Chapter 5
Animal Difference in the Age of the Selfsame

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Abstract In this chapter, I argue that mainstream animal-centered (i.e., "humane") ethics and critical animal studies attempt to account for nonhuman moral considerability in terms of those animals' similarities with human animals. I argue that this emphasis on similarity is a reason why these two fields are generally anti-naturalistic and ultimately (though ironically) anthropocentric. Moreover, on the assumption of a general Levinasian ethic of alterity, this anti-naturalism and anthropocentrism is violently immoral. I propose, therefore, an ethic of animal difference based on an ethically naturalistic reading of intra- and inter-specific behavior sets. However, such naturalism is problematic if the Anthropocene is understood to be a naturalized fact which undermines all (metaphysical or normative) claims to naturalness or wildness. In response, I argue that the Anthropocene is not a naturalized fact but a socially-contingent and constructed fact, and as such is open to moral evaluation. My proposed ethic of animal difference offers one such critique, and one more effective than those found in mainstream humane ethics or critical animal studies.

5.1 Progressivist Anti-naturalism

Peter Singer (1981), the founding father of animal liberation ethics, sees the so-called "circle of ethics" as expanding over the course of history, moving outwards from the individual human self as normative center. Relying on the nineteenth-century historian William Lecky, Singer sees ethics in general as a growth of concern from one's own well-being towards one's family, and eventually out towards all people and even animals. As the story goes, human beings are, by nature, egotistic and "inherently partial" to themselves (Kemmerer 2011, 73), as is the rest of the animal kingdom. Eventually, however, it dawned on our species (at least) that our own self-interests were better served by mutual co-operation, in spite of our innate distaste for getting

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along with each other. Morality was thus invented to keep beneficial social groups operating smoothly, even though it was initially limited to small groups. Over time, however, those groups got bigger and moral inclusivity increased; new human subsets were included in the definition of the self-interested ego. Therefore, recent and more enlightened generations have seen movements advocating the moral and legal equality of women, African-Americans, LGBTTQQPIANU+ persons,[1] and other oppressed minorities. Today, enlightened or progressive persons find themselves at the point where all of humanity is within the community of moral concern, and they face the question of expanding morality further to include nonhuman animals.

The narrative of moral progress is not merely a description of how humans have, in fact, morally developed. It is a normative claim about how morality should have developed (and thankfully, is developing). Ethics is and ought to be *self-interest increasingly generalized over time*. The ego is necessarily the only intrinsically valuable thing, and "higher ethical consciousness" simply expands the boundary of the ego to include other selves within its own self-definition (Singer 1997). Progressive ethics which include at least some nonhuman animals (hereafter called "humane ethics")[2] criticize classical Enlightenment moralities for not being progressive enough—the latter ethics are "anthropocentric," an egoism of humanity. While other chauvinisms recognize no values outside a narrowly defined self, anthropocentrism broadens that self until it is continuous with a conception of the entire human species that recognizes no inherently valuable things outside itself (Midgley 1994). For humane ethics, the solution to anthropocentric chauvinism is to expand the definition of the ego yet further, beyond the boundary of the human species. Thus does John Clark, a critic, identify this move as *moral extensionism*, "the project of applying ethical theories based on anthropocentric (and usually ethical individualist) presuppositions to greater-than-human and larger-than-individual moral realities such as species, ecosystems, and the biosphere" (Clark 2014, 171, n. 46).

There is tension, however, between moral extensionism and nonhuman animals. Up to the species barrier it was comparatively easy for the circle of ethics to expand, because the differences between one's own self and other human beings could be clearly shown to be surmountable. But crossing the species barrier presents progressive morality with an unprecedented obstacle: generally speaking, animals are not capable of behaving in accordance with the dictates of generalized egoism. In Singer's terms, they do not and indeed cannot act in accordance with the principle of utility. Of

[1] This abbreviation stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Two-Spirit, Queer, Questioning, Pansexual, Intersex, Asexual, Non-Binary, Unlabelled, and more. Source: https://www.su.ualberta.ca/services/thelanding/.

[2] A convenient shorthand to denote "animal-centered ethics" has been hard to come by. Neither "animal welfare" nor "animal rights" will suffice, because these terms denote exclusively utilitarian or deontological frameworks. "Animal activists" and "animal advocacy movement" have been proposed, but neither term gives an indication of the sort of ethics operative therein. Thence my proposed plural "humane ethics," as it captures (as I shall argue below) the anthropocentrism implicit in moral extensionism ("the word 'humane' is just a dressed-up version of the word we use for ourselves" [Seitz 2010, 75]) while being colloquially associated with nonhuman animals (e.g., the Humane Society), albeit with unnecessary utilitarian connotations.

course, humane ethics do not claim that animals should voluntarily follow Enlightenment norms—at this point Singer (1975, 237), Tom Regan (2004, xxxvi–xxxviii), and Lori Gruen (2011, 182–183) grant animals the autonomy to be what they are and behave in their own ways—but Singer, at least, cannot but "regret that this is the way the world is." In other words, it's a lamentable shame that nonhuman animals do not fit well within the sphere of morality that expands outwards to include them (Raterman 2008).

This regret is the crux of the well-known clash between humane and environmental ethicists (Hargrove 1992). While many environmental philosophers have used the language of expansion when encouraging the broadening of human moral horizons to include ecology (Leopold 1949; Naess 1989; Rolston 2012), in holistic environmental ethics the individualism assumed by Enlightenment ethics was seen (albeit controversially) to be relativized by encompassing natural systems (Rodman 1977; Goodpaster 1979; Callicott 1980). By contrast, humane ethics understood their expansive transcendent self to be a *de jure* indivisible thing, a norm of moral inviolability, an 'individual.' But the naturalistic holism of land ethics illuminated a recalcitrant reality: "Nature…is not fair; it does not respect the rights of individuals" (Callicott 1989, 51). If it did, every food chain that exists would shut down: "The most fundamental fact of life in the biotic community is eating…*and being eaten*" (Callicott 1989, 57). There is no right to life evident in nature, nor any tendency to alleviate suffering. Nature (or at least the processes of wild or undomesticated ecologies) does not line up very well with an ethic of generalized self-interest where the primary duty is not harming whatever counts as an ego.

