

Anthropocentrism and Two Phenomenological Approaches to Animal Life

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Abstract. This article analyzes two phenomenological approaches to animal life in the context of criticism of anthropocentrism. The first part considers the question of anthropocentrism. Beginning with the posthumanist criticism of anthropocentrism as an ideology of human exceptionalism, the article proposes to reflect human anthropocentricity phenomenologically as a condition of experience. The second part discusses San Martín and Pintos' approach, which, grounded in Husserl's analysis of transcendental *ego*, considers the human-animal relation in terms of egotic subjectivity, corporeality, and the constitution of sense. San Martín and Pintos' position is very important in the criticism of anthropocentrism, and yet it is considered insufficient when reflecting the diversity of human-animal relations. The third part analyses Depraz's four-stage structure of empathy and aims to determine the conditions and limits of access to animals as liminal subjects. Corporeality is considered as the most general layer; the accessibility of animal consciousness, the approach to their experience, the possibilities and limits of it are analyzed. Finally, it is concluded that the two positions can contribute to the understanding of the limits of anthropocentrism and its failures.

Keywords: anthropocentrism, anthropological difference, animality, empathy, San Martín and Pintos, Depraz

Antropocentrizmas ir dvi fenomenologinės prieigos prie gyvūnų gyvenimo

Santrauka. Straipsnyje analizuojamos 2 fenomenologinės prieigos prie gyvūnų gyvenimo antropocentrizmo kritikos kontekste. Pirmoje dalyje apžvelgiamas antropocentrizmo klausimas. Pradedant posthumanistine antropocentrizmo kaip žmogiškojo išskirtinumo ideologijos kritika siūloma fenomenologinių požiūriu reflektuoti žmogaus antropocentriškumą kaip patirties sąlygą. Antroje dalyje apžvelgiama San Martino ir Pintos prieiga, kuri, remdamasi Husserlio transcendentalinio ego analize *Ideen II*, atskleidžia žmonių ir gyvūnų tapatumą egotiškumo, kūniškumo ir prasmės konstitucijos aspektais. Jų pozicija labai svarbi antropocentrizmo kritikoje, tačiau laikoma nepakankama žmonių ir gyvūnų santykių įvairovei reflektuoti. Trečioje dalyje analizuojama Depraz pateikta keturių pakopų empatijos struktūra ir siekiama nustatyti, kokios yra ribinių subjektų – gyvūnų – prieinamumo sąlygos ir ribos. Išskiriamas kūniškumas kaip bendriausias sluoksnis, analizuojama gyvūnų sąmonių prieinamumo, jų patirties supratimo galimybės ir ribos. Galiausiai daroma išvada, kad šios dvi pozicijos gali prisidėti suprantant žmonių ir gyvūnų bendrumo ir skirtumo ribas bei tai, kiek gali būti apribotas antropocentrizmas.

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: antropocentrizmas, antropologinis skirtumas, gyvūniškumas, empatija, San Martínas ir Pintos, Depraz

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Introduction

Prior to the 21st century, the debate on sociality was largely confined to interpersonal relationships between humans. But the 21st century offers a new perspective. The crisis of Anthropocene raises the question: In what relation humans should be with other living beings? Animal ethics, posthumanism, biophilosophy, and the criticism of anthropocentrism are raising awareness of human-animal relation. Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* (1976), which proved and demonstrated how much animals suffer to support human well-being, had to radically question speciesism and the anthropological difference. At the end of the 20th century, Jacques Derrida (2008) went even further and showed how the human's self-constitution depends on this difference which enables violence against other living beings, and also gives the foundation for human exceptionalism. Such criticism is followed by the view that the anthropological difference as an enabler of violence "can no longer be maintained" (Calarco 2008).

But to what extent and how can anthropological difference be abandoned? How can we abandon our human concepts driven by anthropocentrism in understanding animals and forming new modes of co-existence? How can we see ourselves and create the world not by separating from animals, but through the very relationship with them? In this article, I will attempt to phenomenologically reflect on these issues and discuss two contemporary positions providing a clear ethical motivation which responds to the questions of criticism of anthropocentrism and offers phenomenological tools to address human-animal relations. Husserl's phenomenology is the starting point for both of these positions, however, I will not present his insights into animal life separately due to the space limitation. My aim is rather to explore what phenomenology can offer to the debate on anthropocentrism and co-existence with non-human animals. Of course, there are more than two positions on the question of animality in contemporary phenomenology. Some remain within the boundaries of Husserlian philosophy (Ciocan 2017; Heinemaa 2013), some attempt to extend it (Depraz 2004; San Martin and Pintos 2001), while others develop their own perspectives by using the aspects of being-in-the-world, intercorporeality, or interanimality as seen in the works of Jacob von Uexküll, Martin Heidegger, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (Acampora 2006; Painter and Lotz 2007). The limited scope of the article gives no possibility to discuss all of their ideas. So, in this article, I shall only discuss those that suspend any metaphysical preconditions about animal essence, do not seek to create a new ontology of organisms, and consistently remain within the framework of Husserlian transcendental philosophy. It should be acknowledged in advance that the weak point of these positions is unresolved ontological questions (what it means to be an organism, what is properly human, etc.). But these positions help to better understand the epistemological dimension of criticism of anthropocentrism (how are animals accessible to us, how can we overcome the human understanding, etc.) and its relation to ethics.

