generously paints the picture). Cats are exceptionally good mothers – we see this today as the ancient Egyptians observed in their time. One feature of this outstanding motherhood is that they mate with different males and so the same litter of kittens may have different fathers. This is an excellent strategy. We know that new and foreign males taking over a colony (or pride in the case of lions) kill the kittens of the former dominant male. However, if cats mate with all available males in the neighbourhood, this is no longer the case. The new male may be killing their own offspring, so the male aggression to the young is reduced. But this intelligent adaptation created opposite feelings in the human observers, ranging from admiration to sheer and utter condemnation.

As the behaviours and deeds of cats and, moreover, their thoughts seem to elude us, they have always been a symbol of mystery. Most often this is fascinating and exciting: “Our cats provide a very commonplace doorway into the world of mysteries” (Blackwell 2012, 19). But other times it has been a source of mistrust and persecution. Cats have always been the symbol of mystery and unpredictability in deed and thought. As it is hard for us to understand them, even to detect their subtle (body) language, we assumed they are beyond comprehension. In fact, they are simply more discrete and subtle than humans have imagined.

Cats seem to have symbolised femininity from their very beginning by our side. “In the late Egyptian tradition, Isis was assimilated with the lion-goddess Sekhmet and the cat-goddess Bastet. Isis was a goddess that contained in her image the highest kind of spirituality [...] but also the darkest chthonian aspects of the Mother Goddess [...] the Virgin Mary inherited these features, but the Christian official religion kept only the sublime and spiritual aspects, such as purity, holiness and so on. The aspects related to the fertility of the land and her darker side were never recognized” (von Franz 2016, 45). The ancient, sometimes matriarchal cultures celebrated femininity in all its complex and mysterious aspects. Fertility of the land and of all living beings was crucial. The harvest, and all sources of life were connected to the feminine. Thus, the ancient goddesses were revered for their power and importance, for their crucial influence on human life. With the rise of the patriarchal cultures, especially Christianity, these aspects of femininity were overlooked. Power and the feminine were separated. Thus, these aspects were downgraded, the feminine sexual power, fertility were gaining more and more negative associations. The feminine had to be discrete, to pass unnoticed since, on the whole, women could only find acceptance in their submissive roles.

We have seen that cats walk in silence, without making a sound, almost undetectable. This also reminds us of femininity, yet, because of this, cats were associated with gentleness and empathy (in their loving, motherly side). Likewise, they were seen as fierce and menacing in their defence of their young; they were powerful, accomplished hunters protecting their loved ones. As a symbol of femininity, the cat has both positive, loving aspects (such as fertility, creativity, richness and healing) and negative and destructive aspects (like darkness and witchcraft, as we have seen).

As a symbol of independence (the cat still continues to be seen as a “walk-alone” kind of creature), cats always stood for strong, independent women, goddesses of war (like the Nordic Freya). We know that,

historically, unruly and independent women were frowned upon. These women do not fit into society's idea of what they should be like. Fear of cats is symbolically fear of the feminine power and autonomy; or so it was for a very long time – fear of goddesses, fear of witches, fear of single women.

“Cats have a feminine mystery that represents the positive, creative, and in particular fecund aspects of femininity (Ackroyd, 1993). Cats symbolize pregnant women and are related to the moon by virtue of their feminine nature (Cooper, 1978). In addition, cats symbolize divinity across the world (Miranda, 2008).” (Park 2015, 44).

Cats have been worshipped like gods and persecuted like the devil, but all this had in common was the feminine side. Even from the very beginning, from our early history together in ancient Egypt, cats have been strongly associated with the feminine – be it in the protective, motherly love and devotion in the shape of Bastet, the cat, or in the destructive and strong wrath of Sekhment, the lioness. Both aspects of prosperity, fertility, creativity and the destructive nature have been worshipped in the feminine form of the cat.

“Black cats can be related to fortune and prosperity as well as the evil” (Ackroyd 1993 cited by Park 2015, 44). In Romania black cats are traditionally associated with misfortune, especially when one crosses someone's path. This superstition is traced back to ancient beliefs, especially those connecting black and darkness to evil forces, while light and white are related to good, healing powers. Thus, it is believed “that the tail of the white cat can cure blindness” (von Franz 2016, 63). The same author tells us that, generally, the power of the cat is seen to be located in her tail, as the tail is a tool of balance.

Cats are believed to be nocturnal and have shiny eyes, and thus they have been associated with the moon from ancient times. As the moon reflects the sunlight, and so do the cats eyes, these associations were quite common. We know that in ancient Egypt the ability to preserve the light and power of the sun into the dark of the night and, by association, into the chaos and disorder was a key feature. Accordingly, Ra, the sun god kills the monster of darkness Apofis in the shape of a cat. Thus, daggers adorned with cats were supposed to guard their owners from chaos and misfortune.

“Cats are known to have the roundest eyes when the full moon rises, further reinforcing their association with the moon. Cats, as *those which bring light* like the moon [...]” (Park 2015, 47) were always positive symbols. These moon associations further sparkled their feminine associations as the

moon and the feminine were also traditionally associated³¹. Also, the ancient Greeks and Romans believed that cats, rare in the classical world, were associated with Artemis or Venus, the virgin goddess of the moon. And “Artemis seems to be related to independent femininity rather than the typical femininity of a good wife and good mother” (Park 2015, 48). Therefore, cats also symbolize freedom, independence and autonomy, as they are subjected to no one. “The cat has much in common with the individuality and independence of the feminine element” (von Franz 2016, 68).

The femininity of cats in ancient myths has most often positive aspects of vitality and abundance, healing and fertility. The cat, like the snake³², was closely associated with immortality (von Franz 2016, 63). Adding to this belief as we have seen, is the conviction that the cat was credited with having nine lives due to the fact that cats are tough and impress by their resistance. All these count as positive aspects of protection and prosperity.

“The demonic and occult aspects of cats were not revealed until Christian era and they were related to the patriarchal system that intended to expel feminine shadows” (von Franz 2016, 65). The witch hunt and the diabolization of cats have coincided in time due to common roots: the persecution of the feminine power.

Modern stereotypes

There seems to be a real sense of threat in the combination between a woman and a cat. We see this clearly if we look at both sides of the spectre of modern cat – woman stereotypes. On one side, we have the much more familiar “(crazy) cat lady”, a woman who uses felines as substitutes for both lovers and children. On the other side, we have the famous Catwoman, the comic book and movie character, “both the most sexualised and untrustworthy of all female comic book characters” (Maddicott 2020, 11). These stereotypes are so very common, so very frequent and so very present in our minds that it is a real challenge to get beyond them.

I suppose that most of the women working or taking care of cats, or simply loving and admiring them had, at least once in their lives (if not many times over), to deal with this kind of imaginary. The “crazy cat lady” stereotype is, without a doubt, the oldest and most persistent of all, “it is the oldest, historically most sinister, anti-female label of all” (Maddicott 2020,

³¹ For more on cats in the Middle Ages see Walker-Meikle 2019.

³² The cat also sleeps in a curled-up position, where the head reaches the tail (von Franz 2016, 63).

18). “Cat lady” remains the epitome of sad and lonely female failure, often associated with the concept of spinsterhood³³. Generally, women who live in the company of cats (and this stereotype seems to fit perfectly in case of single women with no children) are seen as sad, lonely beings, who cannot hold down a man, who cannot have children (thus fulfilling their purpose in life according to traditional “wisdom”) and therefore fill their hollow lives loving whatever creatures available, namely cats. They must be a little bit crazy too... It is strange (or perhaps not so much) to see that the same situation in case of man is simply not such a big deal. Even more so, if we continue on the road of popular imagery, a dog is a man’s best friend, unlike the cat who is the sign of a woman’s loneliness.

“When we call somebody a Cat Lady we imply that they have left acceptable society, became unhinged, mentally unwell and desexualised; Cat Ladies have crossed over to an existence in which normal human relationships have become inconceivable. It is something to be feared, as once it has happened it is unlikely to be reversed. It is a transformation. It is an end.” (Maddicott 2020, 11).

The “crazy cat lady” idea is linked, as previously mentioned, to earlier beliefs in the connection between femininity, witchcraft and cats. Society in general, and our western society in the present case, does not like women who do not fit into the idea of what women should be; and as we all know, society had quite precise ideas about what women should be, what they should do and all that. Cats, on the other side, were also viewed as independent creatures who do not accept human rule. They were domesticated on their own terms and, in a way, they continued to retain parts of their wilderness³⁴ and remain untamed and unruly; “the untameable cat [has] seemed to supply a perfect metaphor for the woman who refused to accept the wisdom and righteousness of male authority” (Ehrlich 2016, 373). Thus, this cat lady stereotype got its power from all sides involved— everything about women and cats seemed to enforce it.

We have the long history of cats as symbols of femininity, fertility and creativity. As mentioned before, in ancient times this feminine power was a source of awe and celebration, but with the rise of Christianity it became a source of suspicion and doubt. “The Christian dissociation from instinct, sexuality, and the feminine element in general is possibly closely related with this change of the cat image in this kind of feminine instinctive destructive symbol” (von Franz 2016, 62). Overall, the negative associations

³³ And even often associated also with animal hoarding.

³⁴ This continues to remain an important part in the fascination they exert on us.

of women and cats have everything to do with the suppression of feminine power.

In the Middle Ages, all women showing signs of originality or unsubmissiveness were deemed witches and punished accordingly. Furthermore, the simple refuse to obey male authority or the attempt to challenge the usual order of things were considered signs enough that something was seriously wrong with that woman. The independence of women, as well as the independence of cats were traits to be doubted and condemned; and even feared, or at least mistrusted.

In the early 18th century, after the witch trials have lost their force and cats lost their threatening meaning, single women with cats were transformed from frightening witches to figures of pity. This probably happened because single women of the time were viewed as a useless member of the society, a nuisance, and therefore the cat lady became a figure of ridicule. As resentment towards these women grew, so did the popularity of the stereotype. It is popular still to us today as even today collectively we still consider that “decent” women should be first and foremost good wives and mothers.

However, viewing “old maids” as harmless did not last long. Anti-suffragettes propaganda depicted women as cats (inconsequential, trifling animals). Accordingly, only lonely and bitter man-haters could have asked for women rights, or could have risen for the affirmation of their own rights.

This rich imagery and its extremely large popularity show a deep-rooted connection between cats and the feminine power (as old as the ancient Egypt and maybe older) and a fear and mistrust of female independence and autonomy. This changed images and faces, as fear of goddesses, fear of witches, fear of single women and so on, but kept the essence. The feminine power and autonomy are to be distrusted. Disguised in disdain, mockery or pity, this distrust of feminine independence was also focused to discourage women from embracing their power and accepting their singularity. And, unfortunately, it seems that all the amount of feminist discourse happening in the recent years was not enough to rid the culture of this sexist stereotype.

More or less, the same is the history and situation of the other famous cat stereotype (even much more recent and less known than the “cat lady”) namely the Catwoman. Here we have, in many ways, a story and image in reverse of the previously presented situations and stereotypes. Catwoman is the sexiest superhero of them all. She is also feared but also desirable and tempting. Women were the weaker and the more imperfect sex, but also

lascivious temptresses with insatiable carnal appetites who used their charms to beguile, bewitch and subvert men. This power, revered in the ancient world, became, in the times following the spread of the Christian faith, a reason for distrust and persecution. The failure to conform to the recognised (sacred) authority – the male authority – was a mortal sin in the patriarchal society.

This incredible force of nature, this archetypal figure of positive femininity, sexuality and motherhood was reduced to a mocking image of its former glory. Cats are threatening figures in the collective mind – we may even find in this echoes from times long gone when the big cats were the number one hunters of humans³⁵. Thus, our fear and fascination for cats is deeply-rooted. The same goes for unruly women in the man-dominated world. The fear of becoming victims of the evil seductress³⁶ is still very much present. “In place of the pagan tradition of celebrating feline deities as symbols of fertility and love, now the cat is a symbol of promiscuity and lust – a byword for a dangerous type of woman who was out of control” (Maddicott 2020, 19).

A few closing lines

“Cats do not examine their lives, because they do not doubt that life is worth living” (Gray 2020, 6). And cats never do things in halves. Once you have the love and trust of a cat it is always there; it is hard to get their trust, one must be patient and attentive, but once won, they are as faithful as dogs, the much more admired and known for this trait. It also seems common knowledge that cats choose us, more than we choose them. In fact, this may be true as long as it is a real special thing forming a close bond with somebody of a different species. And, as long as cats are the more subtle partner in this relationship...

The strong feelings and emotions that our feline companions spark in us are well known. It may be the case that these are truly old emotions dating back from the time when humans were hunted by the big cats³⁷. Thus we may understand the contradictory feelings of admiration and respect and also the fear and hate. And this may well be why still to this day we have people who love cats and people who hate them and see them as nuisance and nothing (or very little) in between.

³⁵ See Tucker 2016 for more details.

³⁶ Cat derived language is often used as a way of demeaning and/or sexualizing women.

³⁷ For details on this hypothesis see Tucker 2016.

Cats have been worshipped as gods and persecuted as the devil. And as we have seen like all the other basic symbols, cats entail two aspects, positive and negative, at the same time. Cats have been associated with protection and good fortune, as well as motherly love and healing powers. They were protectors and guardians of our souls in the afterlife. One famous saying is stating that cats have never forgotten this status and this is why they have never been subdued to humans. On the other side, as we have seen, in the Dark Ages cats have paid the price for their previous associations with heathen deities and female goddesses. As suspicion raised over the feminine power, so did the animosity towards cats grew. They were persecuted and mistreated and they were seen as signs of misfortune and loneliness.

Some authors consider that hatred of cats may be even an expression of envy. “Cat-hatred is very often the self-hatred of misery-sodden human beings redirected against creatures they know are not unhappy” (Gray 2020, 22). As we have seen along this study, the women and cats are not inherently connected although there is a deep-rooted relation between them. Culture plays a major part in forging this connection.

The paper traced our shared history in the attempt of bringing some light on the popular cat – women associations. I myself met, more than ten years ago, the cat who changed my life forever. Since then I’ve been constantly surrounded by cats of all ages, sizes and conditions. I’ve come to love them all, admire them all for what they are – special breeds or feral or anything in between – and I studied their behaviour in an attempt to understand them better and live with them more harmoniously. Accordingly, this whole investigation is very personal for me. I am the “cat lady”.

Studying cats means uncovering a lot of preconceived ideas and stereotypes. We think that cats are aloof, but in fact they are social and even affectionate to their guardians. Cats definitely love us, but they love differently. And even if cats are no less sociable than other species, we still tend to think of them as solitaries. But “whether or not cats walk by themselves, they still preserve some of their secrets” (Turner and Bateson 2014, 7). Being close to them is a privilege. Observing a feral cat colony, getting the friendship of these semi-wild creatures comes with the feeling of entering a special, private place. Cats are famous as independent beings, they are (almost) never needy and when they choose to be affectionate is a definite sign of love and trust. In our close relations with non-humans we learn how to listen, how to pay attention and how to understand the

different perspectives. As the other animals perceive the world differently, in order to understand and communicate with them we must pay a closer attention to all aspects and fine details. We must be open to new experiences and I believe, this way, we will always learn new things from all our non-human (and sometimes human) companions.

“Humans do not rank above other animals, or below them. There is no cosmic scale of value, no great chain of being; no external standard by which the worth of a life can be judged. Humans are humans, cats are cats. The difference is that, while cats have nothing to learn from us, we can learn from them how to lighten the load that comes with being human” (Gray 2020, 108).

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Thoughts on a Venomous Dispute in Prehistoric Archaeology

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Abstract

Our concern lies with the divergence of opinions between Balaji Mundkur and Alexander Marshack on the general way the meaning of the snake image, present in prehistoric imagery, should be approached. An overview of the body of literature dealing with the interpretation of the image and/or a presumed cult of the snake in archaeological contexts shows us that the cultural vision of the latter predominates. The methodology used in such instances relies heavily on building analogies starting from historic and ethnographic data and the conclusion is that the snake usually embodies beneficial principles such as healing, regeneration, fertility, and wisdom. In opposition to these interpretations, the efforts that try to consider the existence of a symmetric relationship between the human being and the snake are building a rather disquieting range of meanings for the serpent's representations, focusing on the danger it conveys, but usually have a speculative character and lack a strong theoretical and methodological background. However, this line of inquiry, corroborated with the advances made in the field of neurosciences since the '80, make a re-evaluation of Mundkur's biological approach a promising path to follow. We will not argue for or against any of the interpretations above; they may very well both be, and probably they are true. Nevertheless, we cannot accept the claim both schools of thought make, that they present the "original" meaning of the image, and we will try to put forward a possible model of the image's significance evolution from its "original" state to its culturally altered meanings.

Keywords: Prehistoric archaeology, Snake; Neurosciences, Relational ontology

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Introduction

Snakes are a recurrent image of human creations, irrespective of time or geographical location. Their image makes its first known appearance in the Upper Palaeolithic, and it remains a constant throughout history up to contemporary times. When studied in a historical context, its meaning is constructed by the written texts of the period, and when one moves beyond antiquity's threshold, ethnographical studies are often also added to the ordering tools helping us make sense of the prehistoric world. Given the richness of existing data, it is no wonder that most of the effort in prehistorical archaeology is focused on the interpretation of the snake image, and to a lesser extent on the attempts of identifying its origin and force.

The most famous discussion on the latter topic has been sparked in the early eighties by the divergence of opinions between Balaji Mundkur (1994, 1983, 1978; Marshack, Mundkur 1985) and Alexander Marshack (1985; Marshack, Mundkur 1985) on the general way the meaning of the image of the snake should be approached. An overview of the body of literature dealing with the interpretation of the image and/or a presumed cult of the snake in archaeological contexts shows us that the cultural vision of the latter predominates (Antanaitis 1998; Gimbutas 1982; Hayden 1987; Lambert 1985; Maringer 1977; Krumholz McDonald 1994; Peters, Schmidt 2004; Polkowski 2015; Potts 2007; Bru Romo, Vásquez-Hoys 1987). The methodology used in such instances relies heavily on building analogies starting from historic and ethnographic data and the conclusion is that the snake usually embodies beneficial principles such as healing, regeneration, fertility, and wisdom. In opposition to these interpretations, the efforts that try to consider the existence of a symmetric relationship between the human being and the snake (Benz, Bauer 2013; Borić 2013; Gifford, Antonello 2015) are building a rather disquieting range of meanings for serpent's representations, focusing on the danger it conveys, but usually have a speculative character and lack a strong theoretical and methodological background. However, this line of inquiry corroborated with the advances made in the field of neurosciences since the '80, make a re-evaluation of Mundkur's biological approach a promising path to follow. To conclude, we wish to clearly state that we will not argue for or against any of the interpretations above; they may very well both be and are probably true. Nevertheless, we cannot accept the claim both schools of thought make, that they present the "original" meaning of the image. As consequence, we will further focus on building a layered interpretation of the snake

representations which will put forward a possible model of the image's significance evolution from its "original" state to its culturally altered meanings.

Living Materiality

In our understanding, the New Materialism, as one of the latest philosophical platforms built in an attempt to help us better cope with a world of fast-changing truths, realities, and connections, argues for a re-evaluation of our interaction with the natural or built environment. This complex re-evaluation of our life's framework should be made possible by a revitalisation and reinterpretation of a wide array of materialist thinkers (Coole, Frost 2010; Dolphijn, van der Tuin 2012), but who, in our opinion, trace back their roots, in one way or another, to the hermeneutic phenomenology of Martin Heidegger, either to embrace and refine it (Ahmed 2010; Braidotti 2010; Coole 2010), either to contest and rework it (Meillasoux 2012).

In archaeology, this current of thought has led to the appearance of two theoretical stances. The first, with a rather mild discourse, is pleading for a *symmetrical* approach to the interpretation of archaeological realities, that would also consider the intrinsic quality of things to act upon us, to determine courses of action in the exterior world and enrich our interior universe (Domańska 2006; Olsen 2012, 2007, 2003; Webmoor 2007). For us, the main problem with this line of discourse lies in the contrast between its message – archaeology is about things – and its form – archaeology is about being well read in philosophy and occasionally trespassing in the realm of ontology. We believe that it is not archaeology's place to define what it is to be human, but we should focus on how we are/were living as humans and why do we live as we do.

The second stance we have already mentioned. It outlines an archaeology "without the Past" and, in our reading, free of humans; that is that archaeology where artifacts have the capacity of acting, existing, and generating meaning in the absence of a human presence (Witmore 2014). The issue we take with this argument is purely pragmatic: the result of the research must be oriented towards delivering a *cash value*, it has to present relevance and it has to enable us to cope in our dealings with the world (James 1912, 1911; Rorty 2000, 1995, 1991). From this point of view, short of restricting ourselves to thick and heavy description, any connection that we build with the archaeological material presents relevance if it involves the human being and any attempt to extricate the human being from the

equation is bound to be pointless. Consequently, we believe that any plea for a “return to things” should also entail a return to simplicity in our theoretical substrate, to the thinking of Martin Heidegger.

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger (2006) puts forward the concept of *Dasein*, as an understanding of the human being functioning in a continuous state of threefold determination, defined by the constant interaction between things, other beings, and reference to self (Liiceanu 2006, 579). The unfolding of the interaction, as well as the construction of intelligibility of the surrounding environment, from the perspective of the triple determination, are defined by the concept of *understanding* (Heidegger 2006, 119, § 18 [86]). This *understanding* defines the objects as useful entities in the context of the current situational preoccupation and the future projects of the human being that is making use of them. *Understanding* in this sense becomes a predeterminate affective and temporal process. The affective dimension, expressed as mood, constitutes a fundamental aspect of human life and it characterizes the natural and pre-conceptual affective positioning of the human being towards its current preoccupation. The temporal dimension stems from the historical character of existence, which is not moving along a linear path, but it finds itself in a continuous present, inside its preoccupation, which continuously updates the past and anticipates the future. These two dimensions are inextricably connected, and one cannot be understood in the absence of the other, since affective positioning, our mood in each moment, is the result of the past coming forth within the present moment and which further defines the possibilities for future projects (Heidegger 2006, 450, § 68 [340]). This redefinition of the world as experimented by the human being requires the reworking of its spatiality. Space, from a Heideggerian perspective, is not determined by the physical coordinates of the constituent elements of a situation, but by the role these play within our preoccupations and projects. The proximity or distance towards things is therefore defined by the role these play within our present actions (Heidegger 2006, 139-140, § 23 [102]). We have insisted on the spatiality of things because for us, as archaeologists, objects sit in the centre of our attention, and in the following, we will examine the manner in which the Heideggerian thought details their nature. In the opening of his work on things Heidegger (1967) defines three categories: a) things as objects; b) things as names, including concepts and actions; c) things as the totality of connections between objects, concepts, actions, and anything else that possesses an existence. In Heidegger’s view, the last aspect defines the way the human being ordinarily perceives objects,

as it is connected to the lived experience (Heidegger 1967, 75), while the first two are also accessible through pure reasoning. The third type, through its belonging to a specific situational context, inextricably linked to the process of living, becomes accessible only through phenomenological interrogation. The phenomenological interrogation of things becomes possible because these become entities that can be met and understood only within the human experience as action in concrete situations. Only through our perception of, and action on things, do we constitute ourselves into human beings, just as, only thereby do the things become things (Gendlin 1967, 259). From this perspective, objects cease to constitute entities subjected to unfalsifiable examination and become expressions of an equation which through its reversal grants access to human experiences, thus allowing the analysis of the archaeological material along with the same fundamental characteristics we have just described. The proposed solution to solve the new resulted equation must consider the fact that our own project cannot be situated outside our own existence, which means that any analysis we build will, in fact, explain our own situation. In summary, we aim to approach the archaeological material as a manifestation of specific human preoccupations, as a reflection on its possible perception within the dynamics of human lived experience.

Neurosciences and the Image of the Snake

Approaching the problem of archaeological interpretation in the manner described above requires situating the subject of interrogation into a network defined by its intrinsic meaning and the relationships thus established with human behaviour. For the specific subject of this paper, we follow Gell's line of reasoning (Gell 1998, 1992), placing at the foundation of our inquiry the belief that the main purpose of prehistoric art is to act. This is not a dogmatic belief but is endorsed by the functioning of the human brain as a relentless meaning-extracting machine, as exemplified by the ability of simple geometric shapes to elicit automatic emotional responses (Armbruster et al. 2014; Aronoff, Barclay, Stevenson 1998; Bar, Neta 2006; Larson et al. 2009; Takeshima, Gyoba 2016). However, unlike the anthropologist situated within a living cultural system, we cannot afford the luxury of ignoring the origins of a motif, if we wish to decipher its meaning, for two reasons. First, to be able to extract a reasonably best possible explanation, we must define the intrinsic properties of the image that lead it to become a cultural motif. Second, if we wish to build a symmetrical relationship, we need to be able to identify the initial effect that the image

of the snake has on the human being and, in order for our interpretation to be relevant to a larger narrative, to prove a possible independence of its cultural context.

As we have already mentioned, the roots of the snake's image original meaning are still unresolved. However, we believe that Mundkur's assertion that the root of ophidian symbolism is fear ingrained at an instinctual level is correct (Mundkur 1983), with one small caveat: it is not the venom that we fear, but the snake itself. Two issues might be taken with this assertion: first, that fear is an innate emotion, second, that the specific fear of the snake is an unlearned behavioural characteristic of the human being. We will not dwell long on the first problem. The existence of an entire array of evolutionary determined basic emotion, encompassing fear, rage, sexuality, curiosity, nurturance or need for companionship or social interaction, and their role as behaviour adaptive tools helping us with quotidian situations, is by now a well-established fact (Ekman 1994, 1992; LeDoux 2014; Panksepp 2005; Sander 2013; Schulkin 2004; Tucker, Derryberry, Luu 2000). From this perspective, fear ceases to be an expression of a learned behaviour connected to the expectation of a harmful experience and it is a coherent neural system whose task is to maximize chances of survival when confronted with dangerous situations.

The rebuttal of the second objection needs a more elaborate argument. In a first instance, a series of studies indicates that fear of the snake is not only one of the most common reactions, but also one of the strongest, being occasionally surpassed by the fear of spiders, and it presents a trans-cultural character (Davey et al. 1989; Makashvili, Kaishauri, Azmaiparashvili 2014; Prokop, Özel, Uşak 2009). The cultural findings are supported by biological data. A series of studies analysing the automatic appraisal of various visual stimuli demonstrates that the image of the snake is characterized by the shortest time necessary for identification against either neutral stimuli (flowers, mushrooms), or culturally relevant fear stimuli (guns, defective electrical outlets) (Åhs et al. 2009; Soares et al. 2009; Öhman et al. 2007; Öhman, Mineka 2001; Vagnoni, Lourenco, Longo 2012; Waters, Lipp 2008; Waters, Lipp, Randhawa 2011; Zani, Proverbio 2012). The involuntary attention that the snake image forces on the human being, illustrated by the speed of its detection, is connected by the authors of the studies to the automatic activation of the fear module in the brain as a reaction of preparation in front of a possible danger. This conclusion is also supported by a study analysing the electrical activity of the brain, which showed stronger reactions towards snakes and spiders (Mallan, Lipp 2011)

and by research indicating that not only realistic images of snakes are identified faster, but also abstract serpentiform lines (Bex, Simmers, Dakin 2001; Vancleef, Wagemans 2013). We thus believe that there is enough reason to consider that the original message that the image of the snake conveys is of threat and this instinctual reaction should constitute the baseline for the construction of an interpretative discourse. On this ground, we contest the approach towards the image of the snake from the point of view of the history of religions and ethnographic sources resulting in the construction of interpretations on a general level, independent from the context of myth creation. We also believe the existent interpretations of the snake representations on Cucuteni-Trypillia pottery as expressing attributes of the Mother Goddess such as fecundity and immortality or the male element in a description of a hierogamy (Balabina 2013; Burdo 2007; Dumitrescu 1979; Gimbutas 1989, 1982; Korol' 1999; Lazarovici, Lazarovici 2015; Maxim 2005; Monah 2012; Rybakov 1965; Stryelkova 1999; Tsvetkova 2005) are, at best, incomplete. This incompleteness and hesitation in the reconstruction of the possible significations of the image of the snake, draws mainly from the Cartesian stance from which the authors operate. The imaginary creations expressed through material images are analysed with the impartial eye of the scientist and are thus completely deprived of their emotional charge which initially led to their recognition as ideal models.

Literary Sources and Falsification Testing

In order to make the connection between our theoretical stance and the archaeological material, we will use inference to the best explanation as a tool for constructing a logical line of reasoning and, as such, several matters need to be addressed. In extracting what we believe to be the meaning of the image of the snake on the Cucuteni-Trypillia pottery, we will be following the principles of simplicity (Swinburne 2004) and coherence (Bovens, Hartmann 2003); in consequence, not only will we lay out our conclusions in their simplest form, but we will also have to keep the underlying set of arguments to a minimum. However, to ensure the coherence of our interpretation and to raise its degree of confidence, we are forced to add an independent and relatively reliable source of verification.

We have chosen to try and falsify our hypothesis by testing it against historical data offered by the oldest deciphered texts belonging to Sumerian, Vedic, and Egyptian civilisations. We have chosen these texts to both minimize the time gap with the prehistoric timeframe of our focus, and to present a trans-cultural dimension.

Sumerian literature, in general, constitutes an umbrella term that, covers a variety of document types and historical periods. In our case, we will be using literary sources originating from a chronological interval between 2,600 and 1,600 BC. The 40 texts used in our analysis have been extracted from the *Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature* (Black et al. 1998-2006) following a simple term search based on the keywords *snake* and *serpent*.

For the analysis of the writings from the Indus valley, we have utilized the most recent translation of the *Rigveda*, from which we have selected Mandalas II to VII, these being the oldest, totalling 427 hymns (Jamison, Brereton 2014). There is still no consensus between specialists regarding the dating of the *Rigveda* hymns, but, in general, it is believed that these have been put in their current form between 1,400 and 1,000 BC, with evidence on the existence of the Soma deity going back to the environment of the Harrapa culture (2,500-1,900 BC) (Ferreira 2019), and with ongoing discussions on textual evidence indicating a timeframe at around 3,000 BC (Kak 1987; Prasanna 2018). We must underline the strong connections existing between Mesopotamia and the Indus valley within these timeframes (Wright 2016; Daggumati, Revesz 2019), making these texts rather complementary sources of information.

For the Egyptian literature, we have chosen to use the pyramid texts of the Old Kingdom, these being the oldest Egyptian texts known to date. For our analysis, we have used the most complete version that we had access to (Allen 2005), which includes the texts from the pyramids of pharaohs Unis (ca. 2,353-2,323 BC), Teti (ca. 2,323-2,291 BC), Pepi I (ca. 2,289-2,255 BC), Merenre (ca. 2,255-2,246 BC), Pepi II (ca. 2,246-2,152 BC) and of queen Neith, wife of Pepi II, with a total of 55 incantations. Based on the existing evidence up to date (Rice 2003), we consider the Egyptian literature as an independent corpus, that cannot be linked with Sumerian and Vedic texts.

Our testing will consist in the automatic analysis of the sentiments associated in the texts with the snake, and for this, we have used R (R Core Team 2019) overlaid by RStudio (RStudio Team 2016), and the following packages:

- pdftools (Ooms 2019) and readtext (Benoit, Obeng 2018) for documents import;
- dplyr (Wickham, François, et al. 2019), stringr (Wickham 2019), tidyr (Wickham, Henry 2019), purr (Henry, Wickham 2019), and reshape2 (Wickham 2007) for datasets manipulation;

- tm (Feinerer, Hornik 2018), tidytext (Silge, Robinson 2016), sentimentr (Rinker 2019), and SnowballC (Bouchet-Valat 2019) for datasets preparation and automatic texts analysis;
- ggplot2 (Wickham 2016), ggraph (Pedersen 2018), igraph (Csardi, Nepusz 2006), and ggthemes (Arnold 2019) for the visual presentation of the results.

For the identification of the sentiments present within the texts, we have used three collections of words associated with affective valences, integrated within the *tidytext* package: AFINN (Nielsen 2011), Bing (Hu, Liu 2004), and NRC (Mohammad, Turney 2013).

In selecting our working methodology, we have chosen to treat texts as vectorial spaces, where the vectors' elements indicate the presence of words within the texts. This concept, known as *bag of words*, is the most widely used method for sentiment analysis (Cambria et al. 2017) and it starts from the premise that the order of words within the texts is irrelevant, and that the simple collection of words is sufficient to observe differentiations between semantic concepts (Miner et al. 2012).

We have conducted our analysis on two levels. First, we have generated an image of the general tone of the texts mentioning our keywords (snake and serpent) by calculating the degree of association between words based on the covariation between the keywords and all the other words within the texts. This approach offers no indication on the affective dimension of the keywords, but of the story within which they are present. From this perspective, the clearest image is provided by the results obtained through the Bing dictionary. For Sumerian literature, in the texts mentioning the snake, most words are associated with positive affects, giving the texts an overall positive tone. Egyptian and Vedic texts on the other hand are dominated by negative affects (Graphic 1).

For the targeted analysis of the keywords, we chose to focus on the adjective – noun relationship, one of the most important relations of syntactic dependency. The analysis of the attributes of the snake, clearly shows the limitations of this approach. The available dictionaries have been built on the modern-day English language, and as such are not ideal for analysing ancient poetry. The best results have been provided by the NRC dictionary, and although they indicate a prevalence of negative emotions, we hesitate in considering the results conclusive (Graphic 2). But, on the overall, this analysis does not contradict the initial hypothesis of the snake being perceived as a threat.

Concluding Remarks

With the failure of our falsification attempt, corroborated with the known information on the way the human brain processes visual stimuli, we believe there is enough data available for us to build a relatively coherent argument as to why our theory could still be correct. We have discussed before the biological reactions elicited by the visualisation of a snake image and its deep evolutionary roots, granting it attention grabbing capacities as illustrated by the various experiments, and a top position in trans-cultural studies of self-reported fears. We propose that the mechanism through which the snake has become such a powerful image has its roots in its direct input into the fear module. In a cultural setting, the basic fear reaction would be overridden by the subsequent cognitive appraisal. However, given the results of the text analysis and studies aimed at evaluating the affective priming capacity of visual stimuli, we believe that the snake image is associated with narratives aimed at activating advanced neuronal modules such as the security motivation / precautionary system (Woody, Szechtman 2013; Hinds et al. 2010; Boyer, Liénard 2006), or possibly even the hyperactive agency detection device (Rossano, Vandewalle 2021). The activation of either of these modules results in ritual behaviour, as means of bringing under control a hypothesised, and therefore uncontrollable, threat. In our opinion, all these attributes make the snake an ideal candidate for becoming a stimulus akin to Sperber's view, for which the characteristics of its proper domain have facilitated the expansion of its actual domain (Sperber 1996).

The power of the snake image and the expansion of its proper domain is best illustrated, in our opinion, by its transformation into supernormal stimuli (Barrett 2010). A few examples from the ancient literature would be:

- Vritra – gigantic cobra forbidding access to water, and making life impossible – defeated by Indra;
- Apophis – not present in the Unis pyramids texts, it appears later during the IXth Dynasty (from ~ 2,100 BC) – it is an enemy of either the sun god Ra, or the dead – it is the most dangerous of Ra's enemies and its existence is an attack on life itself;
- Best known from Sumerian literature is mušḫuššu – old-Babylonian (first millennium BC) animal companion to Marduk (main Babylonian deity) – apotropaic – the main weapon is its venom – but the earliest documentation of mušḫuššu from the Sumerian-Akkadian period have him as an attribute animal of the

god Ninazu, and in this context it was an angel of death, killing with his venom on the command of his master.

What we see here is an exemplary case of how the original features of a powerful natural domain of the mind are being manipulated into creating easily assimilated cultural concepts. In all these three cases, fear / anxiety is used to proliferate and consolidate the idea that death and chaos await outside the established way of life. And with the transformation of the snake image into a supernormal stimulus comes the explanation of its meaning variability. Once the snake image went viral, every communicator that uses it is also able to expand its domain in accordance with its own interests.

To conclude, we believe Mundkur was right, and the origin of the snake image is fear. Its evolutionary roots gave it the pre-requisites for being turned into a supernormal stimulus which allowed for further numerous mutations creating a vast array of meanings.

In our opinion, treating the snake image as an anxiety-inducing stimulus aimed at promoting narratives with the purpose of increasing either social cohesion and/or control, should be an interpretation worthy of further attention and investigation in the archaeological discourse dealing with prehistoric representations.

Like any other interpretative attempt in archaeology, this intellectual exercise only presents a possible outcome out of many, and it may very well not be true. However, approaching the understanding of human animal-relations in prehistory from a place of equality, and acknowledging that our civilisation, both material and conceptual, is as much a result of the environment's mastery over us, as ours over it, opens exciting new ways of rethinking our past and reimagining ourselves as well.

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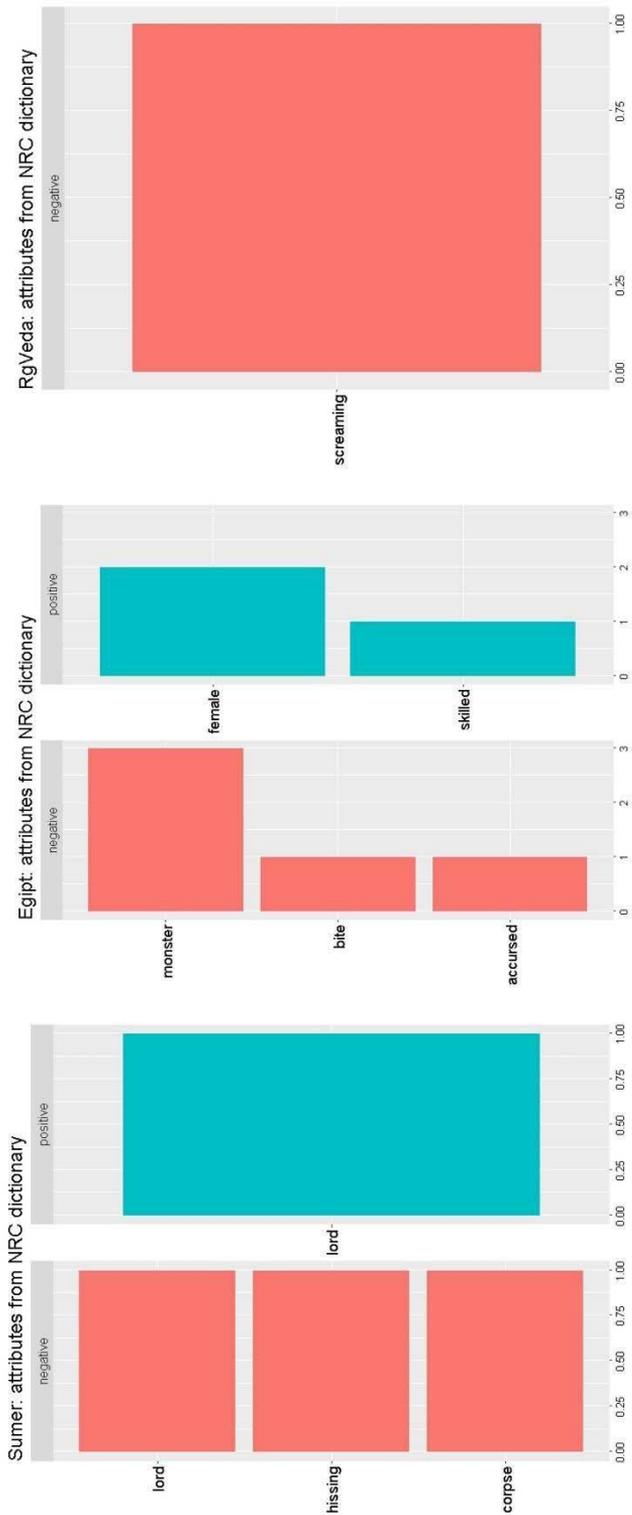
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Graphic 2. Most common attributes used for the characterisation of the keywords (snake / serpent).

