THE HUMAN-ANIMAL DIVIDE:
ANTHROPOCENTRISM AND EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is devoted to exploring anthropocentrism, the concept of human-centredness, as it relates to humans, animals, and education. Employing the philosophical research method of conceptual analysis and working with a five-part theoretical framework (Chapter 1), I explore anthropocentrism's meanings, manifestations, and rationalizations (Chapter 2), discuss three bodies of theory—animal liberation/animal rights, ecofeminism, and poststructuralism—that help to illuminate it (Chapter 3), consider the connections between anthropocentrism and education (Chapter 4), and outline potential educational responses to anthropocentrism (Chapter 5). Through these chapters my intention is to demonstrate that anthropocentrism is a serious bias that deserves critical educational attention, both for the sake of students and the sake of all other animals with whom we share the planet.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

This thesis evolved from my interest in exploring the concept of anthropocentrism—human-centredness or, as I explore in this research, the mindset of human superiority over animals[1]—and outlining why I think anthropocentrism should be considered critically in education. Through an anthropocentric mindset humans are often seen as the only beings with true value or importance, and animals are subsequently disregarded or evaluated only in terms of their usefulness to humans. This mindset, and the ways it may be reproduced in education or conversely challenged there, is the focus of this thesis.

I entitle this thesis *The Human-Animal Divide* to reflect the divide that humans often hold in their minds that keeps animals fixed as "others," as beings considered inferior and/or less worthy than humans of moral consideration. In western culture, the categories of *human* and *animal* are often polarized, despite the fact that humans *are* animals, and the fact that many scientists, dating back to Darwin (1871/1976), understand the differences between humans and other animals as ones of degree rather than kind. It is therefore more accurate to conceptualize humans and animals as being on a continuum rather than occupying separate camps from each other, but the notion of a clear divide between humans and animals remains deeply rooted and is expressed in myriad ways, as I explore in the first half of this thesis.

What keeps this divide in place, I believe, is anthropocentrism. It is anthropocentrism that supports the conclusion that humans are the most valuable species on the planet, and it is anthropocentrism that reinforces the divide whereby humans, standing on one side of the

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[1] I use the term "animal" in the conventional sense to mean "other-than-human animal." I recognize, however, that it is a problematic term, as it separates humans from other animals and erases the fact that humans are animals, too. I use this term in the interest of readability, not to reinforce the human-animal divide I am discussing. I discuss the semantic challenges of the word "animal" further in Chapter 2.

conceptual line, are considered moral entities while all other animals are relegated to the other side as beings who rarely count in their own right. As Singer (1975) notes, through an anthropocentric lens animals' interests seem "allowed to count only when they do not clash with human interests" (p. 220).

The more I contemplate this human-animal divide, the more I see it as disconcerting and false. The tendency to assign moral worthiness to humans on the grounds of their species is a bias, a parochial way of seeing the (human) world in exclusion of all other living beings. This bias troubles me, especially when I consider its outcomes for all those who fall outside its conceptual boundaries—in particular, animals. It troubles me that a particular way of seeing/being in the world results in a disregard for many animals' well-being, and it concerns me that humans perpetuate a viewpoint that is neither scientifically valid nor, in my opinion, ethically appropriate. Given the enormous scope and consequences of this divide, I see anthropocentrism as a matter worthy of examination.

One of the places I think it is especially worthy of examination is education—and hence the second part of this thesis and its subtitle, *Anthropocentrism and Education*. It is my opinion that the educational system, with its focus on individuals' intellectual and moral development, has a role to play in unpacking anthropocentrism; as I argue in the latter half of this thesis the reproduction of the anthropocentric bias seems contrary to what might be considered the purpose(s) of education itself. As such, I think it is worthwhile to examine the relationship between anthropocentrism and education from various angles, including how education reproduces the anthropocentric status quo, why education is an appropriate venue for considering anthropocentrism critically, and how this might be approached. I explore these ideas in Chapters 4 and 5.

This thesis, then, delves into what I have come to think of as the "human-animal divide" that characterizes the mindset of anthropocentrism, and considers how education relates to, and might respond to, this conceptual rift.