Environmental ethics thus diverged from humane ethics for the same reason that nature has fared poorly in Western ethics generally: naturalness, like tradition, functions as a limit to (putative) reason and progress. To be associated with nature or the body is, as ecofeminists have pointed out, to be considered 'irrational' or, in the socio-political sense, 'backwards.' A case in point is critical animal theorist James Stanescu's (2012a) advocacy for "the Gothic's resistance to the natural order" because "a dark animal studies needs to dissociate itself from the tyranny of the natural order" (p. 44)…"We are now about as far away from [Michael] Pollan's notion of having 'a respect for what is' as we can be" (p. 46). This anti-naturalism is even more boldly articulated by vegan food writer Stefany Anne Golberg (2011): "Nature is an asshole. We know this and other animals don't." Antipathy towards nature is presupposed at the outset of morally progressive narratives, scuttling attempts at resolving the impasse between humane and environmental ethics.

5.2 Sameness and Anthropocentrism

Enlightenment progressivism sees itself as *discontinuous* with what it conceives of as nature, be it vicious wild animals or humanity's own primitive animality. On the other hand, Enlightenment progressivism expands by uncovering *continuities* between itself and entities not yet included within its boundaries. Between humans,

particular differences (such as age, gender, class, or creed) are conceptually discarded as accidental, while universals like 'humanity' are held to be the basis of our unalienable rights as individuals. The task of humane ethics is to show that this core notion of self—an ideal derived from the Enlightened human exemplar—shares relevant commonalities with some nonhuman animals. We have already seen this to be the case with Singer's expanding circle, but it is also the case for a wide and representative swath of non-welfarist humane ethics.

The morally relevant commonality for Regan's deontological ethic is being a "subject-of-a-life," which is supposed to engender moral duties in human animals to respect the desires of nonhuman animals to not be used, harmed, or killed—duties which are analogous to how human animals are obliged to treat each other. Ecofeminist Carol Adams uses clearly progressive language: "Color will lose its character as a barrier, just as 'animals' will lose their otherness, and join human animals as a 'we' rather than a 'they' or a collective of 'its'" (Adams 1994, 78). Gruen also argues on the basis of similarity with humans: "Other animals matter because, *like us*, their lives can go better or worse for them. They are sentient beings who have interests and well-beings. They can be harmed when their interests are thwarted and their wellness undermined" (Gruen 2011, 33, emphasis mine). Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka (2011) offer a theory of citizenship and universal rights that applies, via analogy, from human to nonhuman animals: just as certain human beings are granted different rights depending on the sort of citizenship they have in a political community, nonhuman animals are granted different rights depending on whether they are analogous to human *citizens* of one's own country, human citizens of a *foreign* nation, or human *denizens* of one's own country.

Similarity and sameness between human animals (at the presumptive moral core) and nonhuman animals (recently relocated from the outside to the inside of the moral sphere) is at the root of the humane ethics mentioned above, and can be also found within a wide and representative swath of critical animals studies. Even though Nik Taylor (2011) criticizes moral expansionism for "simply maintain[ing] dualist conceptions while moving the boundary slightly…and as such, ultimately reinforc[ing] traditional anthropocentrism" (pp. 206–207), she goes on to advocate for "the removal of animal oppression and the serious inclusion of animals themselves into our intellectual sphere" (p. 219) by "waging war on essential differences" (p. 210) and allowing "the cognitive capacities of humans to migrate to objects" (p. 211), as if she forgot her point about reinforcing traditional anthropocentrism. Richard Twine, meanwhile, simply assumes that "what we share with other animals both socially and corporeally ought to be enough to transgress the human/animal dualism of moral considerability" (Twine 2014, 199). Critical animal theorists generally assume that human exceptionalism is the only philosophical obstacle they face, and that its solution is an inclusive appeal to cross-species commonalities. Doing so, however, operates on the assumption that sameness with humans is good while difference is not: "What is powerful is not what makes us unique, but what makes us in-common. What is exhilarating is not what individuates us, but rather what brings us together" (Stanescu 2012b, 576–577); "In other words, we invest a vast amount of intellectual work in trying to figure out what separates and individuates

the human species, rather than in what makes us a part of a commonality with other lives" (Stanescu 2012b, 569). Therefore, as Lisa Kemmerer (2011) adds, "working to define human beings as distinct from other animals [has] the hidden agenda of justifying human supremacy, dominion, and exploitation" (p. 70).

I contend that the progressive search for commonalities in humane ethics (including critical animal studies generally) follows the logic of Hegelian dialectic: in the beginning there is the self, the subject. But subjective consciousness does not know very well what it is (or what its ethic should be), and so it puts forth a proposal of selfhood, externalizing itself, articulating its loosely formed idea in the objective realm. But objective consciousness is not subjective consciousness and so there is always an incongruity between the two; the objective other-than-self is different than the selfsame, and the self is rocked back upon itself, disgusted by its poorly realized (not inclusive enough) ethic, and so is forced to revise its understandings and to try again anew. This often violent relation between subjective thesis and objective antithesis (Hegel [1956, 21] calls it a victimizing "slaughter-bench") is the engine of progress, driving the self forward dialectically as it encounters recalcitrant objectivity, appropriating it, and creating new syntheses therefrom. However, the final goal—the Absolute—is when the negativity inherent in objectivity is overcome by the self's *discovery of itself* in the other.