The Future of Art after the Animal Turn

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Abstract

The paper discusses the consequences of the animal turn in contemporary art by pointing to restrictions, challenges, and opportunities brought about by this paradigm shift. One of the limitations artists have to deal with when working with non-human animals and animal imagery results from a new sensitivity of art audience for ethical issues. Artists increasingly face criticism when they appropriate non-human animals in abusive or inappropriate ways. The emerge of various guidelines that regulate the use of non-human animals in or for artworks is a rather controversial symptom of the animal turn. Many artists have raised concerns about the intervention in their artistic freedom by guidelines that they call a new form of 'censorship'. On the other hand, the animal turn furthers an expansion of art and introduces non-human animals as agents of art production and art reception. In the last decade, innovative art forms have emerged that challenge the traditional notion of art by involving live non-human animals as recipients or producers of art. The appreciation of non-human animals as creative, communicating, cognitive individuals questions the conventional understanding of non-human animals in art as models, metaphors, materials, or medium. But in some cases, instrumentalizing non-human animals in aesthetic practices borders their exploitation. By discussing selected examples of art for non-human animals, animal art, and 'artivism' that can reconcile the various symptoms of the animal turn, I argue that it is possible to revolutionize the art world and improve the situation of non-human animals at the same time.

Keywords: Animal turn, Art, Artivism, Interspecies art

The Animal Turn in Art

In his influential essay "Why look at animals" the art critic John Berger stated that „[...] animals first entered the imagination as messengers”; “[...] The first subject matter for painting was animal [...] the first paint was animal blood [...] the first metaphor was animal”; “[...] the

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first symbols were animals [...]“ (Berger 1980, 4, 7, 9). And indeed, art was and is hardly imaginable without non-human animals. They have been the motif and subject matter of art since prehistoric times. The earliest known cave paintings from El Castillo dating back to the 4th century BC show free-living animals. Throughout art history and until today non-human animals have populated the canvases, photographs, videos, and installations of the globalized art scene. The beauty of non-human animals inspired creative work, non-human animals served as live models in academic drawing lessons, and non-human animals symbolized all kinds of abstract concepts such as ‘wildness’, ‘nature’ or ‘the other’. They represented wealth, power, royalty, or whatever other quality humans wanted to ascribe to them. Animal body parts were used as materials for art, e.g., in the form of paints, brushes, paste or photographic image carrier layers. Non-human animals often had purely instrumental, didactic, symbolic, or ornamental value in artworks, their individuality and agency as living beings did not really count. Even when living non-human animals became increasingly part of performative artworks in the late 20th century, they still mostly functioned as medium or model organism to communicate human conceptions and ideas. This also holds true for example for the works by Joseph Beuys, one of the pioneering artists who interacted with non-human animals in his performances.

However, in the last two decades, the so-called animal turn has not only affected society and science but also the art world. Academic animal studies formulate a critique of speciesism, anthropocentrism, human exceptionalism, and the common criteria of anthropological difference and there is a general shift of perspective regarding the human understanding of other animals. Other animals are no longer considered as machine-like resources but as historical, social, and cultural actors. In art, too, the animal turn goes hand in hand with a changed attitude towards non-human animals: they are increasingly perceived as independent, feeling, communicating, thinking, and acting social subjects and less as passive objects. That means it becomes more and more questionable to use and understand non-human animals merely as subject matter, muse, material, medium, metaphor to be rendered into images or human ideas at will. While non-human animals were mainly used symbolically or allegorically before the animal turn and primarily conveyed human notions of nature or served human self-assurance strategies, non-human animals are now much more recognized in their individual and specific intrinsic value. They no longer only challenge aesthetic but also ethical positioning.

Guidelines for Working with Animals in Art

A symptom of a new sensitivity towards non-human animals is shown by guidelines and manifestos developed by artists, art historians, and curators that aim to provide orientation for the use and handling of living non-human animals. One of the earliest texts in this context is *Some Notes Towards a Manifesto for Artists Working With or About the Living World* by the artist Mark Dion from the year 2000 (Dion 2000). The text on the gallery wall includes the following statement: “Artists working with living organisms must know what they are doing. They must take responsibility for the [...] animals' welfare. If an organism dies during an exhibition, the viewer should assume the death to be the intention of the artist.” Dion reminds artists of their accountability. He does not ask artists not to harm non-human animals (or any other organism for that matter), but damage should just not result from negligence. In this respect, the artist Marco Evaristti has to be blamed that a fish in his installation *Helena* (2009) died after a visitor switched on the Moulinex mixer in which it was exhibited - even if the artist claims that he did not expect that anybody would touch the switch when he developed the work (Evaristti 2008).

The Justice for Animals Arts Guild (JAGG), which was founded only one year later, positions itself more clearly in terms of animal ethics. It aims to support artists who use their art to oppose the exploitation of non-human animals. All members of the artists' guild create art that is motivated by animal advocacy. They generally reject the inclusion of living non-human animals in gallery spaces. An artwork like *Embracing Animals* by Kathy High in 2005 should therefore not have taken place if the artist had committed herself to JAAG's ideas. Kathy High exhibited three transgenic rats whom she took over from an experimental laboratory (High 2006). Like the artist herself, the rats suffered from Crohn's disease. The work can be understood as a criticism of the way pharmaceutical companies deal with non-human animals. High treated the non-human animals with alternative healing methods and documented the process. In the museum there were daily talks about the therapy, trained supervisors looked after the rats and a veterinarian examined them regularly. Even the animal rights organization PETA approved the work because the rats were visibly better off than during their time in the laboratory. In retrospect, however, High self-critically stated that she had commercialized and objectified the non-human animals by displaying them in an art exhibition. Even if the rats were no longer laboratory animals, they were still objects, this time objects of art.

In 2009 Lisa Jevbratt developed her field guide for “Artistic Interspecies Collaboration” addressing the art students who wanted to make art with non-human animals (Jevbratt / Rosebud 2009). In this brochure, Jevbratt emphasized the need to treat the respective non-human animals with respect and to study their behavior and sensory perception. She also pointed out that non-human animals can certainly defend themselves against being included in works of art and that this has to be accepted. Consequently, one of the rules in the field guide is not to disturb, harm or force non-human animals to do things they do not want to do. If one takes Jevbratt's catalogue of rules seriously, a work such as the immersive video installation *Play Dead. Real Time* (2003) by Douglas Gordon turns out to be problematic: on the large-format videos projected in loops, you can see from different perspectives how an elephant lies down and gets up again. According to Gordon, the idea for the work goes back to a phantasy he had about an elephant lying down (Bloom Ingram 2010). In order to reproduce this picture, which is highly unusual in nature, he borrowed the elephant Minnie from a circus and had her transported to a gallery in New York. There he filmed her lying down at the command of her trainer. The work is complex and visually impressive. The elephant is made tangible as a vulnerable and majestic creature: close-ups on her eyes create a relationship between her and the viewer evoking empathy for her. Still, it is important to remember that Minnie came from an institution that is ethically highly problematic. She was taken out of this already unsuitable home, transported through the city by truck and put into a freight elevator to reach the gallery. There she was repeatedly forced to display behaviour that is so troublesome for elephants since they hardly ever show it in the wild. It can be argued that this procedure is justified to create a strong image never before to be seen. However, a recording of an elephant lying down on human command normalizes and reproduces hierarchical human-animal relationships and is not actually innovative at all.

In 2011, two years after Jevbratt published her field guide, the world's largest artists' association, the *College Art Association*, developed guidelines for art involving non-human animals. In addition to the statement that “no work of art should cause physical or psychological pain, suffering or damage to an animal in the course of its creation”, the CAA guidelines ask artists to keep a number of questions in mind: “Can you make the same statement if you replace the animal? What if you reduce the number of animals? If you refine the use of the animals?” (CAA 2011) These questions are based on the well-known ‘Three Rs’ (replace, reduce, refine)

introduced for scientific animal experiments (Russell, Burch 1959). Considering an artwork like *Helena* by Marco Evaristi and applying the CAA guidelines, one could ask if the artist could have realized the artwork with the same effect and the same message by putting fewer fishes in mixers (e.g. only 2 instead of 10 fishes) or by using plastic fishes? When referring to a work like that of Douglas Gordon, one could ask, for example: could the artist have filmed the elephant Minnie lying down in her familiar environment and not in the gallery space with the same effect and the same statement?

Just like the other guidelines discussed so far, this set of rules is addressing the use of living non-human animals in art. “The Minding Animals Curatorial Guidelines Animals and Art Exhibitions”, developed in 2017, which were presented in Mexico City in 2018 and have attracted a lot of attention since then, go further (Gigliotti, Ullrich, Watt 2017). In the case of living non-human animals in works of art, the attitude of these guidelines is clear: they conform to the CAA that neither in the preparation nor in the realization of a work of art non-human animals should be intentionally or accidentally harmed. However, in these guidelines, the uncritical display of dead animal bodies or their parts is also rejected. Artists should strive for vegan painting materials and, for example, no longer use egg tempera or brushes made from marten hair. However, works of art that use animal material to indicate animal exploitation are considered legitimate. A work like *nanoq flat out and bluesome* (2004) involving taxidermized polar bears would be ethically unproblematic according to the Minding Animals guidelines. In their project the artists Bryndís Snæbjörnsdóttir and Mark Wilson research the biographies of polar bears in British museums and try to reconstruct their biographies, their deaths as well as their further paths in the museum’s context (Snæbjörnsdóttir, Wilson 2006). The animal matter is not used as mere material for sculptural works, but the artists try to posthumously restore the identity of non-human animals who have been rendered into abstract examples of their species for museum displays.

The Minding Animals guidelines also state that non-human animals should not be marginalized or inappropriately trivialized as symbols, metaphors, or carriers of meaning. For many critics, the guidelines go overboard here because they attack the most common use of non-human animals in art. But the word “inappropriate” is key here. By inserting a marginalized group of human beings in the phrasing instead of non-human animals it becomes clear what the rules are opposing. If an individual is marginalized, trivialized, or ridiculed in art, this can lead to the exclusion,

diminishing and mocking of this individual in real life as well. Every kind of representation always effects reality. Degrading depictions of any kind of being normalize and reproduce the loss of dignity in the real life of this being. Just like the male gaze on the female body (Mulvey 1975) and the imperial gaze on the non-white body (Kaplan 1997), the human gaze on non-human animal bodies has been considered as a gesture of domination (Malamud 2012). What all three gaze constellations have in common is that they are one-sided, hierarchical and voyeuristic.

In 2021, in a book about interspecies pedagogy, art educator Ana Dimke suggested adapting the “Minding Animals Curatorial Guidelines” for art schools and implementing them in art teaching practices. Dimke formulates rules like “there should be no live animals in art class”; “the materials in art school should be vegan”; “animals shall not be marginalized, trivialized or ridiculed in art class”, etc. (Dimke 2021, 173-175).

From 2018 to 2021 all art students who took my own classes in art education at the University of Arts in Berlin got a crash course in animal ethics before we discussed artworks involving non-human animals. If the students themselves decided to work with or about non-human animals in one of my classes, they needed to fill out a questionnaire that I developed together with my student Anna Regel before and after they had completed their practical work. They had to reflect the ethical implications of their project and specify what they hoped to learn about the involved non-human animal in their project and what they indeed had learned that could not have been learned without him/her. Some of the students felt that their artistic freedom was being constrained by the assigned preparatory readings in animal ethics as well as by the follow-up questions that touched ethical issues.

Often in the art scene, the initiatives and guidelines mentioned are understood as a form of censorship. But they are only meant to be non-binding set of rules or food for thought. Due to a new sensitivity towards non-human animals, artists are asked to think more about how they depict non-human animals or how they treat non-human animals in artistic frameworks. And artists have acknowledge that animal cruelty is no longer accepted without criticism in the context of works of art and that criticism can come from within their own community and not only from ‘philistines’ without any deeper understanding of contemporary art - which was for a long time the argument when the general public disapproved of animal abuse in artworks, for example the notorious animal killings in the

performance art of the 1970s (Ullrich 2014b). Also, in the last couple of years art historians or art critics increasingly consider ethical implications of the inclusion of living non-human animals or the sourcing of dead non-human animals in artmaking practices or art exhibitions when discussing artworks (Aloi 2011; Baker 2000, 2013; Watt 2012; Burt 2009; Desmond 2012; Ullrich 2014a, 2015, 2019). One of the latest examples is the article “Artistic Freedom or Animal Cruelty? Contemporary Visual Art Practice That Involves Live and Deceased Animals” (Coleman, et. al. 2021) published in the beginning of 2021 in the journal *Animals*. The authors state that “animal bodies on display should not be presented as a spectacle or be voyeuristic, nor become a morbid curiosity.” (Coleman, et. al. 2021, 11). And they recommend the implementation of animal ethics discussions within gallery programming “as a means of avoiding what could be considered unacceptable uses of animals within exhibitions.”

Considering these recent developments, one could state that the guidelines, activities, and discussions about animal ethics, which have evolved in the art world due to the animal turn, might bring about all kinds of restrictions for art.

Opening Art to Animals

On the other hand, with the animal turn, art is also fundamentally expanded by the inclusion of non-human animals in the production and reception of art. Non-human animals are no longer passive subject matter, models, muses, metaphors, or material in art, but take on a new place as actors and participants in the art world. They are being taken seriously as aesthetically perceptive and creative beings. Art by non-human animals and art for non-human animals as well as so-called interspecies art are new phenomena that would have been unthinkable before the animal turn (Ullrich 2019). There have been some experiments with painting apes or studies on the aesthetic preferences of fish, pigeons, bumble bees and primates before the turn of the century, but this research took place almost exclusively in the natural sciences. The findings were later applied as enrichment in zoos and popularized in the entertainment industry. In the art or in art history, creations by and for non-human animals did not play a role for a long time. There are a few exceptions, like for example Arnulf Rainer's parallel painting performances in the 1970s but these artworks were never really about the non-human animals themselves (Rainer 1991). Rather they are to be understood as comments on the art market or a mystical idea about the origin of art in the animal kingdom. That has

changed since the animal turn. Non-human animals play a role as (co-) producers of art, which is reflected in a large number of exhibitions and publications. An exhibition like “Animal House” in Ottawa in 2009, for example, was entirely dedicated to the aesthetic productions of non-human animals, including paintings by elephants and chimpanzees and scratchings by dogs and turtles. A more recent example would be the exhibition “Verwerelden”, organized by artist and philosopher Eva Meijer in her garden in the summer of 2020, that included earthworks by her dog Olli (Meijer 2020).

Interspecies Art

The animal turn also led to the establishment of the new genre of interspecies art. In interspecies art, artists grant value to animal creativity and build on the role of animal co-authors in collaborative projects.

One example would be *Koet*, Semâ Bekirović’s collaboration with two coots in 2006 (Bekirović 2020). The artist offered the birds some personal items that had a certain, often sentimental value for her (for example photos of her parents, plastic toys, or banknotes) and documented the rendering of the material by the birds. It took Bekirović a while to gain the bird's trust so that they would accept her gifts and thus accept to be her partners in this collaboration. Once they did, the birds arranged some of the material to build their nests in an Amsterdam canal and ignored some of the things. In this way, the work points to the different material preferences of the artist and the birds. Although they lived in the same urban environment, their worldview was completely different. Semâ Bekirović did not alter the behaviour of the coots that had already adapted to building their nests with trash found in the urban environment. The work also alludes to the adaptability of birds in urban spaces, such as incorporating technical sounds like cell phone ring tones into their songs. But above all, they bring to mind one of the most talked-about examples of animal aesthetics: the elaborated arcades of the bowerbird in New Guinea are carefully arranged architectures decorated with a variety of brightly coloured items such as berries, flowers, snail shells, and iridescent wings from beetles, but also plastic straws and plastic caps from water bottles. There have been innumerable observations of how the building male is constantly dragging in new objects for decoration, arranging them, moving further away in order to check the appearance from a distance and then continuing the redesign and replacing wilted flowers with fresh ones. The colour and arrangement of the bowers differ from region to region, which suggests culturally

conveyed styles. The female bowerbird chooses her mate according to the beauty of the bower. Fittingly, philosopher Wolfgang Welsch described the bower bird as the very first object artist (Welsch 2015, 192). By invoking these associations and taking into account the joint production process, the choice of material and the situatedness of the birds in an urban space, a work like *Koet* not only showcases a form of relation aesthetics, but also visualizes the absurdity of distinct categories such as nature and culture which have long been questioned by scholars such as Donna Haraway, Bruno Latour or Philippe Descola (Haraway 2003, 2008; Latour 1991; Descola 2005).

Another example of interspecies art is the collaboration of Ute Hörner and Mathias Antlfinger with two African grey parrots, Clara and Karl, in the artist group CMUK (2013-2018) (Ullrich 2016). The name of the artist collective is an acronym of the given names of the participants: Clara, Mathias, Ute, and Karl. Those four members of an interspecies household shared their lives and their studio space. Sometimes they even worked together at a diagonally divided table. For the *CMUK (weekly)* series, the human artists handed over magazines to the birds and exhibited the resulting paper reliefs. The parrots could decide whether to take over the magazines and how to use them while the human artists were careful not to intervene in their production process. The intervention of the birds created bite and scratch marks, cracks and holes in the pages allowing unexpected glimpses through and into the tattered weekly magazine and creating surprising new relationships between texts and images on different pages. The presentation of the magazines to the birds by their human caretakers was certainly a ritual appreciated by the birds. Their gnawing, nibbling, and scratching displayed a joyful, playful and purposeless component. Hörner/Antlfinger treated their bird companions in a respectful, friendly manner. In this way the two couples did not simply lead parallel, but entangled lives. The artistic intervention of the humans was limited to preparing the environment, providing the material, and deciding on the form in which they handed over the parrots' productions to the art world. More or less, Hörner/Antlfinger acted as curators for Clara and Karl's productions.

In interspecies art, the idea of the autonomous, creative author as the intellectual originator and intentional center of art is being replaced by a model of multiple authorship and distributed agency (Bennett 2009). In its ideal form, interspecies art is dialogic and respectful in dealing with the non-human animal(s) involved. Nevertheless, in this setting the non-

human animals are never sole agents (and rarely intentional agents). The two examples show that interspecies art is always initiated, framed, and conceptualized by human artists. Unfortunately, the instrumentalization of a non-human animal for the sake of interspecies art can never be entirely avoided. And sometimes this instrumentalization is paternalistic and exploitative. On the other hand, interspecies art can also grow into a political instrument for animal liberation by challenging the idea of human exceptionalism. When artists discover aesthetic qualities in non-human animal productions and help humans to experience other animals as creators or co-creators of art, a purely anthropocentric concept of art is called into question. Interspecies art forces human audiences to perceive other animals as feeling, communicating, thinking individuals, as well as social and historical actors. Thus, it provides an additional aesthetic argument for the ethical consideration of the other animals (along with all the other well-known arguments about non-human animals being sentient, intelligent, social, etc.).

Animals as Art Audiences

But not only art by or with non-human animals broadens the possible scope of activity for human artists, other animals are also increasingly being discovered as possible audiences for artistic productions (Fuller 2009). For example, Rachel Mayeri produces videos for captive chimpanzees, Marek Brandt composes music for wild wildcats, and Krõõt Juurak and Alex Bailey make *Performances for Pets* (Ullrich 2016b). They all do extensive research on the animal's likes and dislikes before they develop and realize their work attempting to meet their audiences' aesthetic preferences.

Rachel Mayeri explored the cinematic preferences of chimpanzees in Edinburgh Zoo with the help of a comparative psychologist before producing the movie *Primate as Family* (2012), which was screened at their outdoor enclosure for them to enjoy. For several months, she showed different film clips to the chimpanzees, different narratives, different genres, including documentaries, cartoons, abstract films, and observed and recorded the reactions of the apes. She found that some of the chimpanzees preferred to watch "Teletubbies", while others liked drum music and most of the apes were interested in scenes of sex and violence. Even if the chimps did not follow the narration, they enjoyed experiencing certain characters, activities, colours, or sounds. Based on her research, Mayeri created a 11-minute indoor wildlife documentary featuring human actors in chimpanzee costumes. Food, sex, territorial behaviour, and status

within the group play a significant role in the storyline. Chimpanzees are very interested in social relations. It is vital to them that they observe each individual in their group carefully in order to recognize their status or mood and then adapt their own behaviour accordingly. Rachel Mayeri supposes that this is why primates like to watch relationship dramas as well. Mayeri does not question the zoo as an institution and the structural violence non-human animals living in zoos are subjected to. But she addresses the boredom that apes are subjected to in captivity and she, at least, tries to make their lives more enjoyable with her artistic skills. Furthermore, observing how chimps watch TV might raise awareness for the closeness between all primate species, human as well as non-human, among human audiences.

Since 2014 Krõõt Juurak and Alex Bailey have performed for more than 100 companion animals in various European cities. The two artists invite human guardians to book a *Performance for pets* in the familiar surroundings of their cats or dogs. A performance lasts about 20 minutes and takes into account the specific personality of the respective animal audience, which Juurak and Bailey come to know in preliminary interviews with the human caretakers. With their project, Juurak and Bailey turn the tables: consciously or unconsciously, human beings expect non-human animals to perform for them. This is most evident in circuses or zoos when trained or captive non-human animals are expected to satisfy human curiosity or to be continuously visible to human visitors. Companion animals also entertain their humans and perform emotional labour for them. The artists want to give something back to these non-human workers who constantly carry on their jobs as companions without getting any wages or vacations. Watching their companion animals enjoying the show, might help the accompanying people - who are explicitly not addressed as an audience - to, at least, imagine alternative realities.

Marek Brandt makes music for free-living animals in their natural habitats (Brandt 2019). For a composition for wildcats near Saarbrücken in 2014, for example, he combined electronic music, natural sounds from trees, leaves and grass and his own field recordings, which he collected on site over a period of two months. He also hired a saxophone player who improvised in the wildcat habitat. For the duration of the concert, the animal audience did not appear. It is impossible to know whether the wildcats heard or reacted to the music that was produced especially for them. Brandt simply makes an offer for an encounter on an auditory level without any intention to collaborate. The wildcats decide if they want to

accept the offer or not, thus the project allows for a high degree of autonomy, choice, and self-determination on the side of the non-human animals.

By providing surprising images, sounds, or movements, art for non-human animals can turn out to be interesting or even entertaining for an animal audience. But this effect cannot be guaranteed, measured, or sometimes not even perceived by humans. The chimps, cats, or dogs are free to leave or attend the screenings, concerts, or performances (at least within the scope of their often restrictive environment); they can even decide if they want to become involved as co-performers. As art audience, they, for once, get the opportunity to look back thereby challenging an anthropocentric framework in which non-human animals often serve exclusively human desires for entertainment, scientific knowledge, and emotional support. Art for non-human animals presupposing an animal audience might provoke humans to imagine the existence of alternative worldviews or aesthetic preferences that are different from their own.

Artivism

Another kind of art for non-human animals is more straightforward in its emancipatory approach: the animal turn initiated a new art form of practical artistic animal advocacy on the threshold of activism, namely “Artivism”.

In *The Basement* (2014), Erik van Lieshout dealt with the precarious living conditions of cats in the basement of the St. Petersburg Hermitage (van Lieshout 2015). The filthy basement, a dirty, half-dilapidated, cluttered dwelling that has nothing to do with the publicly accessible magnificent museum’s building, has been inhabited by cats for at least 200 years who are tolerated there because they free the building from mice. Together with his assistants, van Lieshout converted the living space of these feral animals into a cat-friendly habitat as part of a multi-week performative work of art, creating a livable environment for them with sleeping baskets, scratching posts, climbing bridges, and litter boxes, but he also installed a new kitchen for the human voluntary caretakers of the cats, all of them older ladies. In the video documenting the project, Lieshout first demands, “We have to change the system.” Later he asks “Can art change the system?”, and then more specifically: “How can art make life better?” (van Lieshout 2015). This wording refers to Joseph Beuys’ concept of social sculpture as an artistic tool to change society, just as his Dutch proclamation “Art en leven is een” (“Art and life are one”) a little bit later in the video. The resulting furniture

had a sculptural character and the whole installation was clearly framed as a performative artwork. But the anticipated needs of current and future cat residents were the measure of all things. In fact, the project improved the living conditions of the cats not only temporarily, but in the long term.

An even more existential effect had an artistic intervention by Yvette Watt. Her *Duck Lake Project* (2016) disrupted duck hunting in the Moulting Lagoon on Tasmania's east coast. Tasmania is one of three Australian states where recreational duck hunting is still legal. Ducks are shot there between March and June; in the 2017 season there were almost 60,000 individuals killed by fewer than 1,200 registered hunters. Under Watt's leadership, seven women performed a dance choreography to the music of "Swan Lake" on a raft in the lagoon at the beginning of the duck hunting season. They wore pink tutus, pink leggings, and T-shirts with camouflage patterns in different shades of pink. With their array of pink kitsch, the female performers ironized the exaggerated macho culture represented by male duck hunters with a similarly exaggerated 'chick' culture. The loud music, dance movement, and bright colors disturbed the hunt and saved the lives of quite a number of ducks that day (Watt 2019).

When artists side with non-human animals and put their works in the service of other animals, it is often ridiculed as a sentimental quirk. But animal-involving art, no matter in which form, is never trivial, innocent, or apolitical: it influences how a society thinks about other animals and, consequently, how it treats them.

The animal turn poses some challenges or even restrictions for artists, but it also brings about far more expansions, and some aspirations. By holding artists accountable for their use and misuse of animals, ethical discussions and guidelines limit some questionable forms of human artistic agency. But art that reduces non-human animals to their symbolic, material, or aesthetic function in an exploitative manner is rather conservative or at least not very progressive anyway since it only reaffirms the outdated notion that the value of non-human animals lies solely in their usefulness to humans.

And by introducing non-human animals as? creators, co-creators, audiences for, or beneficiaries of art, the animal turn opens up the artworld for animal artistic agency or relational interspecies artistic agency thus broadening the range of art itself. Art has always been an important field in the debate about anthropological differences. Those who emphasize human exceptionalism hold up the ability to produce and receive art as one of the few remaining distinguishing features between humans and other animals.

And if art is defined as a generic characteristic of humans, all creative expressions of non-human beings are naturally excluded and any possibility of aesthetic practices by non-human animals is automatically foreclosed. However, due to the shift in attitude towards non-human animals brought about by the animal turn, the basic distinction between humans and other animals becomes increasingly shaky. This distinction between humans and other animals is not given but needs to be constructed over and over again through ever new mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. According to Giorgio Agamben, this activity is the work of the anthropological machine (Agamben 2002). Interspecies art contributes to stopping the anthropological machine: in the protected experimental space of art, this new genre questions phenomena like aesthetic expression, aesthetic sensibility, or aesthetic agency as genuine human abilities in a playful way. By taking non-human animal perspectives and animal agency seriously, art for/with or by animals can help change the reductionist human attitude towards other animals. The animal turn in art has the capacity to become truly revolutionary - in the literal sense of the word (Latin: *revolutio*, "a turn around") since it provides the chance for the artworld and its protagonists to turn away from human exceptionalism and human supremacy and move towards the potential of a post-anthropocentric shared world. And this could be the future of art.

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Biophotography. An Anthrozoological Concept between Image, Representation, and Photography

Codrin Dinu Vasiliu*

Abstract

The fact of cutting and inserting the concept of biophotography into the imaginary and practices of photography first translates as an attempt to identify an anthrozoological meaning at the level of discourses, representations, and artefacts of photography. In the previous issue of this symposium (Anthrozoology Studies. Ethics and Non-Human World), I was trying to define biophotography as the practice of photographing animals in their various life contexts and, at the same time, show the effects of these practices on the representations and ideologies within a social system.

The definition was partly developed and left halfway with the purpose of analysing whether biophotography shows data of possible biopolitics by which we resume our relationship with non-humans in terms of our objectives, norms, and responsibilities. Here I am more interested in how biophotography can constitute itself as an anthrozoological cut in our discourses and representations. Further, I am concerned about how this anthrozoological decoupage can carry extra meaning in our common practice of seeing, photographing, and showing animals as they appear in our relationship with humans.

Keywords: Biophotography, Anthrozoology, Representations, Ideology

What is Biophotography?

If I were to formulate a working hypothesis for the necessity of the biophotography concept, first I would say it is about the following fact: there is not any photography of an animal (taken in its life context) that does not relate to a certain ideological background. What does this ideological background mean is what concerns me most in this present paper. This is

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the first answer to the question “Why do we need another novel concept?”. Hence, the necessity for the concept of biophotography is symbolic, if not ideological. On another note, the concept of biophotography is determined by an anthrozoological necessity. Accordingly, the concept of biophotography stresses the anthrozoological nature of photographing animals (photos taken in their life contexts) and underlines the resource potential of these photographs for anthrozoological research, in terms of empirical data and expressions of the photographic discourse about our relationships with animals. And, last but not least, there is also an epistemological necessity. Hence, biophotography outlines a set of epistemological practices that are common to photographing animals. These practices entail, at least, the following: the degree of subjectivity involved in photographing the animal, the rhetorical instruments used for setting the photographic expression, the degree of scientific accuracy determined by the employed gear, and working methodologies. gradul de subiectivitate implicat în fotografia animalului, instrumentele retorice folosite pentru stabilirea expresiei fotografice, gradul de acuratețe științifică asigurat de aparatura utilizată, metodologiile de lucru.

Based on this triple necessity (ideological, anthropological, and epistemological), if I were to give the definition of biophotography, I would sooner refer to two main aspects, namely: firstly, biophotography is the practice of photographing animals in their various life contexts but, on the other hand, biophotography is about the effects of these practices on the (human) representations and ideologies within a social system.

In this study, I am more interested in how biophotography can constitute itself as an anthrozoological cut in our discourses and representations. Further, I am concerned about how this anthrozoological decoupage can carry an extra meaning to our common practice of seeing, photographing, and showing animals as they appear in our relationships with humans. Accordingly, biophotography, on one side includes all the practices and styles by which we immortalise animals in their life contexts, and, on the other side, comprises all the cultural effects carried by these practices within a social system.

Another matter which I would like to point out from the beginning is that the bio prefix refers both to life contexts and animals' ways of life. I will therefore speak about *how*, *where*, and in *what way* animals or non-humans live. In terms of the big picture, biophotography is a system representing the existence of animals and the fact that animals coexist with us. Accordingly, we should not stop at the mere biology of animals because,

on one side, their life contexts have important effects at the level of representations, and, on the other side, this system of representations established by biophotography has a key impact on our ways of understanding the human-animal relationship.

The Mainframe

To have a structured approach, it is necessary to do an analysis of the most important photography categories, which applies to biophotography as well, by extension. These categories will define the methodological framework and will include the following:

- **Popular photography:** I understand popular photography as that common practice that engages photography mostly as an instrument of recollection, gathering memories, and immortalising (symbolic heritage). There is also known as vernacular photography and it is defined by poor attention to photographic techniques and aesthetics of the photographs taken. However, they make the subject of a huge data capital that can be analysed through technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning.
- **Documentary photography:** I understand it as that practice that uses photography for registering data of scientific and informative nature. The photographing action is done with great attention to photographing techniques, aesthetics of the results obtained, and also the educational nature of the narrative and visual discourses used. Documentary photography serves an archiving function, namely, it capitalises information at the level of common memory.
- **Photojournalism:** I understand it as a practice that employs photography for investigation purposes. Photojournalism always starts from the premise that there is something further to find out about a topic on which dusts a common opinion. It is usually a tool for active intervention that entails producing discursive material as support for critical issues related to one topic or another. It may have a rather neutral tone and, accordingly, it comes much closer to documentary photography.
- **Fine-art photography:** I understand it as that practice by which we especially highlight the aesthetic function of the photographic discourse. Fine-art photography is determined by the artistic project behind the photographing gesture, and it holds a strong symbolic impact in terms of representation. In this regard, fine-art photography is an instrument used for conveying strong ideas at the

level of common mentality.

- **Commercial photography:** I see it as that practice where photography becomes both an instrument and discourse with a marketing role. Commercial photography is regarded as the type of photography with the strongest intent to manipulate and distort the public message. Thanks to the fact that it is based on a carefully structured discourse, whose purpose is to convey trust and attachment to a product on the market.

In reference to this mainframe, I will channel my analysis towards 2 types of expression embraced by the photographic discourse, namely: voluntary and involuntary expression.

When we are speaking about voluntary expression, I see it as everything that is obtained as an expression effect based on a strategy of representation. The effect is deliberate, and the discursive practice set in motion targets it as the main objective for communication and representation.

On another note, when we refer to involuntary expression, I understand it as those significations which appear outside the initial intent of the photographer. They have an incidental character. Nevertheless, they are hardly told apart by voluntary expressions. This is the very reason why they can send to motivations that did not initially exist, at least not in the first stages of the photographing action. The author of a photograph can be suspected of intentions he/ she never thought about it. Accordingly, involuntary expressions can have both positive and negative effects. Furthermore, we could say that involuntary expressions are the cause of many moral debates regarding a photographic object. reprezintă cauza multor dezbateri morale cu privire la un obiect fotografic. The distance between the photographic object obtained and the photographic project intended can become the playground of a very appealing game for ethical debates.

In the third part of this article, I will point out three main domains of photographic practice, namely: Pet Photography, Wildlife Photography, and Industrial Animals Photography. They will be analyzed based on the suggested mainframe and the two types of expressions, specifically voluntary and involuntary expressions.

Pet Photography

Pet Photography primarily refers to the way we relate to animals we see as very close, often symbolically and actually regarded as friends or family members. Pet photography is related to vernacular photography is

owns a special place in the representation place within social media. Accordingly, photographs of pets generate mostly positive reactions on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, or YouTube. At the same time, pet photography serves a strong function of contextualizing the relationship of the animal with its owner.

Here is an interesting fact: pet photography can very well be a pastiche topic for fine-art photography due to the very fact that in many photographs of this genre the relationship with pets is a strong one and can produce either comic or dramatic effects. For instance, Elliott Erwitt, one of the most important photographers of the 20th century, used pet photography for projects of fine-art photography such as *To the Dogs* (Erwitt, 1992), *Dog Dogs* (Erwitt, 1998), or *Elliot Erwitt's Scotland* (Erwitt, 2018).

Another significant project is *The Dog: 100 Years of Classic Photography* (Silverman, 2000), where the editor Ruth Silverman gathers some of the most important photographs of the dog in relation to people, surprised at different times, whether these are happy, dramatic, or simply neutral moments.

Voluntary expressions in pet photography

Here I will point out some of the specific expressions for the discourse of biophotography such as cute pets, emotional involvement, commercial involuntary expression,

Cute pets. Typically, in the case of pet photography, the voluntary expression conveys both familiarity and humour, in the sense of funny, comical expression. The animals seem happy and their happiness signals us that it involves a company animal, a pet. Apparently, happy animals are pets. It is quite easy to tell a pet from a stray, for instance, in a photograph. The neat appearance is one of its hallmarks as well as the fact that it is introduced as a happy and cute animal.

Emotion involvement. Another distinctive feature, when we refer to pet photography, is the constant emotional involvement met in this type of photography. The photographer is not just the owner of the animal, he/she is a happy owner of the photographed animal. At the same time, he/she is an owner who needs to validate this happiness to a wider public.

Naturally, the anthropomorphic effects are not long-delayed: the animal is humanised and this is repeatedly and excessively done. Domestication is not solely related to behaviours but to expressions as well. Hence the question of whether this type of collective behaviour does not produce post-domestication effects (Benson, 2021) which can make the

subject of a rather wide anthrozoological debate.

Another post-domestication effect, generated by emotional involvement, is the continuous process of breed standardization. There is a divided opinion in this case, starting from the following question: are the breed standards of the companion animal beneficial to the animal or to its owner?

Commercial involuntary expression. Pet photography generates a huge capital of involuntary expressions that can be speculated by commercial photography. At least, for the mere fact, that happy animals are those fed with a certain food brand. Accordingly, the image of the animal becomes a marketing instrument, and commercial photography is not stingy about it. It takes from the photography of domestic animals the homey framework, the happy relationship between animals and owners, the nurture of pets, and the happy expressions of kittens and puppies purring or napping after they had a food pouch of their specially designed food.

Pet Photography Short Analysis

Popular pet photography is the most common form of biophotography, cel puțin datorită nevoii emoționale de a ne prezenta public animalele de companie în expresia lor cea mai fericită, comică sau drăguță. În acest sens, the features of animals are augmented (as in amplified). The stress is on depicting animals in comical, sentimental, and familiar stances.

In the same context, I would also like to highlight some effects at the level of the biopolitics of representation. Firstly, it is about that there is a strengthening in terms of differences in bonding and closeness to animals. For instance, it outlines and strengthens our preference for dogs and cats. We are the representatives of an anthrozoological culture where the dog and cat are, by far, at the epicentre of our attention. At the representation level, we imagine dogs and cats as the cutest possible animals. They are the very pets, by definition, at the level of our anthrozoological mentality.

Wild Animal Photography

Stricto sensu, wild animal photography refers to photographing animals found in wildlife, the so-called wild animals. However, this simple aspect hides an entire set of representations that are not visible at first look.

At a closer look, from an anthrozoological perspective, we cannot miss the fact that wildlife photography first refers to the way we separate ourselves from those animals that are not included in the pet category or

industrial animals category. Wild animal is a concept built mentally and based on exclusion: wild animals are all animals which are not pets or industrial animals. In this regard, our relationships with them are defined by distance. Accordingly, these are the animals we can see from a distance, in the woods, in the wilderness, the ones most of us wish to see in photographs or during organized trips. However, this distancing behaviour can have blinding effects or develop indifference. These animals do not matter to us unless they are projected on an emotional background: the case of an extinct species, destruction of habitats, effects of pollution on their lifestyle, and so on. Outside of these symbolic contexts, the wild animals are limited to the simplest possible natural ontology: it exists somewhere, far away, in the woods, or in the deep waters of seas and oceans, and our interest in them is merely inexistent. That is precisely where biophotography can step in since it has plenty of resources to reveal these emotional contexts, thanks to the activist engagement from the past decades. Through this very activist behaviour anthrozoology should get critical and outline the limits between exalted activism, at the symbolic level, and activism based on scientific fundamentals from social and natural sciences.

