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3   **Critical Anthropomorphism and Animal Ethics**
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16   **ABSTRACT.** Anthropomorphism has long been considered a cardinal error when describing animals. Ethicists have
17   feared the consequences of misrepresenting animals in their reasoning. Recent research within human-animal studies,
18   however, has sophisticated the notion of anthropomorphism. It is suggested that avoiding anthropomorphism merely
19   creates other morphisms, such as mechanomorphism. Instead of avoiding anthropomorphism, it is argued that it is a
20   communicative strategy that should be used critically. Instances of anthropomorphism in animal ethics are analyzed
21   in this paper. Some analogies made between people and non-human animals in present theories of animal ethics are
22   clear instances of psychological anthropomorphism. Other analogies are implicit cases of cultural
23   anthropomorphism. It is argued that animal ethics need to take the wider discourse of critical anthropomorphism into
24   account in order to sophisticate the understanding and use of anthropomorphic projections. Anthropomorphism is an
25   efficient tool of communication, and it may be made an adequate one as well.
26

29   A peculiar fact about the way we speak about animals is that we often have specific terms for their feet, but not for
30   their happiness or anger. Many languages contain the insight that hooves, albeit their similar functions to feet, still
31   have particularities to them that make them very different from human feet. Equine happiness, though, has not
32   undergone the same treatment. Equine and human happiness, I agree, presumably contain some similarities. But why
33   would we believe that equine happiness would not also contain particular content that would merit a specific term?
34   Another example is that a mare may be with young, but a woman may be pregnant. Still, we have significantly more
35   evidence that conception, the attachment of the ovum to the uterus and the subsequent development of the fetus are
36   generally similar than we have (undisputed) evidence for saying that human and equine experiences are generally
37   similar.
38   It is also peculiar how conformity of people's experiences is assumed in language, although most people realize
39   that my happiness, or suffering, can be very different from your happiness, or suffering. A linguistic exaggeration of
40   the difference between people and animals seems to be conjoined by an exaggeration of the conformity of people.
41   Perhaps, both kinds of exaggerations are the reasons why so much attention has been put on anthropomorphism,
42   rather than on egomorphism or other ways to attribute a familiar trait to alien phenomena. Indeed, by deciding which
43   speech acts are anthropomorphic, we also decide what is alien – and, by that, what is familiar.
44   This linguistic circumstance has probably fueled the notion that animals lack genuine sentience and the
45   associated experiences and emotional life. Those who insist that animals indeed are sentient must use a terminology
46   that makes their case open to charges about anthropomorphism. Informal, everyday language, too, enables us to
47   speak of animals as sentient by anthropomorphic projections. At the same time, everyday language also contains
48   habits of speaking of machines and divinities anthropomorphically; as would they be sentient. So why would
49   anthropomorphism of animals be more trustworthy?
50   The purpose of this paper is to show a few instances of how anthropomorphic analogies have both been scorned
51   by, and helpful to, animal ethics. My concern is that the selected ethical theorists, ambivalently, are on the one hand
52   attempting to depict other animals as very different from the human animal, while they cannot, on the other hand,
53   avoid attributing human traits to those animals. Even if human beings constitute a unique species, each specific trait
54   may be shared with some or all other animals. While the attribution of some human traits to other animals does not
55   necessarily need be wrong, more research is needed on how to critically do so in order to discern the valid segments
56   of anthropomorphism within animal ethics.

Validation of anthropomorphism might sound as a contradiction of terms. Anthropomorphism, the habit of attributing human traits to non-human entities, has long been considered to necessarily be an error (Fisher 1991). This view is often implicitly associated with the view that anthropomorphism is an expression of anthropocentric bias in human thinking. In order to make the present notion of anthropomorphism sensible, I will present a view of its association to anthropocentrism that makes it possible to understand anthropomorphism to not necessarily be an error.

The anthropocentrisms of anthropomorphism

The term anthropocentrism is sometimes used to describe a consequence of human embodiment, namely that we necessarily and permanently think from a human perspective. At other times, the term is used to describe a theoretical position that claims moral standing to human beings, and only human beings.