On my reading of Hegel, other-modification takes priority over self-modification. As much as Hegelians might want to say that the subject discovers alterity within itself, this is not what provides the subject relief. The horrors of the objective stage are resolved by the balm of the selfsame, not alterity. Even if, for Hegel, the Absolute stage were to achieve perfectly reciprocal representation of both difference and sameness whereby both subject and object are mutually modified by each other, the normative standards of expansionist moral progressivism are *not* altered by the encounter with suitably similar nonhuman animals. In Kemmerer's unequivocal words:

> We ought not to theorize about "others."… If we can look into the bright eyes of a calf and see into a mirror – if we can see in this individual a person – complete with interests, hopes, and fears – not unlike ourselves, then our theorizing is likely to have a greater degree of validity. If we theorize about self whenever we theorize about fish or a dice snake, crab-eating mongoose, or killfish, our theories are more likely to be grounded in reality – the reality that there is no "other," the reality that we are all animals, and therefore are fundamentally alike, particularly in morally relevant ways, such as our ability to suffer and our innate desire to live without suffering…. Those who look at another human being, or another animal, and see "other" must not theorize about those "others."… If we are to theorize about oxen and sheep, then we must theorize about *self…. Please, do not theorize about "other" animals.* (Kemmerer 2011, 79–82 original emphasis)

Humane ethics thus reach the satisfaction of the Absolute when they find *sameness* at the heart of the other animal. Difference qua difference is simply opposition, negativity, even evil. The good is that which the self can find in the other to be in line with itself.

5.3 Violence Against Otherness

For the purposes of this chapter, I will take for granted a broadly Levinasian ethic of alterity, whereby moral wrongdoing is paradigmatically defined by violence, which is in turn defined as the reduction of the Other to the Same. On this account, my Hegelian reading of humane ethics implicates them in a violently immoral opposition to animal otherness. This starts with the creeping significance of species difference into human ethics. While differences between human persons are supposed to be morally irrelevant in progressive ethics generally, the expansion of the human(e) ego is not as seamless when encountering animal difference. While moral consideration can be extended to socially marginalized humans without modification, it cannot be extended without modification to even our closest "evolutionary comrades" (Vera 2008). Crossing the species barrier *is* morally relevant, even for moral progressives whose rhetoric suggests otherwise. Even though Singer (1974, 104) does not want to admit that species difference is morally relevant, he is clear that animals should not vote. So *prior* to the particulars of Singer's argument (and indeed regardless of whether this sensitivity to difference is consistent with the expanding circle), we can already see that as the ethic of moral sameness extends outward from the core of the human individual, it must be adjusted if it is to apply to nonhuman animals. The kinds of moral standing we recognize for nonhumans will *depend also on the differences between humans and nonhumans.* Natural difference means that human moral sameness cannot be the absolute moral standard after all.

Moreover, the ethic of sameness can only be extended so far before it exhausts itself. There are minimum requirements of similarity that must be met before moral recognition will be extended; failing those, the circle of ethics stops expanding. Humane ethics set minimum standards for moral considerability (for Singer, the line is somewhere in-between shrimp and clams [Singer and Mason 2006, 133–134, 275–276], while Regan is largely concerned with adult higher mammals), but at some point the differences between humans and certain animals—to say nothing of plants or nonliving ecosystemic components[3]—are just too great for humane ethics to include. *The more different a being is in comparison to the human, the less it will count within the scheme of expansionistic moral progress.*

What this means, then, is that some animals simply do not benefit from the expansion of human egoism. Their difference is such that insufficient commonalities are recognized between them and the transcendent Self. In addition to being excluded from moral considerability, some animals actually stand in clear opposition to the egoism being extended by moral progress, particularly predators.[4] Some humane ethicists (e.g., Singer, Regan and Gruen) fall back on the lack of moral agency

[3]Gruen (2011) draws the line between animals and plants, for while plants "can have their interests negatively affected," unlike us and (some?) other animals "they will never be interested in that impact" (p. 29). Regardless of whether clams or mosquitoes should be counted among plants, subjective rather than objective interests are Gruen's touchstone.

[4]The issue of predators is explored explicitly and at length in the chapter by Jozef Keulartz's "Should the Lion Eat Straw Like the Ox? Animal Ethics and the Predation Problem" in this volume.

in nonhuman animals—that is, their difference—to avoid advocating the policing of wild animal behaviors, but Martha Nussbaum's ethic is more progressive than that. Her capabilities approach "calls for the gradual formation of an interdependent world in which all species will enjoy cooperative and mutually supportive relations. Nature is not that way and never has been. So it calls, in a very general way, for the gradual supplanting of the natural with the just" (Nussbaum 2006, 399). She therefore requires that nonhuman predators, for example, be treated in ways analogous to how human sexual predators are to be treated (i.e., incarceration and behavioral modification [Nussbaum and Faralli 2007, 157]). After all, a violent animal's lack of moral culpability doesn't mean that it shouldn't be stopped. Therefore, when animals stand in opposition to the extension of human moral standards, those animals need to be corrected, i.e. forced into alignment with the progressive moral order (Wissenburg 2011).

So while many if not most people have intuitions that there are right and wrong ways to treat nonhuman animals, and while there are meaningful similarities between ourselves and many if not most nonhuman animals, difference nevertheless raises its ugly head and the progressive humane ethic has to backpedal. While there is no need to modify rights when they are extended from some (adult) humans to other (adult) humans, there is a need to modify rights when they cross the species barrier. Because species difference is ethically relevant even to anti-speciesists, it undermines the expansionistic model of moral progress. Progress is not supposed to have limits, and yet species difference does constitute a limit. The circle of ethics reaches a point where it can expand no further: because clams or trees (and whatever lies below them on the *scala natura*) *do not possess anything like the most basic element of what counts morally* for the humane ethicist, they cannot be directly morally considerable. When there is no self to be found in the other, difference outweighs sameness and inclusion stops. Beyond the boundary, the radically nonhuman can be instrumentally valued, benignly neglected, morally lamented, or coercively policed. The dark side of the ethic of sameness is its anti-naturalism: the more something can be included within the expanded human self, the better, whereas the less amenable something is to inclusion within that sphere, the more naturally problematic it is.