The question of anthropocentrism

What are the motives of the criticism of anthropocentrism? A common thread can be traced in phenomenology and posthumanist philosophies – violence against animals. However, there exist significant differences. The boundaries of human experience are more important for phenomenology, whereas posthumanism focuses on the critique of human exceptionalism. When Matthew Calarco argues that anthropological difference can no longer be maintained, he sees it as a tool of violence of anthropocentrism.

I will suggest that the genuine critical target of progressive thought and politics today should be anthropocentrism as such, for it always one version or another of the human that falsely occupies the space of universal and that functions to exclude what is considered nonhuman from ethical and political consideration (Calarco 2008: 10).

Anthropocentrism is understood as an approach which puts the human at the center, thereby making them the central problem and concern, while the anthropological difference is seen as one that separates humans from other living beings, relegating animals beyond ethics and politics, and establishing hierarchical relationships. Significantly, in the posthumanist philosophy of the ‘animal question’ and in the criticism of speciesism and anthropocentrism, anthropocentrism itself is considered an ideology which is understood in terms of *power*, *control*, and *exploitation*. As Calarco notes, “ ‘Anthropocentrism’, as I define the term, refers to a set of relations and systems of power that are in the service of those who are considered by the dominant culture to be fully and properly human” (Calarco 2015: 25). Therefore, the human creates the idea of oneself as an exceptional being, presenting it as an order of reality, and thus lays the foundations for the exploitation, transformation of animals into resources. Since anthropocentrism is considered in terms of power and domination in the above-mentioned discussion, not only human actions but also attitudes, thinking, even the perception also have an aspect of violence.

Thinkers such as Derrida or Giorgio Agamben are very important in understanding this. Derrida (2008) equates anthropocentrism with logocentrism, which means that violence lies not only in actions with or against animals, but also in an interpretation itself. The anthropocentric-logocentric thinking itself determines the foundations of otherness, articulates its essence, and so structures our thinking and actions. Therefore, the attitude and interpretation itself become the acts of violence, and thus not only the actions, but also the human attitude in general become the target of criticism. For his part, Giorgio Agamben convincingly shows how the apparatus of violence – the “anthropological machine” – produces the human according to the “exclusion-inclusion” scheme, by repressing, conquering, denying animality, and establishing the human essence (Agamben 2004: 23–27, 33–38). He shows that anthropogenesis itself cannot be separated from violence towards animals, hence stopping the anthropological machine would also mean stopping the violence. Since various inquiries regarding the human exceptionalism deal with *consequences* and their results instead of taking into account their principles, jux-

taping anthropocentrism with logocentrism and humanism seems justifiable. Because the consequences are violence, the task of the criticism of ideology is to stop anthropocentrism, to eliminate or at least limit the anthropological difference, to jam up the anthropological machine and even ‘withhold’ the human approach to animals. Finally, to understand the human itself from a non-human or biocentric perspective. But Derrida’s and Agamben’s difficulties, for which there is no space to be presented here, suggest that anthropocentrism is not merely a matter of politics that we can simply abandon by changing the political agenda.

What can phenomenology bring to this context? As phenomenology examines the conditions of experience, it can help to understand the extent to which a non-anthropocentric approach to animals and ourselves is possible. It could be argued from the phenomenological perspective that *anthropocentrism as an ideology of human exceptionalism* should be distinguished from *human anthropocentricity*, which is a *condition of experience*. Human anthropocentricity could be considered as a layer of experience, a peculiar center or foundation on which we experience any living being. Only under certain cultural conditions can anthropocentricity turn into anthropocentrism. Phenomenology could clarify, aid to realize the human limits of human experience, and abandon the naïve view that it is possible to completely suspend anthropocentrism. Of course, as Ted Toadvine points out, the trend of ‘human exceptionalism’ can be traced in the phenomenological tradition itself (Toadvine 2007: 42–45). Philosophers of the first half of the 20th century, such as Max Scheler (Scheler 1991), Martin Heidegger (Heidegger 1983), Eugen Fink (Fink 1979), formed their concepts of the human by distinguishing humans from other beings through having another essence. Toadvine considers Scheler’s conceptualization as the most prominent example in which he distinguishes between humans and animals by the difference of the essence. Although he recognized the unique intelligence of animals, he reserved exceptional qualities for the human – spirit, openness to the world, the ability to suspend oneself, and so on. The development of the human question in the phenomenological tradition provides a lesson in how dangerous it is to try to define the human essence on the basis of the anthropological difference.

I believe it is necessary to become aware of anthropocentricity as a condition of experience. Edmund Husserl already laid the foundations for this when considering the possibilities of accessing liminal subjects. When talking about the understanding of animals, Husserl notes that the human always functions as a norm in relation to animals. In *Cartesian Meditations*, from the perspective of pure transcendental philosophy, he claims:

Relative to the brute, man is, constitutionally speaking, the normal case just as I myself am the primal norm constitutionally for all other men. Brutes are essentially constituted for me as abnormal “variants” of my humanness, even though among them in turn normality and abnormality may be differentiated. (Husserl 1960: 126)

Thus any understanding of animals is based on those structures of the transcendental *ego* which are given to the human, i.e. available to one and represent the norm. Husserl’s consideration of animals in the context of *Lebenswelt* shows that the norm is not only

transcendental in nature, but also is culturally formed. When reflecting on the understanding of liminal subjects, Husserl notes that he thinks as a “reasonable, normal, and mature human being” (Husserl 1973: 121). In these reflections, Husserl is always in the center, and liminal subjects only appear on the margins of the *normal* experience (Husserl’s detailed reflections on animals within the context of the normality/abnormality problem are discussed in Christian Ciocan’s excellent article (Ciocan 2017). I think that this central place is not only a matter of choice – it is a *starting point* because one always starts with one’s own perception, and alien subjects are accessible only from there.

