

SILVER RATTASEPP

The Human Mirror  
A Critique of the Philosophical Discourse  
on Animals from the Position of  
Multispecies Semiotics





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...caught naked, in silence, by the gaze of an animal, for example, the eyes of a cat, I have trouble, yes, a bad time overcoming my embarrassment.

–Jacques Derrida (2008: 3–4)

A dog's gaze directed towards me causes me no embarrassment.

–Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2004: 160)



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## PUBLICATIONS INCLUDED IN THE DISSERTATION

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- II. Rattasepp, Silver; Kull, Kalevi 2016. The semiotic species: Deelying with animals in philosophy. *The American Journal of Semiotics* 32(1/4): 35–48.
- III. Rattasepp, Silver 2014. The Anthropological Machine and the Absence of Animals. In: Pauknerova, Karolina; Stella, Marco; Gibas, Petr (eds.), *Non-Humans in Social Science: Ontologies, Theories and Case Studies*. Prague: Pavel Mervart, 29–45.
- IV. Rattasepp, Silver 2013. A Metaphysic for Semiotics. *Chinese Semiotic Studies* 9: 254–263.
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# INTRODUCTION

We polish an animal mirror to look for ourselves.

–Donna Haraway (1978: 37)

The basic question which initially motivated this thesis is as follows: “How do philosophers<sup>1</sup> talk about animals – while they are not specifically talking about animals?” The importance and necessity of this question may be cast in doubt. For there is a peculiarity, presumptuousness even, in asking about what thinkers are not doing – as if they should be doing precisely that –, or what they are not doing while doing something else entirely. Thus we must proceed stepwise, and begin with certain examples derived from philosophical discourse.

Let us begin with three quotations, chosen only somewhat randomly – randomly with respect to their content and time of writing, anyway, but mindful of their placement in the text from which they are derived. The first quotation is the very first paragraph of John Dewey’s *Reconstruction in Philosophy*:

Man preserves his past experiences. What happened in the past is lived again in memory. About what goes on today hangs a cloud of thoughts concerning similar things undergone in bygone days. Man lives in a world where each occurrence is charged with echoes and reminiscences of what has gone before, where each event is a reminder of other things. Hence he lives in a world of signs and symbols. [...] And all this is because man remembers, preserving and recording his experiences. (Dewey 1920: 1)

Here we see the eminent pragmatic thinker putting forth the importance of memory for the conduct of human affairs. The second quote is from Giorgio Agamben’s essay “On Potentiality”, from his collection of papers, *Potentialities* (1999). The essay is a thorough investigation of the titular concept, Aristotle’s “potentiality”:

If we recall that Aristotle always draws his examples of this potentiality of non-Being from the domain of the arts and human knowledge, then we may say that human beings, insofar as they know and produce, are those beings who exist in the mode of potentiality. Every human power is *adynamia*, impotentia-

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<sup>1</sup> A note on the concept of “philosophy”: over the course of this thesis I will veer into various different disciplines within, for the most part, the humanities. None of these disciplines are canonically thought of as philosophy proper. As such, philosophy is herein not defined institutionally or historically in a textbook-like fashion. Instead, within the purview of this thesis, “philosophy” and “philosophers” are a shorthand for designating theorists or conceptual thinkers of various sorts: those who either inquire into the underlying premises, assumptions, or “givens” of a discipline, or then again who consider and conceptualize the larger models and theories of said fields, or are engaged primarily in conceptual, rather than empirical analyses. A philosopher – a theoretician, irrespective of the particular domain they are engaged in.

lity; every human potentiality is in relation to its own privation. This is the origin (and the abyss) of human power. *The greatness of human potentiality is measured by the abyss of human impotentiality.* (Agamben 1999: 182)

This quote we can find roughly midway through the essay, where Agamben reaches a certain culmination, his substantial thesis. And the final quote is from Theodor Adorno's *The Jargon of Authenticity*, a thoroughgoing critique of the Heideggerian concept of "authenticity". More specifically, these are the very last lines of the book:

This is the insight that dignity contains the form of its decadence within itself. The fact can be observed when intellectuals become accomplices of that power which they don't have and which they should resist. The Kantian dignity finally disintegrates into the jargon of authenticity. (Adorno 1973: 165)

Now it is eminently clear that none of these citations have nothing whatsoever to do with animals, and in no way refer to anything nonhuman, animal or otherwise. And the reason for this is that I have here committed a grievous academic sin of having doctored the quotes, and without even marking my omissions with the customary academic sign of the ellipsis. Let me now atone, and remedy my error, so that the entire reason for this brief exercise should come out, and make its somewhat straightforward point about philosophers who are not directly talking about animals, yet who nevertheless introduce animals into their texts.

First, Dewey in fact thinks the importance of memory for human affairs needs to be emphasized and highlighted by way of a repeated negation of it in animals (previously omitted excerpts are in bold):

Man **differs from the lower animals because he** preserves his past experiences. What happened in the past is lived again in memory. About what goes on today hangs a cloud of thoughts concerning similar things undergone in bygone days. **With the animals, an experience perishes as it happens, and each new doing or suffering stands alone.** But man lives in a world where each occurrence is charged with echoes and reminiscences of what has gone before, where each event is a reminder of other things. Hence he lives **not, like the beasts of the field, in a world of merely physical things but** in a world of signs and symbols. [...] And all this **which marks the difference between bestiality and humanity, between culture and merely physical nature,** is because man remembers, preserving and recording his experiences. (Dewey 1920: 1)

Second, Agamben, whose entire paper is an analysis of one single concept from Aristotle, deems it important to bring in – and in this particular text to bring in just once, just this one time – a non-human figure:

If we recall that Aristotle always draws his examples of this potentiality of non-Being from the domain of the arts and human knowledge, then we may say that human beings, insofar as they know and produce, are those beings who,

**more than any other**, exist in the mode of potentiality. Every human power is *adynamia*, impotentiality; every human potentiality is in relation to its own privation. This is the origin (and the abyss) of human power, **which is so violent and limitless with respect to other living beings. Other living beings are capable only of their specific potentiality; they can only do this or that. But human beings are the animals who are capable of their own impotentiality.** *The greatness of human potentiality is measured by the abyss of human impotentiality.* (Agamben 1999: 182, emphasis in the original)

And finally in our series of quasi-randomly chosen examples, we have a critique of the vagueness of the concept of authenticity as it was used in philosophical and political discourse in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In this entire book, the word “animal” appears all of five times, including twice in quotations from other texts, and once in an anecdote. Yet here are the *actual* final sentences of the book:

This is the insight that dignity contains the form of its decadence within itself. The fact can be observed when intellectuals become accomplices of that power which they don't have and which they should resist. The Kantian dignity finally disintegrates into the jargon of authenticity. **With it goes that humanity which has its basic nature not in self-reflection but in its difference from a suppressed animality.** (Adorno 1973: 165)

These then are three examples of what is meant with the question “How do philosophers talk about animals – while they are not specifically talking about animals?” All three authors are engaged in themes and topics entirely unrelated to nonhuman animals, yet all three felt it necessary to couch their claims with references to animals. Moreover, these examples – chosen from among a vast number of similar ones – are to be found in points in a text that are usually thought of having particular relevance: the very first sentences trying to capture the reader's interest; the culmination of a text where the most substantial thesis is presented; the very end of the text which finalises the argument and draws it all together in a final crescendo. And as the above examples demonstrate, from all these places the references to animals can simply be deleted, since they play no substantial role whatsoever in the argument at hand, they are in no wise explanatory, and do not lend support the specific, concrete thing that is being argued for. But they do *something*. Indeed, it seems that the primary function of including animals in this particular manner – including them with the sole purpose of immediately excluding them – is to legitimise and lend weight to the given argument by way of an appeal to human uniqueness and dignity, and this in complete disregard of the fact that these animal references do not substantiate the specific issue the philosopher is discussing in any way. What we have here is indeed a variant what Giorgio Agamben himself (ironically, for he seems to have failed to apply his own concepts to his discussion of potentiality) in a different context called inclusive exclusion (1998: 8), of including something so that its immediate exclusion could legitimise and lend weight to order and

normalcy. The force of an argument is heightened and its credibility reinforced by showing what it excludes and pushes to the outside.

This then is the basic starting point and general theme of this thesis. When we analyse such examples of philosophers who bring in animals in contexts where animals are entirely superfluous for the issue at hand, we may be able to detect a certain pattern to it, a certain set of characteristics or dimensions that are repeated over and over in similar contexts, and which will reveal to us an undercurrent of animal narratives, recurrent themes in philosophical discourse, a subconsciousness concerning nonhuman animals. The general claim of this thesis is that this recurrent discourse on animals in philosophy and elsewhere can be encapsulated in the following six theses:

1. The uniqueness of human nature can be determined by studying humans alone
2. The most important characteristic of animals is that they lack something human
3. When humans are compared to animals, humans are described as unique; when animals are compared between one another, they are described as merely differing from one another
4. The distinction between humans and animals is something mental, or reducible to the mental
5. Animals are discussed in general singular, as one indistinct, undifferentiated category
6. Humans reach their true nature only when they expel or remove the animal from within themselves

These six points form the core of the first three papers of this thesis, for which reason they are not much extended or explicated at this juncture. Just the briefest summary is in order. Something like the following, then, is the composite narrative of the philosophic discourse on animals. First, the exceptional nature of humans is determined by mirror-gazing: what is uniquely human is decided beforehand and without any consideration of, comparison with, or study of nonhuman animals. And since the primary function of this uniqueness is to lend credence to the actual discourse at hand through its negation in non-humans, the list of such uniquely human traits is positively endless, since they are, in each particular case, generated by that act of negation. Thus for each idea or concept that a philosopher thinks is important, it will be artificially accompanied by a corresponding lack of that same idea or concept in animals. Language, speech, symbolic forms, rationality, reason, intentionality, freedom, culture, history, consciousness, subjectivity, personhood, individuality, the immortal soul, self-reflection, laughter, ethics, politics, law, rights, property, experience of death, tool-making, labour, wearing clothes, feeling naked, making a fire, lying, pretending, bartering, shame, guilt, the as-such or the *Lichtung* of the metaphysicians...

This lack pertains to all animals in their totality. They can be, it is true, compared to one another, but that would amount to nothing but an indication of their species-specific differences from one another; it would not be an indication of their uniqueness or exceptional status as nonhumans. Compared to humans, animals form a homogenous category and are all indistinct, an undifferentiated collective whose function is to reinforce human uniqueness by their lack. This is not to deny that in empirical research some of these criteria for distinguishing humans from animals may turn out to be accurate – that some particular traits may indeed be uniquely human. Two things must be kept in mind, however. First, this can only be determined comparatively, with respect to particular other species, for to do otherwise and attribute a lack of supposed uniquely human traits to animals *tout court* would be to commit what Gilbert Ryle (2002: 16) famously called a category mistake: the generic abstract category “animals” cannot have properties that characterise (or not, as the case may be) concrete existing species and individuals. To do otherwise would amount to thinking, as Karl Marx once wrote in a rather different context, “as if alongside and external to lions, tigers, rabbits, and all other actual animals [...] there existed also in addition *the animal*, the individual incarnation of the entire animal kingdom” (1976: 27). Second and more importantly, the issue is rather that the items in the list above – which can be extended indefinitely – are usually not at all derived from empirical research but by negation, by denying in nonhumans that which was first decided to be uniquely human (as per point 1, above). Furthermore, the traits or criteria for determining human uniqueness are mental or reducible to the mental: something akin to smallpox (which is uniquely human since it has no other disease vectors than another human) would not do as the indicator of human uniqueness.

Finally, the sixth point refers to what Giorgio Agamben in his *The Open* (2004) has called the “anthropological machine”, according to which human beings are conceived of as constitutionally dual, part animal, part human, in which the ascent to true humanity is achieved by the suppression of the animal within. Commonly, it is that very mark of the mental, or its culture-based surrogates, which mark human transcendence above or beyond nature (cf. Rattasepp 2014, the third paper in this thesis). Thus the

effort to define the human being has usually required a preliminary gesture of exclusion: a rhetorical animal sacrifice. The presence of the animal must first be extinguished for the human being to appear. (Lippit 2000: 8)

Granted, not all of these six principles (or perhaps presumptions or assumptions) in our list appear wholly and clearly in any particular text – sometimes only some of these points are concretely present in a given text. Moreover, there are other ways in which animals can appear in texts in which they are made to play a role as something other than actual representatives of nonhuman animals. Sometimes they are utilized as nonspecific placeholders in the sense that the concrete, chosen animal is interchangeable, such that any one species is as good

as another to be used as an example (John Buridan was in fact not at all interested in donkeys). Or they can be used as codes or metaphors awaiting interpretation, in that behind the animal lurks a general philosophical idea which must be found or revealed (e.g. one of the primary functions of medieval bestiaries was to depict moral virtues and vices) (Tyler 2012: 4). In addition, particularly in animal ethics and critical animal studies, but also elsewhere, the premise of human-animal continuity, usually based on Darwinian ontology, is entirely prevalent as the basis on which attempts are made to establish moral identity between humans and other animals (cf. Calarco 2011: 42–48). Nevertheless, outside of specifically ethical consideration of nonhuman animals, these six points or presumptions comprise the unvoiced visage of nonhumans in philosophy, its “common sense” about animals. In fact, they comprise precisely that “asinanity” for which Derrida so trenchantly criticizes philosophers when they “speak blithely of the Animal in the general singular” and attribute to themselves the “right, the theoretical or philosophical right, to distinguish and mark as opposite, namely, the set of the Animal in general, the Animal spoken of in the general singular” (2008: 40–41).