Progressivist anti-naturalism thus ends in the oppression of 'insufficiently human' nonhuman animals, just as (on my reading) Hegel's encounter with alterity violently reduces the Other to the Same. The Enlightenment ego values things (other persons, animals) insofar as they *cease* to be considered different from it and rather come to be seen (at least in the morally relevant aspects) as the same as it. Moral progressivism assumes egoism as the ethical starting point, basic to human nature and unavoidably rampant in the State of Nature, and it sees the solution to egoism as a more inclusive and broad egoism. Moral progress is the aggregation of egos whereby more and more things which had previously been excluded from the realm of moral sameness are included. Things that were on the outside are now on the inside; things that were other are now incorporated into the self. This logic views difference as a threat; Hans Jonas calls it "the negative experience of otherness" (Jonas 2001, 332). It tries to affirm variety and diversity by making it all morally homogenous. Anything outside Enlightened, democratic, liberal tolerance that resists assimilation is vilified

as uncivilized, barbaric, or even savage. The form of subjectivity advanced by humane ethics replicates the imperialist logic of colonialism.

Granted, moral progressivism starts from the reasonable supposition that we value our selves for their own sakes, and some things (e.g., oxygen) are clearly better for ourselves than other things (e.g., hydrogen sulfide). It is trivial to say that things may be either good or bad in relation to the self (instrumentally valuable), but if we go on to claim that goodness itself is *completely defined* in terms of what is good for the self, then we claim the self to be absolute—the only being that matters—rather than one limited being among many. If the self is (*de jure*) an absolute being and an absolute unity, then anything different from the self or anything which threatens its absolute one-ness, is absolutely bad—the very definition of evil itself. Things that do not fit with the sameness of the self are cosmically out of order, because the self is the standard around which the cosmos should be ordered. Anthropocentrism thus reveals itself to be more than human exceptionalism or the simple denial of direct moral considerability for nonhumans; it is rather the species-level absolutization of otherwise reasonable self-preservation. Because they see alterity antagonistically, aspirationally nonanthropocentric humane ethics self-defeatingly replicate anthropocentrism by imposing human-modelled sameness onto nonhuman animals. *Animals only count in so far as they approximate human beings.* Human beings remain at the center of the circle, the absolute moral standard for all things, only to find this ideal increasingly frustrated the further it moves outward into nonhuman territory. Against this self-defeating ethic of expansionistic sameness, I propose a direction for ethics where animal differences are viewed positively rather than as obstacles to be overcome, where animals possess *independent* standards of value for themselves rather than being beholden to standards centering on us.

5.4 A Proposal for an Ethic of Animal Difference

Homes Rolston, III is a naturalistic environmental ethicist who offers an ethic which insists on the axiological relevance of "discontinuity" between animal species as the touchstone for our evaluation of animals (Rolston 1989). Such discontinuity vexes humane ethics, because it entails natural animal behaviors that do not appear to conform to the models derived from human civil society. Predation, parasitism, cannibalism, coprophagy, and cuckoldry are but a few examples of animal alterity that cannot be made to fit into the progressive moral order. Coprophagy—the eating of feces or dung—might just strike us as disgusting (although lagomorphs and juvenile iguanas apparently both enjoy and benefit from it), but carnivory, parasitism, cuckoldry and cannibalism all turn out rather badly for the particular individuals at the receiving end: prey (or cannibalized cubs) are painfully killed and eaten; hosts to parasites can suffer greatly before eventually dying; cuckolded parents struggle to feed their inadvertently adopted offspring, while their own offspring are often fatally outcompeted. Any ethic of generalized egoism cannot look kindly on such *de facto* violations of *de jure* inviolate individuals, and thus falls into anti-naturalism. My

proposed solution, then, is to encounter animal otherness without trying to force it into alignment with individualistic subjectivity.

For Rolston, the key to an ethic of animal difference is recognizing the *wildness* of animals as a legitimate form of alterity. If humans should not reduce the value of animals to what they (or some of them) have found valuable about themselves, then they should espouse a value pluralism—or species relativism—in nature: “There are myriad sorts of things and they are differently made” (Rolston 1992, 253). Indeed, the etymology of the word ‘species’ is indicative of this plurality: each species is specific and special, and there are millions of species. Each one is different from the other in certain important aspects. There are many degrees of similarity between species too, of course, but what constitutes them *as species* is their specificity or specialty, their unique differences from other species.[5] Earlier, I argued that anthropocentrism should be understood as the imposition of human-modelled sameness onto the other-than-human. Here, this means that anthropocentrism should be understood as a denial of legitimate species-specificity: progressive moral expansionism sees all species (as much as possible) as unwitting aspirants to the human species. Fittingly, therefore, Rolston argues that anthropocentrism is a category mistake because it holds nonhuman species up to moral standards similar to those we hold ourselves to, as if it were illegitimate that there should be *different kinds of animals.*

Environmental nonanthropocentrism must then carefully parse the interrelations of the value plurality in nature: “intrinsic animal natures and their ecological places in the world” (Rolston 1989, 134). That is, individual animals (ourselves included) should be seen as governed by behavioral norms that concern both internal interactions with their respective species members (intraspecific relations between conspecifics) and external interactions with members of other species (interspecific relations between heterospecifics). Classical ethics, being focused exclusively on human behavior towards other human beings, seeks to identify good *interhuman* behavior. The anthropocentric mistake is to think that this human behavior set exhausts normative (as opposed to aesthetic) axiology. Interhuman ‘morality’ (if that term is to be limited to animals which possess ‘moral agency’ or volition) is but a species of the axiological genus, lying within a larger framework of ‘nonmoral’

[5] I recognize that species essentialism is highly problematic in the philosophy of biology. However, my argument does not depend on species essentialism being true; it only depends on species nominalism being false. That is, while it is likely that species (and other biological kinds) do not have unchanging essences (otherwise evolution would be impossible!) it is not the case that species (and other biological kinds) are nothing but convenient naming conventions drawn from a contingent cultural repertoire projected onto an arbitrary group of things. Even though species (and other biological kinds) are “thoroughly heterogeneous collections of individuals whose phenotypic properties [change] over time, and [vary] across the population at any given time” (Wilson et al. 2007, 193), radical skepticism about the existence of species does not “do justice to natural kinds as they are studied in biology and other special sciences” (Brigandt 2009, 79). That is, species identification is scientifically convenient for a reason outside simple taxonomic utility. Homeostatic property clustering (stable grouping) of species (and other biological kinds) is something experienced by scientists as external to their own acts of categorization, and as such, possesses sufficient metaphysical reality for my proposed ethic of animal difference to proceed. For a fuller treatment of my view on the metaphysical status of species, see Kowalsky (2012, 129–132).