Therefore, looking ahead, we may claim that anthropocentrism as an ideology should be criticised, but it is impossible to avoid anthropocentricity as a condition of experience. Anthropocentricity does not need to be overcome, but realized and reflected in order to identify the presuppositions which enable to understand liminal subjects or decisions about how to deal with them. In raising this question through the phenomenological reflection, we move from dualistic schemes to a more nuanced field of experience. Realizing that our understanding determines how we treat them, new questions arise – what do humans and animals have in common? To what extent can we understand them and shape the human co-existence with animals? I will single out two positions from the contemporary phenomenological research. The first is significant as it rejects the anthropological difference in the plane of transcendental subjectivity and asserts human and animal identity in terms of *ego* structure. It paves the way for the criticism of anthropocentrism, by showing that the center is not purely human. The second one raises the question of accessibility of liminal subjects in terms of the normal and the anomalous. It opens the way to reflect the rich experience of human-animal relations; that does not rule out the difference, but treats it as the limit of human experience behind which the otherness of the animal lies.

Javier San Martín and Maria Luz Pintos Peñaranda: animals are transcendental subjectivities

In 2001, Javier San Martín and Maria Luz Pintos Peñaranda published the article *Animal Life and Phenomenology*. They return to the transcendental *ego* structures examined by Husserl in the second volume of *Ideas*, assert that “the concept of transcendental subjectivity must be extended to nonhuman animals” (San Martín, Pintos 2001: 344). However, it should be noted that, unlike Husserl, their ideas are not driven by epistemological issues or the constitution of the common world, but by an ethical motive. They begin their text by naming the human malpractices when treating animals:

Nonhuman animals are excluded from their natural environments; their habitat conditions are degraded so that survival is impossible; their movements are restricted; they are bred in overcrowded and stressful conditions for commercial purposes; they are neutered; they have parts of their bodies maimed for life; babies are separated from their mothers at very early ages; they are painfully marked; they are carried in overcrowded vehicles for hours and days without

food or water and without room to move around; shooting parties are organized; nonhumans perform in circus acts, they are cruelly beaten to death in festive rituals with blunt or sharp instruments for the delight of audiences; they undergo all kinds of military and scientific experiments; they are kept in overcrowded and really small cages; pets become closely attached to their masters only to be abandoned as nuisances; they are trained to fight to the death... Enough is enough. (San Martín, Pintos 2001: 342)

It is rather easy to identify both past and present malpractices of handling animals here. But why such practices are selected considering the diversity of human-animal relationships? What presuppositions lead to this gaze? I would distinguish two sources for such an approach. First, phenomenology has been struggling with the treating the animal as a mechanism since the early 20th century. It may seem rather strange that, at the beginning of the 21st century, such an attempt is being made anew when it was already done in the first half of the 20th century by Jacob von Uexküll, Husserl, Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and others. However, a stronger ethical motivation makes it possible to enunciate those moments of transcendental issues that seem to be forgotten today or self-evident to such an extent that no one wants to return to them. If animals are mere mechanisms, their experiences and emotions can be ignored. They can be bred, contained, transported as raw materials or objects. If animals are living automatons, then all of these listed actions are not violence against them.

The second point is that, with today's greater understanding of emotions that animals experience, the difference between a living being and an automaton is no longer enough. Yet, not all animal emotions motivate to reconsider human-animal relationships. San Martín and Pintos' examples show that the most significant issue here is suffering. Although the authors do not mention anthropological difference, it can be noticed that such practices appear as completely ordinary, normal behavior that is enabled by anthropological difference. The ways of animal suffering mentioned are not deliberately caused. Quite the opposite – the suffering of animals is not reflected on. To a farm or a lab worker, a matador or a hunter, it is evident that they cause pain, but the question is whether they are consciously aware of their actions regarding animal suffering? It does not appear to them that they are engaging in intentional animal torture or committing a crime. For instance, animal hunting is seen by some as entertainment because animals are not treated as analogous to humans. After all, if the hunters thought of not hunting animals, but villagers, making trophies on the walls of their rooms from the villager's tusks and scalps, vests and pants from the human skin, hunting people would seem like a horrendous atrocity. As the activities of hunter organizations show, they do not see themselves as cruel people – they are empathetic towards each other, have their own ethics and do not treat each other like they treat the animals which they hunt. Anthropological difference divides humans and animals into two spheres. The first is the sphere of intersubjectivity, ethics, politics, the second is beyond them. Therefore, the anthropological difference can be treated not only as an enabler of utilizing animals, but also as a condition of experience. This means that, in order to change such a behavior, understanding the common core between humans and animals is of great importance.

The first thing San Martín and Pintos aim to prove is that animals are not automatons, but sentient beings. They do this by looking back to Husserl and transcendental issues. San Martín and Pintos rely on Husserl's second volume of *Ideas* by considering the *ego* structure as characteristic of both human and animals. *Ego* is a pole of intentionality, the center activity and perception; hence it is common to all beings with mental life. This move by San Martín and Pintos itself might seem unexpected, as, in the phenomenological tradition, the transcendental *ego* was understood as the human *ego*. Perhaps this is the case because of Husserl's reflections where the transcendental *ego* is a structure that is given together with reflection, which is only human. Husserl distinguishes the core common to human and animals – the pure *ego* – which he defines as the “subject of the acts and states.” It is given “as that which, in perception, is directed to the perceived, in knowing to the known, in phantasizing to the phantasized” (Husserl 1989: 103), and so on. But Husserl notes that “the essence of the pure *ego* thereby includes the possibility of an ordinary self-grasp, a ‘self-perception’ ” (*ibid.*: 107). Although Husserl did not deny the possibility of the animal's self-perception, the pure *ego* in his phenomenology is considered only as a given of one's own. Hence, from this, it is understandable why Husserl did not delve deeper into the transcendental structures of animal experience; and his claim that the pure *ego* is given to all *animalia* was of little significance to his own phenomenology.