Philosophical Approach

> In the end, the hope of philosophy is to understand—understand ourselves, understand our
>
> world, understand our values and the entirety of existence around us. (Cline, 2006, ¶ 11)

This thesis is philosophical in nature, and in keeping with the above quote aims to contribute to understanding—specifically, understanding of the concepts of anthropocentrism, education, and the relationship between the two. Adams (2000) suggests philosophy is concerned with examining the everyday, with "bringing under critical review and appraisal as much as possible of what is ordinarily taken for granted, assumed, or presupposed about experience" (p. 352). This thesis reflects that focus as I review some "ordinarily taken-for-granted" notions surrounding humans, animals, and education. In Chapter 2 I explore dominant understandings of "human" and "animal," and in Chapters 4 and 5 I consider what might be taken-for-granted assumptions about how animals are represented in education.

These explorations are nested within my larger philosophical claim: that education should critically examine the anthropocentric status quo. This claim situates my work in the philosophy of education, defined by Hare and Portelli (2001) as a "critical inquiry into educational concepts, values, and practices, the reflections of which offer an important bearing on practical educational decisions" (p. 11). This thesis reflects these tenets as it engages with concepts (anthropocentrism and education), values (especially those surrounding human-animal relations), and practices (in particular, educational practices that connect to understandings of human-animal relations), and in doing so, outlines implications for educational theory and practice.

Guiding Research Questions

Several research questions emerged from my study. In particular, the questions of "what is anthropocentrism?" "what is the purpose of education?" and "why should education challenge anthropocentrism?" were explored, as were several sub-questions that emerged from them. The

following diagram outlines the research questions that guided this thesis and how they are organized into chapters:

Chapter 1: Introduction	What am I researching? How will I conduct my research? What are my theoretical influences? To whom might this research be of interest?
Chapter 2: Anthropocentrism: Meanings, Manifestations, and Rationalizations	*Meanings:* How is anthropocentrism defined and understood? What elements appear in its definitions, and how are those elements defined? How do I define it? *Manifestations:* What are the results of anthropocentrism? What are its consequences for animals? for humans? *Rationalizations:* How, and why, is anthropocentrism rationalized?
Chapter 3: Anthropocentrism Through Three Lenses	How do three bodies of theory—animal liberation/animal rights, ecofeminism, and poststructuralism—consider the concept of anthropocentrism and respond to it?
Chapter 4: Anthropocentrism and Education	What is the relationship between education and anthropocentrism? Why should a philosophy of education consider anthropocentrism critically, and how might the study of anthropocentrism fit into a critical pedagogy context?
Chapter 5: Educational Responses to Anthropocentrism	What educational responses exist to anthropocentrism? How might education disrupt or challenge anthropocentrism? Where might the critical consideration of anthropocentrism fit into the curriculum?

Figure 1: Research questions and design.

Research Method

The research method that guided this work is conceptual analysis, a philosophical method involving the analysis of concepts. A *concept* can be understood as "an idea or thought, more precisely the abstraction that represents or signifies the unifying principle of various distinct particulars" (Barrow & Milburn, 1986, p. 47), or, more simply, as "a general notion, an abstract idea" (*Oxford Canadian Dictionary*, 2006, p. 190), and *analysis* can be understood as a process of exploring a concept deeply by "comparing apparent opposites, comparing distinct concepts that ... belong in the same domain, ... considering border line cases, ... and searching for necessary and sufficient conditions" (Barrow & Milburn, 1986, p. 18). Bringing these definitions together, conceptual analysis can be understood as a research method that involves considering the criteria that defines an idea, including its likeness and opposition to other ideas.

Conceptual analysis involves "philosophic analyses of concepts or ideas or proposals or claims" (Brandon, 1983, ¶ 1), whereby the researcher considers "the meaningfulness and inter-relationships of the concepts involved ... to derive a clearer understanding of the fundamental concepts" (Centre for Fundamental and Anomalies Research, n.d, ¶ 1). Exploring concepts—in the case of this research, the concepts of anthropocentrism and education—connects to the philosophical project of reviewing assumptions and ideas ordinarily taken for granted; it also distinguishes this research method from other forms of research. In conceptual research the focus is not as much on finding "answers" as might be the case in more traditional forms of research, but rather is on opening up a concept intellectually by engaging in a careful philosophical consideration of it (Wilson, 1963).