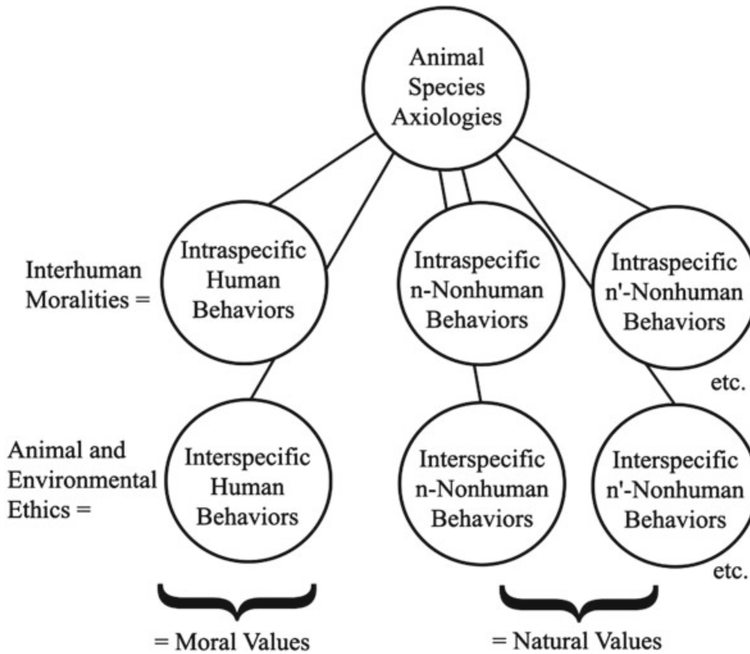

Fig. 5.1 Axiological categorization of species difference

values which relativizes human morality. Animal and environmental ethics, by way of contrast with interhuman ethics, prescribe good *interspecific* behaviors for humans, or our moral duties to nonhuman agents, entities, and systems (Fig. 5.1).

But none of these moral (i.e., good human) behavior sets have anything to do with how nonhuman animal behaviors should be assessed. In Rolston's words, "the appropriate evaluative category is not nature's moral goodness, for there are no moral agents in nonhuman nature. The appropriate category is *one or more kinds of nonmoral goodness*, better called nature's value. Such value is not to be mapped by projection from culture, much less from human moral systems within culture" (Rolston 1992, 252 emphasis mine). The axiological inter/intra distinction can be applied to any species, be it comprised of moral agents or not. There is a set of good intraspecific behaviors for any given species, just as there is a set of good interspecific behaviors for that species. And because species are specific and special, there are often pointed differences between any two species-specific sets of good behaviors. For instance, it is good (though not 'moral') intraspecific behavior for juvenile iguanas to eat the feces of adult iguanas, but familial coprophagy is not very good behavior for most other species, likely including our own. For lions, it is good intraspecific behavior for the newly dominant male to eat the cubs of the previously dominant male, but cannibalizing stepchildren is not very good behavior for many other species, likely including our own.

The same goes for nonhuman interspecific relations. For cuckoo birds, it is good interspecific behavior for them to lay their eggs in the nests of other unsuspecting bird species, leaving non-cuckoos to raise overly large cuckoo chicks which out-compete the surrogate parents' own offspring. Yet cuckoldry is rightly considered bad human behavior, both when it is intraspecific (as goes the dictionary definition of the term) and interspecific (like the legends and tales of Romulus and Remus or Tarzan). Brood parasitism is not very good behavior for most other species either. Finally, for some species, say peregrine falcons, it is good interspecific behavior to consume the flesh and blood of other species, but this does not mean it is good interspecific behavior for other species, say the Ruby-throated Hummingbird, to engage in carnivorous predation.

In common parlance, it is often said that nasty animal behavior 'just is,' as if it cannot be subject to evaluation at all. But with these axiological distinctions in place, we are in a position to capture the intuition of the 'just is' while also avoiding the temptation to see the natural world as lacking any value whatsoever, which often slips into seeing it as a value-neutral repository of material for us to exploit in whatever way we see fit. The best way for humans to assess the natural behaviors of (especially wild) nonhuman animals is to see them as good-in-themselves. It is not our place to say that—because humans are generally not supposed to prey on each other, eat each other, eat shit, or impregnate other people's wives so that another parental pair will raise offspring not their own—the sorts of animals which do exactly these things are behaving badly. Nor will it suffice to say that those behavior patterns are value-neutral, for saying so anthropocentrically denies the conceivability of other-than-human value. Positive value is not the same as 'moral' value; morality is what humans are obligated to do, while positive value is broader than human morality. Each animal has its own set of proper behaviors and thus positive values, and our species' set is not necessarily the same as any other set.

The categorizations established above are generic and as such, empty of content; the scope of this paper permits only preliminary gestures towards their filling. However, it cannot be that humans ought to simply stand back and watch disinterestedly as animals go about their business, for we are not isolated observers. What we observe are interactions, and we are ourselves animals who interact and are interacted with by animals other than us. Indeed, sometimes we are subject to parasitism or even predation by heterospecifics. Rolston (1988, 84–88) offers two ethically naturalistic principles for human treatment of other animals (the principle of the non-addition of suffering, and the prohibition against ecologically pointless suffering), but for him these apply across the board to any and all sentient nonhuman animals, and are not situated within the relativization of interhuman ethics by the larger category of normative species behavior sets.