San Martín and Pintos re-evaluate these moments in Husserl's phenomenology and form the guidelines for the animal question in phenomenology. They put the issue of reflection aside and examine the common core of human and animal. The authors choose the centrality of the *ego* and the constitution of sense as their cornerstones. By asking how animals are given to us, San Martín and Pintos claim that “nonhuman life is given in exactly the same way as human life, with the same characteristics of centrality and epistemic intimacy that define subjectivity” (San Martín, Pintos 2001: 349). They base such statements on the analogous way of the other's givenness to oneself, formulating it through the theory of intersubjectivity. We can recognize the pure *ego* of animals as, by analogy, we are given to understand that they are also the center of their own activity, perception, knowledge, and action accordingly. San Martín and Pintos state that, “if they [animals] have a mental life, that mental life must have a transcendental sense, i.e. it must also be constituting” (San Martín, Pintos 2001: 348). So, if animals have perception, then, for them, their objects are constituted in one form or another.

In formulating guidelines for the phenomenological approach to animal life, San Martín and Pintos list eleven points that are common to all human and non-human animal subjects. They claim that “[a]ll animals, both humans and nonhumans, are transcendental subjectivities” (San Martín, Pintos 2001: 355). I will single out only a few key structural points:

- “Every animal subject – human and nonhuman – is a *Körper-Leib*” (San Martín, Pintos 2001: 355). Everyone has a living body which is different from a dead one, can feel, experience, and act corporeally.
- They control their body in their own, the ‘I way’ (*egoic, Ichlich*), which means that animals have their corporeality and are the center of their own activity. Every

animal subject is “the ‘zero’ point of this world” (San Martín, Pintos 2001: 358). Identifiable things are constituted only in relation to its place. Animals stand in relation to the environment, surrounding objects, and other living beings.

- The time experience of all animals – both human and non-human – is uniform and integral. The stream of their consciousness is characterized by the living presence, retentions, and protentions.
- All animals experience their bodies directly, their bodies are given to them in their original present. This givenness should not be equated with thinking or reflection.
- Each subject has its own perspective, both of its own place and the peculiar ways in which objects are given.
- Each subject experiences the common world and has its own social horizon of species. They empathize, understand, and get in touch with each other. The authors emphasize that language should be understood here on the basis of human reason and that “we should not forget that the human has inherited some communicative forms from his ancestors” (San Martín, Pintos 2001: 360). Every animal subject is an ‘animate organism’, i.e. it can express oneself, communicate with other animals, give an understanding of oneself through expression, and understand other subjects to some extent. San Martín and Pintos accentuate that this is the mutual understanding both within the species and inter-species. Each subject can understand alien species to a certain degree.
- The first contact of each subject with the other is “affective and emotional” (San Martín, Pintos 2001: 362). Here they acknowledge that one can speak only of the emotions of those animals that one can recognize. However, San Martín and Pintos stress that we can identify the positive or negative response from animals in any case, what is good or harmful to them. Through this we are able to see whether animals experience positive or negative states and emotions.

As it can be seen, these guidelines are based on the pure *ego* structure. We cannot disagree – nor can we draw – the anthropological difference from the very core of intentionality and bodily life. These guidelines provide arguments for the shift from the anthropocentric view to the biocentric one, which is desirable in the posthumanistic discourses. The core of the *ego* is common, so there is no difference of essence. As a consequence, it should question all distinctions drawn by anthropological difference. But, from the other side, there are some problematic points. San Martín and Pintos consider that such a revision of transcendental subjectivity is significant in that “our being entwined with other animals at a transcendental level, also binds us ethically” (San Martín, Pintos 2001: 363). We cannot disagree with such an ethical connection, and we must acknowledge that San Martín and Pintos have done important work in revising transcendental subjectivity. And yet, their guidelines should not be adopted too enthusiastically. One might ask – what are the limits of erasing the anthropological difference? The emotions of many mammals or birds are recognizable, and the question of their suffering binds us ethically. But what about other animals that can also be recognized as being at the center of their own

activities, perceptions, and so on? What about the reptiles, fish, insects, ticks, worms, or jellyfish? When I spontaneously kill a mosquito that bites me, I have no ethical relation with it, despite being able to recognize the *ego* as the pole of intentionality in the mosquito's activity.