The possible associations between anthropomorphism and anthropocentrism are different depending on what we mean by anthropocentrism. The first kind of anthropocentrism, which I will call embodied anthropocentrism, results in a completely or partially anthropomorphical outlook on the world. The degree of completeness of anthropomorphism depends on to which degree people's perception can reach outside our own species. I believe that people commonly own both a trustworthy skill of imagination and knowledge about many animals to describe many, but not all, aspects of those animals without making analogies to their own species-specific traits. This can, of course, be further debated. Nevertheless, when describing, for example, the content of experience of many animals, the uncertainty of what is described makes it reasonable to consider such descriptions anthropomorphical. This meaning of anthropomorphism reflects uncertainty of truthfulness rather than a factual or categorical flaw. This understanding of anthropomorphism also rhymes well with claims that the problem of anthropomorphism is the presumptiveness of certain instances of anthropomorphism, rather than that the notion in itself refers to an error (Rollin 1997: 130–1; Mitchell 2005: 102).

The second kind of anthropocentrism, which I will call value-theoretical, is a possible, but not necessary, theoretical consequence of describing the world by standards formulated in the permanent state of embodied anthropocentrism. If human embodiment, and the implied human-centered thinking, would be combined with a genuine ability of human beings to think impartially or be empathetic to the extent that non-human beings were granted moral standing, then even such a species-centric thinking could conclude biocentric or ecocentric norms (here referring to theoretical positions granting moral standing to life in general, or ecosystems, respectively). If such view of human thinking and/or emotional life is considered false, then embodied anthropocentrism will always result in value-theoretical anthropocentrism. Value-theoretical anthropocentrism is, thus, merely indirectly (by way of embodied anthropocentrism) and conditionally related to anthropomorphism. The distinction between the two kinds of anthropocentrism is important to the analysis of this paper because it means that it is quite possible to defend the idea of animals as equals and even right holders, while still being (embodiedly) anthropocentric as well as anthropomorphic.

With this view of the relation between anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism, the definition of anthropomorphism should be slightly altered. Anthropomorphism is the habit of attributing traits, *believed to* be uniquely or typically human, to non-human entities, such as divinities, machines, or animals. The definition of anthropomorphism used here does not, thus, imply that anthropomorphism must be an error. A trait that is typical to human beings is by no means necessarily restricted to our species. A trait that is merely *believed to* be unique to the human species may still actually be prevalent among other animals. The definition is meant to include what is conceived as a play of analogies that transgress the species border not in spite of, but by help of our embodiedly anthropocentric viewpoint. In line with, for example, Eileen Crist, anthropomorphism is understood as a linguistic habit that *may* express an error, rather than a term to point out a factual or categorical mistake. With such a definition, anthropomorphism becomes a true problem. It, thus, makes sense to talk of validation of anthropomorphism.

The pluralism of anthropomorphisms

In ethics, anthropomorphism is often treated as a uniform problem. Ethical theorists believe that anthropomorphic projections will misdirect the empathy towards animals because it fails to acknowledge the animal otherness (Ruether 1996: 87; Taylor 1986: 67). Anthropomorphism has even been regarded as a vehicle for human chauvinism that invalidates justification of the moral standing of animals (Regan 1985: 30–1). Such worries about anthropomorphism correlate with the common view that it is necessarily associated to factual, or categorical, errors (Mameli and Bortolotti 2006; Midgley 2002: 331; Kennedy 1992; Fisher 1991).