Elsewhere, Rolston suggests that human treatment of nonhuman animals should be "homologous with nature," i.e. having "functional similarities" (1989, 134). Furthermore, he argues that our animal ethics should take their "cues from the nature of animals and their place in nature and from our animal roots and human ecology… 'Naturally' must apply to the object animal and to the subject human" (Rolston 1989, 135). What I propose, then, is that the right way for humans to treat nonhuman

animals will depend on the way those particular animals are naturally treated by both conspecifics and other heterospecifics.[6] We should not want to treat animals in ways that fail to do justice to their constitutive ecological relations. Secondly, humans should treat other animals in ways consistent with our own species-specific natural history and needs. Just because ticks like to infest moose hides doesn't mean we should try to do the same, but likewise, just because ticks don't use moose hides, bones or antlers for clothing and tools doesn't mean we shouldn't be permitted to do so. "Resource use of one animal by another," Rolston says, "is a characteristic of the world humans inhabit (a premised fact), one which they are under no obligation to remake (a concluded ought)" (1989, 134). An ethic of animal difference refines this position by particularizing it: resource use of one animal by another will depend on the kind of animals in question and their respective natural histories.[7]

For example, whether it is ethical for a human to hunt a mule deer will depend, at least, on whether mule deer are typically prey species, whether humans are a typically predatory species, and if mule deer provide goods suitable to their being treated as prey by humans (i.e., meat, hides, sinew, bone, or homologous goods that predators seek through predation). The question would be posed again, and potentially answered differently, with respect to human resource use of grizzly bears, golden eagles, Richardson's ground squirrels, leopard frogs, or what have you. If it is found to be ethical to use an animal on these terms, then Rolston's principle of the non-addition of suffering should come into force: animals should not be subjected to more pain than they would suffer if they were living (and dying) in the wild as undomesticated animals. However, Rolston's prohibition against ecologically pointless suffering (one cannot cause pain in an animal—even if it is less than it might experience, say, in the claws of a hawk—if that pain does not have or resemble an evolutionary function) is made virtually otiose by the naturalization of each animal's constitution and relation with the other, unless the use of the animal is clearly a desecration or dishonorable.[8]

Peter Wenz criticizes Rolston's ethic as "conservative in the worst sense. It papers over difficulties in the status quo that a philosopher should be exposing" (Wenz 1989, 7), and most humane ethicists would likely level the same charge against an ethic of animal difference that is open, in principle, to the killing and use of animals by humans. However, the ethic I am proposing here is more radical than

[6]Gruen (2011) allows that "[a]lthough some of the morally relevant facts might be gleaned from species membership, many of them won't be so apparent…the fact[s] that dandelions reproduce asexually or that gibbons are monogamous, don't tell us anything about how we should treat those organisms,…or what obligations or duties we might have towards them in light of such information" (pp. 55–57). To the contrary, I would argue that these facts suggest—at the very least—that humans ought not to attempt to engage in reproductive activities with dandelions and gibbons, and any such attempts by those species towards humans should be rebuffed.

[7]Morally prior to this, of course, is the human duty to maintain ecologically sustainable populations, without which no resource harvest would be permissible.

[8]Besides, Rolston's nature/culture dualism makes virtually any resource use 'cultural' and thus ecologically pointless, making the question "what is natural to humans?" unanswerable on his own terms (1989, 132; cf. Kowalsky 2006).

conservative. While it may permit, in principle, killing an animal for the good of its body, farming an animal for fur or meat may not be permitted. No animals are typically caged species (and few are typically herded by nonhuman heterospecifics) and humans are not a typically caging species (nomadic herding arose contingently a mere 9000 years ago among idiosyncratic cultural groups [Cauvin 2000]). Similar problems beset the use of animals for traction, like horseback riding. It is not even clear how a naturalistic ethic of respect for animal difference could justify animal testing, even for reasons of urgent medical necessity. Rolston (1989, 137) admittedly does not want his ethic to delegitimize "horses, wagons and plows, nomads and camels, cows and milk, chickens and eggs…agriculture…, cities and industry," but the ethic I have outlined here is poised to do just that. To be sure, we will always have to "make some pragmatic compromises" (Rolston 1989, 136)—perhaps for urgent medical necessity, or for the survival of more than seven billion people—but an ethic of animal difference can provide both operative obligations against many present animal cruelties, and aspirational or regulative imperatives which, even as lofty and perhaps unattainable ideals, do not entail colonialist anti-naturalism. While criticizing and revising humane ethics, animal difference can go a long way towards reconciling that field with naturalistic environmental ethics.

5.5 Sameness and the Anthropocene

The Anthropocene, however, is another challenge to the ethic of animal difference that I've proposed. The Anthropocene is the (proposed) name of our current geological epoch, the one wherein human pollution now forms an identifiable layer in the fossil record. The idea that there can be such thing as a 'nature' distinct from the defiling effluents of certain human cultures should be dead, therefore, if it isn't already. Erle Ellis (2011, 40) asserts that the "long trends toward both the intensification of agricultural cultivation and the engineering of ecosystems at increasing scope and scale" are not recent phenomena, but rather began (he thinks) before the Holocene with Paleolithic human fire-drive hunting techniques. There's nothing unique or distinct about the Anthropocene, it would seem, as human beings have always been a geophysical force on the planet. If so, it follows that there is no such thing as animal difference, if by that we mean nonhuman animal behavior sets that are independent of human influence or assessment. The domestication of animals by certain human cultures is at least 10,000 years old, and domesticated lifeforms are the main sort of nonhuman animal encountered by most humans today. With the majority of humans now living in urban areas, most human encounters with wild animals are likely to be in urban settings where such animals are a nuisance at best. The natural habitats of wild animals are fragmented, decreasing in size, and degraded by anthropogenic climate change. The notion of an 'animal' that is other than the 'human' is problematic at best, if not ridiculous, on account of the Anthropocene.