## ANIMAL EPISODES IN HUMAN PHILOSOPHY

He fell in love with himself at first sight,  
and it is a passion to which he has always  
remained faithful.

—Anthony Powell (1962: 33)

That nonhuman animals are described as lacking, and as wholly negatively distinct from humans should be so obvious and commonplace that demonstrating this on the basis of specific sources feels almost superfluous. Nevertheless, we should provide some concrete examples and elaborate on them. But where to begin? Declarations of human uniqueness, and the corresponding lack of that very thing in animals, are innumerable. I remember at some point listening to a radio interview with a theatre producer who was asked about the expected audience for his next production, and the producer answered that it is meant for everyone, because, after all, animals don't go to theatre. Such declarations are so easy to find that an attempt to put together even an illustrative selection would be exhausting, to the point that I am tempted to appeal to authority and rely rather on Jacques Derrida who, in making much the same claim, goes so far as to declare that it is one that is "by far the one that occurs most abundantly. It is probably what brings together *all* philosophers and all theoreticians *as such*" (2008: 13). Or perhaps one can follow the lead of Akira Lippit, who in his *Electric Animal* traverses Western philosophy step by step, in order to demonstrate how nonhuman animals always retain their place in philosophy, albeit as a ghostly presence and a spectral reminder – "a genus of vanishing animals, whose very being is constituted by that state of disappearing" (Lippit 2000: 3) –, no matter how much the various thinkers have attempted to expel them as unworthy of equal interest and treatment. But proceed we must, albeit selectively. (For further readings on animals in continental thought, see Calarco, Atterton 2004). Let us take first some general examples, before proceeding to more philosophically proper authors and arguments. Humans as transcending nature is a theme probably as old as thought itself. For present purposes, however, we will mostly omit extended historical digressions. The 20<sup>th</sup> century alone has seen a plenitude examples of this kind in widely disparate fields.

The ascent of "man" from the organic to something like a new "superorganic" realm, as it was dubbed by Alfred Kroeber (1917), together with the idea of leaving the animals behind, stuck haplessly in the deterministic world of biology, has a long and illustrious history in Western thought. This history has been told often (see e.g. Collingwood 1960). From the story of Creation in the Bible, with its exhortations to "fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion" over it (Gen. 1:28), to Francis Bacon's demand that "mankind regain their rights over nature, assigned to them by the gift of God" (*Novum Organon*, §CXXIX) and all the way to the present techno-scientific domination and management of the Earth, this story need not be retold in full here. With a brief lull during the



late 19<sup>th</sup> century, as a result of the spread of Darwin's theory of evolution and the unfortunate concomitant spread of racist Social Darwinism (lull in the sense that "man's" superior position could be explained evolutionarily, not transcendently), it was soon picked up again during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Granted, in Kroeber's and many others' case it was as a direct response and reaction to Social Darwinism that they once again postulated a different, radical condition for humans as opposed to nature. Yet the solution to the denigrations of Social Darwinism was to return to the old, albeit by reworking the mental into the cultural:

The mind and the body are but facets of the same organic material or activity; the social substance – or unsubstantial fabric, if one prefers the phrase, – the existence that we call civilization, transcends them utterly for all its being forever rooted in life. (Kroeber 1917: 212)

There is, furthermore, usually nothing thinly veiled or allusionary about declarations of human superiority to and transcendence over nature. It is, in fact, what Cary Wolfe has called the "fundamental anthropological dogma" (2010: xiv). Take, for example, the case of Luc Ferry, who, granted, is somewhat of an exceptional case, since for Ferry environmentalism is akin to Fascism and Stalinist Communism. His understanding of "man's" place in nature, however, is exceedingly commonplace, as when he declares without any false modesty that

man is the *antinatural* being par excellence. This is even what distinguishes him from other beings, including those who seem the closest to him: the animals. [...] humankind is not bound to instinct, to biological processes alone, that it possesses a history, that generations follow one another but do not necessarily resemble each other – while the animal kingdom observes perfect continuity. (1995: xxviii)

There have been similar engagements with such a practice of division in the domain of semiotics as well. The interminable debates about semiotic thresholds, whether lower or symbolic, need not be rehashed here. Let us only make a brief historical note. Ever since at least Plato's *Cratylus* and throughout the middle ages, signs were customarily divided into natural and conventional ones. There are, however, two ways of thinking the relation between the two. The more commonplace and intuitive – for both the disputants in *Cratylus* to the naïve realists of the present day – was to ground natural signs in nature or the world of things so that they are directly given to experience, and to treat conventional signs as having value only as a result of their fidelity to the natural ones. Truth and its approximation, or the certain and the probable: this was the principled division between the natural and the artificial in the domain of signs.

Yet as Michel Foucault has argued, this relation is reversed from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onward. First of all, the natural sign is no longer the givenness that is the foundation for truth; instead, the natural sign too is constituted by an act of knowing, rather than merely requiring its recognition. It is nevertheless a sign that, as such, is "strictly limited, rigid, inconvenient, and impossible for the

mind to master” (Foucault 2002: 68). A conventional sign, on the other hand, is artfully constituted such that it would be “simple, easy to remember, applicable to an indefinite number of elements, susceptible of subdivision within itself and of combination with other signs; the man-made sign is the sign at the peak of its activity” (ibid.). A freely constituted, flexible sign that needs no reference to anything other than other signs, and needs no grounding from anything natural, only that of the collective of similar sign-users. This was the birth of the symbol as we know it in semiotics today. And it has also, from the very beginning, been thought of as threshold which the animals cannot pass: “It is the man-made sign that draws the dividing-line between man and animal; that transforms imagination into voluntary memory, spontaneous attention into reflection, and instinct into rational knowledge” (ibid.). Ever since then, the domain of artificial signs, of symbols, is commonly thought of as almost constituting a separate realm of being, superimposed upon yet wholly distinct from that of nature. This was, for example, the belief of Ernst Cassirer, who wrote in his *Essay on Man* that “As compared with the other animals man lives not only in a broader reality; he lives, so to speak, in a new *dimension* of reality. [...] No longer in a merely physical universe, man lives in a symbolic universe” (1953: 43).

Reference to human uniqueness by way of symbol-use and the corresponding semiotic or symbolic threshold continues to hold sway in semiotic literature (for an overview of the status of semiotic thresholds in current debates, see Higuera, Kull 2017). Since the more prevalent Peircean conception of symbols is not easily amenable to constituting such a radical discontinuity (this would entail reconceptualising habit as uniquely human – a difficult proposition indeed), Carlo Brentari refers the genesis of this conception back to the German philosophical anthropology of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century (Brentari 2018). In their otherwise admirable attempt to rid philosophy of idealism and metaphysics, these anthropological philosophers nevertheless reintroduced a radical human-animal discontinuity through their concept of *Sonderstellung* or “special position,” which hangs on the “semiotic organisation of human and animal cognition, a difference that is centred on the respective usage of signs and symbols” (ibid.). Animal signs or signals are proxies of objects and function as stimuli, and thus reside in the external environment, whereas symbols, used only by humans, are related to mental activity, of conceptual thought:

In talking about things we have conceptions of them, not the things themselves; and it is the conceptions, not the things, that symbols directly ‘mean.’ Behavior toward conceptions is what words normally evoke; this is the typical process of thinking. (Langer 1954: 49)

Thus according to philosophical anthropology, the interjection of symbols into the middle of a reflex arc turns reacting into thinking. As such, the move taken by philosophical anthropology corresponds precisely to point 4, above: the human-animal distinction must be made by reference to the mental.

Symbol use as the distinguishing trait that sets humans apart is also prevalent in texts which ostensibly are, unlike authors such as Cassirer, directly and literally about animals and about how to make them more interesting for people. Thus the conservationist Jeffrey Bonner, in a fascinating book about his long experience with animals in zoos, nevertheless declares that

The capacity for symbolic learning sets humans apart. Yes, many animals can communicate using symbols. But all of those forms of symbolic communication are strictly limited. In the case of humans, we can communicate so much more that a quantitative difference becomes a qualitative one. (2006: 54)

We probably should not fault a natural scientist for not noticing the philosophical peculiarity of getting from quantity to quality as if it were a steady change or increase until, at some strange point along a number line, it suddenly transforms itself into something entirely different. It goes hand in hand, however, with the idea of human transcendence over nature, and of semiotic thresholds, where a steady change or accumulation is imagined to transform, at some moment in time, the entire system itself. Much has been made of the arguments whether the distinction between humans and animals is a difference in “degree” or in “kind”, but what we have here is a curious case in which some sufficient amount of change in “degree” ends up turning into a difference in “kind”. As such, it is an argument for emergence, a concept and a phenomenon much debated in disparate fields in the sciences, including biosemiotics. Emergent properties themselves are commonplace and uncontroversial, even if the emergence of life, sentience, and consciousness currently remain little understood. A convincing case for biosemiotics has been made by Terrence Deacon in his *Incomplete Nature* (...), demonstrating the steady appearance of various emergent higher-order properties from the various dynamics residing at the lower levels. Now is not the time to go into technical details, particularly considering the fact that Deacon’s analyses of levels of emergence do not track neatly with species divides, let alone anything as crude as a simple human-animal divide. Moreover, emergence must be shown and explained, as in Deacon, rather than postulated, as in Bonner, above. Thus for the present more general philosophic discussion we should note with Pierre Bourdieu that “[t]he shift from the highest probability to absolute certainty is a qualitative leap out of proportion to the numerical difference” (1990: 99) – and this also applies to the qualitative-quantitative distinction. The difference between the qualitative and the quantitative is itself a qualitative one.

More importantly, we should also note here that the idea of an evolutionary continuity with nonhuman animals is not in itself necessarily free of anthropocentrism, either, at least as a critique of the discontinuity thesis. For it often comes with an unvoiced premise. It is that if humans are “just another” animal, they can then presumably be reduced to a lower level where the rest of the animals are supposed to reside (and in this case, animals are once again not different, but lower). This position retains the idea of a special status for all

animals, and the only move is then to “correct” the misplacement of humans into a unique state. But the presumption of all animals constituting a homogenous mass is nevertheless retained. This corresponds to point 5, above: that “the animal” is an undifferentiated, general category. The problem here is that there is no such “animal” state. Instead, the presumed “lack” of human propriety in nonhumans indicates another mode of nonhuman existence. The continuity thesis ends up removing, quite similarly to the discontinuity thesis, all specificity from nonhuman animals, whereas in fact there are as many singularities and umwelts as there are individual species (and perhaps individuals). Continuism is anthropocentric in that it leads to the conception that nonhuman animals have an impoverished version of what is found in a fuller degree in humans (point 1 and 2, above). Thus

animals emerge from continuism enhanced by a sort of pseudo-humanity or humanity in the making, but this making has no future. Animals would be replicas fashioned more or less after a human model that remains the culmination of all cognitive aptitudes, affective dispositions, and performances of any kind. And how could it be otherwise when animals are measured against humans? (Burgat 2017: 54).

Yet another way of drawing the human-animal divide is to present humans as having rid themselves of all essentialist characteristics. In these cases, to consider humans unique is to postulate humans as having no nature, as opposed to animals who are entirely constituted and thus constrained by their evolved biological makeup and a set of deterministic instincts, and who are therefore indistinctly and inseparably immured in the very fabric of the world: “every animal is *in the world like water in water*” (Bataille, cited in Calarco, Atterton 2004: 34, emphasis in the original). This was particularly prevalent among the existentialists, with the linchpin being Sartre’s much-read and much-quoted *Existentialism is a Humanism* of 1946. In it, Sartre declares – accompanied by the unsurprising denunciation that “man’s” existence is “rather unlike that of a patch of moss, a spreading fungus, or a cauliflower” (2007: 23) – that “man”

materializes in the world, encounters himself, and only afterward defines himself. If man as existentialists conceive of him cannot be defined, it is because to begin with he is nothing. He will not be anything until later, and then he will be what he makes of himself. (Sartre 1946: 22)

By far the most commented of such existentialist declarations of the ineffable uniqueness of the human condition with its foundational lack of essence and thus its boundless capacity of constituting itself and the world around it, and which Sartre follows almost to a letter, is to be found in that (in)famous declaration by Martin Heidegger that the animals are “poor in world” and inanimate things are “worldless,” as opposed to the “world-forming” powers of man (1995: 185ff). For present purposes we can take Heidegger as a paradigmatic example of the philosophic discourse on animals, for in his writings, parti-

cularly in his *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* of 1929/30, he lays down this type of discourse beat by beat.