113   Anthropomorphism, however, is not as uniform a problem as ethicists often assume it to be. I show in this paper
114 that it is necessary to distinguish, at least, psychological anthropomorphism from cultural anthropomorphism in order
115 to understand how anthropomorphism has been used, and can be used in ethical theory. Historically, physical
116 anthropomorphism has also been important, and specifically within theology, in order to guard against misconstruing
117 the view of God. According to Everndon (1992: 54), the rationale of animal experimentation today uses an
118 uncontroversial form of physical anthropomorphism. I will, however, not discuss physical anthropomorphism any
119 further.
120   Psychological (also called emotional and mental) anthropomorphism, ascribing a human-like mind and emotions
121 to animals, has long been controversial, and especially within ethology (Midgley 2002: 332; Kennedy 1992),
122 although much points towards a change in attitude (Andrews 2009; Schönfeld 2006). The attribution of
123 psychological traits can, as anthropomorphism in general, span various degrees of trustworthiness. To attribute the
124 ability to suffer to cats would, today, raise protests only from the most extremely inclined Cartesians. To attribute
125 aesthetic or moral awareness to cats would, at the contrary, definitely meet great and common resistance. We know
126 enough about cat physiology and behavior to conclude that cats indeed can suffer, but not that they are potential
127 artists or moralists in a Kantian sense. Still, relying on similarities between human and feline beings in order to
128 conclude psychological traits does not remove the anthropomorphic speech act we do when saying that cats suffer, or
129 the inherent risk that the conclusion is wrong. Suffering neither is neurons nor groans. We must make an analogy
130 from our own experiences of suffering and knowledge about how those experiences arise in order to understand
131 others' reactions as suffering. Perhaps, such analogy should be called egomorphic, but let us assume that suffering
132 among people are similar enough to call such an analogy anthropomorphic. Perhaps, ethicists associate most readily
133 to this kind of anthropomorphism, but cultural anthropomorphism also seems to be present in ethical theories.
134   Cultural (also called social) anthropomorphism is also controversial, using notions from human culture to
135 explain animal relations. A common example is the production of wildlife television shows that, allegedly, selects
136 such scenes that reconfirm gender and sexuality stereotypes (Ganetz 2004). In this case, the human traits that are
137 transferred to animals are the cultural stereotypes we have construed as part of human culture and social life. A
138 careful selection of images makes it possible to reproduce such stereotypes even in our view of animals. Donna
139 Haraway identifies the same kind of image-driven anthropomorphism in museum dioramas. Such visualizations of
140 animals are, it is argued, used to reconfirm patriarchal values of transcendence over bodily vulnerabilities (Haraway
141 1989: 26–58). Below, I will exemplify cultural anthropomorphism in ethics that is not channeled visually, but by
142 philosophical arguments.
143   The warnings against anthropomorphism are also common in other disciplines than ethics. Pamela Asquith
144 argues that (psychological) anthropomorphism can and should be avoided by combining predictability, confirmed
145 observations, and behavioristically developed terminology in order to describe non-human rationality, including
146 emotional life (Asquith 2010: 4–5). John S. Kennedy has, in line with this thinking, refined the technical language of
147 neobehaviorist ethology in order to remove anthropomorphic elements (Kennedy 1992).
148   The use of technical language attempts to avoid everyday language's tendency to treat animals as acting subjects
149 (Asquith 2010: 2; Kennedy 1992: 161–7). Technical language thus creates a space where animal behavior can be
150 explained without acknowledging inner life, and thus allegedly avoids anthropomorphism (Crist 1999: 2–6). Eileen
151 Crist, as well as Frans de Waal, have pointed out that the avoidance of anthropomorphism often ends up in
152 mechanomorphism, which is as prone to error as naïve anthropomorphism (de Waal 2000; Crist 1999: 9, 42, 68, 84–
153 5, 90).
154   To further complicate the attempts of avoiding anthropomorphism, it has been claimed that it is intrinsic to
155 human nature to conceive other beings as having human characteristics (Hume 1957: xix). Some results from
156 psychology studies confirm that it is common among people to anthropomorphize both natural and artificial entities,
157 and that this even facilitates empathy (Waytz et al. 2010). In the contemporary debate, as in this paper, it is
158 increasingly common to understand anthropomorphism to be an inevitable part of everyday language that does not
159 necessarily imply an error (Daston and Mitman 2005: 6; Elliot 2001; Crist 1999).
160
161 **Critical anthropomorphism**
162
163 Burghardt (1991) as well as Morton *et al.* (1990) suggests both scientific and empathetic approaches to study animals
164 with "critical anthropomorphism." Such methods are claimed to be necessary in order to study animals as living
165 subjects rather than machines. The idea that anthropomorphism stems from a permanent state means that we have
166 only to choose between refining anthropomorphic projections, and leaving them in a crude, naïve state. To avoid
167 anthropomorphism altogether is no option, at least not if we aspire to give a more complete account of animals than,
168 for example, behaviorist terminology makes possible. Critical anthropomorphism is, I propose, to actively use

169 anthropomorphic projections stemming from the permanent perspective of embodied anthropocentrism together with
170 criteria that assist in discerning trustworthy anthropomorphism from naïve anthropomorphism. Three kinds of such
171 criteria can be found in the literature.