Wild Animal Photography Expressions

As we have already seen, the first effect of voluntary or involuntary expression could be strangeness. The wild animal is the stranger by default, even though some wild animals are often met in our representation meadows and thus are somewhat familiar to a certain point.

Cute animals. These very wild animals which are more familiar than others can produce cute expressions in photographs. Some of the animals are cute. And they are cute mainly because they are not perceived as dangerous, and, in this case, the degree of familiarity plays a big part. We are dealing with anthropomorphization behaviour that can be discussed from an anthrozoological perspective and biophotography's viewpoints as well.

Dramatic Figures. It is a truism that wildlife suffers due to human intervention in nature. There are not few cases when biophotography turns into environmental photography. Some of the environmental projects that caught my eye and shed more light on the contemporary suffering of wildlife are *This Empty Word* (Brandt, 2019) or *Inherit the Dust* (Brandt, 2016), where Nick Brandt reproduces the sad image of wildlife habitat loss in Africa, as a direct consequence of the human intervention. The wild animal

appears as a relic in motion, a sort of zombie, a bio-mechanical leftover of environmental degradation of the world we all live in.

Research. Beyond the involuntary emotional impact on us, wildlife photography can also trigger a voluntary expression voiced into a scientific argument. Wildlife biophotography is extensively used in research and for research purposes. Quite often, there are targetted the rarest of animals and the most atypical behaviours. If, before the emergence of photography, the first biologists would draw atlases of the fauna and flora they studied, now, more than ever, photography is a highly advanced tool that allows the accurate study of both anatomy, behaviour, and lifestyle of the subjects.

Esthetic dimension. Wild animal photography can be the starting point for fine-art photography as well. Accordingly, if we were to speak about a significant artistic project, we could readily mention George Wheelhouse who, in his photographs, reduces the animal to its essence, cutting it out of its context. The image becomes a symbol of what the animal represents in its essence and thus the wild animal is nearly removed from the anthrozoological context and becomes the master of its own world, and this allegory could exert influence on the anthrozoological debates.

Wild Animal Photography Short Analysis

Wild animal photography is a domain that can only be distinguished from wildlife photography in terms of biophotography. Biophotography introduces wild animal photography in the field of anthrozoological debate. At least for reasons such as drawing the anthrozoological line of wild animal representation: the wild animal is represented as the stranger by default.

Another worth mentioning aspect is that wildlife photography can serve, at least, three main functions: documentary and journalistic, environmental, and artistic as well. Another conclusion could rest in the fact the mysterious nature of wildlife representation introduces the duplicity of the representation. For instance, it is full of beauty yet dangerous, or it is in constant conflict with humans yet it is often respected.

Regarding the interaction between wildlife and fine-art photography, the following aspects should be mentioned: firstly, since it is the subject of photographers, in particular, wild animal representations are more artistically accomplished, but also more ideologized and aesthetically manipulated. Secondly, in the cases discussed so far, I have spoken about developing the aesthetics of animals' representation. In the specific case of wildlife biophotography it should be reminded of the emergence of ethics that actually proposes replacing hunting with photography.

Industrial Animals Photography

Industrial and Farming Animals Photography is firstly related to the way in which we use animals and, last but not least, to the way we control animals in terms of ecosystems.

If pet photography conveys the feeling of the strongest anthrozoological relationship, and if wildlife photography sends us to our farthest distance from animals, the industrial animal is somewhat caught in the middle. It has generally become an object we regard with indifference and treat in terms of a commodity.

Industrial Animals Photography Expressions

At the same time, it is both difficult and sensitive to talk about this chapter of biophotography. On one side, we are dealing with certain activism against animal exploitation and consumerism. On the other side, we are dealing with hypocritical attitudes where the animal is shown as more than happy and content in its exploitation ecosystem.

If the pet is always present on the stage of our common representations, the industrial animal is the most doctored animal of all. Through commercial photography, the image of the industrial animal is manipulated at the maximum to serve at its best (symbolically speaking) the consumerism behaviours. Accordingly, industrial animal photography targets biopolitical objectives and represents the most appropriate space for anthrozoological debates, and also the most perilous area. On one hand, thanks to these biopolitical objectives, there are often spotted funny involuntary expressions (or, at least, hypocritical ones), where the industrial animal appears happy to be sacrificed on its way to the supermarket shelves and, finally, in the plate of the consumer. There are not few campaigns, where out of the desire to show the happy lifestyle of the industrial animal, that ended up in a sort of tragicomedies where animals happily sacrifice themselves to improve our life quality. This topic is, in my opinion, the biggest anthrozoological challenge and it should be treated with the utmost attention to avoid falling into the naive discourse of extreme activism or getting caught in the nets of scientific discourse that “went the whole hog”. And here is also the place where terms such as *real anthrozoology* (in the sense of *real biopolitics*) can get their best place for debate.

Industrial Animals Photography Short Analysis

In this chapter, I have spoken less about voluntary and involuntary expressions and talked a little more about limits. Therefore, I believe that the ideological limits of Industrial Biophotography oscillate between two representations, namely: (1) animals are happily bred and raised in their exploitation environment, and (2) their brutal slaughtering is done on a very large scale.

Another aspect worth mentioning is that industrial animal photography does not stand on its own unless it is dressed up as commercial photography (where the manipulation techniques are quite often present), presented as documentary photography (where the animal is regarded as a scientific object), or exposed as journalism photography (where the photographic projects show the economy of animal exploitation or reveal the abuses of this exploitation). There are also artistic projects that originated from the above-mentioned functions. One of the most important ones is the platform *The Ghosts in our Machines*, based on the movie of the same name directed by Liz Marshall and released in 2013 in Canada. The images of sacrifices are terrific, and, to enhance their symbolic function, edited by professional photographers.

Conclusions

The first conclusion is that the expression “animal photography” is either neutral or specific to photography. This is why we need a conceptual space where photography and anthrozoology are in an interdisciplinary dialogue. This space could be outlined, at least in terms of linguistic and epistemological behaviours, by the concept of biophotography.

That is why biophotography can bring up the topic of the biopolitical effects of animal photography. In this regard, we can notice that quite often biophotography produces an anthropomorphization of the photographed animal.

On another note, biophotography clearly marks the various degrees of closeness and distance in our relationship with animals and this becomes visible in the tones of the photographic language.

I would also underline the anti-realistic nature of biophotography. The image of the animal is manipulated at the representation level. Biophotography is rarely a phenomenology where the animal is presented as it actually is in its environment. The gestures, shapes, colours, texts, and all the other elements of the photographic composition transform animals into symbolic representations of human emotions and moods.

Besides, the dramatic anthrozoological situations are as real as possible and they involve intricate approaches and a high degree of social, economic, and environmental innovation.

Last and not least, I believe that biophotography can become an important chapter of anthrozoology both for widening the anthrozoological space of debate on practices and effects of animal representation and for proposing biophotography as a discussion about biopolitics.

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Obiectualizare și Exploatare: Despre Femei și alte Bucăți de Carne

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Abstract

Objectification is a defining aspect of the linked oppression of women and non-human females for allowing an oppressor to view another being as an object, who does not speak, does not feel, has no needs and exists only to serve the others. Historically, women and non-human females have been defined as property, have been considered less intelligent, less rational, and therefore more primitive and closer to nature, and thus have been subject to objectification and control of reproduction. They are both exploited for their reproductive abilities and similarly devalued as they age and wear out, when they are no longer able to reproduce. Assuming that women share objectification with the other female animals in our contemporary patriarchal society, the intention of this paper is to expose misogynistic representations that animalize women and sexualize and feminize animals, presuming their availability for consumption, and also to provide a framework for exploring the feminist implications of the oppression of other female animals.

Keywords: Objectification, Oppression, Non-human females, Patriarchy, Women

Introducere

Societățile patriarhale au tratat dintotdeauna femeile drept inferioare. În baza acestei presupuse inferiorități, femeile au fost și sunt încă supuse opresiunii și violenței de toate tipurile, dar mai ales violenței sexuale, din cauza biologiei lor. În timp ce violența împotriva femeilor a fost expusă, condamnată public și sancționată legal în societățile democratice, în ultimele decenii, majoritatea femeilor beneficiind, cel puțin din punct de vedere formal, de o anumită protecție, norme culturale și sociale adânc

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Înrădăcinate continuă să prescrie femeilor o poziție de inferioritate. Aceste norme sociale și culturale operează ca un cadru omniprezent, facilitând o normalizare și o camuflare a violenței, astfel încât aceasta să nu poată fi conștientizată sau să fie, în cel mai bun caz, percepută ca un aspect nefericit, dar inevitabil al vieții cotidiene. Normele patriarhale operează în mentalul colectiv o scindare a membrilor societății în categorii ierarhizate, nu doar în baza diferenței de gen, ci și a altor caracteristici (rasă, vârstă, orientare sexuală etc.), conferind putere unor indivizi în detrimentul altora, operând o devalorizare și justificând o instrumentalizare a celor construiți social drept slabi în beneficiul celor postulați drept puternici.

Dacă devenim conștienți că aceste norme operează o scindare și mai profundă, în termeni de apartenență la specie, separând lumea umană de cea non-umană și postulând inferioritatea celei din urmă, vom înțelege mai bine mecanismul care conduce la justificarea devalorizării, instrumentalizării și actelor de cruzime la care sunt supuse miliarde de animale în zilele noastre. Intenția acestei lucrări este de a prezenta argumente care să sprijine conștientizarea existenței unei legături între statutul inferior al femeilor și femelelor non-umane, inferioritate care permite și autorizează opresiunea și violența împotriva acestora.

Conexiunea intimă dintre opresiunea femeilor și opresiunea celorlalte animale devine evidentă atunci când conștientizăm că cele două categorii asociate istoric, cea de 'femeie' și cea de 'animal', îndeplinesc aceeași funcție simbolică în societățile patriarhale. Ele sunt construite drept un 'celălalt' dominat și supus, menit să susțină dominația umană masculină. Acest tip de construcție socială încurajează obiectualizarea comună și acceptabilă social a femeilor și animalelor, și plasarea ambelor categorii într-o sferă a instrumentelor neînsuflețite, utilizabile și consumabile după bunul plac al categoriilor superioare, justificând astfel violența constantă și generalizată la care acestea sunt supuse.

Intenția lucrării de față este de a argumenta că opresiunea femeilor și femelelor non-umane are un fundament comun: modul în care acestea sunt construite social, prin alterizare și obiectualizare, într-o societate profund patriarhală care justifică și întărește violența împotriva lor; și de a contribui la conștientizarea practicilor dăunătoare alimentate și întărite de acest tip de construcție socială, cu speranța că acest efort de conștientizare poate facilita sancționarea și chiar eradicarea violenței la care sunt supuse femelele umane și non-umane.

Constructe sociale înrudite

Puterea și controlul asupra femeilor și animalelor sunt justificate și perpetuate prin ideologii și practici surprinzător de asemănătoare. Ambele categorii au fost considerate mai puțin inteligente, mai puțin raționale și, prin urmare, mai primitive și mai apropiate de natură decât bărbații: „această construcție socială ce reduce femeile și animalele non-umane la categorii inferioare bărbaților a permis, încă din cele mai vechi timpuri, exploatarea lor” (Kemmerer 2011, 16).

Inferiorizarea femeilor și animalelor permite instrumentalizarea sau obiectualizarea lor; într-un sistem social în care femeile și animalele sunt definite ca inferioare și lipsite de valoare, utilizarea lor ca mijloace pentru îndeplinirea scopurilor sau nevoilor categoriilor superioare devine normală și justificabilă.

Viziunea feminismului radical asupra construcției sociale a genului este utilă pentru scopul prezentei lucrări, întrucât pune în lumină, în termeni foarte elocvenți, sursele violenței împotriva femeilor și ajută la identificarea cauzelor pentru care femeile non-umane sunt utilizate în imaginile și reprezentările ce vor fi analizate în această lucrare. Geneza sistemului de putere care stă la baza violenței de gen este sugestiv prezentată de Catharine MacKinnon:

... în prima zi care a contat, dominația a fost obținută, probabil prin forță. În ziua a doua, deja diviziunea obținută astfel a trebuit să fie stabilită ferm. În a treia zi, dacă nu chiar mai devreme, diferențele au fost demarcate, împreună cu sistemele sociale menite să le exagereze în percepție și în realitate, deoarece atribuirea sistematic diferențiată a beneficiilor și privațiunilor impunea să nu se facă nicio greșală în privința locului fiecăruia. Din punct de vedere comparativ, bărbații s-au odihnit de atunci. (MacKinnon 1987, 40)

În manieră kantiană, feminismul radical susține că inegalitatea este legată în mod intim de obiectualizare: în virtutea unui dezechilibru de putere, cel puternic îl obiectualizează pe cel slab, tratându-l drept un instrument și, prin aceasta, negându-i dreptul la demnitate garantat de umanitatea căreia îi aparține (Kant 1996, 209). Astfel, sexualitatea bărbaților, respectiv a femeilor, este condiționată social: bărbații sunt condiționați, în cadrul unei societăți în care dețin puterea și controlul asupra femeilor, prin diferite practici, să considere subordonarea femeii ca fiind atrăgătoare și stimulantă din punct de vedere sexual, iar femeile sunt condiționate să considere ca fiind atrăgătoare, din punct de vedere erotic, perspectiva subordonării.

În virtutea genului lor, femeile sunt construite ca obiecte ale dorinței sexuale masculine și valorizate exclusiv în baza caracteristicilor fizice, ce pot fi utilizate de bărbați:

... Un obiect sexual este definit exclusiv în baza înfățișării sale, în termenii utilizării sale pentru plăcerea sexuală, în așa fel încât atât evaluarea vizuală – calitatea de a privi, inclusiv punctul de vedere asociat cu aceasta – cât și definirea în virtutea utilizării devin erotizate ca parte a sexului însuși (MacKinnon 1989, 173).

Nici urmă de natură în această interpretare a actului sexual: bărbații sunt condiționați social să întrețină relații sexuale nu cu femei reale, ci cu imaginea construită social a acestora. Cel mai important mijloc de construcție socială a femeii în calitate de obiect sexual este, în opinia feminismului radical, pornografia:

... pornografia creează un obiect sexual accesibil, iar posedarea și consumarea acestuia definește sexualitatea masculină, în timp ce starea de a fi posedat și consumat definește sexualitatea feminină. Acest lucru nu se întâmplă pentru că pornografia doar reprezintă sexul obiectualizat, ci pentru că ea creează experiența unei sexualități care este ea însăși obiectualizată. Aparența de alegere și consimțământ, împreună cu atribuirea acestora unei naturi inerente, este de o importanță crucială în mascarea realității forței (MacKinnon 1989, 140).

Această interpretare, deși radicală, poate fi utilizată cu succes pentru a înțelege mecanismul din spatele practicilor dăunătoare la adresa femeilor și animalelor non-umane, ce vor fi discutate în paginile ce urmează.

Cea mai relevantă și sistematică argumentare a opresiunii comune a femeilor și animalelor o oferă ecofeminismul, care susține că, în sistemul capitalist patriarhal contemporan, femeile și animalele împărtășesc degradarea, instrumentalizarea și comercializarea. Femeile și animalele sunt conectate structural prin acceptarea socială a exploatării și obiectualizării lor, ele sunt construite, în acest sistem, drept obiecte de consum – „femeile drept obiecte sexuale”, „animalele drept hrană” (Adams 2010).

Ca un ecou al feminismului radical ce susținea că, în virtutea unei relații de putere dezechilibrate, femeile ajung să fie tratate în mod obișnuit drept simple obiecte ce pot fi abuzate, trivializate, umilite, cumpărate și traficate pe scară largă, ecofeminismul atrage atenția asupra faptului că animalele femele sunt exploatare din cauza funcției lor reproductive, fiind forțate să se reproducă pentru a întreține ciclul violenței și profitului economic. La baza acestei exploatări stau structuri de putere intersectate

care susțin alterizarea și subordonarea femeilor și animalelor deopotrivă (Gruen și Adams, 2014).

Așa cum feministele radicale argumentau că femeile sunt construite social ca obiecte ale dorinței sexuale masculine și valorizate exclusiv în baza caracteristicilor fizice, ce pot fi utilizate de bărbați (MacKinnon 1987, 173), ecofeministele susțin că obiectul dominației în producerea cărnii este constituit patriarhal, deoarece numărul animalelor de fermă femele este disproporționat de mare în raport cu cel al masculilor; fermierii cresc femele pentru a-și maximiza profitul prin manipularea funcției reproductive, supunându-le la acte de violență extremă: sunt reproduse, încarcerate, violate, ucise și tăiate în bucăți, această poveste a animalelor ce devin carne fiind o istorie a (re)construcției animalelor în calitate de obiecte de consum uman. (Cudworth 2011, 170)

Majoritatea animalelor reprezintă un „Celălalt” naturalizat, reprodus pentru carne, ouă sau lapte destinate consumului uman (Cudworth 2011, 165). Acest „Celălalt” are un gen, animalele de fermă fiind predominant femele, pentru că exploatarea lor este mai profitabilă; ele sunt apreciate pentru calități considerate feminine: docilitate, capacitatea de a oferi grijă maternă puilor; aspectul de gen apare pregnant și la expozițiile de animale, unde femelele sunt puse să defileze și sunt valorizate nu doar pentru capacitatea de a se reproduce ușor și instinctul matern al rasei, ci și pentru aspectul fizic (Cudworth 2011, 164). Construcția de gen operează și la propriu, și la figurat: rasele de animale sunt manipulate genetic pentru a produce „mame bune”, docile și atractive, și masculi „virili”, puternici, „promiscui” (Cudworth 2011, 163).

E greu să nu ne amintim de o întregă istorie a speciei noastre în care am fost exploatate pentru funcția reproductivă. Exemplele celebre ale soțiilor lui Henric al VIII-lea, istoria dureroasă a femeilor sărace, de multe ori de culoare, ce au fost obligate timp de secole să nască și/sau să crească copiii bărbaților din clasele superioare, mamele-surogat din Ucraina, India sau alte părți ale lumii ce produc copii, în zilele noastre, pentru cuplurile bogate occidentale, toate spun o poveste a opresiunii și exploatării femeii în virtutea capacității reproductive. Exploatarea femelelor umane în calitate de mașinărie reproductivă nu diferă cu nimic de exploatarea la care sunt supuse femelele non-umane pentru consumul uman de carne, lactate și ouă. Cele două tipuri de exploatare se suprapun într-o istorie comună în care

... ambele categorii, femeile și animalele au fost configurate social în calitate de proprietate (fapt general recunoscut), în mod special pentru posesiune și utilizare. Fapt mai puțin recunoscut, femeile și animalele au

fost obiecte ale statutului, ce trebuiau achiziționate și prezentate de bărbați pentru a-și crește statutul în raport cu alți bărbați, precum și utilizate pentru muncă și reproducere, pentru plăcere și confort. (MacKinnon 2004, 264)

Pornografia cărnii

Poate că cea mai violentă utilizare a femelelor non-umane este reprezentarea lor sexualizată în publicitate și în mijloacele de informare în masă; o privire obiectivă conduce, inevitabil, la concluzia de bun simț că trăim într-o societate cinică, ce nu se mulțumește doar să ucidă, să dezmembreze, să gătească și să mănânce animalele, ci împinge limitele cruzimii până la a le batjocori, portretizându-le drept obiecte sexuale pentru consum alimentar. Una dintre cele mai sugestive reprezentări vizuale este celebra fotografie publicată în *Playboar*, o binecunoscută revistă a fermierilor din Statele Unite ce se autointitulează „revista *Playboy* a fermierilor”. Această fotografie oferă privirii cititorilor o ființă feminină ce stă întinsă pe o canapea, cu o băutură așezată pe o măsuță, la îndemână, purtând doar un bikini sumar, cu capul dat seducător pe spate și ochii închiși, expunându-și lasciv pieptul, abdomenul și mângâindu-și coapsele desfăcute, ca într-o invitație de nerefuzat; o „anatomie a seducției: un obiect sexual, o băutură, o cameră îmbietoare, activitate sexuală. Formula este completă.” (Adams 2010, 64). Numai că ființa portretizată astfel nu este o femeie, ci o scroafă, cu un nume sugestiv ales: Ursula Hamdress (în traducere literală, Ursula „șuncă îmbrăcată”). Întrebarea ce apare, după ce depășim șocul vizual, este: pentru ce scop a fost fotografiată această femelă? La ce ne invită această imagine: să violăm sau să mâncăm animalul?

Imaginea aceasta, comentată de Carol J. Adams în *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, este corelată cu un caz celebru în Statele Unite, cel al criminalului Gary Heidnik, care a torturat șase femei în subsolul casei sale din Philadelphia, omorându-le pe două dintre acestea. La descinderea în locuința acestuia, în bucătărie au fost găsite fragmente ale unei femei în cuptor, într-o oală pe aragaz și în frigider. Supraviețuitoarele, torturate și violate în mod repetat, fuseseră obligate să mănânce membrele femeii ucise. Asocierea șocantă este un argument puternic pentru înțelegerea faptului că Ursula Hamdress și femeile violate, torturate, dezmembrate și mâncate la ordinul lui Heidnik sunt conectate printr-o suprapunere a imaginilor culturale ale violenței sexuale împotriva femeilor cu fragmentarea și dezmembrarea naturii în cultura occidentală (Adams 2010, 66). Impactul vizual al imaginii unui porc seducător se bazează, de fapt, pe imaginea unei

femei absente, dar imaginabile, în seducția și corporalitatea ei. Ursula Hamdress este deopotrivă metaforă și ‘glumă’; se vizează un efect hilar pentru că suntem cu toții obișnuiți să vedem femei prezentate astfel, imaginea Ursulei trimițând la ceva ce lipsește din fotografie: corpul unei femei.

Industria alimentară occidentală abundă în astfel de imagini care asociază sexualitatea feminină cu consumul de carne: ne sunt prezentate perechi de hamburgeri din piept de pui drept sâni dezgoliți ai unei femei, cu sloganul „Vă vom dezvălui ceva pentru care chiar veți saliva”¹; fragmente de pui așezate în poziții sexuale pe farfurie²; sandwich-uri îndreptate sugestiv spre gura deschisă a unei femei, cu un slogan ce trimite la un act sexual oral³ etc.; nu putem spune cu certitudine ce anume ne oferă, de exemplu, spre vânzare, un lanț de restaurante fast-food american: piept de pui sau de femei⁴? Exemplele pot continua, dar cred că cele oferite aici sunt suficiente pentru a sublinia faptul că ele exploatează simbolic asocierea tulburătoare, dar acceptată social, dintre femei și animale în termenii precizați de Adams: de obiecte de consum sexual și/sau alimentar.

Putem vorbi cu sens despre o „pornografie a cărnii”:

... aceleași structuri patriarhale, aceleași universalitate a perspectivei albe masculine, aceleași luare în proprietate a corpurilor feminine. De data aceasta, prezumă și menține în același timp normativitatea consumului de carne, sexualizând simultan uciderea și consumul animalelor non-umane. (Adams 2010a, 308)

Cu toții suntem complici la această degradare comună a femeilor și animalelor, prin modul în care am fost socializați pentru a accepta și internaliza stereotipuri și puncte de vedere dăunătoare, încât să nu mai recunoaștem violența și dominația implicată în astfel de imagini; nici măcar noi, femeile, nu reușim să luăm distanța necesară pentru a vedea consecințele dezastruoase ale consumului de carne și de produse provenite de la femelele exploatare.

Referentul absent

Acele de violență comise împotriva femeilor și animalelor au un fundament comun în obiectualizarea la care sunt supuse în societatea patriarhală. Pentru înțelegerea acestui proces, un instrument util îl

¹ <https://julieemathews.wordpress.com/2011/09/19/advertisement/>.

² <http://sexualadvertisementsinthemedia.blogspot.com/2010/11/heinz-ketchup-sexy.html>.

³ <https://degradationofwomen.weebly.com/itll-blow-your-mind-away.html>.

⁴ <https://www.news24.com/w24/selfcare/love/sex/sexist-hooters-ad-20120814>.

reprezintă conceptul de „referent absent” (Adams 2010, 66-69). Atât femeile, cât și animalele sunt percepute ca fiind absente din actul consumării lor, această absență devenind posibilă prin procesul de obiectualizare și fragmentare. Animalele devin absente din actul consumării lor deoarece sunt obiectualizate și măcelărite, astfel încât carnea pe care o mâncăm să nu mai fie corelată mental sau vizual cu imaginea animalului din care provine:

Prin măcelărire, animalele devin referenți absenți. Animalele cu nume și corp sunt făcute absente în calitate de animale, pentru a face posibilă existența cărnii. Viața animalelor precede și permite existența cărnii. Dacă animalele ar rămâne vii, ele nu ar putea fi carne. Astfel, un cadavru înlocuiește animalul viu. Fără animale nu ar exista consum de carne; cu toate acestea, ele sunt absente din actul consumării cărnii, deoarece au fost transformate în hrană. ... Animalele vii sunt, astfel, referentul absent din conceptul de carne. (Adams 2010, 66)

Conceptul de referent absent explică foarte bine de ce ne este atât de ușor să mâncăm carne: „referentul absent ne permite să uităm de animal în calitate de entitate independentă; ne permite, de asemenea, să rezistăm eforturilor de a face animalul prezent” (Adams 2010, 66).

Există trei căi prin care animalele devin referenți absenți:

- a) **calea directă:** în cazul consumului de carne, ele sunt absente *pur și simplu*, pentru că sunt moarte.
- b) **calea definițională:** când mâncăm animale, schimbăm modul în care vorbim despre ele; le redefinim, le redenumim; nu mâncăm, pur și simplu *vaci, porci, găini*; mâncăm carne albă sau carne roșie, carne slabă sau carne grasă; aplicând procesul suplimentar al fragmentării, mâncăm cotlet, vrăbioară, antricot, file, șuncă etc.
- c) **calea metaforică:** animalele devin metafore pentru descrierea experiențelor umane; sensul referentului absent derivă, în acest caz, din referirea la altceva decât el însuși; spunem despre femei că au fost torturate sau violate ca „niște bucăți de carne”. Animalele devin referenți absenți atunci când „semnificația lor originală este subminată și absorbită într-o ierarhie diferită a sensului; în acest caz, semnificația originală a sorții animalelor este absorbită într-o ierarhie centrată pe om” (Adams 2010, 67).

Astfel, referentul absent, în același timp, există și nu există: există prin inferență, dar inexistența lui se reflectă asupra obiectului desemnat deoarece experiența concretă, originară care i-ar da sens, nu mai este prezentă: „nu mai reușim să acordăm referentului absent propria existență” (Adams 2010, 67).

Conceptul de referent absent corelează violența împotriva femeilor și animalelor prin modul în care aceasta este exprimată în limbaj. Violența este normalizată și camuflată lingvistic în dublu sens: atunci când ne referim la femeile violate sau agresate ca la niște ‘bucăți de carne’ sau când ne referim la bordeluri drept ‘abatoare’, normalizăm violența împotriva animalelor pentru a descrie experiențe umane; reciproc, atunci când spunem despre animalele inseminate artificial că sunt violate, normalizăm violența împotriva femeilor. Se obține astfel o întărire și perpetuare reciprocă a violenței împotriva femeilor și a violenței împotriva animalelor ce exprimă în mod evident felul în care aceste categorii sunt conectate prin obiectualizare:

Violența sexuală și consumul de carne, ce par a fi forme diferite de violență, găsesc un punct de intersecție în referentul absent. Imaginile culturale ale violenței sexuale și violența sexuală propriu-zisă se bazează deseori pe cunoașterea comună a modului în care animalele sunt măcelărite și mâncate. ... Astfel, când femeile sunt victime ale violenței, ne amintim cum sunt tratate animalele. În mod similar, în imaginile cu animale măcelărite, sunt prezente conotații erotice (Adams 2010, 68).

Dacă animalele sunt referentul absent din expresia „măcelărirea femeilor”, femeile sunt referentul absent din expresia „violarea animalelor”: „structura referentului absent în cultura patriarhală întărește opresiunea individuală, amintind întotdeauna de alte grupuri oprimate” (Adams 2010, 69).

Obiectualizare, fragmentare, consum

Conexiunea dintre femei și animale în termeni de opresiune devine evidentă și în corelația patriarhală dintre dominația masculină și consumul de carne. Noțiunile de masculinitate și virilitate din cultura occidentală se bazează pe consumul de carne: ni se spune, pe toate căile posibile, că bărbații adevărați consumă preponderent carne; prin contrast, dieta vegetariană este promovată drept feminină. Avem aici de-a face, din nou, cu un construct social (Stibbe 2004), întărit de reprezentările din mijloacele de informare în masă și din publicitate, ce utilizează dualismul pentru a trasa o ierarhie socială: aceste reclame transmit, de asemenea, mesajul conform căruia, cu cât mai multă carne, cu atât mai bine, iar orice altceva decât carnea este „hrană pentru puicuțe” (Alcorn și Ogletree 2018, 461). Revistele pentru bărbați promovează consumul de carne, mai ales de carne roșie, ca fiind esențial pentru menținerea forței fizice și conformarea la imaginea bărbatului ideal, având chiar secțiuni speciale destinate asocierii

dintre consumul de carne și idealul de masculinitate occidental. Suplimentar, ele promovează devalorizarea femeii și instrumentalizarea acesteia. Pentru a oferi un singur exemplu, „Secțiunea carnivoră specială” din *Men`s Health*, Decembrie 2000, se intitulează sugestiv: „Bărbații și carnea: doar un singur sortiment de carne ne place mai mult, dar aceasta ar face bine să știe să prepare un grătar.” (Stibbe 2004, 39). Referința la femei în calitate de carne este evidentă.

Pe lângă conexiunea evidentă dintre poziția de putere în societate și consumul de carne, carnea fiind, din cele mai vechi timpuri, apanajul claselor considerate superioare, ierarhia de gen este, în cazul consumului de carne, bine stabilită:

Obiceiurile alimentare nu relevă doar distincții de clasă, ci și distincții patriarhale. Femeile, cetățeni de mâna a doua, consumă mâncăruri considerate de mâna a doua într-o cultură patriarhală: legume, fructe, cereale, mai degrabă decât carne. Sexismul din consumul de carne reia distincțiile de clasă, cu o adăugire specială: o mitologie ce infuzează toate clasele, conform căreia carnea este hrană masculină și consumul de carne este o activitate masculină. (Adams 2010, 48).

Opresiunea comună a femeilor și animalelor devine posibilă printr-un proces de obiectualizare, fragmentare și consum (Adams 2010, 73-74) ce transformă ființele vii în obiecte, apoi le dezmembrează (simbolic sau fizic) și le anihilează semnificația ontologică: nu consumăm ființe umane sau non-umane, consumăm bucăți de carne cărora le-a fost ‘extirpată’ ființa. Acest proces comun femeilor și animalelor este evident în imaginile culturale ale violenței sexuale împotriva femeilor: ciclul obiectualizării, fragmentării și consumului conectează măcelărirea animalelor atât cu reprezentarea, cât și cu realitatea violenței sexuale într-o cultură occidentală care normalizează consumul sexual (Adams 2010a, 304).

Obiectualizarea simultană a femeilor și animalelor, în modalitățile în care ea este prezentă în exemplele de mai sus, ajută la normalizarea și erotizarea violenței și alimentează ierarhiile de putere ce devin aproape imposibil de zdruncinat, care operează la nivel inconștient cu stereotipuri și norme culturale care se alimentează și întăresc reciproc. Încă un exemplu relevant în acest sens îl constituie aparent benigna denumire a primului animal clonat din istorie, oaia Dolly: lăsând deoparte ideea de experiment științific care utilizează animalele, puțini dintre noi știu că această acțiune cvasi-demiurgică, simbol al elevării speciei umane în raport cu toate celelalte specii, a pornit de la o celulă prelevată dintr-o glandă mamară; în logica timpurilor noastre, oaia a primit numele lui Dolly Parton – binecunoscută pentru dimensiunea sânilor (Adams 2010a, 311).

Cercetări recente din psihologie și sociologie confirmă corelația strânsă care se stabilește între femei și animale în termeni de obiectualizare și consum: indivizii care tind să obiectualizeze femeile și susțin rolurile de gen tradiționale, conform măsurătorilor ce indică atitudinile sexiste, manifestă atitudine favorabilă consumului de carne și nefavorabilă animalelor în general (Allcorn and Ogletree 2018, Randler et al. 2021, Graça et al. 2018 etc.). În acord cu teza opresiunilor interconectate (Wyckoff 2014), aceste cercetări susțin empiric argumentul existenței unor ierarhii de putere care se intersectează la nivelul genului și al speciei (Twine 2010.) Conexiunea dintre aceste ierarhii de putere legitimează și perpetuează consumul de femei și animale pe scară largă, transmițând generațiilor următoare îndreptățirea de a profita de statutul inferior al femeilor în termeni de „consumabilitate sexuală” (Adams 2010a, 312) sau de statutul inferior al animalelor, preponderent femele, în termeni de consum alimentar.

Autonomie și demnitate

Se poate aduce, desigur, obiecția că această comparație dintre femei în calitate de obiecte sexuale și animale în calitate de hrană este supra simplificată, deoarece exploatarea femeilor și exploatarea animalelor sunt fenomene complexe și este dificil să identificăm cauzele comune ale acestora. Obiecția se bazează pe supoziția că un astfel de demers argumentativ

... suprimă diferențele dintre intenționalitatea animală și intenționalitatea umană caracterizând animalele drept persoane, pentru a ne fi mai ușor să comparăm similaritatea dintre femei și animale, așa cum demonstrează afirmația că femeile sunt exploatate în calitate de obiecte sexuale în același fel cum animalele sunt exploatate pentru hrană... (Dixon 1996, 190)

Acestei obiecții i se poate răspunde că lucrarea de față nu postulează o echivalență de statut legal sau social al femeilor și animalelor în calitate de persoane, ci doar „existența unor condiții materiale comune” (Wyckoff 2014, 734), respectiv modul în care acestea sunt percepute și construite social într-o ideologie dominantă care subordonează interesele unui grup perceput drept inferior, unui alt grup, perceput drept superior. Ceea ce își propune lucrarea de față este să atragă atenția asupra unui *modus operandi* al patriarhatului, care afectează în mod tragic viețile a miliarde de animale, fie ele umane sau non-umane, din cauza apartenenței lor la genul feminin. În exemplele invocate în rândurile de mai sus, ceea ce sancționez este

privarea femelelor, fie ele umane sau non-umane, de dreptul la autonomie și la un tratament demn, în calitate de ființe, umane sau nu.

În ultimele decenii au fost avansate opinii și teorii filosofice suficient de articulate pentru a justifica oprirea violenței împotriva femeilor și animalelor non-umane. Exemplul pe care eu îl consider cel mai relevant este teoria capabilităților avansată de Martha Nussbaum. Ea consideră că tratamentul moral al animalelor non-umane este o chestiune de dreptate, nu de bunăvoință față de acestea. Demersul ei filosofic, bazat pe capabilități, stabilește drepturi de bază pentru animale, în virtutea capacităților fundamentale ale acestora. Ea se desprinde, astfel, de o lungă tradiție filosofică ce considera că tratamentul moral adecvat pentru animale nu se bazează pe ceea ce le datorăm acestora, ci pe bunăvoința noastră de a le trata cu afecțiune și compasiune. Spre deosebire de John Rawls, care stabilea „o datorie de compasiune și umanitate” (Rawls 1971, 512; citat în Nussbaum 2006, 331), Martha Nussbaum susține că o teorie a dreptății nu trebuie să excludă animalele non-umane: „suntem datori să ne confruntăm cu chestiunile de dreptate pe care le ridică modul în care tratăm animalele non-umane” (Nussbaum 2006, 1).

Demersul filosofic pe care îl propune Martha Nussbaum are la bază o listă de capacități fundamentale care, în cazul oamenilor, reprezintă „un set de bunuri sociale” ce se corelează cu „abilități înnăscute ale ființelor umane” (Nussbaum 2001, 1536). În opinia ei, toate ființele umane au abilități înnăscute care tind să se dezvolte în capabilități complexe; datoria unei societăți este să se organizeze astfel încât să ofere sprijin pentru ca aceste abilități înnăscute să se dezvolte și să poată fi exercitate liber, dacă ele sunt „evaluate ca fiind importante și bune” (Nussbaum 2004, 305). Lista oferită de Nussbaum include capabilități umane centrale precum viața, sănătatea corporală, simțurile, imaginația și gândirea, rațiunea practică, jocul etc. (Nussbaum 2000)

Martha Nussbaum concepe, în analogie cu lista capabilităților centrale umane, o listă a capabilităților centrale animale, în care fiecare capabilitate animală enumerată corespunde unei capabilități umane și care ne ajută să determinăm care sunt standardele fundamentale ce trebuie îndeplinite pentru a permite animalelor să trăiască o viață bună. Ea consideră că această listă, dacă este adaptată fiecărei specii în parte, acoperă toate capabilitățile animale (Nussbaum 2004, 317); fiecare dintre elementele listate reglementează comportamentul și interacțiunea noastră cu animalele. Avem astfel:

1. Viața – în opinia Marthei Nussbaum, toate animalele sunt îndreptățite să-și continue viața, indiferent dacă au sau nu interesul conștient să o facă (Nussbaum 2004, 314).
2. Sănătatea corporală – animalele sunt îndreptățite la o viață sănătoasă, acesta fiind unul dintre cele mai importante drepturi ale lor (Nussbaum 2004, 315).
3. Integritatea corporală – animalele nu trebuie expuse violării integrității corporale prin violență, abuz sau alte tipuri de tratament dăunător, indiferent dacă acesta este dureros sau nu (Nussbaum 2004, 315).
4. Simțurile, imaginația și gândirea – așa cum avem o datorie morală față de corespondenții lor umani de a le proteja dreptul de a-și folosi simțurile, de a imagina, de a gândi sau raționa, avem și față de animale o datorie morală de a le permite să aibă experiențe plăcute și de a nu le supune la experiențe dureroase. Aceasta înseamnă că avem datoria de a suprima prin lege tratamentul abuziv al animalelor și de a le asigura accesul la surse de confort, precum un mediu care stimulează și face plăcere simțurilor (Nussbaum 2004, 315-316).
5. Emoțiile – animalele sunt îndreptățite la o viață în care să poată dezvolta atașamente față de alte animale, să poată iubi și avea grijă unele de celelalte. Aceasta implică, pentru noi, oamenii, grija față de nevoile lor emoționale și încetarea practicilor de separare, izolare sau provocare deliberată a fricii (Nussbaum 2004, 316).
6. Rațiune practică – în măsura în care animalele au capacitatea de a-și stabili obiective, proiecte sau planuri pentru viața lor, avem datoria să le susținem prin măsuri adecvate, cum ar fi libertatea de spațiu și de mișcare sau oferirea de oportunități pentru activități cât mai diversificate (Nussbaum 2004, 316).
7. Afilierea – animalele sunt îndreptățite să formeze atașamente și să se angajeze în activități și relații caracteristice, fie ele cu alte animale sau cu oamenii. În cazul oamenilor, ele sunt îndreptățite la validare și reciprocitate, nu la tratament tiranic; ele trebuie să trăiască într-o cultură care le respectă și le tratează cu demnitate. Foarte important – și aici putem răspunde la obiecția adusă anterior – animalele, chiar dacă încă nu sunt considerate persoane, au același statut cu oamenii, în calitate de ființe demne, indiferent dacă își conștientizează sau nu acest statut (Nussbaum 2004, 316).
8. Celelalte specii – animalele non-umane sunt îndreptățite să trăiască în relație cu alte animale, plante, cu natura în general, ceea ce necesită formarea graduală a unei lumi interdependente în care toate speciile să

se bucure de relații de cooperare și susținere reciprocă; în cuvintele Marthei Nussbaum, ne revine nouă, oamenilor, datoria morală de a realiza o „înlocuire graduală a ceea ce este natural cu ceea ce este drept” (Nussbaum 2004, 317).