There seems to be a few more issues that need to be addressed. First, the question of the scope concerning the conceptualization of animal emotions. San Martín and Pintos emphatically state that "all animals, both human and non-human, are transcendental subjectivities." What is meant by 'all animals' here? We may agree that the minimal structure of the *ego* is common to many animals, but the enthusiastic connecting of the transcendental with ethics shows that phenomenology tends to think only of those animals whose emotions and suffering are easily recognizable. Generalizing statements about all animals should be made with great care. Second, it must be acknowledged that attempts to say anything about all animals bear the danger of humanizing animals. When they are freed from the violence of mechanization, another violence of humanization begins. What is meant when the authors argue that all animals need to be "protected" from violence, and that this protection needs to be "put into our practical life" (San Martín, Pintos 2001: 363)? I agree that there is a lot of evidence that animals are not automatons, they feel emotions, and so on, which no longer allows the above mentioned practices to be left out of ethics and suffering. But how to 'protect' mosquitoes, earthworms, and jellyfish in practical life? It is evident that San Martín and Pintos adhere to a clear ethical imperative not to cause suffering while recognizing their transcendental subjectivity, which only reinforces the rationale for this imperative. Therefore, thirdly, we should not only limit the scope of animals with which we have an ethical relationship, but also expand the variety of relations and interactions with them. I think it is necessary to address the issue of the common core at the transcendental level by not only focusing on erasing the anthropological difference in certain layers of experience, but by returning to the anthropological difference, and ask how much our anthropocentricity determines our relations with animals.

It might seem that we should go one step further here and adopt a new ontology that would draw a substantive distinction between empathising and non-empathising animal groups. This would perhaps establish a certain order of differentiation between species, which could also provide a justification for ethical orientations. Clearly, there is a need to explain why we empathise and ethically commit ourselves more to mammals than to insects or plants. It should be noted that, within the phenomenological tradition itself (if we understand it broadly), there have been attempts to distinguish between animal species based on their certain characteristics of perception, and, therefore, to provide both guidelines for the understanding of animals, and for the orientation of the human's self-awareness towards animals. Perhaps the most famous are the attempts of Max Scheler and Helmut Plessner. The former distinguishes between plants, animals, and humans in an Aristotelian manner on the basis of the centrality of the soul (Scheler 1991). Meanwhile, Plessner, on the basis of eccentric positionality, provides an even more nuanced account of the levels of the organic system (Plessner 2019). While some authors would

argue for the productivity of their positions to address the current questions of animal subjectivity, I would suggest that this would be a topic that requires a rigorous rethinking of ontological assumptions, especially as they relate to notions of the essence of species. I think that in order to avoid questions of substance, we should follow the second position of Husserlian phenomenology which considers the questions of the accessibility of animal consciousnesses in the perspective of the problem of normality/anomaly.

Natalie Depraz: anomalous subjects and the structure of empathy

At the heart of the second position is not so much the question of the common core, but of the difference. This position is significant if we want to understand the conditions of accessing animal experiences and the limits of suspending the anthropocentric attitude. In developing Husserl's theory of intersubjectivity as alterology, Natalie Depraz analyzes human-animal relation in the perspective of normality-anomaly distinction. She solves the question of accessibility of liminal subjects and offers the structure of empathy. She follows Husserl's approach that I – as the transcendental *ego* – is the norm, and the liminal subjects are anomalous to it. Here she also emphasizes the ethical motive, by arguing that 'anomaly' is a purely 'descriptive term', and the difference between normality and anomaly should in no way be understood as the 'hierarchy of values'. On the contrary:

Not being deficient subjects who would be missing something, infants, animals, the insane and aliens are generative subjects, enabling and compelling us to learn and to become familiar with unknown dimensions of ourself and with new horizons of our world. They enrich our self and enlarge our world. As generative subjects, they generate new views in us; as liminal subjects, as I call them after Husserl (*Limes-Subjekte*), they pave the way for an unlimiting of my own egoic subjectivity. (Depraz 2004: 207)

Therefore, the understanding of others and self-perception is formed not only by turning to oneself through means of reflection, but also through encounters with alien others who call to recognize something similar in oneself or acknowledge an unsurpassable limit. Depraz offers an outline for the structure of empathy, which consists of four stages, the four 'steps'. These stages are not in chronological order of experience, but they are layers of the same process. Empathy consists of:

A passive association of my lived body with your lived body
 An imaginative self-transposal in your psychic states
 An interpretative understanding of yourself as being as alien to me
 An ethical responsibility toward yourself as a person (enjoying and suffering). (Depraz 2004: 205)

How does Depraz herself interpret this structure? By using Husserl's concept of *Paa-rung*, Depraz argues that empathy takes place in a much more passive and primitive layer than in the reflective understanding of the other. The first stage is coupling (pairing): "Coupling is an associative process through which my lived-body and your lived-body

experience a similar functioning of our tactile, auditory, visual, proprioceptive body-stile, of our embodied behavior in the world and of our affective and active kinesthetic habits and acts. Coupling is a holistic experience of lived bodily resemblance” (Depraz 2004: 205). The second stage is the imaginative self-transposal that “deals with the cooperative encounter of our embodied psychic states.” Depraz refers to Husserl who interprets the other’s understanding on the basis of standing in the place of the other. I can see from the place of the other, “as if I were standing over there, where the Other’s body is” (Husserl 1960: 123). Although Husserl generally uses the term *Einfühlung* for this purpose, Depraz chooses a less commonly used term – *sich Hineinphantasieren*. *Hineinphantasieren* does not seem very problematic to her because it follows the structure of a successful understanding. However, for Depraz, its problematic nature becomes evident in the case of animals. But more on that later. As Depraz describes the third and fourth stages: “(3) understanding and communication, and (4) ethical responsibility can be summarized as follows: the third step of empathy involves expression (verbal or not) and interpretation, which lead to the possibility of understanding (and misunderstanding of course): it is a cognitive step; the fourth step deals with ethics, affection and considering the other as having emotions: suffering and enjoying” (Depraz 2004: 206).