172   Many authors of critical anthropomorphism generally resound Mary Midgley's suggestion that (psychological)
173 anthropomorphism is trustworthy if the emotion and the creature that is claimed to hold it are sufficiently familiar.
174 Emotions contain an observable attitude that can assist in gaining knowledge about the emotion, and thus confirming
175 the anthropomorphic language usage (Midgley 2002: 331–8). For example, it has been suggested that if there is
176 observational evidence of causal similarities to human states, then the anthropomorphism is appropriate (Mitchell
177 2005: 114). Another suggestion is that critical anthropomorphism is attained if the observable properties building a
178 definition of the human correlate can also be observed among animals (McGrew 1992: 72–87). This approach, thus,
179 utilize the commonly observable status of certain aspects, or, at least, what is claimed to be so – in other words,
180 "external" aspects.

181   Another approach is used by Wemelsfelder *et al.* They use statistics to identify significant commonalities of test
182 persons' descriptions of animals. The descriptions consisted of adjectives as "irritable" and "playful" and were thus
183 instances of psychological anthropomorphism. The statistical method correlated the usages of various terms and
184 resulted in graphical representations of consensus profiles. Because similar terms were grouped together, it could be
185 concluded that the test persons indeed described a common experience (Wemelsfelder *et al.* 2000). Rather than
186 letting the anthropomorphism depend on observable similarities between human and animal, this approach attempts
187 to identify intersubjective content in reported experiences. Critical anthropomorphism would, then, be understood
188 phenomenologically.

189   A further approach could be identified as to evaluate the usage of anthropomorphism by the purpose of the
190 particular practice in question. For example, it has been suggested that if the attribution of emotional states
191 repeatedly correlates with successful predictions of behavior, then such anthropomorphism is valid for ethology
192 (Andrews 2009: 52). Prediction is often viewed as the functional purpose of science. Also, it is possible to argue that
193 simplicity is a core value of science, and that any methodology, including anthropomorphism, can be approved if it
194 correlates with simplicity (Sober 2005). Anthropomorphism would, then, be right to the extent that it upholds the
195 purpose or core values of particular practices. If anthropomorphism is used in other practices, where other values are
196 important, then the appreciation of anthropomorphism changes accordingly. Understood as such, this approach has
197 an underlying, either Aristotelian or pragmatic rationale.

198   I believe that it is too early to decide which of these approaches to critical anthropomorphism is to be preferred.
199 The development of a normative stance towards the three approaches must be postponed to a future paper. Next,
200 however, I will elaborate on three examples of anthropomorphism in theories of animal ethics. The discussion show
201 that, no matter which specific type of critical anthropomorphism that is the better one, an attention to
202 anthropomorphic projections could make ethical theories more consistent and trustworthy.

204 **Anthropomorphism and models of animal ethics**

206 In animal ethics, psychological anthropomorphism is the most important kind, at least if explicit arguments are
207 considered. Here, I will argue that at least three instances of ethical modeling about animal issues contain elements of
208 psychological anthropomorphism, but also more subtle elements of cultural anthropomorphism. There are reasons to
209 believe that this kind of modeling attempts to avoid psychological anthropomorphism, while suffering from an
210 implicit and imprecise cultural anthropomorphism.

211   Peter Singer is known to have developed a utilitarian rationale for the benefit of sentient animals (Singer 1975).
212 Anthropomorphism is present in a representative manner in Singer's reader on practical ethics. He discusses the act
213 of killing in order to develop a method of resolving conflicts of interests. He formulates an argument for that an
214 adult, healthy human being's life is more valuable than a horse's life. He argues:

216   And suppose that when I am a horse, I really am a horse, with all and only the mental
217   experiences of a horse, and when I am a human being I have all and only the mental experiences of a
218   human being. Now let us make the additional supposition that I can enter a third state in which I
219   remember exactly what it was like to be a horse and exactly what it was like to be a human being.
220   Undoubtedly this scenario requires us to suppose a lot of things that could never happen, and
221   some things that strain our imagination. […] Nevertheless I think I can make some sense of the idea
222   of choosing from this position [...]