9. Jocul – animalele sunt îndreptățite la un spațiu adecvat, lumină și stimulare senzorială acolo unde locuiesc și, mai presus de toate, de „prezența altor membri ai speciei” (Nussbaum 2004, 317).
10. Control asupra mediului propriu – trebuie să garantăm animalelor echivalentul dreptului uman la proprietate, adică să respectăm dreptul la integritatea teritorială a habitatelor acestora, indiferent că sunt domestice sau sălbatice (Nussbaum 2004, 317).

Centrală în demersul Marthei Nussbaum este noțiunea de autonomie, în sensul că animalele trebuie să se afle în situația de a putea prospera, de a putea duce o viață bună, așa cum o aleg, pentru ele însele și specia lor (Nussbaum 2004, 312-313). Mai mult, avem datoria morală de a sprijini aceste capacități în totalitatea lor, nu doar parțial.

Concluzie

Pentru contrast, putem afirma în mod îndreptățit că Ursulei Hamdress și altor nenumărate animale non-umane nu le este garantat niciunul dintre elementele ce ar defini o viață bună, în termenii stabiliți de Nussbaum. Și până când nu le este garantat dreptul la autonomie, cu toate consecințele pozitive ce decurg din acesta, ele rămân o categorie ce poate fi catalogată în mod corect drept oprimată. Ele împărtășesc opresiunea cu toate celelalte grupuri cărora le este negat dreptul la autonomie, indiferent dacă împărtășesc sau nu statutul moral sau legal de persoane.

Lucrarea de față și-a propus să dezvăluie condițiile materiale care justifică afirmația că femelele, umane sau non-umane, sunt categorii oprimate în mod similar, în măsura în care practici culturale și societale dăunătoare le neagă dreptul la autonomie și la un tratament adecvat unor ființe pe deplin demne. Aceste practici, precum și justificările aduse lor, se condiționează și se întăresc reciproc: după cum rezultă din exemplele analizate în această lucrare, justificarea exploatării, obiectualizării și actelor de violență împotriva animalelor non-umane permite justificarea aceluiași practici la adresa femeilor și viceversa. Reprezentările și practicile sancționate în paginile anterioare sunt manifestări sexiste și violente, consecințe tragice ale unei atitudini disprețuitoare față de viața unor ființe care sunt îndreptățite la un tratament demn, în virtutea faptului că sunt ființe.

Argumentele filosofice au evoluat, în cultura noastră occidentală, multe dintre ele suferind corecții sau fiind înlocuite de altele mai potrivite, pe măsură ce a crescut gradul de conștientizare asupra problemelor sociale. Două milenii în urmă, argumente filosofice acceptate în mod cvasi-universal ne convingeau că femeile nu merită să fie cetățeni, pentru că sunt deficiente rațional. Dacă pentru femei s-au găsit argumente filosofice suficiente pentru a le fi corectate, într-o anumită măsură, poziția și tratamentele la care sunt supuse, aceasta s-a întâmplat pentru că s-au conștientizat, la nivel larg, nedreptățile la care au fost supuse, nu doar în baza unor justificări filosofice defectuoase, ci și în baza unor percepții și norme sociale și culturale dăunătoare.

Lucrarea de față se dorește a fi o contribuție la conștientizarea faptului că, în ciuda progreselor efectuate, femeile continuă să fie victime ale violenței și exploatării în virtutea unor percepții și practici care le proiectează și le mențin în poziție de inferioritate; aceste percepții și practici sunt surprinzător de asemănătoare cu cele aplicate unei femelelor non-umane, cel puțin în situațiile prezentate în paginile anterioare. Suntem capabili să găsim argumente filosofice convingătoare pentru a opri exploatarea și violența împotriva acestora: teoria capabilităților animale avansată de Martha Nussbaum este un bun exemplu în acest sens. Eu sunt încrezătoare că aceste argumente vor evolua și se vor rafina pentru a fundamenta acțiuni drepte pe viitor; însă consider că pasul inițial al conștientizării este esențial. În cuvintele lui Carol Adams, „procesul de obiectualizare/fragmentare/consum poate fi întrerupt prin procesul de atenție/prezență/ compasiune” (Adams 2010a, 315). Speranța pe care o exprimă această lucrare este că, în măsura în care conștientizăm suferința comună experimentată de aceste categorii oprimate, vom putea alege să ne plasăm de cealaltă parte a istoriei consumatoare de femei și animale.

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Partea Întunecată a Relației Copil-Animal. Abuzarea Copiilor și Abuzarea Animalelor: Un Ciclu al Violenței?

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Abstract

In the psychological literature, animal abuse by children has been recurrently associated with the previous mistreatment of the children themselves. Child neglect, domestic violence, bullying at school, and socio-economic disadvantages are among the conditions emphasized as markers for a cruel behavior towards animals in childhood. However, as in the case of inter-human abuse, only a reduced percentage of the abused children are becoming animal abusers. The psychological mechanisms and processes through which mistreated children turn into aggressors are extensively documented. Far less explored and explained are the factors which prompt or motivate children not to turn, when abused, into abusers. Research identifies resilience as a key factor in this direction. Nevertheless, resilience is but an adaptive behavior, a (positive) response, a (suitable) reaction to a traumatic event. The long-term risks for somatic and mental health are always present, despite being rather underevaluated by actual resilience research. Is prevention, accordingly, the only free-risk solution? Is it possible for a culture that promotes kindness (based on empathy, altruism, and pro-social behaviors) instead cruelty (fueled by greed, narcissism, competition, materialistic values, etc.) to alleviate, at least, not only child abuse but animal abuse as well? My study addresses resilience as a secondary psychological tool in overcoming childhood abuse as a drive for animal abuse. Prevention, through training kindness and its competencies from an early age in development, will be approached and investigated as the primary psychological tool in efficiently treating the abuse of both children and animals.

Keywords: Animal abuse; Child abuse; Resilience; Cruelty; Kindness

„...fellow prisoners of the splendour and travail of the earth.”

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În literatura psihologică, abuzarea animalelor de către copii este pusă recurent în relație cu o abuzare anterioară a copiilor înșiși. Neglijarea copilului, violența domestică, hărțuirea la școală sau în afara ei, la care se adaugă dezavantajele de ordin socio-economic și cultural, sunt indicate și investigate ca predictorii ai cruzimii față de animale în copilărie. Totuși, la fel ca și în cazul abuzului interpersonal, doar o proporție redusă a copiilor abuzați devin abuzatori ai animalelor. Procesele și mecanismele psihologice care transformă unele victime în agresori sunt extensiv documentate. Mai puțin explorate sunt elementele și contextele care motivează și determină copiii să nu se transforme din abuzați în abuzatori. Cercetarea a identificat reziliența psihologică drept un factor cheie al rezistenței la adversitate. Dar reziliența este, totuși, un comportament adaptativ post-adversitate, un răspuns (pozitiv), o reacție (adekvată) la un eveniment traumatic. Riscurile pe termen lung, la nivel somatic și al sănătății mentale, continuă să fie subevaluate. Se pune întrebarea dacă nu cumva singura soluție viabilă este nu tratarea, respectiv vindecarea ci prevenția? În cazul tuturor formelor de abuz, cruzime și violență, fie că vorbim de animalele umane sau non umane, prevenția impune, la nivel social, cultural și axiologic, înlocuirea unei culturi care promovează agresivitatea (încurajată de lăcomie, narcisism, competiție, consumerism) cu o cultură a bunătății (bazată pe empatie, altruism, cooperare și comportamente pro-sociale).

Introducere

Există, la nivelul cercetării academice, o consensualitate remarcabilă în susținerea rolului benefic al animalelor, în general, și al celor de companie în special, în optimizarea dezvoltării psihologice a copilului. Fie că avem în vedere dimensiunea cognitivă, cea emoțională, comportamentul pro-social sau, atunci când este cazul, practici psihoterapeutice care implică asistența unui animal, datele cercetării confirmă în totalitate valențele pozitive ale interacțiunii copil-animat (Purewal et al. 2017; Melson 2005, 2020). Relativ mai puține, deși într-o multiplicare accelerată în ultima perioadă, sunt cercetările care investighează dacă, și în ce măsură, animalele de companie beneficiază la fel de mult de legătura cu copilul și, mai ales, dacă în cadrul acestei relații, sunt expuse unor riscuri sau prejudicii semnificative (Hall, Finka, Mills 2019; Carlisle et al. 2020).

În cadrul cercetărilor care vizează riscurile la care sunt expuse animalele de companie în relația cu copilul o atenție prioritară este acordată

actelor de violență. Focalizarea pe această temă poate părea surprinzătoare din moment ce nenumărate studii au evidențiat, de exemplu, că o majoritate covârșitoare a deținătorilor de animale de companie le consideră drept „membri de familie” (Ascione 2005; Melson 2020). Doar că familia, așa cum o demonstrează analizele făcute de multiple discipline precum psihologia, sociologia, economia, antropologia, istoria etc., este o „instituție” complexă, multidimensională, dinamică și în interiorul căreia se regăsesc, la nivel micro, toate acele fenomene care definesc realitatea socială per ansamblu. Violența, abuzul, relațiile de putere, determinările socio-economice și culturale își pun o amprentă puternică asupra modului în care este constituită și asupra modului în care funcționează. După cum constată Lockwood și Arkow (2016:1): „în multe cazuri, actele de violență la adresa animalelor sunt modelate pe baza aceleași dinamici a puterii și controlului care marchează frecvent traiectoria violenței parteneriatului intim, atacului sexual, abuzării copilului și altor comportamente antisociale violente”.

Studiată preponderent categorial, violența este, în esență, un fenomen extrem de divers și multistratificat, prezent atât la nivel natural cât și social. Dar în timp ce natura în sine este amorală, societatea se bazează pe principii, norme și legi al căror scop este acela de a limita și, în măsura posibilului, de a elimina toate acele manifestări care aduc atingere stării de bine și drepturilor membrilor ei. Drepturile animalelor non-umane sunt un domeniu relativ recent de cercetare, chiar dacă, așa cum rezultă din studiile de specialitate, au reprezentat o preocupare încă din timpuri străvechi. Pe de altă parte, după cum relevă aceleași cercetări (Ascione 1999, 2005; Lockwood 1999; Melson 2005), există o legătură istorică documentată între evoluția drepturilor copilului și cele ale animalelor, cu observația surprinzătoare că unele dintre primele demersuri moderne de intervenție pentru protejarea unor copii abuzați au fost făcute de personalități sau organizații implicate formal în activitatea de protecție a animalelor ¹.

Ciclurile violenței – violența interpersonală și violența interspecii

Actele și comportamentele violente sunt rareori manifestări punctuale, singulare. Ne confruntăm, în fapt, cu un ciclu al violenței și tot mai multe cercetări susțin puternic teza că abuzul îndreptat împotriva animalelor este, într-un număr semnificativ de cazuri, relaționat cu violența

¹ Vezi Ascione (2005:8-10).

domestică și cu maltratarea copiilor. Existența acestei relații, deși sugerată de către unii cercetători, mai ales din domeniul psihologiei dezvoltării copilului, a primit totuși puțină atenție academică în trecut. Dar investigarea, chiar și separată disciplinar, a problematicii violenței, a impus de o manieră incontestabilă faptul că actele de violență extremă, cel mai adesea, nu sunt izolate și distincte ci au mai degrabă cauze, origini, contexte și influențe care le sunt comune. Pe cale de consecință, necesitatea unei abordări integrate a lor s-a impus treptat în spațiul public și academic.

Abordând problema din perspectiva activității de protecție a animalelor dar și a cercetării științifice, Tebault Sr. (1999) consideră că orice demers de prevenire, identificare și soluționare a abuzului asupra animalelor ar trebui să se construiască în jurul a trei axiome:

◀ animalele, în special cele de companie, sunt și trebuie tratate ca membri ai familiei;

◀ actele violente, psihice sau fizice, împotriva membrilor familiei sunt, în esență, o problemă de putere și control, fiind nu doar o formă de violență „intraspecie” ci și o formă de violență „interspecii”;

◀ orice act de violență împotriva unui membru al familiei, fie el „biped sau patruped”, periclitează toți componenții acesteia.

Din dorința, justificată de altfel, de a impune atenției publice dar și comunității științifice importanța relației dintre violența interpersonală și cea împotriva animalelor, literatura de specialitate o prezintă adesea drept „Legătura” (The Link)². Folosirea acestui termen generic poate fi utilă în activitatea de promovare a drepturilor animalelor dar, la nivelul cercetării științifice, implicațiile pot fi mai degrabă negative, afectând uneori obiectivitatea științifică și ducând la menținerea unor „mituri științifice” sau la crearea unor noi. Am în vedere, de exemplu, cazul așa-numitelor „triade întunecate” care sunt invocate sistematic în analiza violenței împotriva animalelor. Triada copilăriei (MacDonald 1963), care include cruzimea față de animale, piromania și enurezisul ca predictor ai unei viitoare personalități antisociale, a fost restructurată de chiar autorul ei. MacDonald a eliminat, ca urmare a unei retestări ulterioare, factorul enurezis, deși a

² Ipoteza unei legături deterministe evidente între abuzarea copiilor, abuzarea animalelor și violența domestică, promovată de personalități marcante precum Arkow (1992) sau Ascione (1993, 1999, 2005) și preluată de o mare parte a cercetătorilor din domeniu ca fiind de la sine înțeleasă, are oponenți nu lipsiți de argumente credibile. Reproșul central vizează fundamentarea pe date obținute în principal din cercetări retrospective ai căror subiecți sunt, majoritar, membri ai unor categorii psiho-sociale extreme (criminali în serie, infractori condamnați pentru acțiuni antisociale grave etc.). Vezi Piper și Myers (2006), Piper și Cordingley (2009).

confirmat violența parentală, piromania și cruzimea față de animale. Cealaltă triadă, care se referă la vârsta adultă (Paulhus și Williams 2002), include narcisismul, machiavelismul și psihopatia ca fiind asociate cu comportamente și stiluri negative de interacțiune, deși ele pot rămâne adesea la frontiera dintre „normalitatea aparentă” și activitățile antisociale. Cercetările evidențiază totuși că nivelurile înalte ale celor trei trăsături de personalitate anterior menționate se corelează adesea atât cu atitudini negative față de animale cât și cu raportarea angajării efective în acțiuni de violență împotriva animalelor.

Într-o meta-analiză³ care a acoperit perioada 2010-2020 și a explorat, din perspectivă istorică, teoriile referitoare la cruzimea față de animale în perioada copilăriei, susținerea lor empirică, calitatea și eficiența metodelor aplicate, Wauthier și Williams (2022) au făcut o radiografie remarcabilă a progreselor dar și a vulnerabilităților temei în discuție. Voi aborda succint câteva dintre ele, nu neapărat în succesiunea în care apar în materialul consultat, asupra câtorva dintre ele urmând să revin ulterior. Prima este de natură terminologică și se referă la definirea și conceptualizarea actelor de violență la adresa animalelor. Deși autoarele s-au focalizat pe sintagma cruzime împotriva animalelor, literatura de specialitate per ansamblu utilizează, de o manieră interșanjabilă, conceptele de violență, abuz, agresiune și, mult mai rar, rănire. Definiția la care se recurge cel mai des îi aparține lui Ascione (1993:83) și trimite la „toate comportamentele inacceptabile din punct de vedere social care cauzează intenționat durere, suferință sau tulburare care nu sunt necesare și/sau moarte unui animal”.

Cu toate acestea, definiția ridică o serie de probleme sensibile, fiind evident că are o puternică încărcătură care ține de domeniul activismului, dar care se poate dovedi insuficient de nuanțată pentru domeniul cercetării, mai ales al cercetării care include copilul și copilăria. Copiii foarte mici pot avea comportamente care să facă rău animalului de companie dar ele se situează doar în mod excepțional la nivelul cruzimii. În plus, având în vedere nivelul dezvoltării cognitive, intenționalitatea, în sensul de finalitate conștient stabilită și asumată, practic nu există. Motiv pentru care Wauthier și Williams (2022) susțin înlocuirea sintagmei „cruzime împotriva animalelor”, cu aceea de „rănire a animalelor”, și propun următoarea definiție: „orice act, de comitere sau omitere, prin care un copil produce un

³ Au fost analizate 69 de articole din cele 416 rezultate generate ca urmare a căutării termenilor relaționați cu copii, animale și rănire (în titlu și în câmpul de cuvinte-cheie) în patru baze de date (OVID, Web of Science, PubMed și EBSCOhost).

impact negativ, intenționat sau neintenționat, asupra stării de bine a animalului” (193). Aceasta ar permite și o translare dinspre o extremă a continuumului care acoperă varietatea acțiunilor care încalcă starea de bine și drepturile animalelor către întregul spectru de comportamente care pot fi identificate de-a lungul acestui continuum.

Deși nu există, la momentul actual, o teorie unificatoare care să explice, de o manieră comprehensivă, etiologia cruzimii față de animale și interacțiunea factorilor care concură la apariția și manifestării ei, cercetătorii au elaborat o serie de teorii și modele ipoteze care sunt încă în proces de testare. Dar focalizarea pe aspectele și manifestările extreme se regăsește și la nivelul teoriilor și modelelor care fundamentează analiza factorilor de risc pentru violența copiilor la adresa animalelor. În absența unui model integrativ, reperele sunt configurate de teorii care se concentrează strict pe patologie⁴ (triada MacDonald și ipoteza violenței graduale), pe delincvență (ipoteza devianței generalizate) și agresivitate (ipoteza dereglării emoționale). Se neglijează, mai întotdeauna relevanța mediului social per ansamblu (inclusiv aspectele de natură economică, precum sărăcia și impactul acesteia pentru traiectoria existențială a copilului) și al culturii (care are un rol major în formarea și orientarea atitudinilor, mentalităților și comportamentelor), restrângându-se câmpul de analiză la diferențele individuale de personalitate și la violența restrânsă, aceea de tip domestic.

Criticile care se aduc prezentării insuficient nuanțate a cruzimii față de animale în copilărie ca factor predictor al unei traiectorii ulterioare violente, patologice, antisociale nu au în vedere atât faptul ca atare, cât mai ales proporționalitatea acestuia, respectiv fiabilitatea datelor statistice care, în multe cazuri, sunt obținute de la o populație care este deja încarcerată pentru infracțiuni de diverse grade, de la furt până la crimă. Dat fiind că personalitatea definită de triada narcisism, machiavelism, psihopatie include și comportamentul manipulativ, putem avea rezerve serioase cu privire la veridicitatea deplină a raportărilor⁵.

Rezerve există și față de nivelul de acuratețe al datelor furnizate de către părinții copiilor care au agresat animale sau de către copiii înșiși

⁴ Pentru definirea și analiza critică detaliată a acestor teorii vezi Johnson (2018) și Wauthier și Williams (2022).

⁵ Chiar și așa, merită să fie reținute o serie de rezultate ale cercetării din mediul carceral, caracterul lor contraintuitiv meritând, în perspectivă, o analiză aprofundată din partea specialiștilor: în timp ce procentul bărbaților închiși pentru crimă sau tentativă de crimă care au raportat cruzime substanțială față de animale în copilărie a fost de 25%, procentul femeilor aflate în aceeași situație a fost de 36% (Johnson 2018, 404).

(având în vedere caracterul reprobabil al unui astfel de comportament). Îngrijorarea cea mai justificată este legată de riscul etichetării unor copii implicați în accidente sau incidente izolate implicând violență față de animale drept „victime” sigure ale unei traiectorii existențiale antisociale. În realitate, o bună parte a comportamentelor abuzive față de animale, mai ales în copilăria mică, se datorează nivelului încă incipient al dezvoltării cognitive, precum și unor abilități motrice insuficient structurate și exersate.

Este important să nu pierdem din vedere că literatura de specialitate menționează, poate nu îndeajuns de sistematic și clar, faptul că majoritatea copiilor care experimentează sau sunt expuși la violență nici nu dezvoltă și nici nu manifestă cruzime față de animale⁶. Această constatare este însoțită, chiar în cazul unor cercetători cu vastă experiență, de oarecare surprindere că expunerea copiilor la violență nu îi transformă, automat, în abuzatori ai animalelor. Dar răspunsul există și poate fi regăsit în cercetările, clasice (Rutter 1985, 1987; Werner 1989, 1993) și moderne (Masten 2001; Svetina 2014) ale mecanismului rezilienței psihologice. Acestea demonstrează că, în ciuda condițiilor traumatizante sau adverse, majoritatea copiilor expuși la risc și presupuși a dezvolta diverse maladii (fizice sau psihice) sau tulburări de comportament au evoluat de o manieră pozitivă, transformându-se în adulți sănătoși și bine integrați, atât din punct de vedere personal cât și social.

Bunătatea și îngrijirea trans-specii

Deși este considerat un termen care aparține limbajului comun, bunătatea capătă treptat, cel puțin în domeniul psihologiei, statutul de concept. Interesul tot mai puternic pentru acest concept derivă, conform aprecierii specialiștilor, din sporirea continuă și convergența tot mai sistematică a evidențelor științifice care demonstrează că atât empatia cât și altruismul sunt înnăscute și emerg spontan în copilăria timpurie (Warneken și Tomasello 2009). Din perspectivă psihologică, bunătatea este pusă în relație, uneori prin asimilare și alteori prin diferențiere, cu concepte precum empatia, compasiunea și altruismul, fiind considerată, sub varii aspecte, ca stând la baza atitudinilor și comportamentelor pro-sociale.

⁶ În acord cu procentele avansate și de cercetările din domeniul rezilienței psihologice, cercetările privind relația dintre copiii abuzați și abuzarea animalelor arată că „peste 80% din copiii care au fost abuzați nu se implică în cruzimea față de animale” (Johnson 2018, 404).

Conform Dicționarului online de Psihologie al APA⁷, bunătatea este „un comportament aparent ne-egoist care furnizează celorlalți beneficii cu un anumit cost pentru individul care îl practică”, fiind „o acțiune binevoitoare și suportivă direcționată intenționat către altă persoană”. Motivația care stă la baza bunătății este, așadar, intenția de a ajuta și nu aceea de a obține o recompensă sau de a evita o sancțiune. Aceasta permite asimilarea unor acte de bunătate cu acelea altruiste, cu precizarea că, din perspectiva unor cercetări, altruismul ar reprezenta un schimb specific, o interacțiune tranzacțională: o pierdere a unei individ și un câștig al altui sau altor indivizi. Din punctul lor de vedere, actele simple de bunătate, precum mângâierea unui animal stresat sau un zâmbet adresat unei persoane necunoscute sau stesate nu poate fi echivalată cu niciun fel de pierdere.

În ceea ce privește compasiunea, un alt concept conexas cu bunătatea, respectiv similaritatea este dată de implicarea sentimentelor de empatie și a motivației de a ajuta, dar aceasta în contextul suferinței, dificultății sau tulburării altora (Goetz, Keltner și Simon-Thomas 2010), ceea ce înseamnă că actele de bunătate în momente sau situații dificile pot fi declanșate de compasiune. Totodată, cercetătorii subliniază și un alt aspect, respectiv că o persoană poate să simtă compasiune și, cu toate acestea, să nu întreprindă nicio acțiune prin care să dea o expresie concretă, practică trăirii interioare.

Prin urmare, potențialul bunătății este mult mai cuprinzător decât suntem tentați să credem și necesită, în consecință, mai multă investigație și valorificare. Printre argumentele pe care le putem invoca în justificarea, facilitarea și încurajarea învățării bunătății de la cea mai fragedă vârstă se numără atât beneficiile de natură fiziologică (îmbunătățirea semnificativă a nivelurilor răspunsurilor sistemului imunitar) cât și beneficiile de natură relațională și socială (reducerea anxietății sociale, cercetarea demonstrând că persoanele anxioase social care au practicat acte de timp de patru săptămâni, au înregistrat o scădere a tendinței de evitare socială).

Având în vedere faptul că bunătatea, așa cum s-a demonstrat (Roth-Hanania, Davidov, Zahn-Waxler 2011; Pfaff 2015), este o trăsătură înnăscută, ea poate constitui fundamentul a ceea ce Garbarino (1999) numește „îngrijire trans-specii”. La baza ei ar trebui să se afle nu atât natura sau calitatea subiectului/subiecților ci valorile pe care intenționăm să le promovăm (acceptarea, toleranța, empatia, altruismul, compasiunea, conectivitatea, civilitatea etc.). Totodată, acest tip de abordare ar permite

⁷ <https://dictionary.apa.org/altruism>.

extinderea conștientizării faptului că, în esență, suferința animalelor diferă prea puțin (ceea ce, de altfel, e doar o prezumție) de aceea a animalelor.

Concluzii

Aserțiunea freudiană conform căreia civilizația umană este bazată pe represiunea instinctelor primare, al căror corolar este violența, continuă să fie subestimată de către științele sociale. Excepționalismul uman și antropocentrismul triumfalist ne-au făcut să pierdem din vedere că, așa cum avertiza în mod vizionar Freud, nicio construcție durabilă nu poate fi edificată pe un fundament care este, în esență, o mlaștină care nu a fost curățată. Asemenea oricărei alte relații de profunzime, legătura copil – animal de companie este dinamică și multivalentă, implicând aspecte atât pozitive cât negative. Dar aspectele negative afectează rareori copilul, situația cea mai semnificativă și frecvent întâlnită sub acest raport fiind suferința psihologică experimentată de copil ca urmare a pierderii, prin moarte, a animalului de companie. Cele cu adevărat vulnerabile sunt animalele de companie, fapt care a impus o cercetare sistematică a factorilor de risc și a contextelor care generează, perpetuează sau chiar favorizează atitudinile și comportamentele negative față de ele. Datele obținute confirmă ipoteza că abuzarea animalelor este un caz specific al fenomenului generic al violenței iar subiecții care se angajează în acțiuni de acest gen, copii sau adulți, au ei înșiși, într-un număr semnificativ de cazuri, o istorie personală marcată de neglijare și abuz episodic sau îndelungat. Cu toate acestea, trebuie să fim extrem de atenți la tentațiile și riscurile care decurg din generalizarea acestor cazuri. Cercetarea demonstrează că din numărul general al copiilor abuzați în copilărie doar aproximativ 20% devin, la rândul lor, abuzatori. Restul de 80% nu doar că dovedesc o reziliență remarcabilă, depășind trauma și urmând o traiectorie de viață normală ci chiar dezvoltă și manifestă niveluri de sensibilitate și empatie, inclusiv în relația cu animalele, care le depășesc deseori pe cele ale persoanelor care nu au trecut prin experiența neglijării sau abuzului. Ceea ce nu înseamnă, desigur, că este acceptabilă minimalizarea riscului, care trebuie sistematic expus și contracarat, reprezentat de procentul celor care aleg sau acceptă să devină, la rândul lor, abuzatori. Și chiar dacă este susceptibilă de critica unei argumentări circulare, diminuarea și, la modul ideal, eliminarea violenței împotriva animalelor poate fi obținută prin cultivarea, încă din copilărie, a unei relații simbiotice între copil și animalul de companie.

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Animale și Oameni Găsiți Împreună la Scena Crimei: Reflecții Interdisciplinare asupra unor Cazuri Reale

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Abstract

Animal cruelty, which is included in the category of animal abuse, is commonly defined as any intentional (and repeated) behavior that causes physical or psychological distress in animals, including death. There is an increasing number of studies conducted by researchers on mental health (psychology, social work, psychiatry), experts and human-animal interaction field and forensic professionals on the motivational factors and significance of animal cruelty as an indicator of anti-social behavior manifestations, such as domestic violence, sexual assault, rape, murder, etc. Special attention is being paid to the relatively high prevalence of cruelty towards companion animals in early childhood and adolescence (particularly towards cats, which are over-represented in the reported cases of animal cruelty around the world). This paper aims to analyse in an interdisciplinary and critical reflective manner several cases of co-occurrence of animal cruelty (death) and homicide in Romania. The cases were documented within the investigations of the Behavioral Analysis Unit of the General Inspectorate of Romanian Police. The motivation for killing the companion animals of the human victims is interpreted in view of several psychological and sociological theories, such as Bandura's Vicarious Learning theory, the Violence Graduation hypothesis, and the Deviance Generalization hypothesis.

Keywords: Animal cruelty, Homicide, Crime scene, Interdisciplinary approach, Cross-education

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Introducere

Această lucrare prezintă o serie de reflecții calitative interdisciplinare asupra problematicii interacțiunilor om-animal (IOA) în general, dar și în câteva cazuri specifice de IOA în context judiciar. Aceste cazuri specifice se referă la scene de omucidere în care s-au găsit, alături de victime umane, victime animale (pisici sau câini, unele aparținând victimelor), cazurile fiind investigate de către unul dintre autorii acestei lucrări în contextul exercitării profesiei sale în cadrul Serviciului de Analiză Comportamentală al Inspectoratului General al Poliției Române București, România.

Ideea acestei lucrări a pornit de la nevoia identificată de către cei doi autori în decursul colaborării lor din ultimii cinci ani de a semnala importanța analizei transdisciplinare a prezenței animalelor și a relațiilor om-animal în diferite contexte, cum ar fi cel criminalistic, atât pentru a aduce valoare adăugată investigațiilor legate de scena crimei, dar și în direcția identificării factorilor de risc și prevenției. Lucrarea prezintă așadar atât trimiteri la literatura de specialitate, dar și reflecții personale ale autorilor, trecute prin filtrele profesiilor și expertizei acestora în interacțiunea cu oameni și animale, aceste filtre venind dinspre domeniile psihologiei judiciare, etologiei, antrozooziei și psihologiei evoluționiste.

Problematica IOA este privită, de obicei, din perspectiva unui tip special de relație interpersonală. Din perspectiva psihologiei și etologiei (studiul științific al comportamentului animal), abordările științifice internaționale subliniază *condiția incertitudinii* acestei relații, invocând de-a lungul timpului faptul că între om (conștient de sine) și animal (inconștient de prezența sa în lume) nu poate fi o relație interpersonală, deoarece unul dintre actori este inconștient. Drept urmare, gândirea psihologică la nivelul populației generale operează cel mai adesea un salt epistemologic insuficient argumentat prin care susține că gândirea relației om-animal ar aparține doar primului actor. Pornind de la această premisă, este construit un șir de raționamente ipotetico-deductive prin care omul se situează aprioric în vârful lanțului trofic mulțumindu-se inconsistent că a rezolvat cumva problema. Urmând raționamentele diferitelor școli de gândire psihologică, se insistă asupra genezei și emergenței diferitelor motivații umane în relația om-animal, sunt invocate mecanisme psihologice mai mult sau mai puțin conștiente, fiind luate limitativ în considerare mecanismele culturale și modelarea mintală operată de reprezentările sociale.

În același context al investigării diferitelor motivații umane în relația om-animal se plasează și interacțiunile cu consecințe de tip negativ asupra

animalelor, în special a celor de tip cruzime, în care se vehiculează adesea ideea de intenționalitate și conștientizare a suferinței. Într-un capitol recent apărut în *The SAGE Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology*, în care se adresează semnificațiile evoluționiste ale eticii în IOA, Fleischman (2021) punctează că, luând în considerare perspectivele evoluționiste și funcționale, se poate infera că procesul de conștientizare subiectivă a suferinței în general a evoluat pentru a preveni și controla rănirea și durerea corporală. Dacă se ia ca un dat faptul că oamenii pot suferi, iar suferința are funcții adaptative importante în supraviețuire și reproducere, se poate astfel asuma logic că suferința există și la alte specii de animale (Tomasik 2017, citat în Fleischman 2021). Cu toate acestea, o serie de autori punctează dificultatea identificării unui cadru unitar de interpretare a cruzimii față de animale în contextele considerate neacceptabile social (DeMello 2012), precum și importanța abordărilor interdisciplinare a acestor acte de cruzime, cu atenție foarte mare pe istoricul individual și situațional.

Sunt destul de modeste și studiile care aprofundează modul în care se ajunge la consensualitatea intersubiectivă în ceea ce privește relația om-animal, sunt și mai puține studiile care analizează procesele de interschimb perceptiv și reprezentational care să conducă la indicii pertinente pentru răspunsuri la întrebări punctuale.

De ce ar fi importante răspunsurile? Pentru că, în spațiul cultural românesc (unde se plasează cazurile analizate în această lucrare), diferențierile de repertoriu al imaginilor și semnificațiilor dezvoltate în cadrul interacțiunii om-animal uneori transcend granițele regionale, făcându-le unice pentru o regiune geografică, în timp ce, în alte zone geografice ale României, aceste repertorii suferă transformări și glisări situaționale, derutante de cele mai multe ori. Altfel spus, imaginarul colectiv care știm că este operant ontologic, influențează opinii, credințe, speranțe și idealuri toate structurând conduite mintale și comportamente specifice. Dacă la acestea subliniem veritabilele centrări ale sistemelor de gândire religioasă existente și puternic remanente în spațiul românesc, ne putem apropia de o înțelegere mult mai acurată de ceea ce înseamnă: mecanismele de tip ”țap ispășitor” din nucleul interacțiunii om-animal, fenomenele de atribuire socială, mecanismele de defensă ale unei comunități dintr-un anumit spațiu geografic, amprentele comportamentale destinologice, ajungând la ”cuvântul de duh” (freudian), catrele batjocoritoare la adresa omului sau animalului, dezvoltarea unui anumit tip de argou regional.

Pentru a susține cele expuse în contextul interacțiunilor om-animal în spațiul românesc, executăm un recul de peste o sută de ani, la o lucrare de

referință, o trilogie din care aflăm despre consistența și fixitatea funcțională a sistemelor de gândire și imaginație care îi avea ca protagoniști pe om și pe animalul din gospodăria sa.

În captura de text nr. 1, nașul copilului preconizează excursul destinologic al celui pe care l-a botezat după aspectul podoabei capilare: dacă copilul are părul asemănător unui câine sau pisică, este considerat un *semn rău*. Practic, imaginarul colectiv transilvănean și bucovinean își cristaliza aprecierea în jurul *utilității* versus *non utilității* unor animale de casă.

Deci după ce a ajunsă acum etatea aceea, în care poți să distingă lucrurile unul de altul, mama copilului său că se duce cu dînsul și cu pîrul pîstrat la nînașul său, sau că acesta vine la finul său acasă și, arătîndu-i pîrul, îl întreabă zicîndu:

— De ce e pîrul acesta, fine?

Dacă copilul răspunde că e de cutare sau de cutare vită e semn bun, căci va avea noroc la vite, dacă zice că e de *cîne*, de *mîș* sau de altă vieta necurată, e semn rău, căci atunci nu va fi gospodar, iar dacă zice că e de om, atunci e un semn că va fi forțe cu minte și deștept la cap (2).

În cele mai multe părți atât din *Bucovina*, cât și din *Transilvania* este datina de a păstra, pe lângă pîr, încă și *buricul copiilor* după ce acesta s'a uscat, s'a desfăcut de unde a fost legat și a căzut jos, până ce cresc mari și încep a pricepe, în unele localități chiar și până după alu șeptelea an dela ziua născerii.

Captură de text nr.1. Extras din lucrarea „Născerea la români. Studiu etnografic de S. Fl. Marianu”. Edițiunea Academiei Române. Lito-Tipografia Carol Göbl, București, 1892, p. 422. Sursa: www.digibuc.ro

Dimensiunile afectivă și instrumentală ale percepției subiective a animalelor se regăsesc în domeniul antrozooziei și psihologiei ca indicatori semnificativi ai atitudinilor (și comportamentelor) favorabile sau nu față de animale, acestea putînd fi evaluate cu o serie de instrumente cu proprietăți psihometrice foarte bune (Serpell 2004; Serpell și Hsu 2016; Turner, Waiblinger, și Meslin 2013; Rusu 2019). Dimensiunea afectivă (emoțională) se referă cel mai adesea la stările/ afectele asociate cu prezența animalelor, percepțiile subiective, grija resimțită față de acestea și tendința de atribuire a trăsăturilor umane (antropomorfizare), iar dimensiunea instrumentală se referă la valoare utilitară și/sau economică a animalelor. Aceste două dimensiuni, chiar dacă nu sunt obligatoriu interconectate în

totalitate, pot fi modelate de o serie de factori culturali și sociali, cum ar fi experiențele personale, credințele și valorile familiale și societale, credințele morale și religioase, educația formală, non-formală și informală etc. Cele două dimensiuni, în special dimensiunea afectivă care include și componente referitoare la conștientizarea existenței emoțiilor și suferinței la animale, sunt considerate importante în evaluarea semnelor timpurii ale abuzului față de animale, dar și în interpretarea intensității și motivației cruzimii față de animale în diferitele situații.

În captura de text nr. 2, observăm că se introduce o latură sancționatorie venită tot pe linie destinologică prezumată, prin care copilul ce se va naște din femeia care lovește vreun câine sau vreo pisică, va împrumuta caracteristicile celor din urmă: copilul va fi flocos și păros ca animalul pe care mama l-a lovit.

Maî departe femeea îngreunată să nu dee cu piciorulū în vre-unū câne, căci copilulū ce-lū va face, va fi cănosū la inimă (6), saū după cum spunū și credū Românii din *Transilvania*, copilulū femeii ce va da cu piciorulū în vre-unū câne saū miță, va fi flocosū și pērosū ca animalulū, pre care l'a lovitū (7).