Depraz only offers an outline which has to be further developed by ourselves. I would argue that the expansion of this structure, modified to some extent, would be useful when examining the question of accessibility of liminal subjects, i.e. animals. She does not say much about the interactions with animals, but gives an important indication. As Depraz argues, we are related “with non-reflective consciousness” – children and animals – by “intersubjectivity as interaffectations” (Depraz 2004: 209). So the first step towards the animal is not thinking or understanding the mental contents of its *psyche*, but the affectation of one another. The animal’s movement and gesture becomes a reference to which it is answered not so much verbally as in action. The first stage of understanding is not the same perceptions, but the interaction between each other. The interaction should not be considered as a mechanical action, but as a certain way of understanding. For example, when playing with my dog, I understand him not by thinking about his mental states, but by acting together: knowing from experience how to understand his gaze and gestures.

The nature of such knowledge could be interpreted in the light of Merleau-Ponty’s concept of intercorporeality which might be seen as the first stage of passive association. Following Merleau-Ponty, we can recognize the common structures between human and animal corporeality, perception, movement, and so on. As Merleau-Ponty says when criticizing Rene Descartes: “the use of life teaches us not only the union of our soul and our body, but also the lateral union of animality and humanity” (Merleau-Ponty 2003: 271). This unity is incorporated in bodily movement as a ‘project of action’. As Merleau-Ponty observes: “It is never our objective body that we move, but our phenomenal body” (Merleau-Ponty 2005: 121). It [phenomenal body] is *not* “bones, muscles and nerves, but potentialities already mobilized by perception” (121) which are concentrated in the action that links the subject through ‘intentional threads’ with objects. If a living body were only an organism composed of parts, then animals that orient themselves in space

by echolocation or other senses, which humans do not have, would be completely incomprehensible to us. We should not be able to understand how bats, dolphins, and electric eels navigate in space. However, phenomenologically, the experience of these animals is not fully inaccessible and incomprehensible. We have a similar type of experience – the power to orient and act in the ‘near sphere’, and these powers are not understood according to the bodily organs, but through the intentional threads between the subject’s action and its surrounding objects.

Yet, it must be emphasized that animals close to us in their corporeality are accessible only in terms of the content of this passive association and not in terms of thinking. We understand them perfectly through this layer of experience until we start asking what is “in their minds?” In the stage of passive association, understanding each other is the interaction itself, it is the knowledge of action. When I play with a dog, I do not have to ask what it thinks when I throw a ball and it brings it back. When I play with a cat, I do not have to ask how it feels when it starts catching a rope stretched on the ground. All of this is understood not by thinking about the dog’s and the cat’s psychic states but by acting together and affecting each other. Everything seems easy until the obviousness of perception is confirmed by interaction. But the second stage – “an imaginative self-transposal into the other’s psychic states” – is probably the most problematic layer of experience. On the one hand, it is necessary to some extent. Realizing that the other has its own center on a very abstract level, I have to “stand in its place” or at least understand how it perceives. As Depraz says,

I am here and I imagine I am going there to the place where you are just now; conversely, you are here (the *there* where I am going to) and you imagine you are going there, to the place where I am (my *here*). Literally, we are exchanging places at the same time: through imagined kinaesthetic bodily exchanging we are able to exchange our psychic states. (Depraz 2004: 206)

For Depraz, this does not seem to be a problematic layer of empathy; and if we are talking about the similarity of human experiences, we can acknowledge that this sort of analogisation is taking place (e.g. when we are discussing a concert we liked with a colleague or if we are trying to explain to them why we did not like the concert or why it was terrible). Depraz might not consider this layer as problematic because she relies on the embodiedness of perception. On the other hand, there is a possibility to impose my ‘projections’ on someone else, i.e. to project my own perceptual structures and contents into the other’s center of perception. This step is the source of misunderstanding. For example, males and females of moderately aggressive fish – American cichlids (especially *Heros severus* cichlids) – clutch their lips together during spawning and pull each other to sides, so they may struggle, try to demonstrate their power, or perhaps establish supremacy or hierarchical relationships. But the ignorant spectator says in awe “how beautiful that they kiss each other during spawning”. Another example: one of the species of fish is even named based on this human characteristic – the ‘kissing gourami’ (*Helostoma temminckii*). Their popularity is can probably be understood due to this. In fact, the extremely large lips of this fish is intended for fighting between male fish and

for nibbling algae from leaves. In such cases, it can be seen that such projections and the 'standing in its place' completely deviate from what animals actually feel and do. So, the second stage, the imaginative self-transposal, has limits. Analogy, although necessary, is insufficient and requires the third stage – a cognitive step, knowledge that will allow the proper interpretation of animal actions and expressions.

It is obvious that the understanding of animals requires zoological knowledge on not only what they feel, but also their body structure, anatomy, instincts, abilities. One only needs to know why certain species of animals do not feel or feel more than we do because of their body structure; and why their relationship to the environment, their response to what is happening is such and not different. In order to fully understand, one needs to know how the behavior of fish changes during spawning, or why a cat cannot resist tugging a rope that is being pulled on the ground. It seems that we need another source of knowledge when considering alien subjects. This source is not formed on the basis of an empathically close intercorporeality, but by interpreting the incomprehensible actions of the other. As Jacob von Uexküll's (Uexküll 2010: 54–126) experiments and animal cognition research (Andrews 2015: 51–79) show, without causal explanation and experimentally derived knowledge, some animal behaviors, even their experience of time and space, might not be accessible to us for a long time. Of course, here we are scraping the surface of a broad question: to what extent does scientific experimentation explain and help us to understand animal behaviors? Nevertheless, the experiments depend heavily on the original hypothesis: the models of time, space, movement, and experience that they follow in advance.