Part of conducting a conceptual analysis involves considering others' ideas about the concepts under scrutiny. According to the International Association for Dance Medicine and Science (2003), "conceptual analyses are often built around a review of the research literature related to the concept under consideration" (¶ 1). As such, a significant part of conceptual research involves investigating ideas about a concept and then synthesizing and extending those ideas. In accordance with this, a considerable part of my research involved familiarizing myself with materials on the topics of anthropocentrism and education, and applying their salient ideas to my research questions.

Another part of conceptual research involves finding relevant examples to explore a concept (Wilson, 1963). In my work, those "relevant examples" are often animals themselves, and I have included some photos and representations of them in this thesis. I have done this for three reasons: first, in some cases the photos relate directly to what I am discussing, and in regard to the adage of a picture being worth a thousand words, I included them to exemplify my points. Second, my aim was to give conceptual space and consideration to both humans *and* animals in this research, and I found that including photos of animals was one way of giving animals that space and consideration. My third reason for incorporating photos of animals was because in writing this

thesis I wanted to move away from producing a text-only document that might reaffirm the primacy accorded to the written (human) word—as discussed in Chapter 2, this primacy is often taken as evidence of humans' "superiority" over animals, and I felt that including photos of animals might, in a small way, disrupt this mindset, as well as encourage engagement with animals on a less abstract level.

Theoretical Influences

As an Education student with a specialization in Women's Studies, I have gained exposure to several bodies of theory that have influenced my thinking. From Education, the fields of educational philosophy and critical pedagogy influence me, and from Women's Studies I have gained exposure to ecofeminist and poststructuralist thought. On my own I have explored animal liberation/animal rights theory, which I find compelling from an ethical perspective. These five areas—animal liberation/animal rights, ecofeminism, poststructuralism, critical pedagogy, and educational philosophy—form the basis of my theoretical framework, and I explore these bodies of theory in relation to the concepts of anthropocentrism and education (see Figure 2).
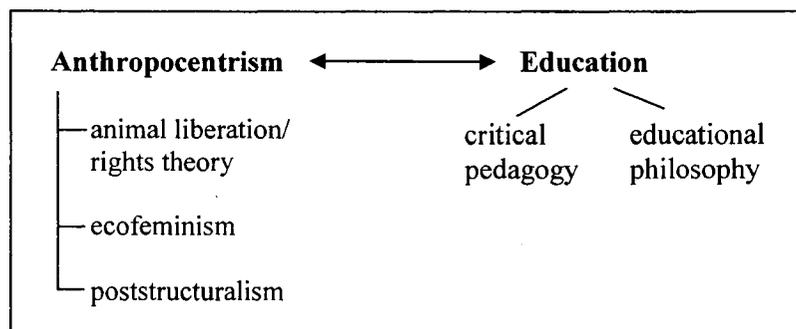
Figure 2: Theoretical framework.

I am influenced by animal liberation/animal rights theory and its argument that animals are entities who possess intrinsic value and are deserving of moral attention. On a personal level I find the animal liberation/animal rights argument that humans should not use animals for their own

ends compelling, although presented as a universal ethic it is somewhat problematic. Nonetheless, I find that this discourse, more than any other field of thought, critically considers the power imbalances in human-animal relations and raises poignant ethical questions about them. In doing so it offers valuable perspectives on anthropocentrism, which I explore in Chapter 3.

Ecofeminism influences me most prominently through its theme of breaking down binaries and moving beyond dualisms. Gaard (1998) explains that ecofeminism strives to disentangle itself from the western tradition of hierarchical dualisms (e.g., men vs. women, humans vs. animals, culture vs. nature, objectivity vs. subjectivity, rationality vs. emotionality), as these dualisms are understood as reinscribing inequities. Ecofeminists suggest traditional "either/or" thinking be replaced by a "both/and" mentality (Plumwood, 1993), and I have attempted to approach this perspective in my research by focusing, for example, on both humans and animals, both nature and culture, both reason and emotion, and so on. In this way, I aimed to not favour or accord epistemological primacy to any one "side" of a dualism.

A second way that ecofeminism, and feminism in general, influences me is through its understanding of the importance of a researcher "locating" herself within her writing. As Ardovini-Brooker (2002) writes, a hallmark of the feminist approach is that "the researchers' intellectual autobiography must be taken into consideration" and the researcher should position herself as "an active presence, an agent in research, and she constructs ... a viewpoint" (pp. 2-3). In feminist research it is argued that the knowledge produced should be situated as emerging from one's particular culture, position within the culture, experiences, and worldviews; the researcher should not attempt to emulate an objective "voice from nowhere" (Haraway, 1991).