Captură de text nr.2. Extras din lucrarea „Nascerea la români. Studiu etnograficu de S. Fl. Marianu”. Edițiunea Academiei Române. Lito-Tipografia Carol Göbl, București, 1892, p. 22. Sursa: www.digibuc.ro

Fantasmеle care se dezvoltă drept acte de tip surogat pentru recăpătarea unei stări de bine, se regăesc în captura de text nr. 3. Într-o notă de subsol găsim credința că, apa rămasă din copaie se aruncă peste *animalele spurcate*, anume *câinele și pisica*. Astfel, se alungă toate ”relele” din casă. Referința psihanalitică ar spune în acest caz că efectul cathartic este obținut ca urmare a unei satisfacții halucinatorii prin care omul scapă de afectele neplăcute prin mecanismul ”țapului ispășitor”¹.

¹ ”țapul ispășitor” era un mecanism de expiere comunitară întâlnit în cultura ebraică.

(3) Cred. Rom. din Costăna, com. de Dragoșu Bumbac, stud. gimn. și a celorlă din Stulpican, com. de Nic. Cotlarciuc: «O babă m-a spusă că *câni* și *mățele* sunt animale *spurate*, pentru-că totă-deauna rămășița apei, care se descântă și rămâne în fundă, se aruncă pe căne sau pe măță, ca prin acăsta să se alunge tôte relele din casă.»

Captură de text nr.3. Extras din lucrarea „Înmormântarea la români. Studiu etnograficu” de S. Fl. Marianu. Edițiunea Academiei Române. Lito-Tipografia Carol Göbl, Bucuresci, 1892, p. 91. Sursa: www.dacoromanica.ro

În ritualurile de înmormântare care închid cununa vieții, ecoul ”naturii spurcate” a câinelui și pisicii construiește un sistem de reprezentări infauste dacă aceste animale se interpun pe drumul transmutației sufletului defunctului. În drumul său spre Ceruri, sufletul mortului trebuie să călătorească nestingherit și, chiar dacă poposește pentru puțin timp în sufletul vreunui animal, unii români din Bucovina consideră de rău augur ca acestea să fie căne ori pisică (captura de text nr. 4).

S'a întemplată adese-oră, că mișcându vre-o pisică numai pânza de pe mortă, toți cei de față au fugită din casă (2).

Adevărata causă însă pentru ce se alungă câni și mățele din casă, nu e cea arătată în șirele de mai sus, ci, după cum spună unii Români din *Bucovina*, pentru că sufletul omului, după ce se despărțesce de corpă, să nu se pue pe vre unulă din aceste animale necurate (3), iar după credința altora, că atunci când sufletul se sbate și se muncesce ca să iasă din casă afară, în isbirea sa să nu se bage cum-va în vre-ună *câne* sau *măță* (4), căci sufletul, după ce se desparte de corpă, după cum ne vomă încredința în altă locă, nu se duce de-a dreptulă în ceriă, ci adese-oră se vîră în animale precum și în alte obiecte, unde petrece apoi ună timpă mai îndelungată.

Totă atunci, când se alungă câni și mățele din casă, este datină în unele sate din *Bucovina*, precum bună-ora în Bilca, de a pune o năframă curată pe ună cuiă, creșdendă că sufletul, după ce s'a despărțit de corpă, se pune pe năframa de pe cuiulă respectivă, unde așteptă până ce vine preotulă

toți» an. III, Bucuresci, 1888, p. 474. — Ionenu, op. cit. p. 36—37: «ună mortă este păzită ca să nu trecă peste elă vre-o pisică, căci se face *strigoii* și moră toți al casei.» — D. Stănescu, op. cit. p. 324—325: «Este importantă a spune aici cătă de înrădăcinată între omeni este ideia că în *câne* și *pisică* și alte animale există duhuri rele. Aă cea mai mare veghere pe timpulă când mortulă este în casă, ca să nu trecă peste elă vre-o pisică, nici chiar sôrece, căci

Captură de text nr. 4. Extras din lucrarea „Înmormântarea la români. Studiu etnograficu” de S. Fl. Marianu. Edițiunea Academiei Române. Lito-Tipografia Carol Göbl, Bucuresci, 1892, p. 92. Sursa: www.dacoromanica.ro

Și, mai departe: „Apogeul manifestărilor malefice este însă atins de strigoii „permanenți”, strigoii morți, mai puternici și mai răi decât cei vii. Ei puteau să omoare oameni, să le ia sângele, să strice recoltele. Aceste făpturi malefice provin fie din strigoii vii care mor, fie din morți nepăziți, cărora nu li s-a respectat ritualul înmormântării (al căror suflet și-a găsit adăpost temporar într-un animal spurcat – câine sau pisică – ce le-a tulburat priveghiul) sau care au murit năprasnic.” (Bistriceanu 2007).

În unele zone ale României, câinele se „naturalizează” în preajma morții, confirmând ieșirea din viață nu numai ca simbol psihopomp², ci și drept certificare că ceea ce se va întâmpla va fi fără întoarcere: la bolnavul care trebuie să moară, urlatul câinelui și groapa săpată de patru-ped în pământ lângă casa acestuia, va da verdictul (captura de text nr. 5).

Urlarea sa și hăulirea cânilor. Dacă într-o casă se află un bolnav, care trebuie să moară, atunci câinele se apropie de casa, unde e bolnavul și urlându sapă sau cel puțin șgărie pământul de lângă acea casă ;
De cum-va familia bolnavului nu are nici un câine, atunci totu aceste semne se fac de către alți câini străini, cari vin în ograda celui bolnav dela vecini săi chiar și din locuri mai depărtate. Însă câinele, care urlă, numai atunci prevestește morțe, când își pleacă capul spre pământ, iar de cum-va urlându își ridică capul în sus, atunci prevestește foc (1);

Captură de text nr. 5. Extras din lucrarea „Înmormântarea la români. Studiu etnografic” de S. Fl. Marianu. Edițiunea Academiei Române. Lito-Tipografia Carol Göbl, București, 1892, p. 5. Sursa: www.dacoromanica.ro

Natura ambivalentă a animalelor de casă, în special a câinelui și pisicii, caracterul când fast, când nefast al acestora sau cumva interpus în destinul uman, este surprinsă mai departe:

„Tocmai datorită pisicii sălbatice, ruda mai mare, pisica domestică a moștenit, probabil, în mitologia românească, aspecte contradictorii, fiind considerată când rea, când bună.”³ Și mai departe:” (...) vrăjitorii și vrăjitoarele de mai târziu preferau pisicile, mai ales pe cele negre, pentru a fi însoțiți de ele în blestemății, inclusiv la sărbătorile lor conduse de diavol. Zăpășul cu dracul se încheia prin amprenta pusă de laba unei pisici pe trupul celui care făcea jurământul; martorul ce supraveghea

² În lumea onirică, în special.

³ <https://epochtimes-romania.com/news/mitologie-romaneasca-pisica---198532>.

ceremonia era adeseori o pisică neagră. Unele vrăjitoare pretindeau că, ungându-se cu o alifie extrasă din ierburi în noaptea Nașterii Sfântului Ion Botezătorul și de Înălțare, se prefac în pisici. De aceea, cei care credeau că sunt loviți de vrăji rele ardeau pisicile de vii!”⁴

Observăm din text cum proiecția pulsionilor inconștiente asupra sistemelor perceptive alcătuiesc un mix de componente raționale și iraționale în tentativa omului de a da un sens și de a construi o relație semnificativă între **o interdicție** și **o dorință**: interdicția de a ucide și dorința de expiere de Rău. Motivația celor care credeau că sunt loviți de vrăji rele (mai ales femeile) devine astfel o forță motrice alimentată din trei surse: (1) proiecția agresivității + (2) interdicția de a ucide + (3) dorința de a scăpa de vrăji sau de ”piaza rea”:

„Piaza rea se poate întrupa ca șarpe, câine (mai ales negru), pisică neagră, găina cu cobe, care cântă cocoșește, cucuvea, om (mai ales oamenii însemnați, precum spânii, cei cu părul roșu, cei cu ochii încrucișați, ciungii sau ologii) sau lucru (o haină sau o casă). Imediat ce este recunoscută, piaza rea trebuie alungată sau omorâtă. Cel mai bun antidot este o bucată de funie a unui spânzurat, păstrată în casă sau purtată asupra omului.”⁵

Conflictul intrapsihic oferă astfel energia necesară trecerii la actul de incendiere a pisicilor încă pe când acestea sunt în viață. De aici, până la asocierea <pisică – femeie⁶> și diabolizarea ambelor, nu mai era decât un pas:

*„Una dintre figurile care îndreptățesc conturarea unui panteon românesc al răului este apogeul maleficului feminin, demonul monstruos **Samca** sau **Avestița**, supranumită **Aripa Satanei**, cea care se apropie mai mult de modelul „mamei cumplite” pomenit mai sus. Victor Kernbach o identifică drept ființa cea mai primejdioasă dintre toate duhurile rele, cea care se opune direct vieții prin amenințarea femeilor însărcinate, lehzelor și copiilor nou-născuți. Natură proteică, poate să apară ca femeie, pisică, găină, capră, câine, muscă sau bob de mei. Conform lui Simion Florea Marian, copiii vânați de acest spirit, dacă au apucat să se nască, vor fi mai departe chinuiți: un fel de cârcei la stomac îi fac să se*

⁴ Idem.

⁵ Apud. p. 74, **Ernest Bernea**. *Spațiu, timp și cauzalitate la poporul român*. Editura Humanitas, București, 2005, p. 261-262.

⁶ Femeia ”care ține coada sus”, asemeni pisicii: femeie perversă, de moravuri ușoare, adulterină, diavoliță.

*schimonosească și să se zgârcească, putând să rămână astfel toată viața; unii dintre ei mor.*⁷

Așa cum este bine știut, proiecția conținuturilor psihice inconștiente nu este purtătoare numai de negativitate, anulare sau deconstructivism. Proiecția poate purta asupra obiectului-țintă și intenții pozitive, dependente de contextul cultural, contribuind astfel la întărirea relațiilor dintre membrii comunității și la „diluarea” pulsionilor sau tendințelor periculoase ale personalității. Astfel, românii sunt recunoscuți⁸ în spațiul european pentru creativitatea anecdotică, umoristică în care omul și animalul împărtășesc un destin particular și multicolor: „*La popa la poartă/ E-o pisică moartă/ Cine-o râde și-o vorbi/ S-o mănânce coaptă/ Cu mărar, cu pătrunjel/ Cu untură de cățel/ Eu sunt popă românesc/ Și am voie să vorbesc*”⁹.

Bogăția fantastică a lexicului românesc în umorul verbal își manifestă intenția de normalizare încă din educația copiilor, este antidogmatică în expresie, refuză tiparele, se folosește de context pregătind interlocutorului surprize cognitive printr-un *umor de registru* (Zafiu 2008), succulent și sexualizat: „*Cățeluș cu păr mișto/ fură Kent și Malboro/și se jură că nu fură/ da l-am prins cu Kentu-n gură/ Cățeluș cu păru roșu/ n-are baba ce-are moșu.../ moșu are o rachetă/ baba are o planetă... / moșu vine cu racheta/ baba deschide planeta...*”¹⁰.

Rolul umorului nu numai că ar fi acela de întărire a coeziunii intra- și intergrupale dar este și acela de detensionare, de luare în derâdere a incertitudinii, absurdului vieții, micimii sau prostiei umane. Umorul la români (non-dacopați) are tendințe iconoclaste și cu potențialități sanogenetice certe (Alexe 2015), *dacă* nu este umbrit de acel complex de superioritate resentimentară¹¹, de ”insulari” latini excepționali și dacă nu se sprijină pe un fond dispozițional dizarmonic al personalității.

Umorul sănătos tratează în cheie comică realitățile sufletești cel mai greu de gestionat: tendința la cruzime și interdicțiile morale.

⁷ Idem. p. 72.

⁸ În ceea ce privește acest aspect, cercetările psiholingvistice și studiile de antropologie culturală susțin ideea că românii urmează imediat după polonezi la felurile expresii argotice.

⁹ Din folclorul autohton.

¹⁰ Din folclorul urban comunist.

¹¹ Expresia se găsește aici: <https://cabalinkabul.com/2018/06/20/je-ne-suis-pas-charlie-halep-de-ce-nu-au-europenii-si-romanii-umor/>.

Cruzimea față de animale și interacțiunile negative om-animal

„Unul din cele mai periculoase lucruri care i se pot întâmpla unui copil este să ucidă sau să tortureze un animal și să treacă peste asta” (Margaret Mead)

Iubirea și ura sunt două sentimente puternic încărcate energetic, dar fiecare a dispus de o evoluție filogenetică diferită: *cruzimea* este preeminentă filogenetic *compasiunii*. Dacă prima este ancestrală, cea de a doua se opune, fiind o achiziție mai recentă și cu o determinantă culturală importantă, presupunând abilități de recunoaștere și conștientizare a nevoilor și suferinței celorlalte ființe, precum și decizia de a interveni în diminuarea suferinței. Astfel, abilitatea empatică, care precede manifestarea compasiunii (adesea numită empatie direcționată), se referă la abilitățile de a recunoaște indicatorii comportamentali și expresiile suferinței celorlalte ființe (din cadrul aceleași specii, dar și din specii diferite în contextul IOA), să anticipeze și să răspundă adecvat la aceste manifestări în direcția reducerii acestora și evitarea traumelor suplimentare (Figley și Figley, 2017 citat în Rusu 2020).

Prin anii 1800, se întâlneau primele preocupări legate de disciplinarea copiilor cu bătaia luând în considerare problema socială a delincvenței care împovăra sistemul judiciar a acelor timpuri. Azi este confirmat faptul că există o înaltă corelație între pedepsele excesive administrate copiilor și comportamentul lor deviant de mai târziu iar abordările pozitive considerau că comportamentul fiecăruia este determinat de forțe aflate dincolo de controlul individului și aceste forțe își au originea, printre multe altele, în cauze biologice, psihologice și sociologice. Comportamentul deviant asociat cu abuzurile și neglijența în interiorul familiei și/sau mediului social proxim a fost adesea relaționat cu manifestări ale cruzimii față de animale în copilăria timpurie, adolescență sau în faze mai târzii ale existenței individuale.

În cazul copiilor, se recomandă atenție și precauție în ceea ce privește interpretarea acestei conexiuni, copiii putând manifesta comportamente de explorare a viului, fără intenție sau fără a resimți plăcere în actele de cruzime față de animale. Cu toate acestea, există un număr impresionant de studii care susțin cu date că abuzul față de animale este un factor de risc pentru violența interpersonală, această conexiune fiind cunoscută ca ”The Link” (Herzog 2010) și fiind adresată în numeroase protocoale de

diagnostic social, educație, prevenție și reabilitare psiho-socială a copiilor, adolescenților, precum și a familiilor acestora (de exemplu, Tedeschi, Fitchett, și Molidor, 2005).

În literatura de specialitate apar frecvent două ipoteze privind asocierea dintre cruzimea față de animale și comportamentul criminal, acestea fiind **teoria graduală** (engleză *graduation theory*), în care se presupune că actele de cruzime față de animale reprezintă o pregătire treptată pentru violența interpersonală, și **teoria devianței generalizate**, care se referă la asocierea personalității anti-sociale cu ambele tipuri de manifestări violente, atât față de oameni, cât și față de animale (Gullone 2014; citat în Fleischman 2021).

O variabilă care se consideră de unii autori că fragilizează metodologic această conexiune este dată de faptul că cele mai multe evidențe ale conexiunii, respectiv "The Link" se bazează pe raportări post-factum ale persoanelor aflate fie în detenție, fie în proces de investigare criminalistică, acestea fiind deci o populație selectată (Flynn 2011). Acest lucru ne stimulează și mai mult să participăm la procesul de conștientizare a nevoii la nivel societal de identificare timpurie (la copii și la adolescenți) a semnelor de cruzime față de animale și oameni, precum și de elaborare de proceduri facil de utilizat pentru raportarea acestor semne și demararea programelor de prevenție și/sau intervenție.

Mai târziu, Școala *biologistă* a tulburătorilor ani '60 se va dezvolta în vremuri de intense tulburări sociale, mari schimbări sociale și tehnologice, modă de neuitat, noi stiluri de muzică, flower-power, drepturi civile, drepturi ale femeilor, asasinate, etc. O perioadă în care societatea americană va investi în cercetare, dar mai ales în cercetarea cauzelor devianței. Această orientare pornea de la premisa că indivizii se nasc esențialmente "răi". John McDonald va studia originile sociopatiilor și va identifica trei elemente care, dacă sunt prezente, vor fi predictorii ai comportamentului violent. *Triada McDonald* (Parfitt și Alleyne, 2018) cum se numește ea în Știință, cuprindea: (1) *enurezis* sau udarea patului); (2) *cruzime față de animale* și (3) *punerea focului*.

În anul 2007, Connor oferea o nouă perspectivă asupra cercetării violenței în copilăria timpurie. El propunea ca studierea violenței să se facă pe trei paliere comportamentale: *semnale alarmante precoce*, *semnale generale de avertizare* și *semnale de pericol iminent*. Perspectiva lui Connor (2017) este și azi, un reper actual pentru identificarea comportamentelor de risc. Semnalele *alarmante precoce* sunt cele care se regăseau în triada McDonald.

Semnalele generale de avertizare, identificate de el în studiul biografic al autorilor de fapte cu violență, erau:

1. Izolat social, marginal, retras;
2. Sentimente și comportamente influențate de cei din jur;
3. Victimizat sau tratat rău de către congeneri;
4. Alcool sau consum de droguri;
5. Experiența respingerii, nedreptății sau a fricilor nerealiste;
6. Reacția la dezamăgiri, critică sau rănire sufletească cuprinde furie extremă, vinovăție exagerată și dorința de răzbunare;
7. Creșterea furiei, agresivității și comportamentelor destructive;
8. Asocierea cu alții asemenea lui, cunoscuți cu comportamente bolnăvicioase, destructive, fantezii violente;
9. Fascinație și interes obsesional arătate față de arme și alte instrumente violente;
10. Comportamente destructive sau violente descrise artistic sau prin alte forme de expresie artistică.

Semnalele de pericol iminent:

1. A atacat un alt copil sau a fost victimizat;
2. A purtat asupra sa o armă într-o situație nepotrivită;
3. Are sau poartă asupra lui o armă cu potențial letal;
4. Manifestă gesturi sau afirmații cu conținut destructiv, violent sau amenințător;
5. A avut/are planuri destructive, violente sau suicidale;
6. Vorbește despre suicid sau posibilitatea producerii lui;
7. Are o posibilă țintă pentru comportamentul său destructiv sau violent.

Din *perspectiva psihanalitică*, în toate aceste situații, în măsura în care sentimentele sunt negative, copilul reacționează cu toată intensitatea urii ce caracterizează stadiile sadice timpurii de dezvoltare. Dar, pentru că obiectele urâte stau alături de cele iubite, generează conflicte care devin curând insuportabil de împovărătoare pentru Eul prea slab. Astfel, singura cale de scăpare devine fuga de ele prin refulare. Păpușile, bărbații, femeile, animalele, mașinile, trenulețele permit copilului să reprezinte diverse persoane - mama, tatăl, frații și surorile, iar prin intermediul jucăriilor, el își poate pune în scenă în întregime materialul cel mai adânc refutat. Copilul încearcă să facă bine și să ispășească pentru ceea ce a făcut: uneori, el chiar încearcă să repare acele păpuși, trenulețe pe care tocmai le-a stricat, să bandajeze rănilor pe care tocmai le-a provocat cățelului sau pisicii din

familie. Alteori, desenul sau construcțiile exprimă aceleași tendințe reacționale.

Din perspectivă *kleiniană*, copiii nu sunt fericiți, toate suferințele de mai târziu din viață fiind, în marea lor majoritate, repetări ale celor timpurii și că, în primii ani de viață fiecare copil trece printr-o suferință nemăsurată. Drept consecință, **cunoașterea conexiunilor dintre fantasme și sexualitate este cea mai importantă**, iar diferențele dintre copilul normal și cel nevrotic sunt date de: intensitatea fixațiilor, felul și momentul în care aceste fixații se leagă cu experiența, gradul de severitate și întreaga dezvoltare a Supra-Eului și capacitatea copilului de a suporta anxietatea și conflictele lăuntrice

Sentimentul de vinovăție trăit de copil în urma chinuirii animalului de casă, de exemplu, devine și el refutat. Astfel, copilul repetă iarăși și iarăși diverse acțiuni care îi exprimă atât dorințele, cât și imboldul de a fi pedepsit. Dorința de pedepsire din partea părinților, factor determinant în repetarea permanentă a unor acte reprobabile, își găsește analogia în fărâdelegile repetate ale criminalului. Altfel spus, la fiecare copil „neastâmpărat” acționează dorința de a fi pedepsit. Friederich Nietzsche îl numea „criminalul palid”, adică criminalul mânat de sentimentul de vinovăție.

În eseuul său intitulat „Criminali dintr-un sentiment de vinovăție”, Sigmund Freud avansa teza că vinovăția nu este determinată de crimă ci, mai degrabă, crima provine din vinovăție. Spre deosebire de aceasta, controversata teză a lui Melanie Klein (2011) ne spune că unui criminal nu-i lipsește conștiința ci, mai degrabă, are o conștiință prea crudă. Vorbim de un Supra-Eu timpuriu nemodificat, care funcționează diferit de cel normal și care sub presiunea fricii și a vinovăției îl împinge spre crimă. Astfel, se consideră că **actele criminale sunt puneri în scenă detaliate ale fantasmelor sadice timpurii**, care joacă un rol specific în dezvoltarea normală. De asemenea, ea afirmă că, exceptând experiențele traumatiche, fantasmele sadice sunt cele care creează imagini distorsionate și înspăimântătoare ale actului sexual. Copilul mic își adăpostește mai întâi impulsurile și fantasmele agresive împotriva părinților, apoi le proiectează asupra acestora și astfel își dezvoltă o imagine fantastică și distorsionată asupra lumii din jurul său. Dar, mecanismul introiecției funcționează în același timp, astfel încât aceste imago-uri ireale ajung să fie internalizate, rezultatul fiind sentimentul copilului de a fi guvernat de către părinți fantastic de periculoși și de cruzi (Supra-Eul din sine însuși). Se instaurează un cerc vicios, anxietatea îl silește pe copil să-și distrugă obiectele, fapt care duce la o sporire a propriei sale anxietăți, iar aceasta îl împinge din nou să

acționeze împotriva obiectelor sale. Acesta este mecanismul psihologic care pare să stea la baza tendințelor asociale sau criminale ale individului. Acest mecanism se întrevede în analiza jocului copiilor care rup, distrug și refac, după caz.

Cruzimea față de animale a fost raportată cel mai des la copiii cu vârsta cuprinsă între 4 și 6 ani, însă acest eșantion este contestabil din cauza faptului că părinții sunt tentați să nu raporteze actele de abuz ale copiilor lor (Lockwood 2013). Un studiu retrospectiv realizat în rândul studenților din America de Nord privind implicarea în acte de cruzime față de animale în copilăria timpurie, indică un procent de 66% de participanți de sex masculin și 40% de sex feminin care au admis că au abuzat cel puțin o dată un animal în copilărie (Arluke 2002). Altfel spus, cruzimea față de animale în copilărie poate fi atât o formă de comportament relativ comun întâlnit (normal) pe care copiii îl manifestă atunci când nu sunt supravegheați de către adulți, dar poate fi și o practică atractivă mai mult decât este cazul pentru copiii cu tendințe spre violență și comportamente anti-sociale (Fleischman 2021). În ceea ce privește a doua categorie, într-adevăr, există studii care susțin cu date clare că acei copii care caută astfel de experiențe și le practică cu intensitate și/sau frecvență mai mare, manifestă o severitate mai crescută a tulburărilor psihologice, emoționale și comportamentale în comparație cu alți copii (DeMello 2012).

Actele de violență îndreptate împotriva animalelor de talie mică, inofensive, non-amenințătoare prin natura speciei căreia aparțin, cu siguranță că sunt expresia dorinței persoanei de a-și exercita *puterea* prin violență. Este mai puțin probabil să subliniem importanța controlului pentru că, dimensiunea controlului este oricum dată de *natura relației ierarhice* dintre agresor și animalul supus acestuia. Dimensiunea controlului se poate dezvolta pe o scală care pornește de la abuz sexual, abuz emoțional prin folosirea animalului de companie în calitate de obiect de satisfacție prin umilirea persoanei vătămate (captură video 1), ajungând până la uciderea acestuia.

Mai mult, similar actelor de abuz sexual al animalelor și actelor homicidale, numărul ridicat de animale care sunt ucise sau schilodite în relativ același context (homicidal) crește nivelul de pericolozitate pentru episoade recurente de violență pierdută de sub control.



Captură video 1. Victima minoră este forțată să facă felație unui câine mascul din rasa bichon maltez. Episodul este precedat de slujirea facială a minorei prin răzuirea feței cu o lamă (arhiva personală a autorului D.D.).

Practica judiciară din România a constatat situații în care, cu prilejul unor episoade de violență în familie, agresorul incapabil să își controleze furia, a urmărit schilodirea animalelor din gospodărie, victimele fiind mai ales câinii, pisicile și caii de tracțiune. În aceste situații dar și în altele de mare violență urmate de moartea victimei, gravitatea leziunilor provocate animalelor din gospodărie a depins prea puțin de încărcarea violentă a agresorului, cât de capacitatea acestora de a fugi. În cazurile rare în care animalele au reacționat instinctiv la explozia furiei stăpânului, acestea au "armat" mecanismul de fueling violent, aspect care a atras după sine o veritabilă furtună de lovituri care s-au abătut asupra lor.

Din perspectiva anchetei judiciare, tabloul lezional purtat de animalele găsite moarte cu prilejul cercetării la fața locului în care s-a produs o infracțiune contra vieții persoanei, investigatorii au acordat atenție situațiilor în care leziunile suferite de animal erau nejustificate prin gravitate, prin repetabilitatea acțiunilor de lovire și de situațiile în care agresorul a utilizat mai multe instrumente de provocare a morții. Altfel spus, investigația judiciară a surprins continuumul agresional în interiorul acestuia, în *timpul comiterii faptei* și mai puțin sau deloc în segmentul *antedelictum* sau *post-delictum*.

Cu prilejul începerii urmăririi penale, în unele situații, investigația juris-psihologică a scos la iveală crâmpie dintr-un trecut sumbru în care agresorul chinuia animalele de casă, preferând grade diferite de distanțare psihologică ce porneau de la „simpla curiozitate” (explorare) anatomică față de victima-animal și se puteau înscrie pe un continuum ce pornea de la contactul fizic direct (animalul era legat/priponit, era lovit cu corpuri dure,

spânzurat, înjunghiat, în timp ce agresorul trăia plăcerea vederii chinului suferit de animalul propriu/străin de casă) și ajungea până la acțiuni agresionale de la distanță (otrăvire, împușcare, proiectarea de obiecte ascuțite către victimă, „exerciții” de tragere la țintă etc.) cu animalul fixat sau nu.

Relevanța acestor comportamente este deosebită ca valență interpretativă, pentru că ne poate descrie procesualitatea învățării desensibilizării emoționale a agresorului, care își are drept mecanism-sursă, *dimensiunea operantă a distanței fizice*: experimentând de la distanță acțiunea de schilodire sau ucidere a animalului, autorul este stimulat să se apropie ulterior de animalul-victimă. Ceea ce îl poate face să se apropie se consideră că este tocmai creșterea sentimentului că poate controla viața victimei în toate punctele sale ferindu-se, în același timp, de detalii perceptive dezgustătoare. Apropierea este însoțită de experimentarea vizuală și auditivă a chinurilor prin care trece animalul, iar aceasta este susținută de plăcerea controlului asupra victimei, moment din care, dezgustul începe să se dilueze. Finalul acestui parcurs este un apogeu fantasmatic prin care interdicția (sau caracterul insuportabil) este învinsă de *dorința-plăcere* prin care autorul jubilează când simte că viața animalului i se scurge printre degete în câteva minute. Aici, ne aflăm la momentul în care s-a instaurat *desensibilizarea emoțională, premisă forte pentru comportamentele homicidale de mare violență de mai târziu*.

O mare parte din literatura psihologică și criminologică mai subliniază faptul că asocierea cruzimii față de animale cu incendierea lor este un predictor foarte puternic pentru conduite extrem de violente și chiar homicidale (de exemplu, Ascione 2008; DeMello 2012). Combinația acestor factori nu este însă întâmplătoare pentru că incendierea intenționată a animalului în timp ce acesta se află încă în viață este un predictor mult mai puternic pentru marea violență decât incendierea animalului post-mortem. Spunem aceasta pentru că trebuie să distingem între: *incendierea ofensivă a animalului* (în scop de obținere a plăcerii autorului în fața chinului animalului cuprins de flăcări) și *incendierea defensivă*, prin care autorul dorește să distrugă total corpul animalului ca într-un fel de încercare de dispariție din câmpul său mental a reprezentării faptei pe care tocmai a comis-o.

Literatura de specialitate și practica judiciară subliniază importanța *premeditării* acțiunilor îndreptate spre suprimarea vieții, iar premeditarea este o circumstanță agravantă cu valențe cert incriminatorii în toate sistemele de justiție penală (Lockwood 2013). Premeditarea desemnează un

efort cognitiv specific pus în slujba creșterii rafinamentului cruzimii îndreptate împotriva victimei, a atingerii unui scop eminent criminal, ținta fiind omul și/sau animalul. Premeditarea este reflectată, spre exemplu, prin:

- Construirea unor dispozitive de schilodire/ucidere;
- Asumarea unui risc sau efort;
- Agresorul urmărește animalul care încearcă să scape de agresiune;
- Indiferența la faptul că cruzimile sunt săvârșite în public;
- Acțiunile de mare violență sunt polimorfe în manifestarea lor și îngrozesc anturajul circumstanțial sau „ales” (cazul unor secte);
- Invitarea altor persoane pentru a asista sau participa la spectacolul macabru;
- Șantajarea/intimidarea emoțională a unei terțe persoane (de exemplu, soțul ucide animalul de companie pentru că știe că, în felul acesta, își poate face soția să renunțe la intenția de a divorța);
- Uciderea animalului este realizată ca un act exemplificator pentru ceea ce va urma (sau ar putea să se întâmple) cu persoana reală, țintă a acțiunii homicidale;
- Prezența unei motivații afective;
- Dezorganizarea trebuințelor de putere și control care conduc deseori la acțiuni de dezmembrare ante- sau post-mortem a animalului.

Secolul ce a trecut (începând cu descrierile lui Krafft-Ebing despre dominație, degradare și violență) a produs cazuri demne de menționat care au extins mai departe spectrul de la visele sadic-sexuale sau fantezmele relatate de către nevrotici în timpul psihanalizei, până la izvorul nesecat al biografiilor de succes ale sadicilor sexual care au fost condamnați pentru infracțiuni de notorietate.

Caracterul inofensiv al celor care doar își imaginează contrastează în mod dramatic cu depravarea acelor infractori sadici a căror translație a fantezmei¹² în acte criminale a făcut să fie întâlniți în practica psihiatriei criminalistice și a cercetărilor judiciare. Pentru a înțelege întregul spectru al sadismului sexual¹³, considerăm că este necesar să studiem nu numai

¹² Termenul de *fantasmă* este utilizat în text din perspectivă psihanalitică.

¹³<https://www.analizacomportamentala.com/post/infractorul-sadic-sexual-%C5%9Fi-faptele-sale>.

persoanele aflate în conflict din punct de vedere nevrotic, dar, de asemenea și sadicii care nu sunt stânjeniți de inhibiții etice, sociale sau legale. Un factor important în înțelegerea profunzimii și amplitudinii fanteziilor cu violență sexuală este recunoașterea *aglutinării și ordonării detaliilor conținuturilor fantazate*. Criminalii se gândesc constant la fantazările lor, le explorează și le retrăiesc. Unul din cele mai bune exemple ale vivacității fanteziilor de violență sexuală este un caz în care poliția a descoperit fotografiile efectuate de criminal atunci când și-a torturat victima. După arestare, criminalul a fost în stare, după câteva luni, să deseneze cu o precizie uimitoare detaliile fotografiilor făcute în timp ce își chinuia victima. Detaliile au fost identice.

Drept urmare, un comportament deosebit de relevant pentru cronicizarea violenței agresorului este îmbrăcarea "hainei" sexualității peste violența generalizată sau episodică. Aceste evoluții care *pot căpăta aspectul unui tandem* fac parte din istoricul multor violatori în serie și criminali în serie, dominarea de tip violent fiind emergentă cu excitația sexuală. Agresorii sunt animați de fanteziile violente și comit atacuri sexuale de mare violență pentru a-și satisface aceste fantezii, pentru a le umple. Actele pe care le comit asupra victimei sunt expresia directă a „revărsării” acestor fantezii. În acest caz, actele de cruzime ale agresorului pot fi acompaniate de un simbolism sexual asociat cu victima sau cu tot ceea ce este reprezentativ pentru acesta. Substituirea reprezentării mintale a victimei umane de către victima-animal și glisarea viitoare spre cel din urmă, nu va face, credem noi, decât să *temporizeze* expresia liberă, violentă a tot ceea ce a avut timp să se încarce fantasmatic.

Pentru că *realitatea niciodată nu va reuși să satisfacă fantezia deviantă*, agresorul poate stoca, în diferite forme, experimentarea actelor de abuz (sub formă de fotografii, înregistrări audio-video, desene, jurnal intim etc.). Necesitatea psihologică internă nu este numai aceea de a celebra grotescul ci, conferă și control suplimentar experienței. Astfel, în trecerea de la o faptă la alta, controlul este ranforsat, acesta crește stima de sine, întărește supremația și permite trecerea cu încredere la satisfacerea unui alt etaj fantasmatic mai polimorf, mai excitant, mai „suculent”.

În cadrul desfășurării investigațiilor în cauzele cu crime în serie de factură sexuală, anchetatorii, cercetătorii, încearcă să identifice motivațiile agresorului bazându-se pe examinarea locului faptei. Interpretarea unui anumit tablou de fantazare prin analiza locului faptei este un demers foarte problematic. Asemeni publicului general, agresorii își țin cel mai adesea pentru ei fantazările și de obicei nu obișnuiesc să lase ca acestea să fie

cunoscute, sau cineva să le pătrundă sensul. Caracterul închis față de privirile indiscrete aruncate acestor fantezii ridică în calea investigatorilor dificultăți extraordinare atunci când ele se bazează doar pe interpretarea scenelor crimei, ca să nu mai vorbim atunci când identitatea criminalului este necunoscută.

Uciderea animalelor în cazuistica Poliției Române – cazuri de animale găsite la scena crimei sau în proximitate

Cazul 1. Dublu asasinat.

Era anul 1973 când T.G. încerca să se integreze pe piața muncii și lucra ca zilier zugrav pe la felurite persoane.

S-a reținut că în 13 august 1973, în jurul orei 21.00, T.G. s-a deplasat la locuința victimelor P.P. și P.F. unde executase lucrări de zugrăvit, pentru a-și ridica un bidon care se afla în pivnița locuinței victimelor. Inculpatul s-a deplasat la locuința victimelor cu bicicleta. Pe portbagajul bicicletei avea împachetat în hârtie, un topor bine ascuțit pe care îl luase de acasă încă din dimineața zilei respective.

În timp ce era în fața casei soților P., T.G. l-a informat pe colonel (P.P.), care ieșise la geam, asupra motivului pentru care venise. În momentele următoare inculpatul T.G. a auzit-o pe victima P.F. întrebând-și soțul cine a venit și pe acesta din urmă răspunzând: „*boul ăla de T.G...!*”.

Victima P.P. i-a deschis inculpatului poarta, având asupra sa o lumânare și chibrituri, după care cei doi au coborât împreună în pivniță. Scos din minți de furie, T.G. se abține până când ajunge cu colonelul la demisol, pentru a i se înapoia bidonul. Inculpatul i-a aplicat victimei o primă lovitură cu toporul în cap, după care a continuat să o lovească cu ambele părți ale toporului. Revenit în locuință, inculpatul a întâlnit-o pe victima P.F. și i-a aplicat și acesteia două lovituri cu toporul în cap. La scena din beci asistă și pisica de casă a familiei, care este omorâtă și ea prin decapitare cu toporul.

În anul 1973, T.G. este arestat pentru uciderea soților P., moment în care primește și condamnarea la moarte, așa-numita „*încadrare la cartuș*”. Pentru uciderea soților P., T.G. va fi condamnat la moarte în anul 1974, iar apoi grațiat prin Decret în anul 1988. Dar, seria de omoruri va continua cu încă trei fapte, din care două cu depeșaj (fiica sa și concubina), cadavrele lor nefiind găsite. Concubina inculpatului (P.H.) va cere „divorțul”. „Divorțul” nu se va pronunța din oficiu, însă va fi cerut de P.H. după doi ani, fapt de

natură a-l „scoate din minți” pe deținut. T.G. acumulează ură nestinsă, dorind și moartea socrilor, mai mult decât orice. Inculpatul își va ucide concubina, tranșând-o cu cuțitul. În același timp, fiica inculpatului îi va cere acestuia să îi treacă apartamentul pe numele ei printr-o păcăleală notarială. Ura stimulează fantazările criminale, iar T.G. o omoară și pe fiica sa, tranșând-o în bucăți, la fel ca pe concubină. După uciderea fiicei sale, cu prilejul unui interviu, inculpatul își rememora un scenariu macabru, în care cumpăra o caserolă de ficat de pasăre și amesteca în aceasta, ficat și inimă de om: „am vrut să-i scot inima și ficatul¹⁴ și să-i duc la **mă-sa...** și niște ficăței,... desfac frumos țipla, îi tai și amestec și zic să mâncăm... dar... știți... mâncă doar ea..., doar pentru ea (râde)”.

În interviul luat în anul 2014, în legătură cu acest eveniment, T.G. ne relatea următoarele:

„T.G. (...) Și după ce l-am executat pe colonel, fir-ar mă-sa a dracu... am văzut... ia uite mă... se uita pisica la mine... se uita așa fix... i-am luat și ei capu’...”

Întrebare: Păi unde era?

T.G. Venise în beci... să vadă ce se întâmplă?!

Întrebare: Și...?!

T.G. I-am luat capu’ cu toporu’...

Întrebare: Cu ce vă încurca?

T.G... A dracu se uita fix la mine...

Întrebare: Și... așa rapid ați fost din topor?

T.G. Pfffoaiii...”

Câteva referințe biografice despre T.G.

Încă din copilărie, relația cu cei din jur este marcată de conflictualitate. Tot ceea ce se întâmplă în jurul său, trebuie să respecte imperativele propriilor necesități. Nu are respect pentru autoritate, nu are respect pentru valorile sociale pe care încearcă ceilalți să i le transmită. Batjocorește sentimentele celor din jur, ia în derâdere pioșenia mamei care se roagă în fața icoanelor, îndepărtează icoanele din casă pentru a-și etala prin diplome performanțele sportive. Din perioada copilăriei lipsesc datele despre timpul petrecut la orfelinat și vârsta la care a fost dat spre îngrijirea Statului.