We can recognise that experiments also involve a certain analogisation and projection of human cognition on the consciousness of animals. Attempts by biologists to scientifically explain animal behavior and the possibilities of their experiences can be learned from. How accurately can we identify animal experiences? How accurately can we understand what they are going through and how? Experiments of biologists are much richer and stronger verified than ignorant projections. Here, however, we face another problem that also points to the limits of interpretation. Biologist Victoria Braithwaite, for instance, has set herself the task of answering the question whether fish really feel pain. This question only looks simple. It would seem that any living being with a central nervous system should feel pain. However, the fish's pain does not have such an easily recognizable expression in comparison to that of mammals, so it is not quite clear how and to what extent fishermen or fish farmers cause them pain when the fish are caught and released or kept in rather cramped farms. Braithwaite did a series of experiments with bee venom, then with vinegar, and recorded changes in the fish's behavior that could be interpreted as a feeling of pain. However, she herself noted that behavioral changes are not a sufficient enough basis for judging pain or suffering. Our judgments about pain are guided by human and mammalian understanding of pain which we recognize from its expressions and more or less from our internal experiences. What makes Braithwaite's experiments interesting is that she was not satisfied with simple causal explanations, but rather sought to understand what the fish were actually experiencing. Her approaches to

the limits of understanding animal emotions are also instructive. I will not go into details of her experiments, but I will focus on a few significant points of her approach, which, on the one hand, shows that biologists are taking important steps which have a decisive influence on the third stage, and, on the other hand, reveals the actual situation we find ourselves in when we want to have a definitive and clear answer to the question of what animals feel. In shaping the approach to the fish's consciousness, she argues that:

The different categories or modules of consciousness can be thought of as pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. If a sufficient number of the puzzle pieces are identified, then this could provide us with evidence that animals also possess a form of consciousness. This is a somewhat speculative process—it has to be—but searching for subcategories of consciousness-like components could be a promising route forward. (Braithwaite 2010: 78).

To name the modules of perception, Braithwaite chose the concept of representation used in the psychology and cognitive sciences, and the criteria of consciousness according to the forms of consciousness proposed by the psychologist and cognitive scientist Ned Block. He distinguished between the 'access consciousness', which is responsible for memory and orientation, and 'phenomenal consciousness', which measures sensitivity and perception, and 'monitoring and self-consciousness' (Braithwaite 2010: 80), which is in charge of perceiving the surrounding situation, possibilities, and predictions of operational scenarios. The first criterion of consciousness was easily confirmed in fish – tests revealed that the fish were capable of forming a 'mental map' quite quickly and learned to orient themselves in the environment. They could remember where food was placed in the maze, and so on. However, Braithwaite also encountered serious difficulties. Experiments and observations showed that certain fish species learn complex actions, form rather complicated hierarchical relationships within a group, and even learn to cooperate not only with their own but also with other species. Yet, the crucial questions – what do fish experience? What do fish perceive? – remain only indirectly answered. Braithwaite could say whether that experience was positive or negative, but she was unable to provide evidence on the existence of richer emotions. And only after assembling certain parts of the puzzle – by analogy with mammalian experiences of noting the possibilities of these three modes of consciousness in the fish's experience – did she conclude that the fish do feel pain, even if we cannot say exactly how or what their experiences are.

What can such research tell us? I do not want to question the veracity of the results achieved by Braithwaite and her response to fishermen and fish farmers. On the one hand, studies attempting to elucidate the mental representations of fish provide us with more insight into what emotions specific species may experience. It is certainly far more meaningful information than only a causal interpretation of behavior according to a stimulus-reaction scheme and far more grounded knowledge than imaginative projections. At the same time, however, it seems that a certain border is being reached, beyond which we understand not so much better. Rather, we – as humans – are spectators who speculate and construct a 'map of their consciousness'. So we find ourselves in a paradoxical situa-

tion. The more precise the aim to find out what animal species or specific individuals are going through, the more structures, modules, and schemes of human thinking we project on them. What are these mental maps? Can we imagine them ourselves?

Hardly can we see them visibly, as Husserl remarked, imagine “as if I were there.” A biologist’s research helps to gather knowledge that we would never get by trying to imagine or consider by means of analogy. Perhaps this is sufficient for a biologist who wants to explain animal behavior. However, from a phenomenological point of view, (a) ‘more adequate’ knowledge of animals is possible only without crossing the border. Human projections are characterized by naïve misunderstanding of animals or scientific cognition. The former analogizes on the basis of ordinary experiences, thus projecting human experiences on animal consciousness (‘kissing fish’), and scientific knowledge projects by analogy on the basis of concepts, modules, and schemes. The second analogization is scientifically substantiated, but the question remains – do different terms grounded in concepts, modules, and schemes actually grasp the animal experience and their emotions? Biologists often ignore interpersonal interaction, influence on each other, and the experience of intercorporeality. But intercorporeality is equally important as it allows understanding without asking about representations in animal consciousness. I do not think that there is a need to oppose intercorporeality with experimental science. Rather, we have two approaches that are necessary elements of integrity in the experience of animal understanding.