223   In general it does seem that the more highly developed the conscious life of the being, the
224   greater the degree of self-awareness and rationality, the more one would prefer that kind of life […]
225   (Singer, 1979, p. 89–90).
226
227   Singer's conclusion is that the lives of human beings are more valuable than the lives of horses. We are asked to
228   imagine a horse with a mind, a proposition probable to attract conventional charges of psychological
229   anthropomorphism. Some would claim it is inherently an error, while others would claim that it is a valid analogy as
230   long as it meets certain criteria. Although this is where much controversy and argumentation has been played out,
231   there is a cultural anthropomorphism more deeply embedded in this quote.
232   The claim that the horse has a mind would suggest that there are significant psychological similarities between
233   human beings and horses, including similarities of experiences and happiness. The quoted reasoning implies,
234   however, more than only claims of similarities. It also suggests that the human mind would be "better" than the
235   equine mind. The human mind is "higher developed," Singer implies, which in this context means *more valuable*.
236   This may, in its turn, be reformulated to "more sophisticated," "civilized," "intelligent," and so on. The point is that
237   the human mind is conceived as better.
238   A cultural anthropomorphism is present that makes it possible to perform normative comparisons. Singer's
239   claims about the higher significance of the human mind rest on the dubious assumption that it would be sensible, and
240   possible, to construe a lexical order between the experiences of being a horse, and that of being a human. What
241   would make such a comparison sensible? Cultural notions about human pre-eminence have established a tacit ideal,
242   to which equine experiences are compared. In other words, a human, cultural notion has been transferred to horses.
243   The neutral position that Singer talks about is not at all neutral, but laden with value-theoretical anthropocentric
244   notions. From that position, they are transferred to the hypothetical horse as though they would be relevant even
245   when describing the moral role of that horse.
246   Using any of the three mentioned notions of critical anthropomorphism, the psychological anthropomorphism of
247   Singer's reasoning may be argued to be valid. Sometimes, horses and human beings exert similar behavior in relation
248   to the same intentional objects. For example, they both drink water when having been deprived of water for some
249   time. An explanation of this similarity by assuming that the horses are thirsty, i.e. implying consciousness, would be
250   more parsimonious than a behaviorist, mechanistic explanation (Regan 1985: 65–6; Singer 1975: 12–3).
251   Alternatively, you could claim that people intersubjectively experience horses as indeed having a mind and conscious
252   feelings (Napolitano *et al.* 2008). Also, ascribing the mental state of thirst to a horse could successfully predict a
253   horse's probable behavior towards a water source when it has been deprived of water for some time. The
254   psychological anthropomorphism, thus, seems to be sound from many theoretical perspectives.
255   The implicit, cultural anthropomorphism is less evidently valid. A cultural notion of human dignity may, or may
256   not, be supported by appropriate arguments. A human, cultural notion of dignity may, furthermore, be right to
257   attribute to horses, even though that would mean to culturally anthropomorphize horses. The transformation of such a
258   notion to be about human pre-eminence over other species is, though, not sensible in the form that it has taken here.
259   The psychological anthropomorphism has been made while considering the difference between human and horse.
260   Differences in self-awareness and rationality are acknowledged, although it is a matter for discussion what such
261   differences would mean in this case, or if such differences are true and relevant. If the attribution to horses of the
262   cultural notion of human dignity would have been performed with appropriate attention for species differences, then
263   the notion of the dignified human would have turned into a notion of the dignified horse. Or the notion of human pre-
264   eminence would have turned into, perhaps sarcastically, a notion of equine pre-eminence. The case at hand, however,
265   transfers the notion of human dignity without changing "human" to the appropriate adjective. The horse is supposed
266   to be valued as would it be a failed human. Hence, the claim of "higher development" of the human mind.
267   Let us return to the three kinds of critical anthropomorphism. Firstly, the cultural anthropomorphism fails
268   because it does not rest on observable similarities. There is nothing we can observe among horses that makes it right
269   to say that the notion of human dignity can be transferred to them without considering differences between the two
270   species. Our embodiedly anthropocentrical thinking may make us mistake traits that people, typically, excel at as also
271   those traits that should be morally cherished. Such mistakes reproduce value-theoretical anthropocentrism.
272   Nevertheless, as soon as we grant moral standing of horses, we are also bound to scrutinize such prejudices in light
273   of those new species that we wish to include in the moral community.
274   Secondly, some would surely claim that preferring to be human, rather than equine, have strong, intersubjective
275   support among people. The approach of Wemelsfelder *et al.* may, then, seem to support Singer's claim. The
276   phenomenological approach to critical anthropomorphism, however, is meant to evaluate percepts, not theoretical
277   conclusions. Imagine that a group of people were asked to describe the dignity of horses while looking at video clips
278   of horses interacting with each other or with people. That would imitate the research design of Wemelsfelder *et al*. If