Perioada micii școlarități transmite semnale de dezadaptare precoce la regimul școlar, perioadă în care T.G. relatează conflictele cu cadrele didactice și pedepsele administrate în scop corectiv. Solicitat să aprecieze

¹⁴ Inima și ficatul fiicei sale H. măcelărită.

sursa generatoare de conflicte, deținutul descrie situațiile sociale ca fiind purtătoare de imprevizibil. El se descrie ca un ins normal, binevoitor cu cei din jur, calm, galant, până în momentul în care situația de interacțiune interpersonală aduce ceva nou, neașteptat, în măsură să îl ia pe nepregătite. Dacă această situație este percepută și ca fiind aducătoare de obstacole în îndeplinirea vrerii sale, reacția sa este deosebit de violentă. El săvârșește acte de violență extremă doar în scop instrumental: acela de îndepărtare a obstacolului. Îl sperie fenomenul morții cu fațetele ei înșelătoare, este foarte atent ce mănâncă (hrana fiind potențial purtătoare de acțiuni letale), „citește” cu atenție relațiile și se simte frustrat dacă nu controlează situațiile de interacțiune. Urăște slăbiciunea umană și orice forme de expresie artistică ce subliniază tema slăbiciunii, impotenței, caracterul lasciv și nedemn pentru voința umană.

Narează cu plăcere despre poeziile pe care le cunoaște, le recită, schimbă apoi registrul și trece în cel muzical, în care cântă două melodii de ocnă (*Anina* și o alta al cărei nume nu și-l amintește), ultima având drept temă omorul multiplu motivat de adulter. Sensibil față de istoria și destinul tragic al unui nepot, ripostează la tratamentul dur al părinților care nu respectă personalitatea copilului, încurajând apropierea afectivă de copil (-ii).

T.G. are un cod moral propriu. El nu este o construcție socială și nu este negociabil sau supus vreunei restricții. Aplicarea sa la fiecare din situațiile de viață are drept rezultat fie îndeplinirea scopului său, fie eliminarea obstacolului care îi barează calea.

Privit prin intermediul sistemului său de valori, deținutul socotește pe drept că situațiile imprevizibile l-au aruncat în pușcării și *regretă nu atât faptele* (ele fiind finalități ale unui proces), *cât lipsa sa de inteligență* în managementul relațiilor interpersonale care *l-au condus* la fapte. Este montajul perceptiv care, azi, îl determină să fie cazat la izolator, departe de contactul cu ceilalți deținuți. Tot acest tip de montaj îl ajută să controleze relațiile și să reacționeze foarte violent dacă este înșelat, mințit, păcălit, și tot această atitudine îl face să fugă de alcool: „*eu treaz fac mai rău... îți dai seama dacă eu aș mai bea ce s-ar mai întâmpla cu mine...*”.

Ordonat, meticulos, exigent, își păstrează starea de igienă corporală și vestimentară, comportamente care se extind și la spațiul carceral unde totul se află într-o ordine desăvârșită.

Raportarea afectivă la ceilalți este tipică psihopatului antisocial sau personalității criminale descrisă în literatura de specialitate. La subiectul nostru punctăm următoarele aspecte:

1. Absența regretelor arată că nu trece prin cele trei faze accesuale: acumulare de afecte dure, descărcare și liniștire;
2. Absența capacității de atașament;
3. Intoleranța la respingere;
4. Incapacitatea de a fi alături de cineva, atât timp cât totul se concentrează pe control.

Cazul 2. Cvadruplu asasinat, autor unic.

În prima faptă - *triplul asasinat* - autorul cunoștea că victimele luaseră pensiile cu o săptămână înainte de comiterea omorurilor. Autorul, F.S. mai cunoștea faptul că bătrânii făceau economii, deci îndeplineau condițiile minime potențiale de victimizare: bătrâni care strângeau bani (*două femei și un bărbat*), scunzi (151-162 cm) și firavi, aflați într-un imobil separat, situat la intersecție de drumuri. Prezența unui bărbat în casă ridică totuși probleme de gestiune a acțiunilor criminale îndreptate împotriva lor. Autorul acționează premeditat. Pătrunde prin efracție, cu rolul de neutralizare a victimelor și, în special, a celui mai puternic (*bărbatul vârstnic*).

Autorul, după spargerea geamului și dezasigurarea ușii, pătrunde în camera 1 unde este întâmpinat de victima R.M. (prima victimă). Atacul este deosebit de violent, iar victima nu mai apucă să se apere, fiind doborâtă, lovită în cap cu toporul, în dreptul pragului de trecere din camera 1 înspre camera 2.

Victima R.E. (a doua victimă) este surprinsă pe canapea (reacție de blocaj sau fugă din pat prin ocolirea mesei spre ușă), încearcă să se apere (este lovită cu toporul peste braț), moment în care, în cameră intră victima K.R. (a treia victimă). Cele două femei sunt lovite succesiv, R.E. fiind practic decerebrată. Urmează scotocirea camerei în căutarea de bani. În urma loviturilor aplicate în zona capului cu toporul, victima K.R. cade, blocând parțial ușa.

După finalizarea scotocirii în căutarea banilor, autorul se întoarce și aplică fiecareia dintre victime, o serie de lovituri devastatoare la nivelul capului. Fiecare victimă este tratată sălbatic: numărarea intersecției liniilor de fracturare de la nivelul craniului arată că prima victimă a primit 9 lovituri, a doua 11, a treia 14, însă cifrele sunt estimative fiind produse multe leziuni prin suprapunere. Înainte de părăsirea imobilului, autorul lasă două” semnături criminale”:

- Acoperă capul victimei K.R. cu o năframă neagră;

- Deschide canaua de gaze de la soba aflată în camera 3 unde dormea K.R. și lasă ușița deschisă pentru propagarea liberă a gazului metan.

Următoarea faptă de omor a aceluiași autor, adică *a patra*, se petrece tot într-un imobil. Autorul se deplasează la locuința bărbatului împreună cu care obișnuia să petreacă timp cu cateheza biblică. Cei doi, enoriași și prieteni în cadrul aceleiași congregații religioase, vor deschide Biblia și vor dezbate subiecte religioase. Autorul îi citește din Biblie, iar victima, aflată sub influența alcoolului, se relaxează sub vocea autorului. Încântat de sentimentul „dumnezeiesc” pe care îl trăise la fapta anterioară, când îi ucisese pe cei trei bătrâni, simte plăcere la gândul că își poate reîmprospăta experiența trecută. Într-un moment foarte scurt, apucă toporul aflat în cameră și lovește țintind capul victimei. Victima este ucisă cu o singură lovitură de topor în creștetul capului, creând o linie de fractură cu lungimea de 22 de cm și adâncimea de 9 cm. Lovitura este atât de puternică încât corpul nu mai înregistrează nicio convulsie post-agresională (reacție de decerebrare). Batjocoritor, autorul îi îndeasă victimei o pălărie de paie pe cap și îi aruncă un pled peste aceasta. La scenă asistă și cățelul victimei.

Pe fondul clarității conștiinței, rațional și metodic, autorul caută obiecte din care să confecționeze un mecanism de aprindere a focului și inițiere a exploziei locuinței. În tot acest timp petrecut în imobil, autorul este încântat de prezența cățelului care i se joacă printre picioare. Se mai jucase anterior cu el.

Din obiecte cu utilitate diferită (baterii de ceas R6, capătul unui aprinzător de flacăra, sârmă tip liță etc.), autorul încearcă să creeze ceva funcțional. Din considerente obiective, mecanismul actuator nu îi reușește dar, folosindu-și inteligența, dezizolează firele de la frigider (fără a introduce încă ștecherul în priză), înfinge o furculiță în rama superioară a ușii de acces în locuința victimei și întrevede posibilitatea ca, din contactul furculiță-fire dezizolate să producă un scurt-circuit. Pentru ca efectul să aibă loc, deschide canaua de gaze naturale, lăsând ușița deschisă la cuptor pentru o mai bună umplere a camerei (similar faptei sale anterioare de la care trecuse fix o lună). Deci, înainte de părăsirea imobilului, autorul lasă două „semnături criminale”:

- Pune o pălărie de pai peste capul victimei J.I. iar peste pălărie, un material textil de culoare verde. [La fapta anterioară, doar una dintre victime este tratată la fel: îi aruncă o basma neagră peste craniul zdrobit].

- Deschide canaua de gaze de la sobă și lasă ușița deschisă pentru propagarea liberă a gazului metan. În stare agonală, victima apucă să mai inhaleze gaz metan după care decedează.

Autorul realizează că dispozitivul de declanșare a scurtcircuitului l-ar surprinde și pe el înăuntru, motiv pentru care abandonează planul de a arunca în aer imobilul prin utilizarea dispozitivului ingenios. Toate aceste operațiuni sunt efectuate în timp ce cățelul victimei se afla în cameră și împreună cu care autorul vorbea de altfel în timp ce meșterea la dispozitivul de inițiere a exploziei. Cățelul va muri, închis în cameră și asfixiat cu monoxid de carbon, lângă stăpânul său. Autorul va părăsi camera sărind pe geam.



Figura 4. Imagine de la scena crimei, unde cu săgeată galbenă este indicat cadavrul cățelului. Sursa CFL.

Referințe comportamentale despre autorul cvadruplului asasinat.

În comunitate, F.S. era cunoscut ca un individ liniștit, inteligent, acceptat de comunitate și mai ales de comunitatea Congregației „M”, care ”l-a crescut”. În localitatea de domiciliu F.S. nu s-a remarcat prin comportamente deviante, violențe sau alte fapte reprobabile care să îl aducă în atenția organelor de poliție. Având în vedere însă condamnarea sa, opinia publică îl consideră motiv de temere colectivă semnificativă față de posibilitatea ca acesta să revină acasă.

În ceea ce privește integrarea în mediul școlar, în calitate de elev s-a remarcat prin inteligență (peste medie), performanțe la învățătură situate

la un nivel peste mediu, însă cu o puternică reactivitate la impunerea de limitări și restricții.

Subiectul este crescut într-o familie ale cărei principii morale sunt fixate cu fermitate, constanță și exigență în ceea ce privește îndeplinirea îndatoririlor morale, în special a celor moral-religioase. Mama lui F.S. este descrisă în termeni apreciativi de genul inteligentă, preocupată față de întreținerea familiei și de asigurarea educației celor doi copii. Față de aceasta, tatăl lui F.S. este descris ca fiind aspru, exigent, dur de cele mai multe ori, care a forțat cumva integrarea lui F.S. în grupul Congregației „M”. Părinții, chiar dacă nu au avut o influență predominantă asupra educației sale, au impus reguli clare de comportament și au eșuat în rolul multivariat pe care ar fi de așteptat să îl aibă o familie: acela de suport moral, de sprijin afectiv, de facilitare a deschiderii emoționale a copilului confruntat cu problemele specifice vârstei. Tatăl lui F.S. a fost perceput ”ca un Dumnezeu” vetero-testamentar: dur, inflexibil, agresiv, aspru cu cei din jur, similar fratelui său (acesta din urmă mai violent însă), declanșa respect necondiționat și, ulterior, frică de pedeapsă. Copilăria este momentul în care peste autoritatea exigentă a tatălui se suprapune autoritatea pastorală, definitorie pentru congregația „M”. Practic, în psihologia lui F.S. asistăm la un proces de glisare necritică de la frica resimțită față de figura tatălui, la temerea de pedeapsa divină impusă de congregație (sectă milenaristă), cunoscută de altfel pentru extremismul ei etico-moral. Înconjurat de această atmosferă și puternic limitat la o comunitate de tip rural, cerându-i-se să se comporte altfel de cum ar simți că este natural să se poarte, F.S. resimte din ce în ce mai acut presiunea grupului familial, a grupului de prieteni și a grupului religios. Retras, inhibat, reținut în dorințe, limitat în satisfacerea impulsurilor naturale, subiectul va începe să resimtă frustrare față de toate aceste impuneri și va încerca să se debaraseze de acestea. Ascuțirea tensiunilor venite asupra sa, lipsa banilor și atitudinea ostilă față de orice formă de impunere a autorității, vor construi un cumul de factori care îl vor determina să treacă la consumul de substanțe etnobotanice, distrugeri de bunuri personale și alte violențe.

Subiectul nu se simte confortabil atunci când i se aduce la cunoștință modul în care este perceput de către cei din jur, mulți descriindu-l ca fiind un tânăr inteligent, liniștit, care nu atrage atenția în mod deosebit. Este dificil de identificat dacă este doar un efect rezultat în urma unei jene sociale sau dacă vorbim despre modestia sa structurală. Este certă însă orientarea subiectului spre o dimensiune filosofică existențială pe care se fundamentează concepția sa despre lume și viață. Subiectul este interesat

de dimensiunea destinologică, utilizează în limbajul verbal-oral o simbolică ce trimite la metafora "căii de parcurs", este interesat de Adevăr și de modalitățile de accedere la acesta, iar subiectele biblice și cele filosofice nu îi sunt străine. Acum, se vede puternic, inteligent real (și nu naiv cum era înainte), apreciază că principala valoare ce trebuie consolidată în relație cu ceilalți este manipularea lor ca strategie instrumentală iar urmarea scopului preferă să o vadă drept "o politică a pașilor mărunți". Știe ce are de făcut, și-a stabilit prioritățile (aceea de a se elibera din penitenciar) și face exact ceea ce trebuie dar nu neapărat ceea ce simte că ar trebui să facă.

Ostilitatea lui F.S. se poartă mai ales asupra experienței avute în familia sa de origine. Nu recunoaște rolul sanogenetic al familiei și nici transmiterea vreunor valori călăuzitoare în viață. Neagă orice comportamente de revoltă care s-ar fi aflat la baza motivației faptelor de care este acuzat, însă reproșează celor din jur, dar și sieși, incapacitatea de a identifica soluții la problemele sale, soluții care ar fi reușit să îl detensioneze „atunci”. Din discursul său înțelegem că subiectul își retracează proiecțiile culpabilizării de la cei din jur și, treptat, ajunge să își asimileze propriile greșeli, reacția sa la frustrare fiind impunitivă (conform teoriilor frustrației, Rosenzweig 1945). Comportamentele care susțin această idee sunt:

- Ante-delictum, subiectul își considera familia și religia drept cele care i-au limitat accesul la o viață intimă normală, sănătoasă; acestea impuneau cenzuri morale de netrecut, sub sancțiunea pedepsei meritate sau așteptate.
- În pre-faza faptelor penale, subiectul dorește să rupă aceste condiționări morale și eșuează în antisocialitate: minte pe membrii familiei profitând de încrederea acestora în el, își distruge propriul autoturism, fură, încearcă atingerea unor scopuri pe căi ilicite;
- Își planifică acțiunile penale în cele mai mici detalii conform echipamentului său intelectual;
- Este dezamăgit de propria acțiune infracțională, imprecizia conducând la arestarea sa.

Cazul 3. Omor calificat.

Starea de fapt: în după-amiaza zilei de 20.12.2011, la solicitarea victimei, inculpatul s-a deplasat la domiciliul acesteia, pentru a o ajuta să activeze o cartelă telefonică. De la ora 19 până la orele 24 cei doi au consumat un litru de țuică. Victima, pe fondul unei certe mai vechi cu tatăl

inculpatului, a început să vorbească urât despre acesta, moment în care inculpatul s-a enervat.

Discuția a degenerat, inculpatul luând toporul victimei care era așezat într-un colț al camerei și l-a lovit în cap de mai multe ori pe S.V. lăsându-l în comă. Fapta se producea pe fondul consumului excesiv de alcool.

Din declarația de inculpat¹⁵, reținem:

„Locuiesc în comuna Z din anul 2000, fiind vecin cu S.V. Arăt că, în tot acest interval de timp relațiile dintre noi au fost bune, de foarte multe ori acesta solicitându-mi ajutorul la diverse activități, ajutor pe care îl acordam când aveam timpul necesar. Cu toate acestea, în urmă cu aproximativ doi ani a avut loc un conflict între tatăl meu și numitul S.V. fără să pot preciza cauza, moment din care cei doi nu și-au mai vorbit, doar se salutau în continuare. Cred că conflictul dintre cei doi a avut loc pe fondul consumului de alcool, întrucât aceștia mai obișnuiau să consume alcool împreună.

Ieri, respectiv în data de 20.12.2011, fiind solicitat de victimă, m-am deplasat la domiciliul acesteia pentru a o ajuta să își încarce cartela telefonică. După ce l-am ajutat să își încarce telefonul numitul S.V. a dat, în prezența mea, câteva telefoane la fiul său în Spania și la o nepoată în România. În tot acest timp am consumat împreună băuturi alcoolice, respectiv țuică produsă personal de victimă. Din câte îmi amintesc, pe perioada șederii mele la domiciliul victimei, respectiv între orele 19-24 am consumat împreună cantitatea de aproximativ un litru de țuică. Arăt că am discutat cu victima diverse lucruri, iar la un moment dat acesta a început să-l insulte pe tatăl meu, împrejurare în care eu i-am solicitat să înceteze injuriile întrucât toată această situație mă afecta moral. Nu îmi mai amintesc cu exactitate ce s-a întâmplat în continuare, însă după ce m-am trezit din starea de ebrietate, respectiv azi dimineață, fiind prezent și la cercetarea la fața locului am realizat cele petrecute. Totodată fiindu-mi prezentat toporul cu care aș fi agresat victima arăt că acesta nu îmi aparține, fiind toporul numitului S.V. și din câte știu acesta ținea de obicei toporul respectiv la intrarea în camera în care dormea, fiind astfel posibil ca eu să îl fi luat de acolo și să fi agresat victima cu el. De asemenea arăt că nu îmi amintesc cu exactitate de evenimentul cu pisica însă din spusele soției, am aflat că eu am decapitat-o cu toporul.

¹⁵ Extras din rechizitoriu.

În momentul în care m-am trezit din beție am constatat că toate hainele pe care le purtam erau pătate cu sânge, iar pe mâini eram de asemenea murdar de sânge.

Arăt că uneori consum băuturi alcoolice și am mai avut comportamente ușor violente în familie, însă numai cu soția și niciodată cu alte persoane.

Nu sunt înregistrat cu niciun fel de boală la instituții sanitare, nici fizică și nici psihică, însă uneori când consum băuturi am momente în care îmi pierd rațiunea.”

Modul de operare este simplu, rudimentar și de mare violență. Autorul folosește obiectul pe care îl are la îndemână și anume toporul. Se năpustește asupra bătrânului, lovindu-l de mai multe cu toporul în cap. Loviturile sunt atât de puternice, încât distrug țesutul osos al craniului și fața victimei, rămânând eschile osoase pe muchia tăietoare a toporului. Starea afectivă a autorului în timpul comiterii faptei este deosebit de relevantă pentru încercarea de a înțelege comportamentul post-delictum: autorul ia toporul cu care a ucis victima și se îndreaptă spre locuința sa. În holul casei își face simțită prezența o pisică de-a unor vecini. Inculpatul apucă pisica de gât și o decapitează în fața soției sale.

Se pot face doar speculații pe marginea acestui comportament, însă se subliniază hiperperseverența afectului după comiterea faptei: autorul nu reușește să își descarce întreaga furie asupra victimei, iar singura modalitate de ventilare ar fi prelungirea acțiunilor criminale. Pisica devine astfel obiect de substitut pentru satisfacerea pulsionii de a ucide, veritabil mecanism-ventil.

Privire sinoptică asupra acțiunilor criminale din cazurile prezentate – Discuții și recomandări

Violența agresorului se poate descărca fie asupra bunurilor materiale, fie asupra persoanei victimei, fie asupra unui obiect-ventil cum este animalul prezent la fața locului. Dacă fapta este comisă într-un mediu închis (locuință, loc de muncă, vehicul) vom constata mai multe semne obiective, multiplicitatea urmelor, diversitatea și starea acestora (sexuală sau generalizată), existența brutalizării, mutilării sau dezmembrării.

Examinarea tabloului lezional al victimei om și/sau animal conduce la instrumentul vulnerant și la mijloacele de constrângere utilizate de criminal (imobilizare banală, legare) și îl considerăm cel mai important reper investigativ, indiferent dacă instrumentele deucidere sunt găsite sau nu la locul faptei. Nivelul de violență exercitată este, în general, corelat cu

dimensiunea emoțională a controlului și cu prezența posibilă a mai multor autori.

Implicarea afectivă a criminalului în timpul acțiunii este un element determinant al condițiilor și a modalităților practice de trecere la act, dar și al rezoluției infracționale. Nervozitatea, colera, ura, pasionalitatea, gelozia, frustrarea, angoasa, disperarea sunt sentimente puternice ce alimentează violența incontrollabilă. Aceste aspecte deseori vin din direcția tulburărilor de personalitate (impulsivitatea), adicțiilor (alcool, stupefiante, medicamente psihotrope), a parafiliilor, manifestărilor depresive sau psihotice. Conduitele dezvoltate pe fondul unor atare stări emoționale sunt numeroase. Atacarea victimei survine deseori în urma unei dispute sau a unui conflict interior. Atacul este brusc, dezordonat, arma utilizată fiind orice îi vine la îndemână: picioare, pumni, armă albă, obiecte contondente, instrumente găsite la locul faptei, similar cazurilor descrise anterior. O atare agresiune este puternic motivată afectiv, este de mare gravitate iar durata sa nu este foarte întinsă. Arma este lăsată frecvent la locul faptei, la fel și cadavrul sau victima care, rareori sunt mutate. Numeroase indicii sunt găsite la locul faptei, iar agresorul, uneori, nu face niciun efort pentru a dispărea. Putem găsi conduite de reparație (aranjarea corpului, etc.) iar acestea sunt posibile în dramele pasionale.

Componenta premeditată este constituită din conduite instrumentale și din *tehnicele* necesare pentru violența descărcată, unde satisfacerea scenariului conduce cu gândul la premeditare, autocontrol, la un comportament cognitiv și rațional al suspectului. În acest caz, crima tinde să fie planificată, organizată, cumva complexă, cu utilizarea mijloacelor deucidere pregătite în avans: unelte pentru pătrundere, lațuri, trusă pentruucidere/tortură. Atacul se comite conform unei strategii de apropiere față de victimă (prin surpriză, izbucnire violentă, viclenie), posibil țintită anterior. Infracțiunea poate dura foarte mult în caz de răpire sau sechestrare a victimei și acesta este cel mai serios indicator pentru pericolozitate. Autorul tinde să îndepărteze probele (curăță locul faptei, sustrage arma crimei, ascunde cadavrul, îl camuflează, îl mută, îngroapă, îl disimulează, îl distruge prin incendiere, îl aruncă în apă). Poate acționa împreună cu alți complici, iar de aici investigația se complică.

În crimele cu nivel înalt de organizare sunt posibile o serie de relații cu fapta mai puțin obișnuite: schimbarea mijloacelor de deplasare la/de la locul faptei, evitarea lăsării descoperite a cadavrului. Pentru anchetatori, determinarea factorilor spațio-temporali și *modus operandi* (context geografic, distanțe, timp între primul contact avut cu victima și descoperirea

cadavrului) este un element esențial pentru evaluarea și clasificarea unei infracțiuni violente.

Natura relațiilor dintre un criminal necunoscut și victima sa, se reflectă în cadrul anchetei victimologice, în factorii spațio-temporali, în cei de context, în diversele informații culese de anchetatori. Această componentă devine mai evidentă când, atât autorul cât și victima, sunt în măsură să relateze experiența și versiunile lor.

Hazardul poate dicta de asemenea deciziile și alegerile în cadrul evenimentelor. Intervenția unei a treia persoane are drept efect anularea proiectului criminal concret și acesta este un indiciu important pentru investigatori. Evenimentele imprevizibile, oportunitățile, contingențele, coincidențele, șansa sau ghinionul, particularitățile mediului înconjurător, condițiile climatice și geografice, prezența sau intervenția altor persoane sunt factori extrem de importanți capabili să influențeze cursul unui act violent, să schimbe consecințele.

Dacă alcoolul sau alte substanțe psihoactive pot interveni practic în toate tipurile de omoruri (mai puțin în afacerile criminale), întâlnirea cu viitoarea victimă este de natură foarte diversificată: prin întâmplare, dispoziția pasivă în fața unei oportunități favorabile, căutare activă și țintire, victimă cunoscută. Gradul de premeditare este uneori total independent de modalitățile de contact cu victima, *ocazia* fiind cea care activează psihologic criminalul. De interes pentru noi sunt:

1. Detecția dimensiunilor pur emoționale ale crimei: absența premeditării, furia, excitația, utilizarea unei arme aflate la îndemână, rapiditatea/caracterul sumar al trecerii la act.
2. Cealaltă presupune, dimpotrivă: pregătire materială și psihologică din partea autorului, comiterea crimei cu sânge rece și metodă, un interval de timp destul de mare între primul contact și execuția victimei (-lor).

Următoarele niveluri de structurare sunt considerate a fi pragmatice pentru înțelegerea crimelor violente prezentate anterior:

1. **Aspectul general al locului faptei;**
2. **Particularitățile modului de operare și/sau al semnăturii criminale**, reconstituită din ansamblul datelor furnizate de anchetă;
3. **Starea mintală a criminalului în timpul comiterii faptei și după.**

Deseori există discrepanțe majore nu numai între crime, ci și între comportamentele aceluiași autor în trecerea sa de la omorârea victimei, la uciderea victimei-animal. Cheile de detecție a diferențierilor subtile sunt:

sursa pulsionii, contextul, factorul declanșator, modalitatea perceptivă, claritatea, intensitatea, emoția și acțiunea.

Aspectul general al locului faptei poate fi privit ca o narațiune. El conține o introducere, un cuprins și o încheiere iar între aceste secțiuni fluide distingem raționamente pentru care anumite acțiuni mintale s-au tradus în fapt în timp ce altele au fost frânate în expresia lor. Autorul poate manifesta o explozie de violență încă de la intrarea în câmpul infracțional după care se liniștește, având victima neutralizată sau în stare agonală. Un altul, dezvoltă violența gradual în raport cu opoziționismul activ al victimei și nu recurge la *overkill*, sau la un "prea mult" violent.

O altă tipologie prezintă un autor care se dezorganizează pe toată axa comiterii faptei, acționând în regim de tip scurt-circuit, cumva convulsiv.

O a patra tipologie, înfățișează un autor care acționează „rece”, precis, matematic, foarte eficient de-a lungul întregului continuum homicidal și chiar și după adică, după ce victima a fost ucisă.

Desigur că toate aceste tipologii sunt orientative, variabilitatea comportamentală umană depășind orice statistică sau teoretizări. Precizia poate fi atinsă dacă, analiza comportamentală se sprijină pe ansamblul datelor furnizate de anchetă și dacă toate probele materiale sunt relaționate pentru a crea un ansamblu comprehensibil.

Constatăm astfel că situațiile în care animalele de companie au fost ucise ante- sau post-homicidal nu atrag interesul echipelor de cercetare la fața locului sau, cel mult, prezența leșului constituie doar o curiozitate pasageră. Anchetatorii se lipsesc astfel de câteva amprente comportamentale de importanță enormă pentru înțelegerea cazului:

- Nu pot aprecia pericolozitatea socială a criminalului;
- Nu pot prognoza natura escaladării violenței în trecerea autorului la alte fapte;
- Nu pot evalua încărcarea violentă și ritmicitatea acesteia în planul personalității. Aici, egosistola¹⁶ și egodiastola¹⁷ încărcării violente sunt indicatori pentru a prognoza dacă ne putem aștepta la o perioadă de "răcorire emoțională" (cooling-off period) sau ne putem aștepta la o stingere progresivă a ecoului violent.

Mai ales în ceea ce privește acest ultim aspect, se pare că *animalele care sunt ucise împreună cu persoana vătămată sunt prelungiri ale*

¹⁶ Constricția Eului.

¹⁷ Dilatarea Eului.

violentei, rezonanțe în timp ale încărcăturii violente. Animalul de companie care va urma soarta stăpânului este martorul mut al actului homicidal. Apariția sa în scenariul uciderii poate fi de natură nu numai să comute atenția ucigașului, dar aceasta chiar poate crește furia autorului tocmai din cauza prezenței inoportune a animalului la locul faptei. Acest scenariu este verificat în experiența noastră, în contextul administrării probelor testimoniale și interviurilor psihologice purtate cu ucigașii, din care aflăm că abuzul și relele tratamente asupra animalelor sunt factori semnificativi în indicarea violenței îndreptate împotriva persoanei care includea abuzul partenerului intim, agresiunea sexuală, violul și omorul. Din spectrul motivațional subliniem: furia, plăcerea, distracția, controlul, răzbunarea, antipatia, imitarea sau chiar plăcerea sexuală. Din perspectiva abordărilor antrozologice, o recomandare ar fi investigarea nivelului de antropomorfizare a animalelor, care ar oferi potențiale indicii privind motivația uciderii acestora în contextul crimei analizate.

Literatura de specialitate din domeniul studiilor om-animal susține cu date că în criminalitatea în serie cu autori atât de sex masculin, cât și de sex feminin (predominant cu autori de sex masculin), se constată în istoricul personal cruzime față de animale, acte de tortură și ucidere în special asupra pisicilor, urmate ca frecvență de câini și alte animale de fermă sau sălbatice. Tot din acest eșantion, agresorii adulți care au fost martori la cruzimea îndreptată împotriva animalelor anunțau, încă din copilărie, o probabilitate ridicată de a ajunge să abuzeze, la rândul lor de animale, fiind împinși de curiozitate, de imitație și experimentaseră desensibilizarea în legătură cu violența, lipsa de empatie și lipsa de atașament. Aceste comportamente au fost cu atât mai frecvente și mai intense, cu cât aceștia au asistat la cruzimi din partea mamei, aspect care este susținut de scrierile psihanalitice încă din secolul trecut și recent de **teoriile învățării vicariante** (Bandura 1965). Ambele teorii se susțin una pe cealaltă prin faptul că subliniază faptul că *observarea unui comportament duce adesea către replicarea acestuia, mai ales dacă observatorul și modelul comportamental au o relație strânsă.*

Pe scurt, cele mai importante teorii privind criminalii în serie sugerează că minorii care învață despre practicarea cruzimii față de animale devin desensibilizați la consecințele unui comportament violent dinainte să acționeze și să dezvolte acte care presupun violența îndreptată împotriva persoanelor. Drept urmare, Asociația Americană de Psihiatrie (APA 2013), va introduce cruzimea îndreptată împotriva animalelor unul dintre criteriile de diagnostic ale *tulburării de comportament*, motivațiile cruzimii

cuprinzând un spectru foarte larg: trebuința de control, răzbunarea, exprimarea agresiunii, obținerea bune-dispoziții, dorința de explorare, amuzamentul, obținerea excitației sexuale, atașamentul față de animal, dorința de a-i intimida pe ceilalți etc. În baza acestor repere simptomatologice, clinicienii operează azi o diferențiere în formularea diagnosticului de tulburare de comportament și vor distinge între copiii care au făcut rău animalelor și cei care nu. Tot în același context diagnostic psihiatric, apariția comportamentelor zoofile (bestialitatea) la vârsta fragedă va constitui un prognostic infaust pentru dezvoltarea normală viitoare a copilului.

Ar fi deosebit de fructuoase cercetările acelor cazuri de crime izolate sau în serie în care agresorul, persoana vătămată și animalul de companie au făcut parte dintr-un *loc de proiecții* triumvirate sau centrate diadic astfel: ucigașul a proiectat asupra persoanei vătămate trăsăturile specifice animalului de companie. Sau ucigașul s-a identificat cu o rasă de animal și a proiectat propriile conținuturi similare, similare de altfel, asupra persoanei vătămate. În acest caz, se poate vorbi despre tendința de zoomorfizare, aceasta referindu-se la atribuirea de caracteristici umane, în special stări mentale, animalului (Nanay 2021). Sau, animalul de companie, a constituit pentru autor un veritabil mecanism de reactualizare a unor informații din memorie, facilitând emergența unor reprezentări particulare despre o anumită persoană/grup de persoane.

Aceste ipoteze pot suscita interes științific pentru că ar explica succesiunea acțiunilor ucigașului la locul faptei, extensia violenței, frâna morală circumstanțială în acțiunile tanatogeneratoare, un anumit tip de violență sau violențe combinate similare sau nu, îndreptate împotriva omului și animalului deopotrivă. Mai mult, nu putem să nu ne întrebăm dacă:

- *Alegerile de tip narcisic* pe care le fac persoanele vătămate față de animalele lor de companie influențează un anumit tip de violență letală? Are vreun rol „similaritatea” om-animal în ajustarea conduitelor criminale ale autorului? În acest sens, din perspectivă antrozologică, ar fi indicată investigarea nivelului de antropomorfizare a animalelor, care se poate realiza cu scale disponibile și în limba română (de exemplu, Rusu, Pop, și Turner, 2018). Antropomorfizarea, respectiv atribuirea de caracteristici umane animalelor, este considerată ca fiind aparent o trăsătură universală a minții umane (Urquiza-Haas și Kortschal 2015; Fleischman 2021). În context judiciar, se recomandă evaluarea tendinței de antropomorfizare ținându-se cont de stadiul de dezvoltare/vârsta

persoanei care manifestă cruzime față de animale, având în vedere că în copilăria timpurie, animalele tind să fie tratate ca ființe umane (Serpell 1996).

- *Alegerile de tip anaclitic* (opuse celor de tip narcisic) operante în relația persoană vătămată-animale, escaladează violența criminală și în ce mod se dezvoltă aceasta?
- Putem identifica acompaniamentul violent pe acest continuum al similarității/complementarității dintre persoana vătămată și animalul martor la ucidere?
- Deținem instrumente psihologice sau repere socio-culturale științifice pentru a înțelege corect și a preziona evoluția criminală?

La aceste întrebări, avem răspunsuri aproximative și adevăruri relative care pot constitui, credem noi, surse de dezvoltare ale unor noi direcții de cercetare viitoare, care să se bazeze pe abordări interdisciplinare și analize interprofesionale. În acest timp, este foarte important ca principalele instituții de aplicare a legii, medicii veterinari, etologi și alte asociații să lucreze împreună pentru prevenția cruzimii față de animale și, atunci când suspectează așa ceva, să anunțe organizațiile de protecție a animalelor, dar și autoritățile responsabile cu protecția copiilor. Altfel spus, considerăm de importanță majoră ca fiecare persoană din domeniile menționate mai sus să conștientizeze importanța procedurilor de identificare și raportare a semnelor abuzurilor față de animale. Nu de puține ori, psihiatrii și procurorii omit cât este de important rolul pe care îl are cruzimea față de animale în perpetuarea unui comportament criminal violent. Aceste instituții pot fi primele care pot recunoaște un pattern periculos de cruzime față de animale sau de abuz asupra copiilor sau a altor categorii fragile de persoane.

În direcția găririi de răspunsuri la nevoile menționate în acest articol, o serie de recomandări sunt accesibile în literatura de specialitate, realizate pe bază de consultări între experți din domenii și societăți diverse, care se confruntă cu această problemă universală a cruzimii față de animale și investigarea acesteia în relație cu comportamentele antisociale interumane. Un exemplu util este materialul comprehensiv „*AniCare: Treating Animal Abuse*” (variantele pentru copii și adulți), elaborat de Animals and Society Institute (Shapiro și Henderson 2016; DeMello 2012). Autorii pornesc de la datele care indică co-apariția celor două manifestări și nevoia de a transfera cunoștințele dinspre cercetare și practică înspre publicul larg și responsabilii de politici publice și proceduri legislative. Sunt oferite informații și exemple de bune practici privind **prevenția primară**, care se

referă la eforturile de a educa publicul larg despre seriozitatea și importanța abuzului și cruzimii față de animale în relație cu alte forme de violență și implicit cu sănătatea individuală, de grup și societală. Includerea educației bazate pe compasiune (*humane education*) în ofertele curriculare ale grădinițelor și școlilor primare este unul dintre pașii sugerați. **Prevenția secundară** se referă la identificarea persoanelor aflate „la risc”, deci a celor care au o probabilitate crescută de a deveni abuzatori, cum ar fi copiii din medii familiale și/sau sociale care nu au supraveghere adecvată în mediile de viață. Programele de tip Școala Altfel, de exemplu, pot deveni medii de învățare experiențială a interacțiunilor adecvate cu animalele de companie sau de fermă, bazate pe oferire de grijă și respect.

Nu în ultimul rând, se oferă recomandări pentru persoanele care se bazează sau s-au bazat pe abuzul față de animale ca forme de exprimare sau rezolvare a problemelor emoționale și comportamentale, fiind descrise o serie de intervenții din domeniile psihologiei clinice și asistenței sociale, precum și oferindu-se trimiteri spre instrumente comprehensive de diagnostic (Shapiro și Henderson 2016).

În aceeași direcție cu reflecțiile incluse în această lucrare, materialul elaborat de echipa interdisciplinară a *Animal and Society Institute* punctează importanța formării de tip *cross-training*, în sensul de conștientizare de către personalul din sistemul judiciar și cel din serviciile sociale, despre asocierea dintre abuzul animalelor și alte forme de violență, despre existența procedurilor de diagnostic, a procedurilor de raportare, precum și a programelor de intervenție disponibile la nivel local și național. O altă recomandare emisă de specialiști este realizarea unui registru/bază de date cu persoanele care au fost identificate de către Poliție că abuzează animale. Într-o notă optimistă de final, considerăm că aplicarea acestor recomandări în România este facilitată nu doar de colaborarea între specialiști din sistemul judiciar, psihologie, etologie și antrozologie, dar și de înființarea în 2021 a Direcției pentru Poliția Animalelor, o structură care, în opinia noastră, poate beneficia la nivel funcțional de bunele practici stabilite prin colaborări interdisciplinare, interprofesionale și cu membrii comunității.

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Lumea fără Simțuri la Oameni și Animale

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Abstract

Two of the criteria underlying the superiority of humans over animals could be the following : free will and transcendence. The perspective on the world in both humans and animals is given by the way the senses work and the ability to decode information. Although animals perceive the world differently due to senses that far exceed human senses, there are many commonalities and nuances that are similar enough to survive and evolve together on this planet. External reality is manufactured by senses in humans and animals. Reality, as we perceive it through senses, is just one perspective out of thousands of other possible perspectives offered by nature to coexist. But there is something that senses cannot give us: self-awareness, present in humans and animals. If the senses did not exist or were 'silenced', there would still be this consciousness which is no different from the self-awareness of animals. Advanced neuroscience research shows us that free will is almost completely reduced and all our thoughts and actions are actually the work of the subconscious mind, a program we might liken to instinct in animals. Here the differences between humans and animals can be looked at from an entirely different perspective that can diminish human arrogance. The common denominator of life on planet Earth is the self-awareness that transcends all differences and truly defines humans.