Now it is true that, at least to begin with, Heidegger casts doubt at any simple hierarchical orientations or value judgments between humans and animals, despite the apparent clarity indicated by the choice of words “poor” and “forming” (Heidegger 1995: 194). For neither animals nor humans can be placed in a simple line of ascent or measurement, where for example one creature’s world is richer than that of another’s, or that one has more senses or behaviours or more or less degree of freedom. But this is essentially a dodge on Heidegger’s part, for he is not, in the end, interested in the sort of knowledge that may be derived from natural sciences to help us decide about the richness of sensation or behaviour or lack of them in nonhuman animals. Instead, he is interested in a fundamental metaphysical distinction which would allow him to draw the line between the animality *as such* of animals from the humanity *as such* of “man” in a manner in which animals in their very essence would be wholly *deprived* of world (ibid, 196). In fact, Heidegger’s prohibitions against creating hierarchies and value judgements between animals and humans takes on a rather deceptive tone in light of his initial statement about the *naïveté* involved in treating material objects, animals, and humans “as if the three beings we have mentioned were three things of the same order, as if they were all on the same plane” (ibid, 185). For the conclusion that Heidegger will want to reach is that there is in fact an “abyssal” difference between “man” and “animal” *as such*, which, in Matthew Calarco’s summary, is to be “understood in the most fundamental and radical way possible”, for that abyss “marks a gap and a rupture which is utterly untraversable” (Calarco 2008: 22). For Heidegger, it is precisely this “as-structure” of which animals are deprived of and is the reason why they are poor in world: animals, too, may experience things, but never experience them as-them; they cannot be open to the Being of their being. Thus for example animals and humans both die, but the death (or “demise”) of Dasein takes place within a specific modality of being towards death and finitude, whereas animals, lacking this, merely perish unawares. Heidegger stacks up this list: Dasein exists, the animal merely lives; Dasein eats, the animal merely feeds, the animal behaves, Dasein has a “comportment”, etc. (ibid, 26).

Moreover, it is a stance which does not proceed from any interest in the possibly unique modes of being possessed by other animals; rather, it is grounded on fear of or anxiousness about the loss of human dignity and is an attempt to prevent this loss of dignity which would supposedly result if the “dignity” afforded to animals were to increase. This prevalent conceit among thinkers of human uniqueness conceives of human-animal relations (particularly ethical ones) as akin to a zero-sum game, a calculus of morals in which ethical dignity decreases on the human side the more it is attributed to animals, as if to give more consideration to one means to give less consideration to the other. Thus in another context Heidegger radicalizes the human/animal divide to the point of declaring them to be entirely incommensurable and fundamentally incomparable even as opposites, for “oppositions, even the most extreme, still

require one same domain in which to be posed against each other” (Heidegger 1992: 152). Anxiously acknowledging the “scarcely conceivable, abysmal bodily kinship with the beast” (Heidegger 1998: 248), Heidegger accuses biology and psychoanalysis of complete obliviousness and ignorance of all laws of Being, of the uniquely human openness to the “free of Being”, which results in “an uncanny hominization of the “creature,” i.e., the animal, and a corresponding animalization of man” (Heidegger 1992: 152), an abandonment of human being to the realm of *animalitas*.

The result is anthropocentrism of the most commonplace kind, corresponding to the six dimensions described above almost point by point: the examination proceeds from the presumption of the uniqueness of Dasein; to study animals is to understand what they lack; the difference is not to be found in anything biological but rather in a metaphysical mode of being; the mode of being proper to Dasein is lacking in all animals *tout court*; and the purpose of the entire exercise is to reveal the essential, foundational uniqueness and exceptionality of the human.

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The final contention from all of these examples and debates should be clear: we should stop asking the question “what is proper to Man”, particularly any and all forms of the question that take as their point of departure the denigration of nonhuman animals. Instead of seeking new, more effective or more authentic articulations of what it means to be human (to the exclusion of all nonhumans), we should rather show, to quote Giorgio Agamben, “the central emptiness, the hiatus that – within man – separates man and animal, and to risk ourselves in this emptiness: the suspension of the suspension, Shabbat of both animal and man” (2004: 92). Yet – and this must be emphasized – since what is at stake is both the human and the nonhuman, we must not fall into that very opposite trap of deeming impropriety the new “proper” of human existence, in the manner of Sartre and Heidegger. As Viveiros de Castro has put it,

The point of contesting the question, “what is (proper to) Man?” then, is absolutely not to say that “Man” has no essence, that his existence precedes his essence, that the being of Man is freedom and indetermination, but to say that the question has become, for all-too obvious historical reasons, one that it is impossible to respond to without dissimulation, without, in other words, continuing to repeat that the chief property of Man is to have no final properties, which apparently earns Man unlimited rights to the properties of the other. (2014: 44)

A principled philosophical stance here would be one of indistinction with respect to the “question of the animal”, of “what is proper to man”, where any line-drawing between humans and animals, as Matthew Calarco has put it, “no longer serves as a guardrail for thought and practice” but would rather mark “an

effort to render inoperative any nostalgia for extending human traits to animals or for complicating the differences between human beings and animals” (2011: 54). We have to begin by imagining the existence of living creatures whose diversity cannot be amassed together within the single figure of “animality” that is simply opposed to humanity. Such an attitude would be expectant, and would let go of any desire to determine hierarchically the place and status of all the beings, things and events in the world, and instead allow them to arrive and surprise and “interrupt one’s mode of existence and have a transformative effect, as an *arrivant*, an absolute newcomer” (ibid, 52). For, as Roberto Marchesini has put it, “the human being does not emerge from a disjunction or purification from otherness – that is, from a self-referential humanity (as in Descartes’ *cogito*) – but, on the contrary, from a hospitable openness toward otherness” (2017: 140). In fact, perhaps we should entirely let go of talk about “characteristics” or “traits” or “properties” as such, and pay attention to the constitutive relations, connections and semiotic links that embed and intertwine us into our environments and associate us with a myriad of both non-human species and non-living aspects of the world (including technology, and ecosystems, and the built and unbuilt world), since they all constitute humans and nonhumans together. The posthumanist is not interested in State animals, as Deleuze and Guattari called them (2008: 265), describable through characteristics and attributes; instead, the posthumanist runs with the demonic animals, “pack or affect animals that form a multiplicity, a becoming, a population, a tale” (ibid.). For what if, as Lyotard once asked, “what is ‘proper’ to humankind were to be inhabited by the inhuman?” (Lyotard 1991: 2). Becoming-animal is a matter neither of delineating human-animal distinctions nor identifying with animals, but rather that of symbiosis, affect, alliance, and contagion. Or as Deleuze and Guattari once put it:

We are not interested in characteristics; what interests us are modes of expansion, propagation, occupation, contagion, peopling. [...] What would a lone wolf be? Or a whale, a louse, a rat, a fly? Beelzebub is the Devil, but the Devil as lord of the flies. The wolf is not fundamentally a characteristic or a certain number of characteristics; it is a wolfing. The louse is a lousing, and so on. What is a cry independent of the population it appeals to or takes as its witness? (Deleuze, Guattari 2008: 264)

# CONCEPTS AND CONSIDERATIONS

## Correlationism

For instance, what about this tree, that others call *Wellingtonia*? [...] If it is lacking anything, then it is most unlikely to be you.

–Bruno Latour (1988: 193)

In April 2007 a small seminar took place at Goldsmiths, University of London. Titled ‘Speculative Realism: A One-Day Workshop’, it featured but four speakers: Ray Brassier, Iain Hamilton Grant, Graham Harman, and Quentin Meillassoux. Its purpose was to question the consensus of continental philosophy of having overcome old metaphysical debates about realism and idealism, subject and object by declaring that the solution is to put primacy on the constitutive relation between the two. Instead, the seminar wanted to ask, “Is realism really so ‘naive’? And is the widespread dismissal of representation and objectivity the radical, critical stance it so often claims to be?” (the full transcript of the event can be found in Mackay 2012: 307–449).

It was an event which, over the next few years, was to launch an academic storm, a supposed new paradigm shift and the first new thing in philosophy since post-structuralism. A separate journal, *Speculations*, was launched, and another one, *Collapse* veered heavily in its direction. An eponymous monograph series was launched. Naturally enough, in this era of endless academic turns, it too was declared a “turn” (Bryant, et al. 2011). Reams of papers and books were published.<sup>2</sup> And as so often happens in cases where declarations of importance are reversely proportional to the substance of the work, speculative realism soon collapsed in on itself. None of the original participants of the Goldsmiths seminar no longer use the term “speculative realism”, and have mostly distanced themselves from it. Whether such a thing exists or should exist has been questioned (Brassier 2014: 407–421) and the purported turn was soon declared to be both over (Kolozova, Joy 2016) and of having been about nothing other than the old Kantian *noumenon* all along (Wolfendale 2014; for a Whiteheadian critique, see Shaviri 2014). Other than attempts at turning it into a brand by Graham Harman,<sup>3</sup> its most vociferous defender and supporter, it is, while no doubt having left an indelible mark on the philosophical landscape, now mostly a movement that never was. And in a statement during an interview for the online journal *Kronos*, one of the supposed founding members of the speculative realism movement, Ray Brassier, had this now infamous thing to say about it:

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<sup>2</sup> Too numerous to list. Even just for full-length monographs see Harman 2013, 2018a, 2018b; Bryant 2011; Morton 2013a, 2013b; Garcia 2014; Willems 2017. This list, while representative, is also incomplete.

<sup>3</sup> This is not a denigration, but rather Harman’s own stated goal: see Bryant et al. 2011: 21.



The “speculative realist movement” exists only in the imaginations of a group of bloggers promoting an agenda for which I have no sympathy whatsoever. [...] I agree with Deleuze's remark that ultimately the most basic task of philosophy is to impede stupidity, so I see little philosophical merit in a “movement” whose most signal achievement thus far is to have generated an online orgy of stupidity.<sup>4</sup>

For all these academic dramas, the critical core concept that launched this entire purported turn has remained relatively robust, and has now entered the philosophical lexicon, most likely to stay. Found in a slim volume called *After Finitude* (2008) by Quentin Meillassoux, it was the concept of correlation / correlationism. It was quickly picked up by realists of all stripes as indicating a symptom of modern philosophy. It eloquently put its finger on the root cause of the unease these thinkers felt about philosophy which had been turned almost entirely into epistemology, into discourse on human meaning-making. They wanted a way out, and this seemed like the avenue they had been looking for all along. But it was their new models, their new metaphysics, which unfortunately ended up going nowhere, for they never amounted to anything more than a number of idiosyncratic speculations, and it was this lack of coherence that was the movement's downfall and the reason it never turned into a properly philosophical school or movement.

As a now-foundational concept for critiquing anti-realist positions, correlationism is relevant for animal studies and zoosemiotics, and merits addressing. Correlationism, then, is what Meillassoux calls an “explicit decision” by continental philosophers, from transcendental philosophy to phenomenology and postmodernism, that “there are no objects, no events, no laws, no beings which are not always already correlated with a point of view, with a subjective access” (2014: 9). In short, correlationism amounts to the conviction that it is an absurdity to think of anything (from things in themselves to nonhuman subjectivities) as existing outside and independently of our constitutive relation to it. This is because to think or talk about something is to first posit it, to experience or cognize it, for that something cannot exist without it being first manifest or given. Any argument against such “philosophies of access” – for at bottom all these philosophies circle around the question of how the mind gets to know, to access the external world – is effectively a performative contradiction in which the counter-argument contradicts itself by the very act of being presented:

every objection against correlationism is an objection produced by your thinking, and so dependent upon it. When you speak against correlation, you forget that you speak against correlation, hence from the viewpoint of your own mind, or culture, or epoch, etc. (ibid, 10)

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<sup>4</sup> The interview is no longer available at its original location, but numerous extracts and quotations from it can be freely found online.

This, then, is the core of correlationism: any given thing or phenomenon is a correlate of thinking. Therefore, any argument about things in themselves, of the *an sich*, cannot but be naïve, or even impossible, for

thought cannot get *outside itself* in order to compare the world as it is ‘in itself’ to the world as it is ‘for us’, and thereby distinguish what is a function of our relation to the world from what belongs to the world alone. Such an enterprise is effectively self-contradictory, for at the very moment when we think of a property as belonging to the world in itself, it is precisely the latter that we are thinking, and consequently this property is revealed to be essentially tied to our thinking about the world. (Meillassoux 2008: 3–4)

Moreover, correlationism is asymmetrical, in the sense that it is the side of thinking or the mind that does the heavy lifting, because the conditions of possibility for any access to reality are to be found on the human side, be it in the transcendental categories of the mind of the idealists, or consciousness or *Da-sein* or language, or any hypostatization of these into “culture” or *Weltanschauung*. These, no matter what particular concept or framework is used in a given context, are the conditions that make any manifestation (that is, representation, cognition, phenomenon, etc.) possible, thereby subsuming the manifestation itself and making it secondary to these conditions of possibility (Brasier 2007: 51). For it is part and parcel of Western metaphysics to privilege the immaterial as logically prior to the material, and to claim that while the immaterial requires a material basis at least in some sense, it is nevertheless irreducible to it. It may well be, it is argued, that human beings are an evolved, biological species, just another one among the animals, yet this mode of existence as biological beings merely provides the material basis for the transcendental regime and its means of objectivation. This is the old metaphysical distinction between the transcendental and the empirical, in which the former is merely instantiated in the latter and which provides the transcendental with its material conditions and empirical support, but is in itself nevertheless wholly distinct from it (ibid, 56–57). This is why the prioritization of the correlation between the two – between thinking and being – does not lead to a mutual, symmetrical constitution of the two sides, but instead to the subsumption of things to that which form and regulate them, that is, the subsumption of the empirical under the transcendental (ibid, 64). In short, for this asymmetrical correlationism, the thinking side is conceived of as the more dominant one. It is in fact that old Cartesian premise, endlessly rejected and criticised yet always returning, always sneakily present again, that the “I” accompanies any thought and therefore self-referentiality is the primary and fundamental condition of all thinking, of all representations. It was precisely on such or similar lines of reasoning that the “modern constitution” (Latour 1993: 13ff) was founded: to know is to filter a singular but ultimately unknowable nature through the ever-multiplying frames of culture. For, as “everybody knows”, since it would be naïve to believe in any immediate access to external reality, the only conception left is that there is “the

human history of nature on the one hand, and on the other, the natural non-history of nature” (Latour 2004: 33): multiculturalism is always accompanied by mononaturalism.