279 those people would agree on that equine dignity is based on their cognitive skills, or that the horses are characterized
280 by their moral inferiority to Man, or that their dignity is so similar to human dignity that they are indistinguishable,
281 then this approach would support Singer's claim. Such results would be surprising. It is, then, also surprising if the
282 phenomenological approach would support this case of cultural anthropomorphism.
283   Turning to the third kind of critical anthropomorphism, some may claim that Singer's cultural anthropomorphism
284 upholds the value of human pre-eminence, and that this is a core value of ethics in general. The anthropomorphism
285 would then be valid according to the view that the purpose of the particular practice in question is the standard of
286 evaluating anthropomorphism. Indeed, if it could be argued that ethical theories are to be developed not to describe
287 and prescribe goods and rights, but to recreate particular values that happen to coincide with common values of those
288 in power, then this case of cultural anthropomorphism would be valid. If not, it is not valid.
289   A similar example is present in Tom Regan's ethical model for animal issues. Regan has provided the seminal
290 attempt to justify rights for sentient animals (Regan 1985).
291   Regan, too, needs a rationale for resolving conflicts of interests. This revolves around his much debated life-boat
292 example. It is argued that, if the choice must be made, it is better to save a drowning human person rather than a dog,
293 albeit that both beings have equal inherent value (which the holding of rights imply).
294
295   Death of a dog, in short, though a harm, is not comparable to the harm that death would be for
296   any of the humans. To throw any one of the humans overboard, to face certain death, would be to
297   make that individual worse-off (i.e. would cause *that* individual a greater harm) than the harm that
298   would be done to the dog if the animal was thrown overboard (Regan, 1985, p. 324–5).
299
300   Dogs are viewed as having fewer opportunities for a good life. Equal value or not, when forced to choose, less
301 harm should be chosen. Like Singer, Regan attributes consciousness to animals. Psychological anthropomorphism as
302 a descriptive strategy, although not called by that name, is commonly used in Regan's theory. To even think before
303 throwing the dog overboard is an effect of the attribution of a human-like sentience to certain animals. Because of
304 additional reasons, however, sentience is not enough in cases of prioritizations.
305   Dogs' deaths are not as significant as people's are. Human beings *die more*, it seems. To make sense of this
306 suggested moral difference of deaths, it must be the case that there is a standard to which deaths are evaluated. The
307 quote suggests that this standard is harm. Harm, however, is not a species-neutral concept in this case.
308   Regan's concept of harm includes aspects of both suffering and deprivations of benefits (Regan 1985: 94). Also,
309 the concept plays a role in the justification of animal rights that immerses the concept in notions heavily affected by
310 embodied anthropocentrism (and, thus, anthropomorphism).
311   The notion that, *prima facie*, it is wrong to harm others is used to evaluate other notions in Regan's theory.
312 Regan's discussion about animal consciousness results in the claim that some animals are beings that can be harmed
313 in a morally significant manner. Those animals are, therefore, included in the theoretical protection offered by the
314 harm principle (Regan 1985: 187–8).
315   The reason why Regan feels comfortable to assume that animals have a human-like mind does not explicitly
316 contain any idealization of the human mind. Nevertheless, clarifying this argument helps explaining why it is with
317 good reason one can suspect that the actual reason why the dog is concluded as the loosing part is not completely
318 explicated in Regan's reasoning. The argument for animal minds is summed up quite concisely:
319
320   If I know that you are thirsty and desire some water, I naturally expect you to drink a glass of
321   water rather than down a cup of sand, when given the choice. Human-thirst behavior has its animal
322   counterpart, and so I expect that animals would make a similar selection. In claiming that human-
323   thirst (or taste, etc.) experience and animal-thirst (or taste, etc.) experience are similar, what we
324   claim is not inconsistent with the observable facts about human and animal behavior. Once again,
325   therefore, since, on grounds of simplicity, I ought not to multiply kinds of experience beyond
326   necessity, I ought not to postulate a human-taste experience, say, that is totally different from canine-
327   taste experience. On the contrary, I ought to postulate a shared, a common taste experience, even
328   though dogs belong to one species of animals and humans to another (Regan, 1985, p. 65–6).
329
330   Regan understands the term anthropomorphism to refer to a kind of error that is due to human chauvinism
331 (Regan 1985: 30–1). This quote does not, of course, express that kind of anthropomorphism. The quote, nevertheless,
332 shows that he willingly use anthropomorphism in the sense of being a communicative strategy to bridge species
333 borders.