Keywords: Senses, Free will, Reality, Illusion, Consciousness

Simțim lumea în același fel

Trăim într-o lume plină de stimuli care ne asaltează în fiecare moment din toate direcțiile și pe frecvențe diferite. Această situație nu ne deranjează prea mult: creierul nostru, cea mai mare achiziție a naturii din întregul univers, reușește să decodifice, să transmită și să sincronizeze aceste

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semnale în spațiu și timp pentru a reda o percepție a lumii înconjurătoare simultană, continuă și identică pentru fiecare individ. Această procesare a miliarde de biți de informație pe secundă pare a se efectua fără efort: când privim o buburuză care își ia zborul de pe o floare, nu simțim codificarea electrică efectuată de celulele cu conuri de pe retină; atunci când încercăm cu dosul mâinii temperatura laptelui pe care urmează să îl dăm unui nou-născut, nu simțim nevoia să mai scanăm termic laptele pentru a fi siguri că nu este prea fierbinte sau prea rece. Avem încredere deplină în simțurile noastre. Noi simțim în același fel. Așa este setat creierul nostru. Diferențele nu se datorează simțurilor, ci modului nostru de gândire care, în general, este același, doar că informațiile (nu senzațiile) primite la nivel individual sunt diferite, în funcție de mediul în care trăim. În favoarea acestei afirmații putem să ne gândim la degustătorii de vinuri care nu doar reușesc să facă distincții foarte fine între diferite producții de vinuri, dar alegerea lor este acceptată unanim de către toți oamenii fără experiență în degustare. Acest lucru nu se întâmplă pentru că știm că cineva a degustat vinul, ci pentru că ne place. Simțurile gustative sunt aceleași la toți oamenii cu anumite diferențe datorate vârstei. Pe de altă parte, nici un computer nu poate înlocui un degustător de vinuri pentru că la ființele vii intervine și o componentă psihologică. Astfel, spunem că „vinul are un anumit caracter”. Pentru a specifica această componentă enigmatică încercăm să adăugăm pe lângă denumirea gustului și denumirea caracterului vinului. Din acest punct de vedere, vinul capătă ca prin minune o personalitate proprie. În Dicționarul francez de vin, caracterul unui vin este descris ca o trăsătură specifică a vinului care se distinge prin tipic și o prezență bine afirmată (“Vin de Caractère Définition - Dictionnaire Du Vin” n.d.). Prin acest exemplu evidențiem faptul că lumea exterioară, materială, pentru care avem senzori adaptați, nu poate fi complet exprimată fără a adăuga ceva din emoții, trăiri sau experiențe personale, idealuri care caracterizează o ființă vie. Toate aceste adăugiri nu vin din lumea simțurilor, ci din lumea emoțiilor, a personalității, a psihicului. Toate bucătăriile lumii sunt pline de descrieri ale unor rețete de mâncăruri, descrieri ce provin din această lume a personalității, care este și lumea conștiinței. Ceea ce face ca oamenii să fie diferiți nu este lumea simțurilor. Este vorba despre interpretarea pe care o generează gândirea noastră.

Suntem programați la nivel de ADN să simțim și să reacționăm automat toți în același fel? Corpul nostru reacționează în mod similar la stimulările senzoriale și emoționale. Cunoscutul psiholog Paul Eckmann a studiat microexpresiile feței timp de 30 de ani și a ajuns la concluzia că

indiferent de cultură, rasă sau regiune, reacțiile mușchilor faciali sunt aceleași. El a reușit să creioneze criterii exacte de detectare a emoțiilor unei persoane și să citească pe fețele oamenilor dacă aceștia spun adevărul sau nu. Un alt exemplu este *Kiki Boubă effect*. În momentul în care privim forme ascuțite, avem tendința să le atribuim nume „ascuțite” cum ar fi „kiki” sau „tekki”; dacă formele sunt rotunde, le atribuim nume „rotunde”, cum ar fi „Boubă” (Hirano et al. 2020; Shukla 2016). Această sinestezie subconștientă o întâlnim la toți oamenii indiferent de cultură, regiune sau rasă. Uneori acumulăm informații prin experiență de care nu suntem conștienți, dar care ne influențează comportamentul, reacțiile, deciziile.

Nocicepție sau durere? Peștii simt durerea?

Dacă modul de percepție a lumii exterioare este atât de similar și totuși suntem atât de diferiți, ce s-ar întâmpla dacă simțurile noastre ar fi și ele diferite? Nu putem afirma cu certitudine că un orb sau un surd din naștere au o viziune și o percepție a lumii exact așa cum o avem noi. Totuși, chiar și aceste persoane au dezvoltat alte sisteme de semnalizare prin care reușesc să răspundă cerințelor de supraviețuire și, mai mult decât atât, să ajungă să perceapă lumea înconjurătoare într-un mod aparent asemănător. Să facem o trecere de la oameni la lumea animală. Legile naturale ale planetei se aplică și în lumea animalelor, a viețuitoarelor mărilor și oceanului, a insectelor, plantelor, bacteriilor. Fiecare specie a dezvoltat modalitatea proprie organismului pentru a răspunde la provocările mediului prin intermediul organelor de simț și prin experiențele acumulate. Dacă e să sintetizăm în câteva cuvinte răspunsul oricărei specii la aceste provocări, acesta ar fi: *Luptă sau fugi! Fight-or-Flight!* Indiferent de organele senzoriale disponibile într-un anumit mediu sau într-o anumită etapă de dezvoltare, organismul sau vietatea respectivă trebuie să fie capabilă de una dintre aceste două acțiuni: să se împotrivescă pericolului sau să-l evite. Cum este văzut, perceput, prevăzut, simțit acest pericol, depinde de modul de organizare internă a organismului respectiv, însă este nevoie să se declanșeze o senzație cel puțin neplăcută pentru a pune în alertă toate nivelele de percepție disponibile. Nivelele și modalitățile de percepție sunt foarte diferite, dacă este să comparăm mamiferele cu nevertebratele sau cu peștii. În acest sens, bioloaga Victoria Braithwaite a atras atenția asupra faptului că în studiul animalelor este nevoie de o altfel de înțelegere a sistemului nervos și ar fi o greșeală să folosim omul ca standard de comparație. Ea arată în cartea sa *Do Fish Feel Pain?* (Braithwaite 2010) că este posibil ca peștii să sufere din cauza durerii. Câțiva ani mai târziu se pare

că și influența studiilor sale a determinat în Germania apariția unei legi pentru protecția animalelor care reglementa modul de pescuit, de manipulare a peștilor pentru a evita suferința acestora. Cei care nu respectau aceste condiții și dădeau dovadă de acte de cruzime asupra peștilor erau pasibili de amenzi și chiar de închisoare. O asemenea decizie ar fi afectat nivelul de trai al tuturor pescarilor, al cercetătorilor științifici, cum ar fi biologii marini sau a unor instituții, precum muzeele cu acvarii. Legea din Germania era susținută și de Directiva Parlamentului European din 2010 și a Consiliului Europei cu privire la protecția animalelor folosite pentru studiul științific. *„In addition to vertebrate animals including cyclostomes, cephalopods should also be included in the scope of this Directive, as there is scientific evidence of their ability to experience pain, suffering, distress and lasting harm.”* (“Directive 2010/63/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 September 2010 on the Protection of Animals Used for Scientific Purposes (Text with EEA Relevance)” 2019). Germania este țara unde protecția animalelor face parte efectiv din legislație și chiar se aplică. În aceste condiții, era „necesară” o demonstrație științifică care să arate că peștii nu sunt animalele conștiente și capabile de a simți. Ceea ce ne impresionează în mod negativ este faptul că, de această dată, s-au găsit fonduri și o echipă numeroasă, internațională de cercetători (coordonată de un cercetător german) a încercat să combată toate studiile conduse de specialiști individuali ce demonstau că și peștii au conștiință sau cel puțin capacitatea de a simți și reacționa la diferiți stimuli, inclusiv la durere. Citind acest articol (Rose et al. 2012), se poate observa această tendință *a priori* de a încerca să răstălmăcească orice cuvânt care putea fi demonstrat ca fiind ambiguu, cum ar fi „un simplu reflex”. Principalele argumente aduse ar putea fi reduse la câteva pentru a evita o aprofundare științifică care nu își are locul aici. În primul rând, trebuie făcută o distincție între senzorii ce transmit durerea, numiți noniceptori, și durerea în sine ce este resimțită de fapt în creier. De exemplu, în cazul anesteziei, senzorii continuă să transmită durerea, însă ea nu mai ajunge la creier pentru a fi conștientizată. La oameni, emoțiile sau atenția pot diminua intensitatea durerii resimțite de creier prin mecanismul de integrare a durerii în context. Un simplu exemplu de acest fel, este faptul că la copii, durerea poate fi mai mare sau mai mică în funcție de atitudinea părinților: „Vino la mama ca să suflu acolo unde te doare!”. Mama ia copilul în brațe, suflă și durerea pare că trece. Un alt exemplu: în război sau în alte conflicte, în momentul în care doi indivizi se încaieră și se lovesc, ei nu simt durerea imediat. După ce conflictul se termină și atenția se focalizează spre

locurile învinețite, durerea începe să devină acută. Sunt foarte multe exemple de acest fel care demonstrează subiectivitatea durerii și mai ales influența neocortexului. Se naște o dilemă pe care specialiștii au analizat-o: peștii care nu posedă neocortex, pot simți într-adevăr durerea? Sau comportamentele de evitare observate sunt doar niște reflexe arhaice, așa cum este reflexul de extensie a piciorului la oameni, atunci când doctorul lovește cu ciocanul genunchiul sau tendonul lui Ahile? Deși în acest articol (Rose et al., 2013) se recunoaște că nu se pot efectua studii cu scannerul funcțional pe bază de rezonanță magnetică la pești și faptul că peștii nu pot vorbi despre durere, așa cum fac oamenii, se trage totuși concluzia că peștii nu simt durerea. Comportamentele de evitare a unor stimuli dureroși la oameni aflați în stare de inconștiență, cum ar fi stările vegetative sau excizii ale creierului sau chiar anesteziei nu sunt dovada faptului că acești oameni simt durerea. Ei rămân inconștienți în tot acest timp. Având în vedere că aceste comportamente de evitare se mențin chiar și atunci când părți importante ale creierului la pești sunt îndepărtate, peștii nu au nici o șansă să mai fie conștienți de ceva. Putem să spunem că durerea nu este prezentă în creier, ci doar la nivel nociceptiv. Astfel, dacă un pește nu are cortex, nu poate simți durerea. Dacă un pește ar gândi, așa cum înțelegem noi acest proces, în cele din urmă la ce i-ar folosi? El trebuie să se bazeze pe reflexe extrem de rapide pentru a evita prădătorii și nu au timp prea mult să gândească (Rose et al. 2012). Acestea sunt, în general, principalele argumente aduse împotriva afirmației că și peștii simt durerea. În definitiv, toate aceste argumente pro și contra pot fi luate în considerație pentru a înțelege mai bine semnificația durerii la animale dar și la oameni. În realitate, părțile oponente încearcă să demonstreze fiecare că dreptatea este de partea lor, când de fapt toate cercetările și descoperirile sunt importante. În această situație, nu interesul peștilor este pus în discuție, avându-se în vedere în special doar interesul economic. Unde erau acești cercetători și aceste fonduri de cercetare acum 20 de ani când Victoria Braithwaite făcea pionierat în cercetările pe animalele marine? Ultimul răspuns al acestei cercetătoare îl găsim într-un articol intitulat *Why human pain can't tell us whether fish feel pain* (Braithwaite și Droege 2016) publicat în *Animal Sentience*. Ea spune că ipotezele pornesc de la o premiză greșită, și anume că modul de procesare a durerii de către oameni constituie un model standard pentru a aprecia durerea la toate celelalte animale de pe planetă. Este posibil ca în procesul evolutiv animalele, în funcție de specie, să fi dezvoltat un mecanism total diferit de cel al oamenilor pentru a percepe

durerea. Trei ani mai târziu cercetătoarea avea să moară după o lungă suferință de cancer pancreatic.

Nu trebuie să uităm că misterele vieții sunt mult mai profunde și complexe decât orice tehnologie. Deși emoțiile la animale sunt foarte puțin studiate, acceptarea acestora ar însemna și capacitatea lor de a conștientiza aceste emoții. Orice durere este însoțită de emoții de care nu doar primatele sunt capabile. Deși specialiștii care încearcă să combată teoria durerii emoționale la pești au mari reticențe în a admite ideea de conștiință la animale, studiile întreprinse pentru a înțelege legătura dintre durere și emoții la oameni se bazează pe șoareci! În aceste situații, reacția emoțională provocată de durere la șoareci este perfect admisă pentru a demonstra rolul amigdalei în emoțiile provocate de durere la oameni.

Într-un articol intitulat *Pain and Emotion: A Biopsychosocial Review of Recent Research*, realizat de către Wayne State University, Duke University Medical Center și St. John Health/Providence Hospital and Medical Centers în 2011, se descrie faptul că lezionarea sau injecția de morfină în amigdală împiedică răspunsul emoțional la șoareci atunci când se provoacă durerea (Nandigama și Borszcz 2003). O altă observație arată că hipotalamusul ventro-median determină comportamente defensive la amenințări, inclusiv la durere (Braz et al. 2005).

Prin stimularea acestei structuri la șoareci se observă comportamente emoționale asemănătoare celor provocate de durere. Inhibând neurotransmițătorii în cadrul acestei structuri cerebrale se alterează acest răspuns emoțional la șocurile dureroase (Borszcz 2006). Mai mult decât atât, stimularea parțială a porțiunii basolaterale a amigdalei determină creșterea răspunsului afectiv a șoarecilor la șocuri dureroase (Borszcz și Spuz 2010). Dacă șoarecii sunt expuși la stresul provocat de apă atunci când sunt nevoiți să înoate, stresul social, stresul provocat de schimbarea mediului înconjurător, stresul provocat de frig sau de îngrădire pe termen lung a mișcărilor determină o creștere a sensibilității la durere (Andre et al. 2005; Khasar, Green, și Levine 2005; Suarez-Roca et al. 2008). Însă în momentul în care li se administrează diazepam, șoarecii nu mai dezvoltă această sensibilitate la durere (Andre et al. 2005). La oameni, sensibilitatea la durere crește atunci când se așteaptă să urmeze o durere, iar aceasta este acompaniată de creșterea activității neuronale în cortexul cingulat anterior (Benedetti et al. 2007). Ca și în cazul animalelor, administrarea de diazepam reduce anxietatea anticipată și sensibilitatea la durere (Benedetti et al. 2006; Lumley et al. 2011). Alexitimia este o boală care se referă la incapacitatea de a recunoaște și exprima propriile emoții, dar și la

incapacitatea de a distinge emoțiile de senzațiile corporale. Se pare că persoanele care suferă de o astfel de boală simt durerea mult mai puternic. Am putea oarecum forța o ipoteză: presupunând că peștii nu sunt capabili să recunoască o emoție, să aibă emoții sau să diferențieze o emoție de o senzație corporală, atunci, în cazul lor, durerea suferită trebuie să fie mai puternică și de o amploare pe care noi oamenii nu putem să ne-o imaginăm. Este doar o ipoteză.

Am descris aceste studii pentru a lua în considerare faptul că și animalele au mecanismele lor de manifestare a durerii la toate nivelele, inclusiv cel emoțional, indiferent dacă structura creierului lor e diferită de cea a oamenilor. Creierul animalelor răspunde la medicamente în același fel ca și creierul uman. Dacă s-ar considera că animalele nu percep durerea și emoțiile, aceste studii nu ar avea nicio valoare medicală. Atunci când e vorba de beneficii ce privesc oamenii, nu se mai pune la îndoială faptul că există durere. În critica adusă în ceea ce privește durerea la pești, se afirmă clar că este vorba despre nocicepție și nu despre durere. În studiul șoarecilor, nu există nicio afirmație în legătură cu nocicepția. Ca să preluăm ideea din articolul respectiv și să o „plantăm” în studiul pe șoareci, de unde știm că anumite comportamente ale șoarecilor nu sunt decât niște reflexe arhaice provocate de senzorii nociceptivi fără a fi conștientizați de către șoareci? Bineînțeles că experimentele pe șoareci au avut ca rezultat o cunoaștere mai profundă a creierului uman, însă când este vorba despre o cunoaștere mai profundă a creierului animal, există îndoieli, critici și foarte puțină deschidere. Este posibil ca prin studierea conștiinței la animale să ajungem să cunoaștem mai bine și conștiința la oameni.

În numele științei se pot face greșeli grave. Știați că și copiii simt durerea?

Aducem în dezbatere o cercetare pe care o considerăm necesară pentru a demonstra că paradigma cercetărilor în domeniul biologiei și neuroștiințelor trebuie schimbată sau reanalizată. Vechea paradigmă care are ca punct de plecare modul de organizare și operare a organismului uman, considerat un model standard de referință, pare a avea multe erori. Un articol intitulat *fMRI reveals neural activity overlap between adult and infant pain* (Goksan et al., 2015) evidențiază, pentru prima dată într-un mod incontestabil, că și copiii nou-născuți simt durerea! Deși toată lumea, dacă este întrebată, știe din experiență sau din observație că un copil mic simte durerea, ei bine, în anii '80, acest aspect a fost pus serios la îndoială de către specialiști în medicină și de către personalul medical. Se credea

atunci (ca și contestatarii din articolul mai sus amintit care spun că peștii nu simt durerea) că un nou-născut nu poate simți durerea pentru simplul fapt că neocortexul nu este suficient dezvoltat la această vârstă! Mișcările neputincioase ale unui copil în fața durerii erau considerate doar reflexe nociceptive. Prin urmare, orice intervenție dureroasă efectuată asupra copiilor nu era acompaniată de anestezie, ci doar de medicamente care să blocheze mișcările musculaturii pentru ca intervenția să se poată efectua fără impedimente: „*Consequently, infants have received poor pain management, exemplified during the 1980s by surgery being routinely performed using neuromuscular blocks without provision of adequate analgesia* (Anand și Hickey 1987).

Această atitudine s-a perpetuat și după anii 2000 când întâlnim într-un ghid medical din Marea Britanie ideea că intervenția chirurgicală în cazurile de anchiloglosie¹ la copiii mici trebuie însoțită mai degrabă de alăptare și așezare în poziția ghemuit decât de administrarea de analgezice (Goksan et al. 2015). În acest studiu s-a evidențiat, cu ajutorul scannerului funcțional pe bază de rezonanță magnetică, că la creierul adulților creșterea activității datorate durerii se manifestă în 20 de regiuni cerebrale, iar la copii aceeași creștere a activității cerebrale se manifestă în 18 regiuni. Cele două regiuni în care nu s-a observat activitate cerebrală la copii au fost amigadala și cortexul orbito-frontal, regiuni ce ajută individul să interpreteze acești stimuli. Copiii simțeau pe deplin durerea ca și adulții, doar că nu știau de unde vine, ce este această durere și cine este responsabil de provocarea durerii.

Un caz foarte cunoscut este cel al mamei Jill și copilului Jeffrey Lawson, descris într-un articol publicat în 2011 și intitulat *Science is not enough: The modern history of pediatric pain* (McGrath 2011). Iată pe

¹ Anchiloglosia (cunoscută și ca limba fixată, limbă legată sau limba scurtă) este un defect congenital al frenului lingual - membrana ce fixează fața ventrală (inferioară) a limbii la planșeul bucal. Această formațiune anatomică este mult mai scurtă și nu permite mobilizarea adecvată a limbii, limitând mișcarea de protrakție ceea ce îngreunează alimentarea copilului mic (a suptului) și poate produce tulburări de fonatie. Malformația se poate transmite ereditar sau apare în contextul unor sindroame genetice. În forme mai ușoare, tratamentul nu este necesar, existând posibilitatea compensării defectului prin întinderea țesutului și acomodarea limbii la aceste mișcări reduse. Această afecțiune împiedică atât vorbirea, cât și alimentația. Limba este unul dintre cei mai importanți mușchi implicați în înghițire și vorbire. Fără o gamă liberă de mișcare, aceste activități pot fi afectate. Cu toate acestea, severitatea „limbii legate” variază în rândul copiilor, astfel încât afecțiunea poate fi detectată devreme sau mai târziu în viață. Este posibil ca furnizorii de asistență medicală primară să nu verifice întotdeauna această afecțiune la naștere sau la vizitele inițiale ale copiilor sănătoși, astfel încât afecțiunea este uneori descoperită pentru prima dată atunci când părinții raportează dificultăți de alăptare la sugari sau atunci când un copil mai mare are probleme cu mâncatul sau vorbitul.

scurt descrierea suferinței unui copil care a murit câteva săptămâni mai târziu din cauza șocului durerii suferite în timpul operației: „Jeffrey avea găuri tăiate pe ambele părți ale gâtului, o altă tăietură în partea dreaptă a pieptului, o incizie de la nivelul sânelui până la coloana vertebrală, coastele despărțite și o arteră suplimentară lângă inimă suturată. Această sutură s-a făcut printr-o altă gaură tăiată în partea stângă. Operația a durat ore întregi. Jeffrey era treaz în tot acest timp. Anestezistul l-a paralizat cu Pavulon, un medicament care blochează mușchii, dar lasă copilul complet conștient. Când l-am interogat mai târziu pe anestezist a spus că Jeffrey era prea bolnav pentru a tolera anesteziile puternice. Oricum, a spus ea, nu i s-a demonstrat niciodată că bebelușii prematuri simt durere. După operație, Jeffrey a intrat în șoc, a început procesul de catabolizare și a intrat în insuficiență cardiacă, renală și hepatică. A murit 5 săptămâni mai târziu, la 31 martie 1985.”

Ne confruntăm cu un mare paradox al științei dogmatice: orice mamă știe imediat când copilul ei suferă, numai doctorii nu aflaseră încă acest lucru. Medicii așteptau cercetări științifice elaborate pentru a se decide eventual dacă un bebeluș suferă sau nu, în timp ce orice părinte, indiferent de mediul social din care provin, putea confirma cu ușurință că copilul său suferă, resimte durerea! Dacă această revoltă a mamelor cu privire la experiențele chirurgicale făcute pe copii și mai ales revolta publică cu privire la această operație de necrezut nu apărea în mod public, managementul durerii la copii avea să aștepte ani îndelungați până când studii serioase aveau să fie puse în aplicare. În acest caz, doar opinia publică a reușit să pună știința în aplicare. Așa cum concluzionează acest articol, știința nu este suficientă pentru a pune cunoașterea în practică: „*Science is not enough to move knowledge into practice*”.

Rezultat asemănător cu procesare diferită

Prin aceste exemple vrem să evidențiem că o structură vie nu trebuie neapărat să posede anumite arhitecturi cerebrale sau nervoase asemănătoare oamenilor pentru a percepe mediul și acționa în consecință pentru a supraviețui. Regnul vegetal și animal a dezvoltat abilități specifice de percepție, de multe ori superioare celor umane, obținând rezultate cel puțin la fel de performante ca ale oamenilor. Să analizăm în continuare cele cinci simțuri la diferite animale pentru a determina dacă este nevoie de un model ca cel al lui *homo sapiens* pentru ca celelalte animale să conștientizeze lumea exterioară.

Simțul văzului este printre cele mai utilizate în regnul animal. Totuși, configurația anatomo-funcțională a ochiului diferă de la o specie la alta și, de multe ori, există o diferență enormă față de structura aparatului vizual la om. De exemplu, lentila umană nu lasă să treacă razele ultraviolet (UV). Sub nici o formă noi nu putem vedea în UV. Multe specii posedă pigmenți vizuali cu lungimea de undă sub 400 nanometri, cu vedere în UV. Această abilitate este întâlnită la păsări, pești, reptile și amfibieni. La mamifere vederea UV este rară, ea fiind întâlnită la rozătoare, cârțițe, câteva specii de marsupiale și câteva specii de lilieci. Aceste animale au lentile care transmit lungimi scurte de undă. Oricum, la mamifere această capacitate era considerată o excepție.

Cu toate acestea, toți fotoreceptorii pot absorbi cantități semnificative de UV și orice animal cu media oculară² transparentă la lumina UV este sensibil la lungimi de unde scurte, chiar dacă nu posedă pigmenți vizuali specifici acestor lungimi de undă ale spectrului luminos. De exemplu, dacă în urma unei operații de cataractă la oameni se îndepărtează lentila și nu este înlocuită cu o proteză care să nu lase să treacă undele UV, persoanele respective pot vedea detalii în UV! La toate speciile cu sau fără vedere în UV, lentila joacă un rol primordial în percepția luminii. Cu excepția unor specii de pește a căror cornee absoarbe lumina albastră și verde, toate corneele sunt subțiri și fără pigmenți, capabile să transmită radiații UV cu lungimea de undă sub 300 nanometri. Singurele informații disponibile despre vederea mamiferelor sunt doar cele care provin de la unele specii de verigițe și rozătoare diurne a căror lentile împiedică trecerea radiațiilor între 420 și 470 nanometri și de la altele, situate în cealaltă extremă, a căror lentile au transparență maximă pentru radiațiile UV și transmit doar radiațiile luminoase sub 320-340 nanometri. Piscile și câinii se pare că pot vedea în UV (Douglas și Jeffery 2014). Studiul vederii la animale este abia la început. În ultimii ani se încearcă producerea unui software capabil să redea modul în care animalele văd lumea exterioară (van den Berg et al. 2019). Menționăm că nici un software nu poate simula exact cum vede un animal pentru că nu se cunosc mecanismele prin care un stimul electric devine imagine în creier. Dacă am deține acest software am putea înregistra orice vis. În ceea ce privește capacitatea păsărilor de a vedea în UV, cercetările care au utilizat camere cu vedere UV, au arătat că frunzele reflectă mult mai bine lumina ultraviolet decât o transmit. Frunzele transmit și reflectă aceleași cantități de lumină verde, roșie și albastră însă reflectă o cantitate

² Substanțele transparente ale ochiului alcătuite din umoarea apoasă, umoarea sticloasă, corneea și cristalinelul.

mult mai mare de lumină UV. În natură, lumina descendentă este mult mai strălucitoare decât lumina ascendentă, ceea ce permite o mai mare reflexie la nivelul suprafețelor înalte, de suprafață decât cele joase sau de adâncime. Acest lucru face ca suprafețele joase să reflecte aceleași cantități de lumină verde ca și cele de suprafață, însă cantități diferite de lumină UV. Din acest motiv se realizează un contrast vizibil între suprafețe în lumina UV, iar vederea în această lungime de undă permite păsărilor să se orienteze mult mai bine (Tedore și Nilsson 2019). Se pare că vederea în UV este esențială și în atracția sexuală dintre păsări. În anul 1990, Andrew Bennett împreună cu Innes Cuthill de la Universitatea Bristol din Marea Britanie, au descoperit că penele la graurii europeni (*Sturnus vulgaris*) și la cinteza australiană zebrată (*Taeniopygia guttata*) pot reflecta undele UV. Femelele detectează anumite particularități ale masculului studiind aceste unde și după niște criterii bazate pe aceste reflecții în UV, doar de ele știute, aleg masculul respectiv. Când li s-au prezentat masculii într-o lumină care împiedica reflecția razelor UV, femelele respective nu s-au mai preocupat de selecția partenerului. Au fost studiate pasărea gușă albastră (*Luscinia svecica*) și pițigoii albastru (*Parus caeruleus*). Atunci când partenerii au avut de ales între partenerii care reflectează undele UV și cei care nu reflectau aceste unde (au fost uniți cu o substanță chimică antisolară care bloca radiațiile UV) ele au ales pe cei care reflectau undele UV. Această reflecție crește cu vârsta și de aceea femelele au preferințe pentru masculii mai maturi (Withgott, 2000).

Un alt studiu realizat în 2018 de către Institutul de fiziologie, biologie moleculară și neuroștiințe din Argentina împreună cu Universitatea din Buenos-Aires, Facultatea de științe naturale și exacte, făcut pe crabii (aceștia au ochi foarte diferiți de animalele care trăiesc pe uscat), a arătat că imaginile vizuale create în creierul crabilor sunt rezultatul unor combinații ale informațiilor provenite de la ambii ochi, însă nu se știe unde are loc combinarea și procesarea stimulilor electrici. Neuronii din așa numiții lobuli giganti comunică între ei schimbând și procesând informații. Nu avem încă tehnologia necesară pentru a aprofunda aceste studii. Vederea binoculară a crabilor a fost demonstrată, însă modul cum un sistem nervos primitiv poate face acest lucru rămâne încă neclar (Scarano et al. 2018).

Un alt simț, considerat universal, este cel gustativ. Cele cinci simțuri cunoscute - dulce, sărat, acru, amar și umami sunt percepute atât de animale, cât și insecte. Desigur că nu putem ști în ce măsură gustul dulce e simțit la fel de o antilopă, de un copil sau de către muscuța de oțet. Reacția la acest gust este asemănătoare. *Drosophila Melanogaster* sau muscuța de

oțet a evoluat total independent față de mamifere, însă ea simte aceleași gusturi ca și oamenii sau șoarecii. Este atrasă de dulciuri, dar și de concentrații scăzute de sare. Nu suportă gustul amar. Gustul delicios, cunoscut sub numele de umami, nu se știe încă dacă face parte din preferințele ei. Să ne imaginăm că am putea simți gustul unui aliment și cu ajutorul mâinilor, picioarelor și chiar cu cel al pielii. Oare percepția unui gust nu ar fi mai intensă sau mult mai diferită? Ar fi oarecum tot același gust, dar la o altă dimensiune. *Drosophila*, datorită dimensiunilor ei mici, intră în contact cu mâncarea nu doar cu gura. Această insectă atinge mâncarea cu întregul ei corp, se plimbă pe mâncare. Ea are receptori gustativi pe picioare și chiar pe aripi. Sunt multe întrebări care au nevoie de răspunsuri cu privire la modalitatea în care musculițele de oțet folosesc informația gustativă de pe întregul corp pentru a realiza un anumit comportament și, de asemenea, nu știm cum se păstrează calitatea informației. Musculițele și șoarecii au un strămoș comun, dacă ne întoarcem cu 550 milioane de ani în timp și ajungem în Cambrian. Totuși, în pofida evoluției foarte diferite, fiecare specie împărtășește aceleași principii de organizare, reușind cu ajutorul unui număr mic de senzori să identifice gusturi variate și mâncărurile preferate (Yarmolinsky, Zuker și Ryba 2009). În ceea ce privește văzul, noile cercetări au scos în evidență că musculița de oțet, deși are ochi foarte diferiți de cei umani, este capabilă de a percepe aceleași iluzii optice de mișcare ca și ochiul uman. Prin inhibiția neuronilor ce detectează anumite mișcări, cercetătorii au fost capabili să facă predicții asupra direcției de mișcare a musculiței. Creierul uman posedă aceleași mecanisme de detectare a mișcării ca și *Drosophila* (Agrochao et al. 2020).

Această musculiță, atât de diferită de oameni, a fost studiată începând cu Gregor Mendel până în zilele noastre, când biologia cuantică folosește această insectă pentru a-și dovedi principiile în lumea vie, arătând că mirosul acesteia nu poate fi explicat decât la nivel cuantic (Bittner et al. 2012). Iată cum o insectă este capabilă să furnizeze informații pentru zeci și zeci de ani de cercetări. În pofida acestui asalt al științei asupra unei musculițe, nu s-a reușit încă elucidarea multor mistere ascunse sub denumirea din limba latină - *Drosophila Melanogaster*.

Animalele posedă supersimțuri, dar nu sunt superanimale

Dacă ne orientăm și spre alte animale, misterele încep să se multiplice și doar așa ne putem face o opinie asupra adevăratei lumi a celor care nu cuvântă. Este cunoscut faptul că un câine are un simț al mirosului ce nu

poate fi egalat. Însă ce poate acest animal mirosi nici nu ne putem imagina. Indivizii bolnavi de malarie, dar asimptomatici, emit un miros special pe care țânțarii îl simt și sunt atrași de acești oameni pe care îi înțeapă. În acel moment, țânțarii devin transmitătorii malariei. Cercetătorii și-au pus întrebarea dacă nu cumva și câinii care au un miros atât de fin pot fi antrenați să identifice oamenii infectați cu parazitul malariei, dar care nu prezintă simptome. S-au colectat astfel ciorapii unor copii cu și fără simptome de malarie din școlile din Gambia pentru a fi miroșiți de câini. Copiii au încălțat ciorapii o zi și o noapte. După 17 luni, când s-a efectuat experimentul, rezultatele au fost remarcabile: câinii au detectat exact copiii bolnavi de malarie, dar asimptomatici, și au făcut diferența dintre aceștia și copiii care nu erau infectați cu acest parazit numit *Plasmodium falciparum* (Morsella et al. 2015).

În ultima vreme, depistarea contaminărilor cu COVID rămâne esențială pentru controlul răspândirii acestui virus. Testele nu sunt suficiente, durează prea mult, iar testele rapide nu au eficiență maximă. Drept urmare s-a avansat ipoteza legitimă dacă nu este posibil ca animalele, cum ar fi câinii, să fie antrenate în depistarea oamenilor contaminați cu acest virus, dar care nu prezintă simptome sau care se află încă în perioada de incubație a virusului. Universitatea din Auburn S.U.A., în cadrul Departamentului de Științe Clinice, Programul Științific de Performanță Canină, a antrenat opt câini să detecteze timp de o săptămână saliva și secrețiile traheobronhice ale pacienților contaminați cu SARS-CoV-2. Acest studiu a folosit elemente de studiu aleatorii, dublu-orb. Câinii au fost capabili să detecteze cu ajutorul mirosului pacienții contaminați cu acest virus și să facă distincție între mostrele de analiză preluate de la pacienții contaminați și cei necontaminați. Rata de specificitate a fost de 96,5 % (Jendry et al. 2020).

Alte cercetări anterioare au demonstrat deja că un câine este capabil să detecteze anumite modificări ale mirosurilor compușilor organici în cazul infecțiilor, contaminărilor sau în diferite forme incipiente de cancer. Aceste boli favorizează apariția unor biomarkeri ce pot fi detectați de câini doar prin miros. În ceea ce privește virusurile, s-au făcut și alte teste în care virusul diareei (BVDV), virusul herpesului la bovine (BHV 1) și virusul parainfluenza (BPIV 3) au fost detectate de câini cu o acuratețe remarcabilă. Câinii antrenați sunt capabili să detecteze narcotice, explozibili și anumite produse biologice. Acuratețea identificării bolilor de către câini poate întrece de multe ori testele medicale (Angle et al. 2016).

Această capacitate nu este specifică doar câinilor. Șobolanul african uriaș are o capacitate de detecție a mirosurilor, dar și o capacitate cognitivă ieșită din comun. Acest tip de șobolani sunt utilizați în detectarea minelor explozive aflate sub pământ, dar și în diagnosticul tuberculozei (Olude et al. 2019). În ceea ce privește tuberculoza, *The American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene* a publicat un studiu în care se arăta că acești șobolani întrec în precizie microscopul electronic. Ei au fost antrenați să detecteze agentul tuberculozei din sputa a 10523 de pacienți, spută care a fost în prealabil studiată la microscopul electronic. Astfel, după studiul la microscop, s-a găsit un procent de 13,3 % de pacienți ca fiind TBC pozitivi. Când aceste mostre de spută au fost „analizate” de șoareci, au fost identificați încă 620 de pacienți ca fiind TBC pozitivi și care nu au fost depistați cu ajutorul microscopului electronic. Astfel, rata de detecție, prin folosirea șobolanilor, a crescut cu 44% (Poling et al. 2010).

Conștiința de sine - factorul comun dintre oameni și animale

Urmărind aceste studii, am dorit să arătăm că animalele percep lumea exterioară cel puțin ca noi oamenii și că toate aceste percepții provenite pe căi și din medii diferite sunt cauza unor anumite comportamente suficient de complexe care să ne determine să afirmăm că, fără o conștientizare minimă a ceea ce se întâmplă în jurul lor, nu ar fi capabile să interpreteze aceste semnale, să-și ajusteze reacțiile, să anuleze un program prestabilit din naștere pentru a da naștere unui nou program și să prevină situațiile periculoase.

Exemple de animale care pot aplica astfel de „proceduri” sunt nenumărate, însă noi am ales spre exemplificare crabi, insecte și păsări pentru faptul că sunt atât de diferite de oameni și că, totuși, posedă sisteme de percepție ce folosesc mecanisme asemănătoare omului. Să ne imaginăm cât de mult s-ar schimba modul de gândire al oamenilor dacă ar poseda măcar unul dintre simțurile pe care le au unele specii de animale.

De asemenea, am intenționat să evidențiem că, într-o anumită măsură, am putea reduce din aroganța noastră față de animale, aroganța care își are originile doar în ignoranță. Nu suntem chiar atât de diferiți și de superiori animalelor prin inteligență și tehnologie. După cum vedem, acestea nu ne ajută nici măcar să supraviețuim ca specie pe această planetă. Rămâne să analizăm în ce constă, de fapt, superioritatea omului. Acuitatea senzorială a animalelor în cele mai multe cazuri o depășește pe cea umană. În consecință, ne punem următoarea întrebare: este conștiința la animale

inferioară conștiinței umane? Dacă da, în ce măsură? Poate conștiința animală să o completeze pe cea umană și invers? Când ne referim la conștiință nu luăm în considerare conștiința percepțiilor senzoriale și nici măcar gândurile. Majoritatea activităților și gândurilor umane își au originea în subconștient. Este posibil ca și animalele să aibă un anumit nivel de fluctuație al gândurilor, e adevărat, mult mai simple decât cele umane și care diferă de la o specie la alta. Conștiința la oameni și animale mai are o formă ce se ridică la un alt nivel: este conștientizarea senzației de a fi, de a exista în spațiu și timp. De asemenea, simțim foarte clar că această conștiință nu are nici o legătură cu materia, spațiul sau timpul. Nu știm încă ce este conștiința și nici nu am putea afirma că o altă ființă umană ar avea conștiință dacă nu am presupune din start, că acea ființă trebuie să simtă la fel ca noi. Nici o cercetare științifică nu poate detecta conștiința, de unde vine, din ce fel de particule subatomice sau energie este făcută și nici măcar dacă acționează sau nu independent de creier. Nu avem încă tehnologia necesară pentru a testa această ipoteză. Știm că transmisia unei emisiuni în eter este independentă de televizorul din casă, dar nu putem detecta această transmisie fără televizor. Putem face această analogie referindu-ne la creier și conștiință? Am văzut că nu este nevoie de o arhitectură specială a creierului pentru ca lumea înconjurătoare să fie percepută într-un mod similar de către toate ființele vii. Transmisia în eter poate fi recepționată în funcție de felul receptorului disponibil: aparat radio, televizor color, televizor alb-negru, televizor cu plasmă, cu leduri UHD, 4K, 8K, 36K etc. În mod asemănător, conștiința poate fi aceeași pentru întreaga lume vie, însă receptorul reprezentat de diferite specii de animale este limitat sau, mai bine spus, specializat cu un anumit scop. În cele din urmă, suntem noi mai conștienți și mai puțin programați decât animalele? Totul este trecut prin filtrul subconștientului care aduce la nivel conștient o cantitate extrem de mică de informații și aceea strict necesară într-o anumită situație. Întregul nostru ego, personalitatea noastră este o creație subconștientă pe baza informațiilor acumulate și primite pe parcursul vieții. Gândurile ne gândesc și ne dirijează ego-ul așa cum cerebelul și trunchiul cerebral ne controlează funcțiile de bază. Când ajungem să conducem o mașină în mod profesionist, nu suntem mai mult conștienți decât un animal care caută o pradă. Conducem mașina din instinct și cu ajutorul reflexelor. Datorită subconștientului, toată viața noastră, inclusiv gândurile ce se ivesc precum floricelele de porumb când sunt încălzite în ulei, se bazează pe un pilot automat sofisticat. Singura care iese din această ecuație de automatizare a vieții este conștiința de sine.