Such is the general defence of human uniqueness in matters epistemological: the world, as Kant famously declared in his Copernican turn, is made to circle around the knower, whose powers are such as to constitute that very world from itself. But at least when it comes to philosophy proper, it is at least assumed that the unknowable *an sich* still exists out there, in whatever inaccessible form, and that anything cognized is at least a synthesis of some sort between the knower and the known. At the birth of the human sciences, however, this basic assumption took an unexpected turn for the extreme. For the figure which, according to Michel Foucault, ushered in modernity and laid the foundation for the human sciences, is a historically specific understanding of the nature of “man”, of “human nature”, a figure which he named the “empirico-transcendental doublet”. This doublet is “a being such that knowledge will be attained in him of what renders all knowledge possible” (2002: 347), a “paradoxical figure in which the empirical contents of knowledge necessarily release, of themselves, the conditions that have made them possible” (ibid., 351). This conception renders moot any consideration of the things of the world, of any synthesis with the *an sich*, or considerations of human *umwelt*. By definition this figure, which is central to the genesis and genealogy of the humanities, of the human sciences, is inward-turning and exclusionary, for it finds both its empirical object of study, as well as the conditions of possibility for that very study from the same place – from “man”, from “the human condition”. The *what* and the *how* of any inquiry are, from the perspective of the doublet, the very same thing. And it is all this that led Meillassoux to complain, in that famous, now oft-quoted passage, of contemporary philosophers’ loss of the *great outdoors* “which thought could explore with the legitimate feeling of being on foreign territory – of being entirely elsewhere” (Meillassoux 2008: 7).

Perhaps this explains, to some length at least, why it has taken such a long time for something like the animal turn (and even later, the turn to things, to objects, to any kind of nonhuman) to appear as a discipline or a program of research within the humanities. For the logic of the doublet necessarily also impacts that which may at first seem to fall outside its purview. Within the scope of the doublet animals, or more importantly the animality of the human, are left over as a spectral reminder: cast out as irrelevant because of their lack of human propriety, yet brought back as a reminiscence of the animal within. Animals are included in general discourse only in order to signify their own expulsion, as if placed on the outside of the inside, or vice versa. They find themselves within the anthropological machinery of inclusive exclusion, as the always-present rejects of what Giorgio Agamben described as foundational to Western politics and metaphysics: “man is the living being who, in language, separates and opposes himself to his own bare life and, at the same time, maintains himself in relation to that bare life in an inclusive exclusion” (Agamben 1998: 8). And this inclusive exclusion is far from being innocent and merely

constitutive of the human condition, for as Massimo Filippi argues, it constitutes a “double move” of

an appropriating exclusion – which degrades animals to things, goods, labor – and an ex-propriating inclusion – which equates ourselves to angels in order to deny our fragile and mortal corporeality. This double move allows us to place ourselves outside of nature and to have the whole of existence at our disposal as if we were its absolute owners. (Filippi 2011: 1)

As long as the logic of the doublet is operable within the human sciences, knowledge of animals is neither objective nor subjective, but abjective. They are neither the beings who have been put in front (as the etymology of *objectāre* indicates) of human discourse, ready to be brought in as partners in knowledge, nor made subjects of the symbolic flourishing of imagination which reduces the motley lived world into a set of animal representations concocted by humans. Instead, they remain abjects, the out-casts, the thrown-downs. It is that which zoosemiotics, biosemiotics, animal studies, and to a small extent this thesis too should attempt to remedy.

## Posthumanism

An animal which could speak said: ‘Humanity is a prejudice of which we animals at least are free.’

–Friedrich Nietzsche (1997: 162)

Even if speculative realism is now waning as a separate school or branch of philosophy, the mixture of unease, disappointment, and hope for a renewal in philosophy which gave rise to it continues to spread. For speculative realism is or was part and parcel with a number of other movements that proceed from the same basic recognition of, or perhaps boredom with, that very same, exceedingly familiar gesture which we just described, of reducing all knowledge to human representations, discourse, cultural frames, etc., and the resultant rejection, critique or questioning of this anthropocentric premise. Various ways of rethinking this basic premise of the human sciences go by many different names, mostly due to the current disciplinary fragmentation of these nascent approaches, with different fields coming up with their own particular theories to suit their own particular needs. They range from animal studies and bio- and zoosemiotics, to which this thesis lends its allegiance, to the academic-activist critical animal studies, to new materialisms, particularly of the feminist kind, to philosophies of immanence, to actor-network, affect, and assemblage theories,

to different strands of anti- and posthumanism, and various others.<sup>5</sup> To a greater or lesser extent all these new humanities and philosophies of the Anthropocene

criticise anthropocentrism, rethink subjectivity by playing up the role of in-human forces within the human, emphasize the self-organizing powers of several nonhuman processes, explore dissonant relations between those processes and cultural practice, rethink the sources of ethics, and commend the need to fold a planetary dimension more actively and regularly into studies of global, interstate and state politics. (Connolly 2013: 399)

Since many if not most of these various theories, movements, and conceptions critique, decenter, displace, and rethink either certain humanist values and beliefs or, more importantly, the metaphysical ideal of humanist subjectivity, a convenient umbrella term for them would be “posthumanism”.<sup>6</sup> Since there is no coherent disciplinary identity shared by all these forms of thinking, posthumanism is far from being the accepted general term, but it will serve us as a shorthand in the present context, denoting a sort of *postanthropocentric desire*, in Stefan Herbrechter’s (2018: 95) memorable phrase.

Despite appearances, posthumanism does not refer to any kind of radically new conception, of an overcoming or surpassing of a previous era. It is an unsettling and a reconfiguration. Much like Bruno Latour’s moderns whom we have never been, posthumanism names a similar situation in which we recognize our always-already imbrication with the nonhuman, but also a dislocation of the legacy of humanism as a historically specific mode of thought. Posthumanism refers to a crisis, a renewed interest in, or a forceful appearance of certain ideas that have long lingered in Western thought and which have recently, over the past decade or two, burst to the forefront, fuelled by the recognition of and disappointment with endlessly repeated anthropocentrisms. In this sense, for the purposes of this thesis, posthumanism should not to be confused with transhumanism and the concept of the post-human found within that entirely different movement. Transhumanism is an eschatological and soteriological brand of hyper-humanism, the goal of which is to fulfil Enlightenment dreams and values through technological enhancement of the human mind and body, accompanied with the hopeful construction or arrival of the post-human (or the singularity, or similar quasi-religious events or entities) which would transform mankind and transport it to a new, unknowable “stage” of development. It is an attempt to “immanentize the eschaton,” in Erich Voegelin’s famous phrase. It

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<sup>5</sup> Literature on these movements and theories is vast, and most are not pertinent for the present context. Among those which are, see for animal studies DeMello 2012; Cederholm *et al* 2014, for zoosemiotics, Maran *et al.* 2011; Martinelli 2010; Kull 2014, for posthumanism in the sense used in this thesis, see e.g. Braidotti 2013; Braidotti, Hlavajova 2018; Nayar 2014; Wolfe 2003, 2010. For a recent juxtaposition of animal studies and the concept of the Anthropocene, see Tønnessen *et al.* 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Another such prominent umbrella term today is New Materialism, see Coole, Frost 2010; Tuin, Dolphijn 2012; Bennett 2010.

should be noted, however, that the thorny issues relating the fusion of technology and technological mediation with questions of the “nature” or “essence” of man is found in that style of posthumanism which is described herein as well. The posthumanist focus in such debates, however, is that of decentring or dislocating human reason or subjectivity from the self-assured centrality it is afforded in humanist discourse, of which transhumanism is part. “In the post-human era many beliefs become redundant – not least the belief in human beings” declares what is possibly the most trenchant manifesto of this kind of technological but anti-transhumanist posthumanism (containing, in fact, a literal posthumanist manifesto): Robert Pepperell’s *The Posthuman Condition* (2003: 177), the motto of which illustrates this attitude perfectly:

Humanists saw themselves as distinct beings in an antagonistic relationship with their surroundings. Posthumans, on the other hand, regard their own being as embodied in an extended technological world. (ibid., 187)

In brief, the purpose of posthumanist discourse as understood here is to dislocate, decentre, and deconstruct the idea(l)s of human transcendence and exceptionalism which is the hallmark of humanism and the core of transhumanism. In this respect, posthumanism is in all essentials the opposite of transhumanism.<sup>7</sup> (For a classic critique, see Hayles 1999, but for a more relevant critique of transhumanism from the posthumanist perspective, see Marchesini 2017: 137ff.)

Thus while posthumanism can and often does involve considerations of technology (e.g. Stiegler 1998), its basic point of departure and object of critique is *humanism* as a set of ideas and ideals. This must be clarified, for humanism, a nebulous concept of longstanding history (its origin lies in the supposed overcoming of the dogmatic ignorance of the medieval era during the Renaissance) has been involved in and accused of almost everything over the past half a millennium of the concept’s existence, from philosophy, liberatory politics and education, to literature and the arts, all the way to fascism and genocide.<sup>8</sup> (For a convenient overview of the antics and escapades of the concept of “humanism” over the centuries, see Davies 1997).

The faults of which humanism has been accused are numerous. That it failed to do anything more substantial than scratch off the word God from Christian ethics and replace it with “universal mankind” while leaving everything else intact is a familiar one (e.g. Ehrenfeld 1981). That it is scarcely more than another name for anthropocentrism, with its focus, in the name of human

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<sup>7</sup> The concepts “post-human” and “posthumanism”, used in this manner as a confused mixture of the critique of the anthropocentric ideology of humanism, and as commentary on the new post-human condition in a technologically mediated society, are not new or novel. They were already present in philosophical discourse in the 1950s–1960s. See Greif 2015: 324–325.

<sup>8</sup> “In the innermost recesses of humanism, as its very soul, there rages a frantic prisoner who, as a Fascist, turns the world into a prison” (Adorno 2005: 89).

universality, on human ends, values, and dignity to the detriment of all others (not just nonhuman animals, but many a human collective as well, both historically and today) is another – or perhaps another variation of the previous one. But we will leave to others to decide on the merits of these critiques, for in the confines of this thesis we are interested in critiques of humanism from the specifically posthumanist and animal studies viewpoint. Roberto Marchesini provides us with a handy list of characteristics of what he calls the “Vitruvian model,” the humanist figure “who enters the world and shapes it, dictating its metrics and morphology” (2018: 26). In the humanist conception, “man” places itself at the centre, it is centripetal; enhances its being as an essence, therefore its purity; considers technology as an instrument of domination; regards itself as a technical manufacturer, the Promethean human forging the world; and believes itself to be self-sufficient, autopoietic, and thinkable *iuxta propria principia* [on its own principles] (ibid, 145–146). It is a figure who in order to constitute itself turns its back on alterity, and thinks itself the *fons et origo* of all that is worth knowing.

Posthumanism, to the contrary, in its very basic core describes how what we call “human” is bound up with all sorts of forces and factors that aren’t really “human” at all, such as our “animal” biological inheritance and how it shapes our emotions, our behaviour, our needs and wants; our ecological embeddedness as creatures of evolution in a web of life, our use of so-called “external prosthetics” such as culture and language, and so on. We are, and always have been, constituted by something – actually, many “somethings” – that we are not. The core ideas and basic premises of posthumanism have perhaps best and most eloquently articulated by Cary Wolfe in his *What is Posthumanism?* (2010). Here he summarises posthumanism as follows:

“we” are always radically other, already in- or ahuman in our very being – not just in the evolutionary, biological, and zoological fact of our physical vulnerability and mortality, our mammalian existence but also in our subjection to and constitution in the materiality and technicity of a language that is always on the scene before we are, as a precondition of our subjectivity. (Wolfe 2010: 89)

And as such, he continues in a different context, we must

attend to the specificity of the human – its ways of being in the world, its ways of knowing, observing, and describing – by (paradoxically, for humanism) acknowledging that it is fundamentally a prosthetic creature that has coevolved with various forms of technicity and materiality, forms that are radically “not-human” and yet have nevertheless made the human what it is. (ibid, xxv)

For the posthumanist philosopher who takes epistemology as their basic object of interest, as philosophers are wont to do, the crisis of humanism is that of its conception of the knowing subject. It is a conception of subjectivity which is self-transparent to itself, and which practices a sort of benevolent dominion over its “objects” of knowledge. In this conception, the knowing subject incorporates these objects into its own regimes of knowledge precisely *as* objects, which as such provide no challenge or feedback to that regime itself, that is, it incorporates them without destabilizing or throwing into question the schema of human subjectivity that underlies it. This, it should be said, is the humanist ideal and as such dissimilar to practices of knowledge as they actually function (as has been amply demonstrated by Science and Technology Studies); the ideal has also been thoroughly deconstructed by post-structuralist critiques of subjectivity (cf. Cadavra et al. 1991). Posthumanism, too, joins the fray:

The full force of animal studies, then, resides in its power to remind us that it is not enough to reread and reinterpret – from a safe ontological distance, as it were [... A]s long as it leaves unquestioned the humanist schema of the knowing subject who undertakes such a reading, then it sustains the very humanism and anthropocentrism that animal studies sets out to question. (Wolfe 2009: 569)

In this thesis we are concerned with nonhuman animals and their depiction and denigration in philosophical texts. As should be clear from the above, however, posthumanism in itself is not limited to “the question of the animal”, but rather pertains to all attention paid to the non- or inhuman forces and phenomena that have a constitutive effect on human and nonhuman lives, such as, for example, technology studies, disability studies, affect studies, and many others. As such, it is indeed yet another “new name for some old ways of thinking”, as William James once called pragmatism. But it is in conjunction with nonhuman animals that posthumanism is most trenchant in its critique of all things humanist, and perhaps best poised to put into practice that erasure of man so famously prophesied by Michel Foucault. It has even been argued that the “recent concern with animals or ‘the animal’ may be the latest if not the ultimate form of [...] anti-humanism” (Berger, Segarra 2011: 3), and if so, then this ultimate anti-humanism was inaugurated in semiotics and by zoosemiotics, in the form of Jakob von Uexküll’s (1957) famous tick, “which certainly constitutes a high point of modern antihumanism”, this at least according to Giorgio Agamben’s perhaps not entirely unironic remark (2004: 45).