334   The reasoning resounds early comparative psychology and ethology. Morgan's law was formulated to counteract
335   this kind of anthropomorphism. The idea that animal behavior should not be explained by "higher" mental attributes
336   if it can be explained by "lower" mental attributes became immensely popular. Here, Regan challenges this idea by
337   the criterion of parsimony, implying that non-human animal behavior should indeed be explained in the same way as
338   human behavior if that is the less fantastic explanation.
339   This anthropomorphic approach has lately received further support. Elliot Sober (2005) argues that Morgan's
340   law one-eyedly counteracts anthropomorphism, while simultaneously granting free reign to the opposite, but equally
341   serious, mistake of refusing to acknowledge actually present similarities between human and non-human beings (see
342   also, de Waal 2000). Sober instead, based on the logic of evolution biology, suggests the principle "If two derived
343   behaviors are homologous, then the hypothesis that they are produced by the same proximate mechanism is more
344   parsimonious than the hypothesis that they are produced by different proximate mechanisms" (Sober 2005). Regan's
345   reasoning can be viewed as an example of applying this very principle. The psychological anthropomorphism in
346   Regan's argument can very well pass as sound as long as the criterion of simplicity is accepted.
347   In terms of the above scheme of critical anthropomorphism, Regan's psychological anthropomorphism is made
348   valid by a combination of the first and the third approach to critical anthropomorphism. Observable behavior towards
349   intentional objects as well as treating simplicity as an evaluating core value is used to argue that it is sensible to
350   attribute minds to animals.
351   The consideration of the start and the end of the reasoning reveals, however, that more than only mental traits are
352   attributed to non-human animals. It seems to start with a common argument from analogy, but it ends in the
353   drowning of a dog. John Stuart Mill formulated an argument from analogy to prove the existence of other human
354   minds which is similar to Regan's argument except in its anthropocentric application (Mill 1872: 243–4). That
355   argument did not end up in the recommendation of drowning a certain kind of people. This suggests that there is
356   something more than the explicit psychological anthropomorphism happening between the two above quotes.
357   Although Regan's theory explicitly is for the equal inherent worth and rights of animals, something is making him
358   conclude, quite readily, that the death of a dog, expressed in terms of harm, is less significant than the death of adult
359   human beings.
360   I suggest that the discrepancy between Mill's and Regan's uses of argument from analogy are because of an
361   implicit (and, to be fair, probably unintentional) cultural anthropomorphism on Regan's behalf. Harm is understood
362   in a manner that benefits human beings in cases of conflicts of interests. The way that human beings experience the
363   world (for example by "taste experience") is an ideal. The choice of starting point of the analogy – human experience
364   – is understandable given that embodied anthropocentrism is permanent. As a consequence, though, the analogy not
365   only attributes psychological traits, but also cultural notions about which kind of experience is better. This is not
366   evident when talking about animal minds as such because all sentient beings are considered to be brothers in
367   consciousness. Nevertheless, where there are conflicts of interests, cultural notions of human pre-eminence is
368   activated, and the non-human animals are pushed over to the losing side. I have previously argued that this
369   circumstance in Regan's theory prioritize adult, healthy human beings even against children and other "marginal
370   cases" (Karlsson 2009: 256–62).
371   Regan's model of animal ethics has, thus, problems similar to Singer's reasoning. And a scrutiny by the three
372   approaches to critical anthropomorphism would have similar outcomes as in the case of Singer. There are several
373   cases of explicit, psychological anthropomorphism in the benign sense. The validity of those analogies may be
374   challenged and discussed, but Regan provides reasonable arguments for his psychological anthropomorphism. There
375   is, however, also an implicit, cultural anthropomorphism that carry notions of human pre-eminence. There are no
376   arguments in Regan's theory for why such pre-eminence should be accepted, and many arguments against it. The
377   case of killing is exceptional in Regan's theory, but it still shows how an implicit kind of anthropomorphism has
378   avoided critical treatment with the result that the concluding view of animals, in this case, contradicts the intentional
379   view of animals (namely that of animals as equals).
380   Martha Nussbaum has developed her capabilities approach to ethics to also include animals (Nussbaum 2006).
381   Nussbaum uses anthropomorphism quite readily when modeling the meaning of animal capabilities onto human
382   capabilities (Nussbaum 2006: 392–401). Allegations of *naïve* anthropomorphism, however, are efficiently
383   counteracted by her careful discussion of each analogy of a particular capability.
384   Still, an implicit, cultural anthropomorphism seems to linger in her reasoning. Nussbaum, too, believes that harm
385   done to a being with a more complex set of capabilities and sentience is morally more significant than harming, say,
386   a shrimp (Nussbaum 2006: 387). It is, thus, not surprising when she later claims that people should eat animals and
387   persevere in animal experimentation if the alternative would be that harm comes to people (Nussbaum 2006: 402–5).
388   Human beings are imagined to carry the most complex set of capabilities in the Aristotelian framework Nussbaum
389   works within. They should, thus, be in priority whenever there is a conflict of interest, she believes.