The fourth step – an ethical responsibility toward yourself as a person (enjoying and suffering) – is of great significance in the structure of empathy. Unfortunately, it is often overlooked. Indeed, the motive of ethical responsibility led Braithwaite herself to answer the question whether fish can suffer. It could be said that the phenomenological dimension of the encounter may have been a part of her experience, but it was excluded from the research field by the biologists themselves. Perhaps this is a requirement of biological approach – as, for biologists, animals are solely objects of study. Yet, in an actual experience that occurs when meeting the other, the other is encountered as the other – it addresses me and I respond. A relationship is established *if I respond* to the other, allowing myself to be affected by it. I engage in an interaction, an adventure and its development can be very individual. The ethical response that lies within this four-step structure of empathy must not be forgotten. On the one hand, this means that it is the appeal of the other and my response to it that awakens passive association and interaction. The other’s appeal motivates me to behave in an understanding manner which requires an appropriate response from what is significant to the self, and not from my projections. On the other hand, the ethical response is stronger towards those liminal subjects whose experiences we can more easily identify with. Ethical response is not abstract. We cannot ignore the fact that not all animals evoke compassion. In principle, we feel compassion for everyone who suffers, but only a meeting with a concrete other demonstrates and establishes a real, genuine relationship. A dog in pain will almost always evoke compassion, but a washed up jellyfish that is slowly dying or perhaps already dead on the shore does not have such a powerful effect. Their helpless lying on the shore does not

manifest their self in the same way as the gaze of a suffering dog. This is not to say that one cannot be compassionate or responsive in the case of jellyfish, but the expression of their bodies is not as understandable as a suffering dog's eyes. Ethical response requires entering into a relationship and interaction with the actual other; otherwise everything will remain only an abstract principle. Therefore, the ethical response to the other is a condition of passive association and the awakening of attention to the other. The established connection develops individually, becomes personal and intimate, and, as is often the case, becomes inconvenient to interpret for the science which seeks universal truths. Moreover, it threatens to relativize universal interpretive schemes; hence, science tends to reduce unique encounters to universal schemes.

Such a theory of empathy allows us to understand how animals are accessible to us and what the limits of our decisions about them should be. The problem today is not only that animals are treated as living mechanisms in some areas of activity, but that we often understand them 'too well' when caring and making decisions for them. As mentioned above, there is a danger of humanizing animals, especially when it comes to their needs, rights, and so on. For instance, we strive for a fulfilling or even happy life for our pets or zoo animals. A common example where owners want their pets to be happy is doing everything they can to experience as much joy and pleasure as possible. But is a puppy with a trendy leash dressed in the latest fashion, with lots of toys and delicious food genuinely happy? It is significant not only to know, understand, and properly interpret, but also to understand one's boundaries. We must set boundaries even when trying not to humanize animals and treat them according to their nature.

Conclusions

In terms of intentionality, constitutionality, affectiveness, and emotions, humans and animals have common structures. This allows us to recognize and know animal emotions, as well as reform our treatment of them. Our being in the animal presence can be based not only with an affirmative answer to the question whether they can suffer, but on a much wider range of experiences. On the other hand, the staging of common core is insufficient and can be harmful because of forgetting that animals have their own selfhood – they are liminal subjects and will always remain to some extent alien to humans. It is therefore necessary to reflect that the perceiving human is an anthropocentric being whose anthropocentricity can easily be transformed into anthropocentrism as an ideology of human exceptionalism. Phenomenology rejects such an ideology.

San Martín and Pintos' position can serve as criticism because it knocks down the foundation of anthropological difference as an ideological tool. And yet, anthropological difference remains as the boundary of experience. Therefore, one needs to reflect on one's centrality and anthropocentricity. In terms of accessibility of other subjects' experience, it must be acknowledged that the human is undeniably at the center: the structures of thinking, language, and so on are self-given to the human whereas animal experience is only partially accessible. Analysis of the structure of empathy has shown that only

the passive association is unproblematic. The ‘imaginative self-transposal’ provides a better understanding of the animal experience, but it is also a source of deception and illusions. Research provides an opportunity to learn about those alien animals that are not directly accessible to us, but we can also detect that such an interpretation of animal behavior has its limits. Finally, the ethical dimension of empathy shows that being together with animals must not be based on a rather abstract principle, recognizing their ability to suffer or common *ego* structures, but on a particular experience of interaction and interaffection where we have an extremely diverse world of interpersonal relationships. Therefore, the co-existence that is being created should take into account not only the common principles but this diversity, and grant greater importance to the encounter of species and individuals.

It can be stated that phenomenology itself as a description of experiential conditions is not completely neutral. As noted, both approaches are ethically motivated. Both advocate against the devaluation of animals and against considering them as inferior subjects (on which the self-evident use of animals for human needs is based). The first position focuses on stopping violence and establishing commonality on the basis of egotism. This questions the use of animals in the food industry, laboratories, and so on, self-evidence and requires a new relationship with egotically close, but also different subjects. In the second position, the issue of violence is not evidently raised, but other perspectives are visible. The structure of empathy shows the possibilities and conditions for making decisions about animals, and it is especially important that animals give us the opportunity to become better acquainted with our own subjectivity. If we act carefully and responsibly towards them, they also expand our own subjectivity, thereby opening up new perspectives to recognize animals and our own lives in terms of the diversity of life forms. And it is precisely this approach that allows us to take at least one step towards the otherness and diversity, even without leaving our human centrality. We must not forget that any subjectivity is formed in relation to others. So if we allow animals to become those others who can decentralize us and open up new perspectives, then our identity can be formed in an environment of new co-existence, and not only in the human social medium.

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