## Anthropomorphism

Presumption is our natural and original disease. The most wretched and frail of all creatures is man, and withal the proudest. [...] How does he know, by the strength of his understanding, the secret and internal motions of animals? and from what comparison betwixt them and us does he conclude the stupidity he attributes to them?  
–Montaigne (1910: 224)

Yet another habitual tactic of denying nonhuman animals a place of consideration in human affairs is by way of anthropomorphism. Now, *anthropocentrism* also plays such a role, and is the more encompassing term. But presently we are not interested in that more straightforward human-centeredness, for it is part and parcel of humanist thinking, and as such its critique is part of general post-humanist critique, treated above. Anthropomorphism, or rather the accusation of having engaged in it, is a much more subtle denial, particularly because it is often presented as a reasonable, scientific standpoint, a guard against too hasty projections of human characteristics to nonhuman animals.

Both anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism have been widely discussed in academic literature, giving rise to countless papers, and several prominent collections (e.g. Boddice 2011; Daston, Mitman 2005; Mitchell, Thompson, Miles 1997). Anthropomorphism is usually defined as an attribution of cognitive or emotional states to non-human animals, or the use of human characteristics to describe or explain the behaviour of nonhuman animals. Such a definition is rather coarse. A convenient explication and classification of various possible types of anthropomorphism is handily provided by John Fisher (1996: 7).<sup>9</sup> Let us briefly summarize those types which are relevant for the present discussion. In brief, anthropomorphism is the case where conclusions are drawn from the behaviour of an animal to the mental or emotional state of that animal. It is a situation where an observed behaviour on part of a particular animal is interpreted, and provided with an explanatory basis, by referring to alleged mental states of that creature, which presumably caused the animal to behave the way it did. Such attributions may take the form of conferring intentionality to animals (e.g. the cat is playing) or of simply ascribing emotional states to them (e.g. the chimpanzee is happy).

Now, following that old scholastic adage that whenever you meet a contradiction you must make a distinction, we should begin by dividing anthropomorphism into what might be called the *situational* and the *categorical* version.

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<sup>9</sup> Fisher draws a technical distinction between anthropomorphism and anthropocentrism. An anthropocentrist in this context is not merely one who refuses to ascribe human-like attributes to nonhuman animals (a matter of empirical studies), but one who holds that any such attribution is *ipso facto* a fallacy. For our present less technical discussion this distinction can be elided.

Situational anthropomorphism refers to those instances where we make a mistaken inference about an animal's mental or emotional state that nevertheless could be true in other contexts or other circumstances. For example, a chimpanzee might bare its teeth as a sign of anger or threat, and we misinterpret it as a smile, or as a sign of affection. In this instance, we are mistaken and the chimp is in fact angry, but this obviously does not rule out, in principle, that the ape cannot be happy in other times and circumstances. It is a context and situation-specific mistake, and not a principled one.

What we are actually interested in here is categorical anthropomorphism, the stance that the attribution of mental or emotional states to animals that can never, in any context or circumstance, ever be valid. That is, relative to a particular kind of creature, it is always a mistake to attribute certain kinds of mental states to this kind of creature. It is a mistake *in principle*, supposedly amounting to committing a category mistake. This is essentially the original sense of 'anthropomorphism', already hinted at in Xenophanes' famous passage, where in reference to gods he famously declares that

if oxen (and horses) and lions had hands or could draw with hands and create works of art like those made by men, horses would draw pictures of gods like horses, and oxen of gods like oxen, and they would make the bodies (of their gods) in accordance with the form that each species itself possesses. (quoted in Spada 1997: 38)

Now, one could justifiably assume that categorical anthropomorphism is the rarer of the two, not to be found very often in literature, and as such there would not be much need for critics to attack this position. One would be wrong. For according to Fisher, critics – whom he calls by way of analogy “hard anthropocentrists” – generally assume that categorical anthropomorphism is the default mistake: that attributions of mental states to nonhuman animals are always necessarily wrong. Moreover, here we arrive at the one aspect that is of interest for us: its use as an accusation, a purported fallacy, “an embarrassment to be avoided” (ibid, 3). It is indeed yet another example of line-drawing between humans and animals; it is to be deplored, and avoided at all cost. Fisher provides a series of telling examples: “Attributions of intentions and beliefs to animals smack of anthropomorphism”; “I see nothing at all anthropomorphic or in any other way absurd in saying that...”; “this smacks of anthropomorphism, anathema to today's nature writers” (quoted in Fisher 1996: 3, 6). Sometimes the hyperbole is whipped up to highly emotional levels. Anthropomorphism has been called dangerous, an incubus from which the field of ethology must struggle to free itself, an incurable disease, which has no place in a scientific study, it is uncritical, naïve and sloppy (quotes from Horowitz, Bekoff 2007: 30) and that “it has taken many centuries to achieve the present measure of emancipation from vitalism and anthropomorphism” (quoted in Mitchell, Thompson, Miles 1997: 24). Horowitz and Bekoff are indeed left to conclude that “in studies of animal behavior, there is near official consensus about

anthropomorphizing: it is to be avoided” and that its “accepted status” is that of a “fundamentally flawed way to describe nonhuman animal behavior” (2007: 23–24). One is reminded of a quote from Blaise Pascal: “How comes it that a cripple does not offend us, but that a fool does? Because a cripple recognizes that we walk straight, whereas a fool declares that it is we who are silly; if it were not so, we should feel pity and not anger” (Pascal, *Pensées*, §80).

Here we can see the strong grip of dimension 2 (animals are lacking) and soon enough, dimension 4 (distinction is mental) from our list of six dimensions, as presented at the beginning of this introduction. At the pain of repetition (but repeat we must, for outside of animal studies this is still all too common): This accusation indeed represents one of the many devices used in depicting human beings as fundamentally distinct from the rest of nature, as being qualitatively different. It is one way of depicting the rest of the living world as mere background, existing solely for the purpose of figuring as an undistinguished mass from which uniquely human characteristics are supposed to stand apart. In this “shallow” picture of human beings’ place in nature, “humans are perceived as the significant figures against a ground that only assumes significance in so far as it enhances humans’ images of themselves *qua* important figures” (Fox 2003: 252).

As such, the accusation of anthropomorphism functions as what may perhaps be called a hegemonic device, a non-coercive power circulating through discursive practices (Lears 1985). The use of anthropomorphism as an accusation functions as a sort of a silent influencer that attempts to determine, in advance of any actual empirical research and proper articulations, *what* can be thought about and *how* it can be thought about. It limits and directs arguments in such a manner that they should start, as their primary condition, with a fundamental separation between humans and all other animals. The “null hypothesis”, so to speak, is human exceptionalism. The accusation tries to inhibit the consideration of certain possible positions, and is particularly pernicious for philosophical or theoretical work.

There is a further discursive mechanism, or perhaps it ought to be called a rhetorical bait and switch, by which nonhuman animals are expelled from philosophical discourse by the mechanism of inclusive exclusion. This time it begins by admitting that many nonhuman animals in fact do have capacities which were formerly denied to them. The bait is the admission of a characteristic (say, capacity for surprise), and the switch is a version of self-awareness. That is to say, when it is discovered that some nonhuman animals do indeed have some characteristic that was previously thought of as uniquely human, the human version of said characteristic is re-described through human self-awareness of said trait. So perhaps animals are also symbol-users, but humans are *aware* that they are symbol users. Perhaps animals are rational in their behaviour, but humans are *aware* that they themselves are rational. The uniquely human version of any such capacity is animal capacity + awareness of capacity.

This tactic is exceedingly commonplace. Nevertheless, a few examples are in order. In traditional metaphysics, this is the thought process that undergirds

the differentiation between *perception* and *apperception*. Thus Leibniz writes that

it is good to distinguish between *perception*, which is the internal state of the monad representing external things, and *apperception*, which is *consciousness*, or the reflective knowledge of this internal state, something not given to all souls, nor at all times to a given soul. (1989: 208)

And it is precisely this capacity for apperception that distinguishes, for Leibniz, “beasts” from “rational animals”, the former of which are only capable of perceiving situational facts and remembering the consequences of effects, whereas the latter are capable of “true reasoning” about causes, of immaterial things and truths, because the souls or minds of rational animals are “capable of performing reflective acts, and capable of considering what is called “I”, substance, soul, mind” (ibid, 209).

As we already saw above, this is also the line taken by Heidegger in his “as-” structure, in which animals fail to see things as-such, but only as they engage them in their everyday activities, all the while for Dasein they are open to perception X-as-X. Similarly, in semiotics, this same line is taken by John Deely: “Animals make use of signs without knowing that there are signs” (Deely 1990: 36), but the “human animal [is] the only animal that, besides making and making use of signs, knows that there are signs” (Deely 2001: 736–737; for further discussion on Deely, see Rattasepp, Kull 2016, the second paper included in this thesis). Many more examples can easily be found.

Such a meta-level self-indication is often not obvious, however. Here is a somewhat more complex example of this tactic. In his *Problems of Rationality* (2004: 135–149) Donald Davidson first argues that beliefs depend on the capacity to categorize. Then, taking note that some nonhuman animals are indeed also capable of categorization (ibid, 135), he shifts the criterion to the capacity for surprise. Thus, according to Davidson, there are no beliefs unless there is the capacity to be surprised when a belief turns out to be false. Having beliefs depends in this case on the capacity of having meta-thoughts: thoughts about thinking. As such, a belief about the state of affairs in the world is not sufficient for having a “true” belief. Instead, one must first be able to have a belief about the state of affairs in the world, then a situation where the belief turns out to be mistaken, with surprise following from this tension between prior thought and the new thought about that thought, brought about by a surprising mismatch between belief and reality. And only if one is capable of this kind of a train of mental states and emotions does one have “true” beliefs. In this example, “surprise”, the meta-thought about thought, functions as the switch from the bait of categorization. (For further commentary on this, cf. Bortolotti 2008.) And, as ever, goalposts are shifted in this manner for the purpose of denying that any nonhuman animals could have beliefs. And, as ever, issues are not solved empirically, but by an *a priori* redefinition the concept. Animals are expelled by fiat.

## Maieutics and perspectivism

Probably the most frequently asked question from anyone who explains that they are engaged in umwelt studies, or are interested in the subjective worlds of nonhuman animals in general, is something along the lines of “but how do you get access to these subjective worlds?” For indeed, as has been endlessly debated by philosophers of mind and cognition, there is the famous “hard problem” (Chalmers 1995) of third person access to first person experiences. This question extends to access to nonhuman subjective umwelts as well, for what would it mean to study the subjective umwelts of nonhumans in a situation where the actual object of study is inaccessible? We don’t even have access, so the story goes, to even the inner worlds of other humans, and it is immeasurably more difficult to even imagine what the umwelt would be of a creature entirely unlike ourselves. We have never been and thus can never know how it feels to be a bat, as probably the most famous formulation of the issue goes (Nagel 1974): so what is it that we are studying in the first place?

When faced with this question, I am often tempted – and often fail the temptation – of noting that in a similar vein no physicist has ever been an elementary particle, and no sociologist has ever been a society, yet this is not thought of being a hindrance to research. What is fascinating here is not really the question itself (of how to be a nonhuman), but some of the reasons why this feels like a relevant, even common-sense and immediate question to ask. It is as if the stars and atoms are so distant or so unreachable, and societies with their institutions so generic or abstract or so far from anything animate (despite the fact that we systematically project agency to social phenomena) that such a question sounds positively bizarre. We find ourselves in a peculiar position of thinking that the distant stars and the generalized models of social institutions are in some sense close and understandable for us and thus amenable to straightforward research, whereas nonhuman animals, many of whom are so similar to us that we find it very easy to attribute all sorts of emotional states and beliefs to them, are as if so distant and alien to us that the question “how can we even come to know their umwelt?” seems to be unanswerable. What is beyond our experience has been brought to the forefront, and the closeness of animals has been pushed away. What has happened that the distant and the abstract feel close and obvious, but the closeness of animals gives rise to incredulity?