390   It may, of course, very well be the case that a human life is more significant than the life of a shrimp. But
391 Nussbaum's argument for that this is the case is in stark contrast to the rest of her rationale. Nussbaum's frustration
392 over the failure of contemporary justice theories to justify the inclusion of disabled people, children, and poor people,
393 shows that her intention is not to simply assume that those that are "more" capable also are morally more significant.
394 Still, it is unclear why she seems to do this when it comes to animals.
395   I suggest that this is another instance of cultural anthropomorphism that has implicitly created an
396 anthropocentric shadow over the would-be dignified and equally valued animal. Nussbaum's reasoning, in this
397 particular case, is not as detailed as Regan's and Singer's. It is, thus, not possible to further elaborate on the
398 suggested anthropomorphism. Her book, being her most elaborate on the animal issue so far, does, however, show all
399 the signs of a contemporary example of making analogies to animals without shaving off cultural notions of human
400 pre-eminence.
401
402 **Conclusion**
403
404 The problems appearing in ethical theory point towards that animal ethicists are skilled in psychological
405 anthropomorphism and use it in a critical manner (with appropriate arguments). Our embodied anthropocentrism,
406 however, does not only affect the way we anthropomorphically speak of psychological traits of other animals.
407 Cultural notions, too, are transferred to other animals and must undergo the same careful scrutiny as psychological
408 anthropomorphism.
409   Perhaps this is a consequence of the great significance that is granted the mind and mental states within
410 philosophy in general, and in sentientist theories in particular, as well as the relative small concern for contexts in the
411 mentioned kinds of theories. Perhaps, although I do not believe so, it is intentional in order to make the theories more
412 acceptable to present society. Whatever the reason may be for this circumstance, the alternatives to solutions still
413 count to two: either all cultural anthropomorphism should be removed, or the identified anthropomorphism should be
414 treated according to the outcome of critical evaluation.
415   Any attempt to remove the cultural anthropomorphism would, with previous research in mind, most probably
416 change the nature of the problem, rather than solving it. Perhaps all anthropomorphism could be removed from these
417 theories if stricter formal, philosophical language would be used. To describe other animals as fully sentient beings
418 whose lives may flourish if we improve our treatment of them would surely be harder, but, maybe, it is possible. On
419 the other hand, previous experiments to avoid anthropomorphism instead made mechanomorphic projections onto
420 animals. Philosophers may be able to avoid mechanomorphism, too, but what other kind of morphism will there then
421 be? Why would the uncritical morphing of the view of animals by, for example, the language of symbolic logic be
422 less naïve than any other uncritically performed morphism? There is no avoiding of attributing some kind of familiar
423 traits to other animals; there are only more or less critical morphisms.
424   The worries about anthropomorphism expressed in literature on ethics are adequate, to an extent. To
425 misunderstand animals misguides empathy. To misrepresent animals in ethical reasoning invalidates justification (or,
426 more precisely, makes the justification to be about creatures that do not exist, for example human horses). The
427 attempt to avoid morphisms is, however, nothing less than tilting at windmills. You may feel victorious as the first
428 blade pass and disappear from your most proximate view, only to be ambushed by the second blade, and the one after
429 that, and then still another and another one. The skill to make analogies should be used, intentionally and critically. I
430 have provided some examples of what "critical" may mean in this case, but further studies are necessary in order to
431 adapt the mentioned approaches to ethics, or perhaps develop new methods more suitable to ethical theory.
432   Once better critical approaches to anthropomorphism surface, it may also become clear that other morphisms can
433 be helpful, if performed critically. Mechanomorphism has become a sin in contemporary human-animal studies, but
434 perhaps *critical* mechanomorphism may meet a need for reasonable manners to talk of animals in quantifiable terms?
435 The aim must never be to forbid a certain kind of symbols when communicating thoughts on animals, but to describe
436 animals well.
437
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439

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