În ceea ce privește conștiința, propunem următoarele delimitări: 1) conștiința care detectează lumea materială și în care se încadrează conștientizarea percepțiilor senzoriale, emoțiilor, trăirilor, sentimentelor, reprezentărilor, planurile de viitor, evaluarea trecutului și tot ce ține de experiența acumulată de la naștere s-ar putea numi conștiință primară; 2) conștiința de sine prin care suntem conștienți de noi înșine, de faptul că existăm și prin intermediul acestei conștiințe putem observa din exterior succesiunea gândurilor, percepțiilor noastre fără să intervenim. Această conștiință o putem numi conștiință fundamentală, situată la un nivel profund. Ea nu este influențată de percepțiile senzoriale, de gânduri sau de celelalte componente ale conștiinței primare. Are un rol foarte important și anume, rolul de observator. De la acest nivel gradul de obiectivitate în relație cu noi înșine și cu ceilalți este semnificativ mai mare.

În sprijinul acestei teorii, vin cercetările de ultimă oră care încearcă să identifice rolul liberului arbitru și rolul conștiinței în panoplia proceselor psihice. Pentru că nu există încă tehnologia necesară, cercetările trebuie să se limiteze la delimitarea conștiinței pe care noi o numim conștiință primară cu ajutorul scanerelor și electroencefalogramelor. Noile descoperiri aduc tot mai multe întrebări cu privire la liberul arbitru și provoacă îndoieli serioase cu privire la existența acestuia. O cercetare mai veche a scos în evidență uimitorul control și modul de procesare a informațiilor de către subconștient. Un grup de cercetători de la Universitatea Humboldt din Berlin a publicat un articol intitulat *Unconscious determinants of free decisions in the human brain* (Soon et al. 2008) în care s-a arătat că, înainte de a lua o decizie, subconștientul nostru prelucrează informațiile în regiunea cortexului frontopolar și ia decizia, pentru ca apoi să o trimită la nivel conștient. Decalajul dintre luarea deciziei la nivel subconștient și conștientizarea propriu-zisă a deciziei este de cel puțin 7 secunde.

Această regiune este responsabilă cu funcționarea memoriei prospective, multitasking, integrare relațională, propria evaluare. Conform unui studiu asupra leziunilor în această regiune, cortexul frontopolar median este implicat și în procesarea stărilor emoționale (Hoffmann și Bar-On 2012). Aceste prime rezultate neașteptate au determinat studii aprofundate și chiar reluarea experimentelor. Un timp de 7 secunde între formarea răspunsului în subconștient și conștientizarea acestui răspuns este imens. Nu mai poate fi vorba de o eventuală eroare în ceea ce privește *timing-ul*. Cercetătorii au reluat experimentul în cadrul unei echipe internaționale la care au participat printre altele instituții precum Centrul Bernstein de științe computaționale din Berlin, Institutul Max Planck de

științe a creierului și de științe umane cognitive din Berlin, Universitatea Duke-National din Singapore, Universitatea din Dresda, Școala Medicală și Școala de Științe Psihologice din Melbourne. Cercetătorii s-au întrebat dacă aceste decizii subconștiente se reduc la activitățile motorii de a apăsa pe buton sau sunt și alte decizii mai complexe ce se iau în subconștient, înainte ca acestea să fie conștientizate. Prin aceste studii ei au arătat că un calcul matematic de adunare sau scădere, deci o activitate cerebrală mai complexă, se realizează prima dată în subconștient (conștientul fiind precedat în acest caz cu 4 secunde de subconștient), în cortexul prefrontal median și parietal. Și asta înainte de a-și face apariția pe scena conștiinței. Rezultatele au arătat că pregătirea subconștientă a răspunsului nu se reduce doar la nivel motor. Deciziile ce necesită multiple nivele de abstractizare își au origine în negura inconștientului (Soon et al. 2013).

Un alt studiu realizat la Universitatea din Ierusalim, în colaborare cu Universitatea din Copenhaga, a arătat că, în ceea ce privește abilitățile verbale, chiar dacă o serie de cuvinte sunt prezentate subliminal, subconștientul nostru procesează și relația dintre ele. Această situație ne arată că procesele subconștiente pot efectua manipulări secvențiale ale simbolurilor abstracte, deși se credea că această abilitate aparține de conștient. În cadrul aceluiași studiu s-a arătat că procesele inconștiente pot efectua orice funcție de bază pe care și conștientul o poate efectua. Astfel, operațiile de adunare și scădere se pot efectua și la nivel subconștient, performanțele subconștiente fiind diferite de la un individ la altul. În ultimii zece ani s-a descoperit că multe din funcțiile de nivel înalt caracteristice conștientului se realizează și la nivel subconștient. De exemplu: procesul de învățare, formarea intuițiilor ce determină anumite decizii, funcții executive și stabilirea unui scop. În acest studiu s-a demonstrat că produsele umane culturale, cum ar fi procesarea semantică a unui număr de cuvinte și rezolvarea de ecuații aritmetice, nu necesită o activitate conștientă. Concluzia studiului este că trebuie să reconsiderăm modul de abordare a capacităților umane considerate unice, cel puțin în privința conștiinței (Sklar et al. 2012). Deși acest studiu a avut anumite critici în ceea ce privește calculele aritmetice, el este susținut și de alte studii cum este cel din 2013 realizat de universități din Germania, Singapore și din Melbourne. Imaginarea mentală și gândurile au fost considerate ca fiind voluntare și total dependente de conștient. Iată că o nouă cercetare, publicată în martie 2019 de către Universitatea New South Wales din Sydney, arată că imaginarea mentală nu se află total sub controlul conștientului. Urmărind activitățile patternurilor din cortexul vizual primar înaintea luării unei decizii, putem

face predicții asupra viitoarei imagerii mentale ce va fi conștientizată sau aleasă printr-o decizie conștientă. Se pare că reprezentările vizuale sunt influențate de senzori neuronali ce declanșează apariția acestor reprezentări cu uimitorul decalaj de 11 secunde înainte de a fi conștientizate (Koenig-Robert și Pearson 2019). Cine suntem noi de fapt și prin ce se deosebește preprogramarea subconștientă la oameni de programul ce activează instinctele animalelor? Iată că liberul arbitru de care specia umană este atât de mândră își reduce „aria de influență” din ce în ce mai mult. Cui datorăm activitățile culturale și toate descoperirile și realizările din istoria științei și cea a umanității? În ce momente suntem cu adevărat noi înșine? Prin prisma acestor cercetări de dată recentă, putem să presupunem că suntem noi înșine doar în momentele de relaxare, fără gânduri, în momentele de admirație, în momentul când iubim ceva sau pe cineva fără nici un interes. Dacă ne gândim bine, adeseori în preajma animalelor sau în fața naturii suntem noi înșine. Poate că animalele, la rândul lor, doar în preajma noastră pot fi ele însele. Există parcă un transfer reciproc de conștiință urmat de un comportament în consecință. Când mai trăim această stare? La nașterea unui copil care are încredere absolută în noi și ne iubeste cu toată conștiința lui eliberată de gânduri. Ego-ul nostru, ceea ce credem noi că reprezentăm în această lume, dispare. Este prezentă doar conștiința noastră și conștiința copilului sau animalului din fața noastră. Încă nu putem face referiri la nici un studiu care să demonstreze clar această prezență a conștiinței, dar toți știm că aceste situații există. Se pare că simțurile sunt universale și joacă un rol primordial în formarea experiențelor care, la rândul lor, duc la formarea unei false identități care se manifestă prin ego. De ce vorbim de o falsă identitate? Pentru că ne identificăm cu experiențele noastre oferite de mediu și de ceilalți oameni. Conștiința de sine se află în afara acestor experiențe, prejudecăți sau convingeri. Lumea materială, perceptibilă, nu ne poate da o informație exactă despre cine suntem noi pentru că modul de construcție a creierului ne oferă o imagine fabricată din interior a realității. Nu avem altă modalitate de a cunoaște lumea exterioară decât prin intermediul simțurilor și a căror interpretare aparține în totalitate creierului.

Să presupunem că nu am poseda simțuri și toate experiențele noastre s-ar reduce doar la a ști că existăm. Nu am avea nici frică, nici bucurie, nici stări de oboseală sau de plictiseală pentru că nu am ști ce înseamnă aceste stări. Ce ar rămâne de fapt? O comunicare doar la nivelul și prin intermediul conștiinței cu celelalte conștiințe. Fără simțuri nu am putea percepe gravitația, distanța și nici timpul. În această stare, poate că am simți

animalele direct la nivel de conștiință și le-am considera ființe și nu doar „ființe comestibile”. Adevărata diferență dintre noi și animale ar putea fi „detectată” din această stare de a fi. Într-un astfel de moment, nu am mai avea nici un complex de superioritate. Sunt multe istorisiri adevărate legate de comunicarea empatică dintre oameni și animale care merită studiate, însă ele nu fac subiectul acestui articol. Aceste întâmplări sunt dovada faptului că nu este nevoie să eliminăm simțurile pentru ca să descoperim realitatea din spatele cortinei. Animalele de orice fel sunt aici lângă noi și ne pot ajuta să facem acest pas. Un pas mic pentru o specie, un salt uriaș pentru viața pe Pământ.

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Are Animals only Intelligent or Do They Possess Thought?

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Abstract

It is often said that animals cannot think because they are not endowed with natural language. But this thesis often remains vague and circular (because they have no language, they cannot think or vice versa?). A more precise form of argumentation is at our disposal if we consider that the vast majority of the central characteristics we have attributed to beliefs seem to be related to the productivity of language, which allows us to form, starting from some given simple ideas, an infinity of new, more complex ideas. Since having a conviction means to possess the concept of a certain state endowed with a content, likely to be true or false. However, to do so one must have linguistic communication for the reason that verbal communication with someone means to be able to share with that one the notion of an objective world, which is the notion of a truth on which the speaker and interlocutor can agree. Such a notion could only appear in the context of the interpretation of one subject by another, which in return implies a possible agreement between interpreter and interpretation. Usually, we attribute the "mind" to the things we interpret accordingly, and from this arise a lot of questions about the conditions under which a thing can be declared to have a "mind" or as possessing beliefs, desires, or other mental states. According to this theory, such a set of questions can best be answered by analyzing logical presuppositions and methods of attributive practices, especially when we adopt the intentional statement about something. Everything that is easily and completely predictable by an intentional explanation is, by definition, an intentional system. Intentional slander can be defined as the strategy of interpreting the behavior of an entity (person, animal, artifact), treating it as if it were a rational agent that governs the choices they make if we were to take into account their "beliefs" and "desires". In this article, we will try to answer questions such as: are animals just intelligent or do they possess thinking?; Are there clear rules of communication in the human world as in the animal world?

Keywords: Thinking; Language; Communication; Mind; Intentional explanation

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About intentional beliefs and strategies

Some characteristics of beliefs

The states that we call "beliefs" can be characterized by four main properties (Engel 1994, 51-72):

1. Beliefs are semantically evaluable mental states: they have intentional content. These are propositional attitudes like X believes that p, where "p" denotes the content of the belief. To say that they are semantically evaluable means that they have conditions of truth: X believes that p is true and p is true if and only if certain conditions of truth are met. If the content of a belief is known, it is known what kind of particular belief it is. Also, the usual assignments are considered "opaque"; if X believes that „a” is F and if $a = b$, it does not follow that X believes that b is F. The "opacity" or intentionality of beliefs determines the difficulty of evaluating their conditions of truth.

2. Beliefs have a causal role in producing behavior. But they do not exercise this causal role alone; they do so, in general, in conjunction with other mental states (desires, etc.), and they have causal powers over the contents of other mental states. This can be seen if we consider the usual form of practical reasoning: if X thinks that p, and if X wants as q, and if X thinks that doing A will satisfy his desire as q, then X will do A. It is the usual form of our explanations for action. Popular psychology characterizes these explanations as causal. The fact that beliefs (and their contents) fall into causal chains of this type is what we can call the "functional profile" of beliefs: the fact that they are states that are defined by their relationships with other mental states and behavior. It should be noted that these beliefs have not only causal powers because they are mental states of a certain type, but also by virtue of their content. Because my belief is that „there is a steak in the refrigerator” has this determined content, it can cause, at the same time with my desire „to eat a steak”, my action to go and take the steak from the refrigerator.

Who says cause, says law. Popular psychology assumes that these causal relations correspond, to a large extent, to the laws of behavior: in the same way, if X thinks that q, then X will make A. We can ask ourselves if there can be here nomological causal generalizations on the contents of beliefs. But there is no doubt that popular psychology attributes to these generalizations the form of causal laws, even if they are not true laws.

In order to treat a state as a "persuasive" state, two more essential features must be fulfilled.

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3. The contents of beliefs are "holistic." Beliefs do not merely have propositional contents. These contents have a certain structure: they are composed of concepts. We cannot claim to have a conviction if there are no corresponding concepts from which they are articulated, and if there are no other concepts to which they are related. Based on this "holism" of the contents of belief, it could be said that such a content is identified at the limit with all the conceptual and doxastic connections that confirm it and, consequently, that no creature capable of beliefs could have only one conviction. In this sense, it is often said (Fodor 1990, 134) that holism is an absurd doctrine because it seems to imply that, for maintaining a convincing content, it is necessary to keep all possible contents. But we do not need to subscribe to this absurd doctrine to recognize the holistic nature of beliefs. It is enough to admit that, for a content of belief and a given conceptual content, it is not possible, in principle, to determine how much other beliefs or conceptual content would be required. This does not imply that the conditions for the individualization of a belief are identified, as Fodor argues, with all of its "epistemic connections," but it does determine that, for a belief to have a definite content, it must be linked to other beliefs and concepts, without knowing very well how many other beliefs and concepts are related to it, nor what they are. The relatively indeterminate character of the limits does not involve the total indeterminacy of the content of the beliefs, nor the impossibility to limit the holism to the connections, more or less local. The fact that the notion of a cup is vague does not imply that we do not have criteria to determine when we are dealing with a "cup". Likewise, the holism of beliefs does not imply that this notion is irremediably vague.

4. Beliefs are second-order intentional states. It is enough to believe that p to have the conviction that p? Apparently not, since one should also be able to believe that one believes that p, that is, to be aware of one's own beliefs. Beliefs do not have to be attitudes implying the existence of an effective consciousness, namely, "accidental" states. On the contrary, many beliefs seem to be dispositional, in the sense that they are dispositions of behavior that can be said to have them, without being aware of having them. For example, I may think that walking on the ice of the lake is dangerous without consciously representing this propositional content to me (but manifesting it through my non-engagement on the ice) (Hügli, Poul 2003, 236). I can have many beliefs without ever having thought of them explicitly, such as I can believe that „pink elephants do not walk through the streets of my city” and have never thought of it. But even if such beliefs are

not conscious, they can come into my consciousness, they must be potentially conscious to be able to attribute them to me. Perhaps many of my beliefs are "tacit" in this regard, and this fits with the holistic trait that has just been revealed - in this sense, I can have an infinite number of tacit beliefs. To recognize a belief the intentional second-order states are necessary as well as, a fortiori, the third-order intentional states (e.g., to believe that someone believes that someone believes that p).

Do animals have beliefs?

No one denies that animals, at least superior animals, have informational states, which provide them with data on the environment, namely, they can see, hear, touch, smell, and feel. However, these data do not represent convictions. We invest them with the function of beliefs, in the sense of 1 and 2. The functional and causal profile of these assignments also applies to animals. For example, we say that Azorel scratches the kitchen door because he thinks that his food is in the kitchen, and he wants to eat that food. This type of attribution is purely anthropomorphic, the dog does not actually have states such as beliefs and desires. That assignment would be correct if that dog had a mood reinforced by the door's squeaking behavior when he was hungry. This is the projection on this functional profile of suitable contents, which we associate with our own functional profiles. But for the functional profile to be real, then can we say that 2 applies to animals? Is this minimum condition of this type accomplished? The functional profile assumes that the animal has distinct states entering into mutual causal relationships, in order to trigger the behavior. In Azorel's case, it is the belief that the food is in the kitchen actually a distinct state from his desire to eat that food? And he can rush at the food, which was actually food for cats, so he was sorely mistaken? The problem here is not only that we do not have the means to discern exactly the contents of the assigned intentional states, but also we cannot have any idea how these states can combine each other to cause a behaviour, nor the means to perceive where they can fit into other "practical reasoning" of the animal. Animal beliefs, if they exist, seem to lack the plasticity that can be proved by human beliefs, and consequently cannot be treated as beliefs in the true sense of the word. This plasticity, along with the nature of the functional profile of human beliefs, seems to be essentially related to the fact that they have intentional content. Even if we can attribute some content to animals, is this content intentional in the first sense? We have several reasons to

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attribute beliefs to animals when they exhibit behaviors that can be identified as errors.

For example, imagine that Azorel is following his neighbour's cat, which climbs up a tree. Quickly, once climbed into an oak-tree, she jumps further onto a nearby tree. Yet Azorel stays and barks under the oak. We observe the scene and say that he thinks that the cat is in the first tree she jumped, but that he is wrong about the tree where the cat has climbed. An animal capable of error cannot be suspected of having any real conviction. However, to be able to attribute the false conviction in question, a finer determination of the contents would be necessary. The intentionality of the contents is intrinsically linked to their referential "opacity". But animal "beliefs" do not have this property. It does not make sense to say that Azorel believes that the cat climbed the oak and if the oak is the tallest tree nearby, then Azorel believes the cat climbed the tallest tree in close proximity. We could suggest relativizing the concept of belief in that animal species, saying, for example, that Azorel believed the cat climbed the tree and that the cat believed Azorel was following her. The intra-specific beliefs in question would not have all the characteristics of human beliefs. But what would distinguish between the belief of a dog, a cat, and these from the conviction of human, and why could the former be identified as a belief? The issue has not been resolved yet.

Finally, can we attribute beliefs to animals in sense 4, namely, beliefs about beliefs? It is even more doubtful. It is often said that animals cannot think because they are not endowed with natural language. But this thesis often remains vague and circular (since they have no language, they cannot think or vice versa?). A more precise form of argumentation is at our disposal if we consider that the vast majority of the central characteristics that we have attributed to beliefs seem to be related to the productivity of language, which allow us to form, starting from some given simple ideas, an infinity of new, more complex ideas. Davidson (1982, 95-107) gave an argument in this direction:

a. To have a belief, it is necessary to have the concept of "belief" in the sense of 4, second-order beliefs;

b. To have the concept of "belief", one must have the language and the faculty to communicate.

Why? Because to have a conviction means to possess the concept of a certain state endowed with content, likely to be true or false. But for that, one must have linguistic communication, since communicating verbally with someone means to be able to share with him/ her the notion of an

objective world, namely, the notion of a truth on which the speaker and the interlocutor can agree. And, according to Davidson (1984, 3-15), such a notion cannot appear only in the context of the interpretation of one subject by another, which in return assumes a possible agreement between interpreter and interpretation. Even if it is not given as for Davidson, the notion of an intersubjective truth as a condition of communication (and therefore of authentic thinking) occupies a central place provided that communication is analyzed as a process capable of producing beliefs and other intentional states to others, and that r these states are recognized, which could lead to providing a similar argument.

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Professor Skinner's strange research, which he undertook during World War II, was considered the Top Security Classification List and was intended to make a pigeon learn how to guide a ballistic missile. The pigeon is capable of incredible performance, especially when it comes to choosing a particular image, mixed with many other photos. During the training period, the pigeon receives a grain of wheat or another reward for each success achieved. Then, the bird is conditioned to strike with the beak exactly the requested image. So, nothing is easier than training a pigeon to aim at a precise point on an aerial photograph or on a building to be destroyed. Consequently, the bird is placed inside the rocket where, on the screen, an image from the ground is placed in front of it, thanks to an optical device or a radar. When the spotted target appears, the pigeon hits it with its beak and the rocket launches towards the target.

Skinner (Cheran, 2007, 22) had the revelation of the role that pigeons could play as participants in the war in 1940. He was not able to train them perfectly until 1944. Later, when his research became public, they were no longer unique in the scientific landscape. Other animals could also be used successfully in the war, and this was proved by the Soviets. They trained special dogs, to look for food under enemy tanks, while carrying an explosive charge behind them. Sneaking under German tanks, the quadrupeds stopped attacks that could hardly have been prevented otherwise.

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Training amoeba

Any living thing, even a simple amoeba, can be taught certain skills, with truly exceptional results. For example, a paramecium can be taught to swim in a triangle or even in a square; it is sufficient to keep it for a while in a container with one of these shapes and then to transfer it to a larger, circular aquarium. The roundworm, even the commonplace earthworm, are also can learn to move through a simple labyrinth. It is a "T" shaped tube, one of the arms of the letter having at the end a dark shelter, pleasant for the worm, and at the other end an unpleasant side, sprinkled with glass wool or containing two metal wires. At first, the worm's path is random, then after several attempts, there is a hesitation in its behavior, and before reaching the unpleasant end of the arm, it returns from the road. It was found that after many attempts, over 150, the worm no longer makes any mistakes and goes without hesitation to the pleasant end of the letter. It is very interesting to note that if the two arms of the "T" are reversed, after one or two mistakes, the worm manages to make the right choice. So both the roundworm and the earthworm are able to learn and even generalize to some extent.

Cephalopods almost equalize vertebrates in terms of mental development. For example, the American researcher Boycott managed to train some octopuses to come through in a rather complicated maze. It would seem that, mentally, the octopus is superior to many vertebrates such as fish, bats, and reptiles.

All insects can learn to go through relatively complicated mazes. French researcher Remy Chauvin has long studied the behaviour of crickets. He built a maze of metal blocks of 2 cm width and 6 cm length, arranged side by side. The corridor, on which the cricket was supposed to move, was painted white and brightly lit. The metal blocks were immersed in a shallow vessel filled with water. The cricket was carefully placed at one end of the device and did not feel well at all, as it preferred shade and hiding, not light and open space. So, the cricket starts looking for a more comfortable place and, by not being able to get out of the labyrinth, it ends up in a shelter at the other end. The rescue shelter is a glass tube in the dark, impregnated with the smell of crickets that were kept there for a while. Under these conditions, the cricket refuses to leave that very pleasant place. However, the researcher gently takes it from there and puts it back at the starting point, ten times in a row. After each route, the cricket is allowed to rest for three minutes, and after ten rides, it is allowed to rest in its shelter for 30 minutes. A comparison between the results obtained in the first series of

tests with those in the second series is spectacular. The insect no longer makes any mistakes in the second session. The way the cricket accommodates itself is almost identical to that of the rat, an animal which is considered much more evolved.

If we abandon an animal in a maze in which there are no traps or rewards, it adapts very well and walks at random through it. After a while, the animal is taken from the maze and placed in another identical one, but which contains both a trap and a reward. Very quickly, the maze is traversed without any mistakes, avoiding the trap to get the reward. This discovery led Tolman to state that the existence of a "cognitive map" in the rat's mind should be admitted, thus arousing astonishment in the scientific world. Nowadays, the existence of such mental maps is largely admitted, even for crickets.

Observing the behaviour of insects has led to the idea that some of them go through a phase of "insight", or enlightenment during the process of learning a skill, such as going through a maze without any incidents to obtain a reward. This long-term learning is considered a mark of intelligence and the idea that it cannot exist in invertebrates has even been credited. However, the English researcher Thorpe, (cf. Cheran, 2007, 23) experimenting a lot in this field, came to the conclusion that this moment of "insight" certainly exists in insects. Thus, from the first road outside the hive, the bee manages to discover the way back to it, despite all the obstacles and the fact that it can be at a great distance. Spiders realize quickly when someone approaches their web.

Among the lower vertebrates, fish find their way through relatively complex labyrinths, which supports the hypothesis that in their case too we can talk about enlightenment. For example, it was found that the groups of fish learn much faster to cope in a maze than a single individual, from which we can deduce that it could possess group intelligence.

In an American laboratory, an American scientist of Asian origin named Tsai imagined some very interesting experiments on mice. For example, a food dispenser was installed in a cage, based on a very simple principle: each time a lever was pressed, a piece of cheese came out through a nearby opening. As soon as the mouse learned to do this, the conditions of the experiment changed. The lever was mounted at one end of the cage, and the place where food came from was at the opposite side. At that moment, three mice were placed in a cage. The situation became very tense because the mouse operating the lever never received food, as the other two reached the piece of cheese faster than it. Under these conditions, no mouse

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wanted to operate the lever and all three vigilantly guarded the opening through which no more food came. The next day, a single mouse pressed the lever for the benefit of its friends, and, on the fourth day, one of the animals had a flash of genius: he quickly maneuvered the lever for three times, leaving each of his two friends to appropriate a piece of cheese, the third belonging to him. After this "insight", he returned to work and, in less than two hours, extracted 1156 pieces of cheese from the dispenser. Delighted by the feast, at one point, the mice began to work on shifts when the lever was pressed, pressing three times in each half. Is it a simple moment of enlightenment or actually true intelligence?

Experiments using the food dispenser were also conducted at Yale University, with monkeys as subjects. For example, in the first stage of the experiment, the monkey received some white tokens that, if inserted into the machine, allowed it to receive a grape. Once the monkeys understood the significance of the tokens, they were distributed to them only in exchange for tasks that had to be performed. Chips were accessed only when the primates lifted 10 kg at a certain height. The monkeys got to work quickly, some of them reaching exhaustion. One of them lifted the weight for 185 times in ten minutes. Then the blue chips were added to the white tokens, which meant fruit. When they learned to use them as well, the experimenter threw the yellow chips into the game, which gave the monkeys the right to climb on his shoulders. One day, a mouse accidentally entered into the cage of one of the chimpanzees, which happened to be very scared of mice. Frightened, the monkey rushed to his token store, took a yellow one, and ran to give it to the experimenter, who, excitedly, immediately allowed him to climb on his shoulders.

Tsai obtained similar results on mice. A mouse can pull a string to drop a token, which will be placed in a plate that will push to the point where it will receive the piece of cheese as a reward. All these examples prove that animals possess a living intelligence that we, humans, have failed to fully investigate in their self-sufficiency.

D. Dennett's intentional strategy

Dennett's central idea of "intentional strategy" is identical to that of the "verificationist" approach: beings have intentional states only in proportion to the normal properties of states that we can attribute to them. In other words, the beliefs of a being are what they should have if they are supposed to be rational and their biological conditions are normal (Dennett

1981). It is a strategy that Dennett prescribes not only for humans, but also for artificial intelligence and animal systems.

How do these attributions of intentionality work? Ideally or optimally. For example, if we have reason to attribute to a being X the belief that p, then we will prescribe that: If X believes that p, if X is rational and if p implies q, then X would believe that q. Attributing this kind of belief to X does not imply that X is supposed to possess the logical rule *modus ponens*; or that he follows it in some sense. This consists only in prescribing if we attribute to him the conviction p that the being also believes that q. If our empirical data allows us to attribute the belief that q (on an independent basis), then our prediction will be confirmed. As Dennett (1978, 233) put it: the "intentional posture" is to make a "loan" from the intelligence of the system, a loan that is repaid or not, as the case may be, depending on the results that come later. How is this strategy applied to animals? Similarly to humans, it is a detective strategy. For chimpanzees, we have the experiences of Premack and Woodruff (1978, 532-535), tested the existence of this type of second-order capabilities. If chimpanzees have intentional states of the second or third order, then they must be capable of tricks (misleading).

Premack and Woodruff placed the female chimpanzee Sadie in the following situation: food is put in two boxes in front of her door. Then a "cooperative" or "competitive" trainer enters the room where Sadie is. She learns that she must designate the box containing the food to obtain it. The "cooperating" trainer shares the food with her, the "competitive" trainer keeps it for himself/ herself. Will Sadie show the empty box to the latter? If so, it could be said that chimpanzees have the concept of persuasion, and that they have something like a "theory of mind." We assume that an empty transparent box and a food box would be installed in an "opaque" box; if the "competitive" trainer comes in, and Sadie shows the opaque box, this shows that she lacks the subtlety needed to mislead her trainer. That would necessarily reveal stupidity. Dennett's idea is that intentional posture is a kind of "black box" to characterize observable cognitive and behavioural skills, which help us test as many of these skills as possible. But the main conclusion is that, since there is no a priori reason to prohibit the attribution of animals, at least methodologically and heuristically, intentional states such as beliefs can also belong to the animal world.

Daniel Dennett's theory of intentional systems is primarily an analysis of the meanings of "mentalist" terms such as: belief, desire, expectations, decision, intention, terms of popular psychology used in explaining, interpreting, predicting the behaviour of other human beings, animals, and

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also artifacts such as robots or computers. Usually, we attribute the "mind" to things we interpret in this fashion, and this generates a lot of questions about the conditions under which a thing can be declared to have a "mind" or as possessing beliefs, desires, or other mental states. According to this theory, such a set of questions can best be answered by analyzing logical presuppositions and methods of attributive practices, when we adopt the intentional statement about something. Everything that is easily and completely predictable by the intentional stance is, by definition, an intentional system. Intentional stance can be defined as the strategy of interpreting the behaviour of an entity (person, animal, artifact), treating it as if it were a rational agent that governs the choices it makes, by taking into account its "beliefs" and "desires."

The distinctive features of the intentional stance can be better seen in opposition to two other more primitive stances of prediction, the physical stance and the projective stance. The physical stance includes the standard methods of the physical sciences and takes into account the physical constitution of things to construct predictions. For things that are neither alive nor artifacts, the physical stance is the only valid strategy, although there are exceptions. Every physical thing, designed, organic or not, is an object that is subject to the laws of physics, which, in principle, can be explained and provided for the physical stance.

The projections of the projective stance are riskier than the predictions of the physical stance, due to the external statements that must be taken into account: that an entity would be designed as I assume it would be, and that it will operate without dysfunctions, according to the assigned prediction.

Consider the computer that plays chess. It is subject to a simple strategy of interpretation: it possesses the same thinking as that of rational agents who want to win and know the rules of chess and the position of the pieces on the board. The problem of predicting and interpreting its behavior is solved more easily than if the physical or projective stance were used. You can make a list of all the valid moves that your computer can make when its turn comes. Then a classification is made of the movements from the most indicated, wise, rational, to the most stupid, bad, after which the prediction is made: the computer will make the best choice. The human may not be sure what the best move is; the computer can estimate the situation better than a person who chooses four or five variants that provide it with important predictive levers. These levers could be improved and thus predict in advance exactly what movement the computer will make.

However, this implies huge costs of time and mental effort by returning to the projective stance, considering the millions of lines of computer codes, or going back to the physical stance to calculate the flow of electrons resulting from pressing the computer keyboard.

If a computer chess program works well, it is obvious that its various moves will be made in response to detecting conditions that more or less dictate how it should be acted, given its very broad projective purposes. When the computer (control) system is well designed, the reasons for action will be quickly discernible and highly predictable; in any case, the engineers who wrote the software attach "comments" to the source code, explaining these reasons to connoisseurs. The laymen know nothing about computer programming so that they could predict the behaviour of the system.

Evolution and optimism

If we admit, according to Dennett, that "the beliefs of a being are those which it should have given considering its evolutionary capabilities and needs," (Dennett 1987, VII) it does not place the intentional instance in a biological perspective, and which in addition is in line with a very familiar biological thesis?

Dennett admits that intentional strategy is in tandem with the program called adaptationism in the theory of evolution, which places its main idea that natural selection is an "optimizing" agent. One of the best illustrations of using these optimalism models is found in the "evolutionary game theory" proposed by authors such as John Maynard-Smith who seeks to apply to the behavior of groups and species schemes of individual explanation of game theory and decision.

Daniel Dennett, starting from reflections on the brain and consciousness, wrote a synthesis work considered one of the best presentations of strong Darwinism. For him, Darwin's central idea is that evolution is an algorithm, a blind, mechanical process, which Darwin called natural selection. Dennett places great emphasis on the idea of an algorithm, arguing that it does simple things, yet in nature, all the features we observe were created by the Darwinian algorithm. Enthusiastic about this view that the simple could create the complex and that all forms of nature are the result of a simple algorithm that no one created, Dennett compares what he calls "Darwin's dangerous idea to a universal acid." (Dennett 1995, 71) As it dissolves all the materials it encounters, Darwin's idea dissolves all the concepts it encounters." Among them, the platonic ideas or the "Aristotelian essences"; we find here, as in Dawkins, a

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gradualist conception of evolution, in which it subtly passes from one species to another and where a species is an aggregate of insignificantly different individuals as bearers of constantly evolving genomes.

Dennett has such confidence in the power of natural selection that he does not hesitate to write: "When scientists are confronted with what appears to be a strong objection to the natural selection hypothesis, they are led to reason as follows: they cannot yet imagine how this objection can be rejected or solved by this difficulty, because I cannot imagine how these effects could have any other cause than that of natural selection, I will tend to say that the objection is empty; one way or another, natural selection must be sufficient to explain these effects. " (Dennett 1995, 100)

Dennett is aware of the enormity he has just written. He justifies himself by saying that natural selection has revealed so many challenges, and brought so many successes, that "it is reasonable to believe that an idea that could ultimately be revealed as false could succumb to such a stubborn campaign of criticism. This is not a convincing demonstration, of course, just a very convincing reason".(Dennett 1995, 91) This is less convincing if one considers that quantum physics withstood all attacks for three hundred years before being replaced by completely different concepts. This proves to be a form of mental blockage.

Another central idea in Dennett is adaptationism. "Adaptationist reasoning is not an option for us to be free to choose: it is the heart and soul of evolutionary biology. Even if it can be improved and fined, moving it from its central position in biology is not only imagining the fall of Darwinism but also the confrontation of biochemistry and all social sciences, such as medicine." (Dennett 1995, 111) He compares adaptationism to "retro-engineering": when an engineer dismantles a competitor's product, he asks himself questions such as: Why did he use this type of alloy in this place? and so on. Dennett admits that sometimes there is no answer to the question, and it is only by chance that one solution or another is chosen. But in the vast majority of cases, there is an answer. Similarly, when we look at the different characteristics of a human being, in most cases, they are not here by chance; they are adaptations of the body to certain living conditions of the ancestors.

It is important to understand why "adaptationist" reasoning is so essential to strong Darwinians. For them, natural selection is extremely effective, being able to cause extraordinary adaptations based on mutations made by chance, but which are beneficial for the body in certain contexts. In conclusion, most of the characteristics of a living being must be the result

of adaptations. Dennett created the concepts of "crows" and "celestial hooks." Crows are engines that allow objects to be transported from one point to another. In the history of the evolution of life, these would be physical mechanisms allowing species to overcome important "evolutionary distances" that they could not overcome through normal mechanisms.

The "celestial hooks" are mystical, miraculous, and impossible engines, suspended in a vacuum. Dennett constantly accuses non-Darwinians and those with a non-reductionist view of consciousness of being in search of "heavenly hooks."

Finally, when it comes to religions, Darwin's dangerous idea threatens to be as toxic to them as modern civilization is to large mammals such as elephants because it is a universal acid capable of destroying everything. Elephants need to be saved, but not at any cost. Likewise, religions must be saved, but not accepting absolutely anything from them. He does not agree with the forced excision of women and the secondary status that women have in Roman Catholic religions, Mormonism or Islam.

The same logic must prohibit the teaching of creationism in private Christian schools in the United States (Dennett is subtle enough not to forbid the critique of Darwinism in education, although he does not seem to be very far away). The best place for religions is at the zoo: "What about all the glories of our religious traditions? Languages, costumes, rituals, monuments must be preserved, as must languages. They are increasingly considered as second-class shelters for endangered species, but at least these shelters exist and what they preserve is irreplaceable [...]. What will happen, one may ask, if religion is preserved in cultural zoos, libraries, concerts and events? This is already happening: tourists gather to watch the tribal dances of the American Indians and for the spectators it is folklore, a religious ceremony that must be treated with respect." (Dennett 1995, 601).

To the extent that adaptationism thus remains confined to the status of a heuristic and methodological rule for interpreting living systems, there is nothing to object to, as long as the strategy remains fruitful, and as long as the possibility of "unloading" the optimal features in terms of ultimate causal explanations (which is not always possible, especially with regard to the "neutralist" theory of evolution, according to which natural selection is only one of the factors of evolution).

In this sense, Dennett argues, there is nothing mysterious in the fact that we can attribute "motivations" or "intentions" to nature as well as to our fellows. In both cases, our attributions of "motivations" or "intentions", and of mental contents in general, are indeterminate subjects: nature's

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motivations are "floating" and we can never be sure that we have read correctly in the mind of Mrs. Nature (c.f. Dennett 1987, 267), no more than, as Quine's thesis of indeterminate translation has taught us, we cannot be sure that we can read determined contents in the minds of our fellows. In Dennett's terms, intentionality is "extrinsic" and not "intrinsic," it is "derived" from "intentional and interpretive posture." There is no "primitive and literary" intentionality because any form of intentionality is the product of an interpretation. Here is Dennett's official position, which often leads to the characterization of his position as "instrumentalist" on the issue of intentionality and beliefs. But this official theory is competed by another, which clearly appears in Dennett's same essay, *Evolution, Error, and Intentionality*: Our intentionality is derived by reference to a primitive and "original" intentionality, which is that of Nature, and which is contained in our genes: "We may call our intentionality real, but we must recognize that it is derived from the intentionality of natural selection, which is just as real — but, which is less easily spotted, from the reason of the great difference of the temporal and spatial scale it has in relation to us." (Dennett 1988, 323)

How is it possible to say that nature has intentions if natural selection is a blind process, which excludes the possibility of these motivations? Because, as Dennett tells us, we are able to explain why this or that process has evolved in a certain way and "succeeded." But the purpose, the goal in itself, has not been determined. There is a paradox here, because Dennett states that Mrs. Nature's intentionality is primitive, original and real, and on the other hand that it is unintentional, relative to our intentions, indeterminate and in this sense non-real. Many believe this is a dilemma of Dennett.

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