In his despondent and melancholy essay *Why look at animals?* (1980: 1–26), the great art critic John Berger mourns the loss of attachment and contact with nonhuman animals in today’s urbanised world. What has happened, or so he argues (and I am hesitant in using this poetic essay as a source for substantial claims), is that the more we lose close contact with animals, the more they are relegated to zoos and distant, managed wildernesses, the more we have been searching for surrogates and replacements for this irreparable loss. Once again we are back at animals who are in a state of perpetual vanishing. The more animals withdraw from everyday life, the more we attempt to bring them back through the usage of various surrogates (zoos, toys, and animal imagery). It is

not simply the case that we don't have access to nonhuman umwelts for some technical reasons or for because of the puzzlement of philosophers, but because we have effectively marginalized them, and pushed them aside:

That look between animal and man, which may have played a crucial role in the development of human society, and with which, in any case, all men had always lived until less than a century ago, has been extinguished. [...] As for the crowds [i.e. humans], they belong to a species which has at last been isolated. (Berger 1980: 26)

So perhaps the issue is not just how to solve the hard problem of access to first person subjectivity. Perhaps there is also a need for something like an ethos, an imperative perhaps of research conduct that could guide us as we go forward in our studies in zoosemiotics. One possible avenue is laid down for use by the principle of maieutics, as reformulated by Mark Greif (2015: 24–26) and a non-human version of perspectivism which Eduardo Viveiros de Castro first formulated in his studies of Amerindian ontology (Viveiros de Castro 2014).

Maieutics, *technē maieutikē*, “the art of midwifery” (*Theaetetus* 150b), is an old Socratic concept; in fact, in translations it is often rendered straightforwardly as the famous Socratic or dialectical method. This famous method is, let us recall, not merely, as is so often supposed, a way of reaching the truth (or at least concord) through debate and dialogue. Rather, in *Theaetetus* and several other dialogues, Socrates provides the prodding questions yet provides no answers himself, helping others come to their conclusions of their own accord. Socrates is merely the midwife, helping others to deliver their newly discovered knowledge yet claiming none to himself. The method of maieutics, of midwifery is one which “by insistent and forceful questioning, seeks to bring into being and bring to birth *in another person* answers that will reward the questioner’s own belief in the character of the universal capacity for thinking” (Greif 2015: 24).

From this we can draw an imperative, a “should”. At the core of this ethos lies in an acceptance of the impossibility of providing definitive answers, but which for this very reason is an imperative to a discourse regardless of its ability to solve or determine an inquiry; it would be a call to provide ideas and conceptions that are valuable to bring out and articulate, even without the certitude of them being correct:

Maieutics are *shoulds* in discourse or within the intellectual life that help to say what must be addressed or talked about, what stands up as a serious or profound question or contribution, regardless of its ability to solve or determine an inquiry. (ibid, 25)

To paraphrase a famous quote, whereof one cannot speak, thereof everything must be said. And the “shoulds” of the maieutic that we then ought to follow is threefold. First there is the attitude taken towards oneself: maieutics “makes you work on yourself and your own thought, midwife to something that lies inside

you and would be valuable to bring out and articulate even if you are in no wise “correct.”” (ibid.). Second, there is the effect on others, an imperative to arise in others the same sort of need to “say everything” in the face of uncertainty, with the purpose that “another will undertake the task of speaking, thus doing something to himself and to the listening (or reading) public.” (ibid, 26). And finally, the overarching goal is to reach “the discourse that we can see emerges in furnishing a should to a range of speakers, irresolvably” (ibid.).

What would this mean for zoosemiotics, animal studies, for the broad philosophical discourse on nonhuman animals? Only some generalities can be provided here. The first thing to conclude is, of course, to put the above three principles into actual practice: that the inaccessibility of umwelts to direct experience should foment and instigate more discussions, more research, more imaginative answers despite (and even contrary to good academic standards) their validity or their basis on empirical research. But we should not go too far along this path. Rather, let us ask, what *kind* of thought should be spurred in this situation where nonhuman animals are systematically rejected, described as lacking, and as forming a homogeneous background from which human uniqueness should stand out. And the short answer is that, whatever the methods we may or may not develop for further research, we must take umwelts seriously as a plurality of *ontologies*. For if we were to follow this imperative to always think otherwise, to subsume to this “should” of talking in ever more creative forms, we must understand and consider the diversity of all life, the differences between species, and their own being as individuals; we must understand their multiplicity, diversity, difference; and we must place ourselves face to face with the alterity and singularity of nonhuman animals, under the gaze of an alien being. As Nietzsche once put it,

I think that today we are at least far away from the ridiculous immodesty of decreeing from our angle that perspectives are *permitted* only from this angle. Rather, the world has once again become infinite to us: insofar as we cannot reject the possibility *that it includes infinite interpretations*. (2001: 239)

We should, however, make some remarks as to what, in broad strokes, this ontological perspectivism is. In his *Cannibal Metaphysics*, Viveiros de Castro calls for “a permanent decolonization of thought” (2014: 40), the purpose of which is to “make multiplicities proliferate” (ibid, 45). While originally this was a call for a more fundamental understanding of the ontologies of different human cultures, and was targeted against the presumption of treating Western naturalism as the basis on which others can be grounded and explained, it could perhaps be fruitfully extended to cover the nonhuman umwelts as well. Such a comparative ontology of umwelts would take the descriptions of ontological self-determination or grounding of nonhumans in parallel with our own more familiar one(s), resulting in a perpetual reworking of our own human umwelts, ontologies, and their descriptions. It would be a nonhuman animal variant of what Viveiros de Castro has described as the “ontological determination of

ethnographic alterity, the elucidation of the terms of the ‘ontological self-determination of the other’” (2015: 4), in which the researcher takes the position not of a monopolistic analyst of objects of study, but takes as fundamental the semiotic agency of the nonhumans, thereby “forcing the analyst to confront the unexpectedly powerful speculative forces that spring from the actors, far more philosophically-minded (in a broad sense) than we normally take them to be” (ibid, 6). This would amount to placing the agential nonhuman umwelts on an equal footing to ours, letting our own ontological assumptions to be “counter-analyzed”, as it were, which would have the effect of making ourselves more alien and “returns to us an image in which we are unrecognizable to ourselves” (Maniglier, cited in Viveiros de Castro 2014: 41). Perhaps there is a possibility, remote and of idle imagination it may turn out to be, of finding ourselves in a strange state which Bruno Latour once described in his stupendously original, underappreciated philosophical *tractatus* called *Irreductions*:

I don’t know how things stand. I know neither who I am nor what I want, but *others* say they know on my behalf, others, who define me, link me up, make me speak, interpret what I say, and enroll me. Whether I am a storm, a rat, a rock, a lake, a lion, a child, a worker, a gene, a slave, the unconscious, or a virus, they whisper to me, they suggest, they impose an interpretation of what I am and what I could be. (Latour 1988: 192)

Such would be the combination of maieutics and perspectivism, of comparative ontology, where every good model would not just be a model of a passive object (or even a subject, for the reification of subjectivity into a static entity is all too common, particularly in the case of nonhumans), but a model which would be at least partially a version of the nonhuman umwelt, an elision of the distinction between the object-level and meta-level, of the human and the nonhuman. Similarly to the plurality of ontologies described in anthropology’s ontological turn, such a comparative ontology of umwelts, a multispecies semiotics, would take as “fundamental that there are multiple, irreducible forms of thought [in our case, umwelts] that all count as ontology” (Charbonnier et al. 2016: 3) and which then would be

a way of postulating a horizontal plane on which different, noncompossible ways of composing a world that are actualized by collectives can be related, rather than the old vertical search for a foundation – and thus a reduction – of one such composition to another. (ibid., 4)

Whether such a thing is possible I do not know. But I do believe that

We need another and a wiser and perhaps a more mystical concept of animals. [...] We patronize them for their incompleteness, for their tragic fate for having taken form so far below ourselves. And therein do we err. For the animal shall not be measured by man. In a world older and more complete than ours, they move finished and complete, gifted with the extension of the senses we have



lost or never attained, living by voices we shall never hear. They are not brethren, they are not underlings: they are other nations, caught with ourselves in the net of life and time, fellow prisoners of the splendour and travail of the earth. (Beston 1992: 24–25)

Maybe the time is ripe for animal exceptionalism?

## THE CHATTERING OF FICTIONS, THE SILENCE OF REALITY

Since the final paper included in this thesis was published in Estonian, this subchapter provides a brief summary of relevant parts of it. This paper and the previous one, *A Metaphysic for Semiotics*, are two more general treatments which function as accompanying pieces to the first three. While *A Metaphysic for Semiotics* suggests certain considerations of and concepts suitable as general principles for studying nonhumans, this paper provides a more general historical background concerning a “two worlds” metaphysics which lies at the core of any rigid distinction between humans and nonhumans. The “two worlds” of this philosophical picture are, of course, culture and nature. I have in mind that very worldview, so much criticized today and during the past decades, of the mediation of nature by culture, on which “the world is culturally constructed” stance is predicated upon.

The paper itself is a historical overview of the genesis of that stance, and since this history has often been told, it need not be repeated here. Thus what follows are certain excerpts from it which are more pertinent to the general theme of this thesis. In general, the original paper followed Latour’s claim that over the course of the past few centuries, the distinction between nature and culture has increasingly become more radical, moving from the classic starting point of *distinction* between mind and world, to their separation, then contradiction, all the way to complete incommensurability (Latour 1993: 58). It was this historico-philosophical process which has led many a person think that a question such as “do you believe in reality?” is a substantial one to ask (Latour 1999: 1–4). Which leads him to describe the two houses of being of the modern constitution, from which this paper takes its title:

The first is the obscure room depicted by Plato, in which ignorant people find themselves in chains, unable to look directly at one another, communicating only via fictions projected on a sort of movie screen; the second is located outside, in a world made up not of humans but of nonhumans, indifferent to our quarrels, our ignorances, and the limits of our representations and fictions.

[...]

The first house brings together the totality of speaking humans, who find themselves with no power at all save that of being ignorant in common, or of agreeing by convention to create fictions devoid of any external reality. The second house is constituted exclusively of real objects that have the property of defining what exists but that lack the gift of speech. On the one hand, we have the chattering of fictions; on the other, the silence of reality. (Latour 2004: 13–14)

Underneath all the historical attempts at bringing mind and nature, thinking and being back together, with the failure of such attempts pushing them increasingly apart, there lies what François Laruelle has called the Philosophical Decision (Brassier 2003). The philosophical decision proceeds from a cut or separation of two sides, a posited empirical datum (that which is to be conditioned), and a corresponding posited faktum (the specific conditions); the two are then supposed form a synthetic unity, but a curious one which distinguishes and unites at the same time, being both immanent to the posited distinction, and simultaneously transcendent with respect to it as its condition of possibility. This is the disjointed conjunction, as it were, of noumena/phenomena, knower/known, virtual/actual, and a multitude of others (ibid., 26; see also Snricek 2011: 166). As such, this philosophical Decision is the essence of correlationist thinking, already described above, and unsurprisingly it is once again the supposed human side that is the conditioning (i.e. meaning-making) part in this (dis)unity.

This process of radicalization of the (dis)unity has today left us in a situation where a lot of contemporary philosophy (mostly Continental) has turned away from any discussions of reality or materiality, but rather focuses entirely on language games, representations, cultural categories, narratives, and the like. A paradigmatic example of thought's elopement from the world into an "alternative view" of self-professed insularity is Jürgen Habermas: "the paradigm of the knowledge of objects has to be replaced by the paradigm of mutual understanding between subjects capable of speech and action", based on a "model of unconstrained consensus formation in a communication community" (1987: 295–6, naturally, by communication community Habermas means humans only). Thus have we arrived at present times: to understand the world is to see how people talk to people.

The above pertains mostly to philosophy. In the social sciences and the humanities, there was a parallel track, which amounted to the replacement of subjectivity with culture, but retaining the philosophical Veil of Maya metaphysics, with mental representations replaced with impersonal cultural ones.<sup>10</sup> Already Durkheim made the distinction between the experiential world and the world of representations or concepts, the latter of which stop the flow of experience and structure it. Such concepts, however, are of a particular kind:

the nature of the concept bespeaks its origin. It is common to all because it is the work of the community. It does not bear the imprint of any individual intellect, since it is fashioned by a single intellect in which all the others meet [i.e. society]. (Durkheim 1995: 435)

And with Durkheim's claim that concepts "correspond to the way in which the special being that is society thinks about the things of its own experience" (ibid., 437), we once again see the idea of the transcendence of the social out of

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<sup>10</sup> In semiotics, the Saussurean system of language which consists only of internal distinctions between signs, is very much part of this same legacy.

the world into a special realm of its own, now resplendent with experiences which this new entity has all of its own accord.