Even though Paul Crutzen proposed the term "Anthropocene" to inspire caution or regret regarding the ways in which anthropogenic effects alter planetary geology, the

way the term has been enthusiastically embraced by especially (but not exclusively) humanist scholars suggests anything but caution or regret. As Langdon Winner (2017, 291) notes:

> The basic sensibility that emerges from the notion "Anthropocene"… is one that blends a familiar, threadbare, human-centred worldview, often with lavish infusions of techno-triumphalism, the latest version of a narrative tradition that includes "progress," "development" and "innovation," this time enhanced with austere rituals of hand-wringing.

The hand-wringing is necessary for appearances' sake only, for the normative undertones of "the age in which nature and culture are no longer neatly separable forces or spheres" (Williston 2016, 155) are celebratory: humanity at long last has triumphed in its (supposedly) 200,000 year old war against 'nature.' Even though current rates of anthropogenic ecological change are greater than have been seen for hundreds of millions of years, ecomodernists Michael Shellenberger and Ted Nordhaus (2011, 10) assert that these are changes of "scope and scale, not of kind." If that is so, then there can be no ethically naturalistic critique of the project which finds its culmination in the Anthropocene. All we can and ought to do is adapt to our new Anthropocene conditions, just as nonhuman animals are currently being forced to. The way things are is simply the way things have to be, and there can be no ethical response to it other than acquiescence (and innovation, of course).

This situation, however, is an odd one for normative ethics: if the only response to (so-called) human domination of the planet is acceptance of (so-called) human domination of the planet, then ethics have no normativity vis-à-vis (so-called) human domination of the planet. Ethics in this case simply have no purchase on the orientation of human behavior. The projects of 'our species' (let us pretend, for the moment, that domination of the planet is, in fact, appropriately described as 'human') are entirely naturalized in the sense of being devoid of agency, volition, or freedom. 'Our' tendency to dominate the globe is *itself* a geo-physical law, we are led to believe. If the Anthropocene is what its boosters want it to be, it is the condition for the *impossibility* of an ethical critique of the Anthropocene itself; the Anthropocene narrative is "the rubber stamp [of] the fait accompli" (Charbonneau 2018, 145). This chapter is not the place for a defense of the reality of human moral agency, but if there is anything that is phenomenologically true about the human condition, it is that all of us—regardless of language, culture, color, or creed—make significant choices. We form societies, for instance, and there is a virtually infinite array of societies that we can form. If this is so, then we have to face the possibility that the Anthropocene—even as a geological reality—is also a social construction. It is not simply human; it is the result of a contingent set of some forms of human culture. As such, it can be subject to normative evaluation, and does not function as a natural limit or barrier to normative evaluation. There is no need to accept the Anthropocene as a given, or to see it as characteristically human. Rather, the need is the inverse.

An ethic of animal difference *can* speak to the Anthropocene project critically, therefore, but so can humane ethics. Humane ethics have resources with which to decry the ongoing domestication of animals (Comstock 1992), they critique certain breeding and grooming practices of companion animals, and voice concern for the

condition and treatment of wild animals, urban or otherwise. However, all this is merely formal; in content, the humane ethic succumbs to the ironies of progressivism. As if offering a summary of the earlier parts of this chapter, Don McKay (2008–2009, 11) contends that "No less than the technological mindset, Romanticism converts the other into the Same of the human self, but by a soft and seductive path, the generous extension of citizenship rather than violent reduction to utility." Humane ethics model their standards for animal treatment on ethics of human treatment, which is why they are more consistent with an embrace of the Anthropocene than may have originally seemed. At best, humane ethics would offer a reformist balm to the Anthropocene's 'human' domination of all that exists on this Earth. So long as that domination is 'humane,' the colonialist and imperialist projects of both are morally consistent. The anti-naturalism of humane ethics offers nothing but grounds for *accepting* the radical 'humanization' of the planet, which is the Anthropocene per se. Both humane ethics and the humanist celebration of the Anthropocene articulate themselves as fulfilling "the project that has centrally occupied humanity for thousands of years—emancipating ourselves from nature, tribalism, peonage, and poverty…" (Shellenberger and Nordhaus 2011, 11). Just as humane ethics progressively expand the definition of 'person' to include members of marginal human communities and (some) nonhuman animals, the Anthropocene is the progressive expansion of the 'human' to geologically and biologically include *all* of nonhuman nature (animal or vegetable or mineral). The anti-naturalism in humane ethics is of a piece with the Anthropocene's own anti-naturalistic declaration of the end of nature. The Same triumphs over the Other.

It is fitting that this book should be edited by and have so many contributors from within the Dutch context, because the Netherlands is essentially a case study in the Anthropocene. As the saying goes, God made the world, but the Dutch made the Netherlands. The Netherlands is the most densely populated country in Europe, and if the embrace of the Anthropocene becomes writ large across the globe, the Netherlands' levels of population density, land use, and types of animal encounters may become the model for every square meter of the terrestrial surface.[9] Very little of the Netherlands currently counts as 'wild landscape,' and of that which does, most is space reclaimed from the environing 'cultural landscape' of urbanization, industrialization, and agriculturalization. Likewise, the Anthropocene is the radical suppression of wildness, writing domestication and 'civilization' (literally, city-fication) into everything everywhere for all time, from the geological strata to the heady airs of the atmosphere. This is the naturalization which the Anthropocene seeks to achieve: a particular version of human society—broadly speaking, high technology human sedentism (and not necessarily Dutch!)—standardized across time and space, around which all otherness must and will be subordinated (even if some is allowed to remain in isolated pockets for recreational purposes or curiosity's sake).

[9]Shellenberger and Nordhaus (2011, 8–9) use the precarious technological gamble of the city of Venice as their metaphor for the Anthropocene, but their comparison is seamlessly applicable to the Netherlands as an entire country.

This is why humane ethics appear best suited for domesticated animals within urban and rural settings. The more oppositional and irreducible differences there are between wild animals and the core context of sedentary agrarian human civilization, the less those animals can be tolerated (in their wild form). Civilization—which as a process, anthropocentrically makes something fit for a city—conceives of anything outside its own ordering as a chaotic threat. Furthermore, to make something a citizen—be it a human or another animal—is to reconstruct it as a member of the city, a place where that thing's wildness is unsuitable. Domestication therefore removes difference from animals by genetically changing them so that they can physically and psychologically tolerate captivity by humans. It forces alignment with the strictures of agrarian human sedentism, being the literal anthropomorphization of wild animals, or a genetic reification of the other to the same. Moral progressivism—be it embodied in humane ethics or the Anthropocene—emanates outward from the agrarian sense of self and generates a barnyard ethic of animal treatment. The progressivist anti-naturalism of both, at base, aim at the triumph of the selfsame which brings order to recalcitrant and repulsive nature with the point of a weapon, if necessary.

However, this particular and contingent social project does not need to be naturalized. Indeed, naturalizing it is both archaeologically and anthropologically false. It is clear that for the vast majority of our species' chronology, we lived without domestication, agriculture, or sedentary civilization (let alone industrialization, mechanization, and mass urbanization), and we were not any less human for lacking it. Foraging—the primary mode of human subsistence for 95% of the human past—does not require the large-scale manipulation of the ecosystem in a manner that sharply contrasts with how the ecosystem would function without human presence (Tudge 1998, 5–7). There's *nothing* universally human about either treating nonhuman animals as "feral permanently retarded human children" (Pluhar 1991, 26) in need of house training, or viewing the Earth Mother as standing in need of geological domestication. *Nor should there be*. If the violent overcoming of the Other by the Same is fundamentally immoral, then both humane ethics and the Anthropocene project are morally suspect at best.

Nor is it an impossible task to respond to animal or geological alterity without antagonism. Most foraging cultures known to anthropology view(ed) wild animals as exemplars of foreign ways of being that humans could not actually participate in—and thus companionable behaviors were seen as inappropriate. In these non-agrarian contexts, wild animals were viewed as both different from humanity and yet as positive and unopposed to humanness, a non-oppositional encounter with alterity which is precisely what humane ethics and the Anthropocene lack. The Anthropocene's geological domination of the planet and humane ethics' (im)moral domination of animals are thus non-natural in the sense of being contingent and unnecessary (not naturalized) and anti-natural in the sense of being opposed to wildness (i.e., the natural evolutionary and ecological state of all animals). Contrary to the progressive narrative, there can (and indeed should) be differentiation between humans and other animals without endemic conflict, and difference within reciprocal relationship.

This is where an ethic of animal difference fits in. In so far as the Anthropocene forces the denaturing of nonhuman animal otherness by taming, domestication, genetic modification, agricultural and urban vilification, habitat destruction, and climate change, an ethic of animal difference will morally condemn the Anthropocene. Such an ethic will provide grounds for resisting those anthropocentric forces which convert the Otherness of nonhuman animals into something more conducive to the Sameness of high-technology sedentary human civilization. That this contingent form of human culture is currently writing itself into the geological record is metaethically irrelevant. The task of philosophical ethics is not to take human cultural constructions for granted, but to subject them moral examination. That is precisely what an ethic of animal difference would do. It is premised on the wild, evolutionary, and ecological otherness of nonhuman animals, and from that vantage point rejects the radical suppression of wild alterity by the Anthropocene (and humane ethics).

What if the Anthropocene cannot be stopped? How then shall humans orient themselves towards the animals which remain after the anthropocentric juggernaut has conquered all the places where both can live? On the one hand, temporary pragmatic compromises can be made. Insofar as domesticated animals are incorporated into sedentary industrial-agrarian social systems, we may apply certain anthropocentric moral standards to their treatment (perhaps alleviation of suffering) as a form of ironic respect for what remains of their wild form's alterity (e.g., allowing chickens to express 'natural' scratching behavior). Insofar as wild animals migrate into urban and rural areas and even speciate in response to anthropogenic pressures, we should allow them to do so, at least in honor of what remains of their eco-evolutionary agency. If they're nuisances in our cities, let them be nuisances as a sign to us of the horror of having brought our cities to the point where wild animals have no other choice but to be a nuisance therein.

But let us not celebrate these new feral beasts or hybrid species as an innovative response to a naturalized Anthropocene. Let them rather be icons of the failure of the currently dominant form of human culture to respond to Otherness without violence. If resistance is the spirit of the compromises we make, then an ethic of animal difference can still issue a moral vocation that transcends the fait accompli of the Anthropocene. Ethics can—without being hamstrung by naturalizing contingent 'realities' like the status quo—offer aspirational or regulative imperatives that provide resources with which to critique the Anthropocene juggernaut, even if it is currently the victor. There is no need to fully collaborate with the colonizer or the imperialist 'human.' Resistance is possible, and resistance is obligatory.

5.6 Conclusion

As with all essays, this chapter can remain only a proposal, and as such its results are indeterminate and open. Much careful work needs to be done to identify humanity's natural intra- and inter-specific behavioral norms, as well as the norms of those species with whom our species most commonly interacts. This is, however, a project

worth embarking on. If the vast majority of the Western tradition has been the immoral attempt at conceptually, technologically, and normatively mastering the Other by reducing it to the Same, then the ethical framework proposed in this chapter offers a way forward without perpetuating that colonialist and imperialist agenda. Whether or not it is too late to actually stop the colonialist and imperialist agenda of the Anthropocene is beside the point. What matters is that we recognize its agenda and recover resources with which to oppose it at every step. The Otherness of animals different than ourselves is one such source of grounding. Let us return to the animals themselves![10]

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