The “two worlds” metaphysics, then, is as follows: culture consists of transmissible representations, which are separated from actual practice; they are thought of as determining said practice; cognitive processes impose their stable set of categories upon the flux of sense experience, which itself is confusing because there can be nothing in nature that would itself have an active, agential impact on thinking; therefore there cannot be any actual, direct engagement with the environment, but only through the mediation of cultural representations concocted in the recesses of the human mind or society, but which do all the work in meaning-making.

Our basic philosophical intuitions or metaphysical premises direct us to the kinds of questions we ask and shape the form our answers must take. In the “two worlds” metaphysics, the basic question becomes the epistemological one of access to external reality, which I have sometimes called “philosophies of extrusion” (but which nowadays are more commonly known as “philosophies of access”, which I agree is a better name), because they all circle around how “far” into the supposed “external” realm can thought penetrate – if at all. In this general sense, many seemingly opposite strands of thinking start to seem similar, with the difference between the objectivist and the subjectivist, the realist and the relativist only amounting to how successful they think this access to or penetration into the external world is or can be. All are premised on the belief that, in Francis Wolff’s beautiful expression,

we are locked up in language or in consciousness without being able to get out. In this sense, they have no outside. But in another sense, they are entirely turned towards the outside; they are the world’s window [...] consciousness and language enclose the world within themselves only insofar as, conversely, they are entirely contained by it. We are in consciousness or language as in a transparent cage. Everything is outside, yet it is impossible to get out. (quoted in Meillassoux 2008: 6)

Within this “two worlds” metaphysics there is a rather curious paradox, not perhaps in the sense of an aporia, but rather a puzzlement. For while the human meaning-making side is thought to be the constitutive part in any such thinking-being relationship, it is nevertheless and at the same time the outside world that is actually “real”, for, as is well known, often repeated and therefore necessarily true, that the only objectively understood reality is mind-independent reality. All the representations of the mind or cultural categories are in the end mere illusions, despite at the same time being our only means of access to reality. Habermas turned upside down: now the only foundation and guarantor of knowledge is an insulated independence of the Real, and that reality is premised on the unreality of the observer: the more unreal the observer, the more real the world. It was this that Whitehead famously criticized in this *The Concept of Nature* (1920) as the “bifurcation of nature” into “two systems of reality”, which

in so far as they are real, are real in different senses. One reality would be the entities such as electrons which are the study of speculative physics. This would be the reality which is there for knowledge; although on this theory it is never known. For what is known is the other sort of reality, which is the byplay of the mind. Thus there would be two natures, one is the conjecture and the other is the dream. (Whitehead 2015: 21)

These are some of the elements, then, which are pertinent for the present thesis. I have omitted here the full historical detail and sources from the original paper. It forms the background from which the present-day posthumanities, new materialism, animal studies, and the like stand out, with their flat ontologies and the agency of things. The motto for these new ways of thinking should perhaps be Latour's principle of irreducibility: "Nothing is, by itself, either reducible or irreducible to anything else" (1988: 158). In the flat, irreducible ontology, every thing, every phenomenon would be itself and would stand for itself, yet always together with others, for in the principle of irreducibility, the emphasis is on "by itself". Nothing could be cast aside as mere context, substance, form, property; everything would be concrete and immanent and nothing would transcend actuality. Or as Latour himself describes it in a "pseudoautobiographical" interlude:

It was a wintry sky, and a very blue. I no longer needed to prop it up with a cosmology, put it in a picture, render it in writing, measure it in a meteorological article, or place it on a Titan to prevent it falling on my head. I added it to other skies in other places and reduced none of them to it, and it to none of them. It "stood at arm's length," fled, and established itself where it alone defined its place and its aims, neither knowable nor unknowable. It and me, them and us, we mutually defined ourselves. And for the first time in my life I saw things unreduced and set free. (ibid., 163)

## CONCLUSION

This thesis is an exercise in ground-clearing. It is an attempt to take apart and bring to the open certain premises and assumptions which make large swathes of traditional philosophy inimical to substantial consideration of all things non-human. More precisely, even if they consider the nonhuman, the fact that the nonhuman could consider *them* and that there are conclusions and self-critique to be derived from this, has been essentially inconceivable for most strands of philosophy up until very recent times. But umwelt studies, multispecies semiotics is precisely that: a study of nonhuman animals that is always open to the possibility that a comparison between the lived world of particular nonhumans and our conceptions of them may in fact lead to substantial questioning or revision of our concepts and ideas which we cherish the most, and have thought of as stable, well-defined, and universal. Multispecies semiotics is a questioning of human beliefs, ideas, and habits through the perspective of nonhumans, who represent not a lack, but worlds with their own specificity and difference. From this perspective, there is no single, specific relation that humans have with the world, nor one which humans would have with nonhumans, and those between all the nonhumans themselves. The world is motley, and humans should not be conceived of having a unitary, uniquely privileged or constitutive relation to it that would subsume all others (even if that relation comes just in the form of representations). That, at least, is its ideal. But in order to conduct such research, we must first understand why we have *not* been conducting such research, or at least have not been conducting it as substantially and thoroughly as perhaps we should and could have been. And to explicate some of the reasons for this is the purpose of this thesis.

This thesis owes a lot to that mainstay and classic of today's animal studies and posthumanities, Jacques Derrida's *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (2008). By far the most impactful book to be published for these fields, the literature on this text is overwhelming.<sup>11</sup> It is indeed Derrida who most forcefully articulates the entire basis and substance of the present thesis. Most importantly for the present context, among all the philosophers who have discussed animals, animality, and nonhuman alterity in general, he most forcefully rejected any sort of representationalism. If the basic theme of this thesis is to ask and then critique how philosophers talk about animals, we must also be mindful of and attend critically to the general focus on representations – on human representations in the philosophical sense anyway, as hidden replicas of the world tucked away in the recesses of the mind (here multispecies semiotics joins forces with radical enactivism with its representation and content-free approaches to cognition; cf. Hutto, Myin 2017, Menary 2006). For one of the most basic and essential goals of contemporary philosophy of the past three hundred years or so, roughly

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<sup>11</sup> See, for example, just some of the book-length dispatches on this text and the subsequent one on similar themes, the two-part *The Beast and the Sovereign* (2011): Berger, Segara 2011; Krell 2013; Lawlor 2007; Llored 2012.

starting from the classic triumvirate of Descartes, Locke, Kant, has been to be a general theory of representation. “The picture which holds traditional philosophy captive is that of the mind as a great mirror, containing various representations,” as Richard Rorty once put it, and “getting more accurate representations by inspecting, repairing, and polishing the mirror” is the basic task of philosophy (1979: 12). For philosophy as the mirror of nature, animals enter not as themselves as living beings with their own worlds and histories and modes of life, but as caught up in general theoretical and abstract issues for which they function as nothing but “a theme, trope, metaphor, analogy, representation, or sociological datum” or the like (Wolfe 2009: 567). These are Derrida’s *animots*, paper animals, abstract, inexistent. And it is this general premise of representational philosophies which is rejected by Derrida – as well as his many readers today, present author included.

It is *not just* a matter of asking whether one has the right to refuse the animal such and such a power [...]. It *also* means asking whether what calls itself human has the right rigorously to attribute to man, which means therefore to attribute to himself, what he refuses the animal, and whether he can ever possess the *pure, rigorous, indivisible* concept, as such, of that attribution. (Derrida 2008: 135, emphases in the original)

The five papers included in this thesis are as follows. The first paper, *The philosophical discourse on animals, and the philosophical animals themselves* (Rattasepp 2016) is the central one and explicates and expands the six-point list of the ways philosophers discuss animals when they are not discussing animals. It then draws out some of the conclusions of this self-centred isolation of humans into a sphere of meaning concocted entirely out of themselves, and instead suggests that we should take a circuitous looks back at ourselves through the (perhaps metaphorical, but with further umwelt-studies, maybe at one point empirical and philosophical) eyes of nonhuman animals, and see how this would shape our ideas, concepts and conceptions about both ourselves and our companion nonhumans.

The second paper, *The Semiotic Species: Deelying with Animals in Philosophy* (Rattasepp, Kull 2016) applies the six points to an analysis of John Deely’s concept of the “semiotic animal”, and in addition provides a classification of the possible approaches to the semiotic problem of the *conditio humana* of being aware of signs. In this joint paper, the analysis of Deely’s thought was provided by the present author, and the classification was provided by prof. Kalevi Kull.

The third paper, *The Anthropological Machine and the Absence of Animals* (Rattasepp 2014) is an earlier explication of some of the ideas more fully developed in the first paper included the present thesis, but puts more focus on Giorgio Agamben’s famous concept of the anthropological machine. This is an articulation of the human-animal difference, widely prevalent in Western thought, which does not place the dividing line at the species border, but within

the very constitution of humans themselves, resulting in a conception of the human condition as creatures perpetually divided from within. This, too, has several consequences, such as the demand for the suppression of the “bestial” in humans, and the concomitant expulsion of animals from philosophically relevant thought as anything other than that which must be expelled.

The final two papers function as companion pieces to the first three. The fourth paper, *A Metaphysic for Semiotics* (Rattasepp 2013) muses upon certain general ideas and conceptions for general semiotic theory which would be suitable as premises for thinking about nonhumans. It proposes a sort of non-hierarchical flat ontology of diverse entities, and a transactional, which is to say a constitutive and irreducible concept of relations. And the final paper, *Väljamõeldiste vadin, reaalsuse vaikus* (*The Chattering of Fictions, the Silence of Reality*, Rattasepp 2010) provides a more general historical background of the genesis and development of the “two worlds” metaphysics – of the division between thinking and being, of which representationalism is the necessary consequence – that is at the root of the self-centred philosophies which either reject nonhumans, turn them into vessels of human meaning-making, or lend credence to them only as long as they are but reflections in the human mirror.

There are at the end of some of the papers contained within this thesis some philosophical-sounding musings about what an animal-centred philosophy could look like, taking a few fellow creatures (a mole, a squid) and speculating what human philosophy would look from their perspective. They do not constitute any philosophical argument or a coherent claim of any sort. They are more akin to fables, snippets of thought, exempla rather than examples. They are there, however, to indicate two things. First is to mark down, if only briefly, one avenue for further research which the author of this thesis is planning to pursue in the near future. For to develop nonhuman ontologies is the very task of the semiotic Umwelt-theory, and is one of the paths toward which further research in this field should proceed.<sup>12</sup> But the second and more important one is that they are there to highlight and exemplify one of Derrida’s core messages, which on the face of it may sound like a commonplace but which up to very recent times was scarcely to be found in philosophy. It is that

it is rather a matter of taking into account a multiplicity of heterogeneous structures and limits: among nonhumans, and separate from nonhumans, there is an immense multiplicity of other living things that cannot in any way be homogenized, except by means of violence and willful ignorance, within the category of what is called the animal or animality in general. (Derrida 2008: 48)

An exceedingly dominant strand in Western thought, familiar to all, has been human exceptionalism: that there is a unique place reserved for humans in the world, a place which is to be separated and marked down against all others,

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<sup>12</sup> Research in animal studies in this direction is also underway, perhaps best exemplified by Anna Tsing’s wonderful *The Mushroom at the End of the World* (2015). See also Despret 2016 and Kohn 2013.



which signifies human transcendence from nature or from the biological order. This belief, whether implicitly or explicitly, crops up in many disparate fields, often in ones which seemingly have nothing to do with one another. It resides deep in the heart of humanism. It is the basis of the conception of culture superimposed on nature as a separate, superorganic domain. It is the essence of the idea that the essence of “man” is to have no essence. It is the core of that metaphysics which thinks the transcendental as logically superior to the empirical. It lays the foundation to all forms of anthropocentrism. Often, of course, this happens unwittingly as an irrelevancy, as we saw at the beginning, when we inquired about how philosophers talk about animals when they are not specifically talking about animals. Many more examples could be added. True enough, there are numerous contrary strands as well, as well as those which ignore these anthropocentrisms in general, such as structuralism with its focus to non-individualistic determinants, poststructuralism with its critique of anything static, semiotics with its irreducible relationalities, and the various anti- and posthumanisms that herald the erasure of “man” like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea. But they are beyond the scope of these introductory remarks.

Today, the above are perhaps commonplace observations. It is nevertheless relevant to repeat them again, for the narrative of the Ascent of Man is the major intellectual source for the present crisis of the Anthropocene. The more proper stance today and for a long time now is, to borrow from Derrida again,

to pass beyond man and humanism, the name man being the name of that being who, throughout the history of metaphysics or of ontotheology – in other words, through the history of all of his history – has dreamed of full presence, the reassuring foundation, the origin and the end of the game. (Derrida 1970: 264–265)

Further studies, which will hopefully follow from this thesis, would attempt to make good a kind of multispecies semiotics, a comparative ontology of *umwelts*, which akin to perspectivism and the ontological turn in anthropology, would put philosophical concepts and ideas themselves at risk under the gaze of nonhuman animals. Proceeding from a flat ontology of diverse *umwelts*, such studies would inquire into the species-specific nature of human conceptions and beliefs, and ask whether new, novel ideas could possibly stem from thinking and imagining similar (or different, for that matter) ideas from the perspective of a nonhuman animal whose embodiment and *umwelt* would be different from our own. An intensification descriptions of nonhuman *umwelts* which would place our own concepts at risk. But for the time being, if this thesis has any overarching message, it is contained in its title: that a necessary step toward nonhuman philosophies and modes of thought which would provide their full support to and understanding of alterity, and of the full diversity of life on Earth, is to refrain from the incessant polishing of the human mirror. Hopefully, the rest will follow.

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## SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN

### **Inimese peegel: filosoofilise loomadiskursuse kriitiline analüüs paljuliigilise semiootika positsioonilt**

Käesolevas töös üritatakse avada ja välja tuua teatavat filosoofilist või teoreetilist tavakäsitlust või -mõistust loomade ja inimeste vaheliste suhete kujutamises. Eesmärgiks on näidata, et mitmes filosoofilises suunas ja mõnede teiste teadusharude üldisemates teoreetilistes käsitlustes on esile toodav teatud konventsionaalne kujutus loomade suhetest inimesega, ja et niisugune standardkujutus on levinud. Fookuseks on peamiselt filosoofia selle üldteoreetilises, mitte institutsioonilises tähenduses, mis võimaldab töösse haarata rohkemat kui tavaliselt filosoofia katusermini all mõeldakse.

Töö peamiseks tulemuseks on näidata, et see tavamõistus loomade kujutamisel on laialt levinud, ja et see koosneb kuuest eri tahust. Need tahud ei ilmu tervikuna mitte igas vaadeldavas tekstis. Eri tekstides võivad selgelt esile tulla neist tahkudest vaid mõned, kuid siiski moodustavad need kokku teatava komplekti, mida võib pidada üheks kõige harjumuspärasemaks loomade-inimeste suhete kujutamise viisiks, ning olulisemana, et see tavakäsitlus võib omada pärssivat rolli elurikkuse, omailmade paljususe ning ka inimese loodusesse paigutumise mõistmisel. Seda põhjusel, et need kuus tahku näitavad koos ja eraldi, et loomade kujutamise üheks põhiliseks rolliks filosoofias on teiste loomade käsitlemise, mõtestamise ja mõistmise väljatõrjumine teatavast arusaamade, teemade ja uskumuste sfäärist, mida peetakse ainulaadselt inimomaseks. Nende mõttemustrite abil kujutatakse inimest radikaalselt unikaalsena, sageli suisa loodusest „väljununa“ ja elavana omaette olemise sfääris, mis on võimalik vaid inimestele. Selle tulemusel võivad jääda märkamata need sisulised vastused erinevatele filosoofilistele küsimustele, mida võivad pakkuda teiste liikide omailmade – subjektiivsete elumaailmade – sügavam tundmine.

Need kuus tahku filosoofilisest tavamõistusest on järgmised:

1. Inimeste ainulaadne loomus tuletatakse ainult inimest ennast uurides, mitte võrdlevalt teiste elusolenditega;
2. Loomade peamiseks üldtunnuseks on, et neil puudub midagi ainuliselt inimomast;
3. Kui inimesi võrreldakse loomadega, kirjeldatakse inimesi nende suhtes ainulaadsetena, kui aga teisi loomaliike võrreldakse omavahel, kirjeldatakse neid vaid üksteisest erinevana liigispetsiifiliste tunnuste põhjal;
4. Eristus inimeste ja loomade vahel on vaimne, või siis kirjeldatav või taandatav vaimsele;
5. Loomi kirjeldatakse ühe suure ja ühtlase kategooriana, millesse kuuluvad kõik loomad tervikuna, liigipõhiseid eristusi ei tehta;
6. Tõeline inimeseksolemine saavutatakse siis, kui inimesest endast eemaldada või välja tõrjuda loomalikkus.



Neid kriteeriume, mida arvatakse olevat ainulaadselt inimomased ja mis seetõttu puuduvad kõikidel teistel loomadel, võib esile tuua sisuliselt lugematul arvul, kuna need on tuletatud eituse kaudu vastavalt tahkudele 2 ja 3. Enamlevinud kriteeriumid on keelevõime, kultuurivõime, teadvus või eneseteadvus, ratsionaalsus, sümbolikasutus. See ei tähenda, et mõni neist kriteeriumeist ei võiks olla ainulaadselt inimomane, kuid niisugused võrdlused on teaduslikult võimalikud vaid liigipõhiselt. Töö rõhuasetuseks on aga, et loobuda niisugusest filosoofilisest tavamõistusest, mille tagajärjeks on teiste loomade väljatõrjumine, võiks olla viljakas nii mõnelegi probleemile uudse lahenduse pakkumiseks, mille tõttu zoo- ja biosemiootikal oleks tulus teha vastastikust koostööd paljude teiste humanitaaria ning sotsiaalteaduste valdkondadega ja eriti filosoofiavallaga.

Mõistagi ei saa seda „tavamõistust“ liialdatult üldistada. Täpsemalt, on näidatav, et eeltoodu käib peamiselt humanismi pärandiga mõttesuundade kohta, milles antropotsentriline mõtlemine on kesksel kohal. Sellest johtuvalt esitatakse töös vastukaaluks posthumanistlik mõtteviis, mille eesmärgiks on mõista inimeseksolemist sängitatuna paljudesse erinevatesse protsessidesse ning näha inimest haaratuna tervesse semiootilisse suhtevõrku, mis tema olukorda tingivad ja mida ta ise tingib vastu. Zoo- ja biosemiootika, mis rõhutavad kogu elusa kommunikatiivset iseloomu ning uurivad teiste elusolendite omailmu, on selle poolest oma sisult filosoofias ja humanitaarias laiemalt levinud „posthumanismile“ lähedased valdkonnad.

Töös kasutatakse läbivalt mitmeid mõisteid ja kontseptsioone, mis kerkivad eri artiklites ikka ja jälle üles. Kaks kesksemat neist on korrelatsioonism ja antropoloogiline masin. Esimene on (humanistliku pärandiga) filosoofiale omane mõtteviis, mille järgi teadmisteooria saab tegeleda vaid ühe spetsiifilise suhtega, nimelt mõtlemise ja olemise vahelisega, ega mitte kummagi poolega eraldi. Mõelda tähendab mõelda korrelatsioonist maailma ja teadvuse, keele ja osutatu jne vahel. Korrelatsioonism on aga ebasümmeetriline: inimõistus või –kultuur omab suhtes konstitueerivat rolli, täites maailma tähendusega. Sellest johtuvalt pöörab korrelatsioonistlik mõte vähem tähelepanu maailmale ja ka seal leiduvatele teisele olenditele, kuna inimliku poole tähendust konstrueeriv roll on tõstetud tähtsamale kohale. Korrelatsioonistlik mõte toetab humanistlikku filosoofiat ja selle tõrjuvat hoiakut kõige mitteinimliku suhtes.

Giorgio Agambeni mõiste antropoloogiline masin käib peamiselt ülaltoodud kuuenda punkti kohta. Läbi lääne mõtte ajaloo on inimest regulaarselt kujutatud justkui kahetise olendina, kes kuulub osalt loodusesse, osalt on aga sealt väljunud (kas siis „väljunud“ eraldisse kultuurimaailma või siis on tema teadvus või mõtlemine maailmast mingis tähenduses eraldiseisev). Loomalikkude poolt aga on tavapäraselt peetud madalamaks, mistõttu „tõelise“ inimloomuse saavutamiseks tuleb see maha suruda või välja juurida. Lisaks filosoofilistele probleemidele on sellel arusaamal olnud mitmeid traagilisi tagajärgi ka poliitikavallas ja ühiskondliku elu korraldamises.

Käesoleva töö **artikkel I**, *The philosophical discourse on animals, and the philosophical animals themselves* („Filosoofiline diskursus loomadest ja filosoofilised loomad ise“) on töö jaoks keskne ning harutab pikemalt lahti ülal-

toodud kuus tahku inimeste ja loomade suhete kirjeldamises. Edasi lahatakse mõningaid tagajärgi sellest enesekohasest inimese isoleerimisest vaid tema enda kirjeldatud ja temast endast tuletatud kujutlusest inimloomuse kohta. Lõpuks üritatakse näidata, mismoodi võiks välja näha omamoodi tagasipilk inimese mõtlemisele teiste elusolendite vaatepunktilt, ning arutada, kuidas see mõjutaks meie ideid, arusaamu ja mõisteid nii meist endist kui meie kaaslastest, teistest elusolenditest.

**II artikkel**, *The Semiotic Species: Deelying with Animals in Philosophy* („Semiootiline liik: Loomad John Deely filosoofias“) rakendab ülaltoodud kuut tahku John Deely „semiootilise looma“ mõistele, uurimaks, kas ja kuivõrd kirjeldatud filosoofiline tavamõistus tuleb esile John Deely kui ühe semiootika jaoks keskse autori vastavasisulistes töödes. Näidatakse, et ka Deely järgib osaliselt seda mustrit, kuid toob välja eripäraseid tahke, mis asetavad inimesed kommunikatiivselt sügavalt eluilmale sisse. Lisaks tuuakse ära klassifikatsioon võimalikest lähenemistest semiootilisele probleemile *conditio humanast* kui olendist, kes on teadlik märkidest.

**III artikkel**, *The Anthropological Machine and the Absence of Animals* („Antropoloogiline masin ja loomade puudumine“) keskendub peaaegselt juba nimetatud antropoloogilise masina mõistele, ning arutleb tagajärgede üle, mis tulenevad inimese-looma vahelise piiri paigutamisest mitte liigipiirile, vaid inimesse endasse. See on viinud erinevatesse katsetesse inimese loomalikku pärandit alla suruda. Antropoloogilise masina mõiste on peamisi, mis on põhjustanud kuni loomaeetika tekkimiseni vähese eetilise tähelepanu muudele elusolenditele.

Viimased kaks artiklit on laiemaks taustaks esimese kolme spetsiifilisemale fookusele. **IV artikkel** *A Metaphysic for Semiotics* („Üks semiootika metafüüsikaid“) arutab teatavate üldiste kontseptsioonide üle semiootika üldteoorias, mis sobiks alusteks mitteinimeste uurimise tarbeks. Käiakse välja eri entiteetidest koosnev mittehierarhiline „lameontoloogia“ kontseptsioon, ning „transaktsiooniline“ käsitlus suhetest, mis näeb relatsioone konstitueerivate ja taandamatutena. **V artikkel**, *Väljamõeldiste vadin, reaalsuse vaikus* annab laiema ajaloolise tausta nn „kahe maailma“ metafüüsika tekkest ja arengust, nimelt modernistlikust arusaamast, mille järgi on võimalik ette otsustada, kas mõni nähtus kuulub maailma või mõtte, looduse või kultuuri valda, millise otsuse tagajärjel kirjeldatakse neid kaht olemise sfääri eraldiseisvate ja lahutatutena. See humanistlik mõttesuund filosoofias on kõige kaalukam põhjus, miks mitteinimesi (nii asju kui teisi loomi) võetakse filosoofias arutellu vaid siis kui nad on esitatud inimese representatsioonidena, aga mitte iseseisvate ja iseväärsete entiteetide ja elusolenditega tihedalt põimitud maailmas.

Positiivse programmi käiakse töös välja ka võimalus analüüsida muid liike sarnaselt antropoloogias leviva „ontoloogilise pöörde“ vaimus, mille eesmärgiks on omamoodi tagasipilk, kus fundamentaalsed mõisted pannakse teiste kultuuride või kollektiivide kujutluste, uskumuste ja arusaamade kriitilise ümbermõtestamise alla ning selle abil näidatakse mõistete partikulaarset, ajaloolist või kehastunud loomust. Tulevaste uuringute jaoks käiakse välja võima-

lus teha sarnast zoosemiootikas teiste liikide abil, kus inimese omast erinevad omadused võiksid olla kõnekad inimomaste arusaamade kriitilisel mõistmisel ja lahtiharutamisel.

Mitmes artiklis esitatakse eelneva illustreerimiseks mõned spekulatiivsed lühianalüüsid või pigem kommentaarid, milline võiks olla „filosoofia loomade pilgu läbi“. Võetakse mõned näited (mutt, kaheksajalg, lehtritsikas) ning näidatakse, mismoodi võiks nende abil mõelda probleemidest nagu nt materiaalsus, probleemilahendamine, teadvus jne. Antropotseeni ajastul on sellest tulenev arusaam inimeste sügavast osalusest kogu elumaailmas olulise tähtsusega.



## **PUBLICATIONS**

## CURRICULUM VITAE

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### Selected publications

- Rattasepp, Silver 2016. The philosophical discourse on animals, and the philosophical animals themselves. In: Maran, Timo; Tønnessen, Morten; Armstrong Oma, Kristin; Kiiraja, Laura; Magnus, Riin; Mäekivi, Nelly; Rattasepp, Silver; Thibault, Paul; Tüür, Kadri (eds.), *Animal Umwelten in a Changing World: Zoosemiotic Perspectives*. Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus, 51–65.
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### **Other specialized activities**

Translations of various academic and philosophical texts, including Bruno Latour, John Dewey, Tim Ingold, John Berger, Gregory Bateson, Quentin Meillassoux, Andy Clark, Lynn White Jr. and others.

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### Peamised publikatsioonid

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### **Toimetatud kogumikud**

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### **Muu erialane tegevus**

Tõlkinud erinevaid akadeemilisi ja filosoofilisi tekste, mh Bruno Latour, John Dewey, Tim Ingold, John Berger, Gregory Bateson, Quentin Meillassoux, Andy Clark, Lynn White Jr. jt.

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