In relation to this, I have aimed to be explicit about where I am coming from in this thesis, and I have drawn on my experiences, in part, to inform my work. As a white, able-bodied, educated woman with middle-class status in western culture, I am aware that my "location" affords me a particular perspective in relation to this topic, as well as the time, energy, and resources required to undertake this research. My undergraduate degree in Women's Studies has been

especially helpful in allowing me to "see" anthropocentrism and animal oppression, as it opened my eyes to various forms of *human* oppression, conflated with gender, and the often-insidious workings of power that render that oppression seemingly "natural." Extending some of these ideas to animals, as I have done in this thesis, has in no small part been an act of building upon the conceptual and cultural understandings I have gained through a feminist education. I explore these (eco)feminist influences in Chapter 3.

Poststructuralism influences me in the manner in which it calls into question concepts that may otherwise be treated as "natural" or "true" (Scott, 1988). In relation to humans, animals, and anthropocentrism, I believe there is much to be called into question, and the poststructuralist project can assist with this. I am particularly influenced by poststructuralism's understanding of language as a system through which meaning is constructed and cultural practices organized, and how this might relate to human-animal relations. Within poststructuralism words are not believed to have fixed or intrinsic meanings (although certain meanings emerge as normative through power discourses (Foucault, 1980)), but rather are seen as constructs and constraints that can be deconstructed, in theory and practice. I explore these ideas further in Chapter 3.

Critical pedagogy influences me through some of its underlying tenets, especially the ideas that education is inherently political, that the aim of education should be to balance the goals of cultivating the intellect with fostering social change, and that critical pedagogues should aim to identify and resist the harmful effects of dominant power (Kincheloe, 2005). Through a critical pedagogy approach to education it is important to examine current ideologies and systems of power to determine who benefits, and who suffers, under them, as well as examining what counts as "knowledge" itself and what power relations are embedded in it. In Chapters 4 and 5 I consider knowledge and power in relation to education and anthropocentrism, and a critical pedagogy perspective guides these chapters.

Finally, educational philosophy influences me through its questioning of the purposes of education, the role education plays (or should play) in students' development, and how education

connects to critical and/or creative thinking. In particular, I am drawn to the philosophical idea that education should not be about reproducing the cultural status quo, but rather should comprise a critical inquiry that opens up new possibilities for thinking about and being in the world. In Chapters 4 and 5 I discuss ideas from the philosophy of education that connect to my research, and throughout this thesis I am influenced by this field as it provides a framework for my own work, in which I am forwarding my own philosophy of education.

Potential Audiences

This thesis is interdisciplinary in nature, and as such is aimed at an interdisciplinary audience. As explained in the section above, I have been influenced by, and have drawn ideas from, the fields of educational philosophy, critical pedagogy, ecofeminism, poststructuralism, and animal rights/animal liberation theory. I believe each of these areas has a stake in analyzing anthropocentrism, and as such, this research may be of interest to anyone in these fields. This thesis is thus aimed at a wide potential audience, including students, teachers, researchers, philosophers, ethicists, animal defense and social justice scholars and activists, and anyone else interested in considering the concept of anthropocentrism and the human-animal divide.

CHAPTER TWO

Anthropocentrism: Meanings, Manifestations, and Rationalizations

In this chapter and the next I analyze the concept of anthropocentrism so that it is understood in the context of my larger claim, that anthropocentrism is a bias that should be considered in education instead of being ignored (and hence reproduced) there. This chapter provides the first half of this analysis by exploring some of anthropocentrism's meanings, including my own understanding of the term; some of its manifestations for animals and humans; and some of the ways it may be rationalized or kept in place.

Meanings of Anthropocentrism

> The initial question about ... technical terms is ... "What does this term mean?" (Barrow & Milburn, 1986, p. 4)

For a few reasons, it makes sense to begin my analysis of anthropocentrism by considering some definitions of the term. Outlining definitions serves the obvious purpose of introducing readers to meanings of the term, and it also provides an opportunity to consider how different authors interpret it, what components they understand as comprising it, and how they see those components fitting together. It is also worthwhile to review definitions because after having done so I will be in a position to forward my own operational definition of the term, which can be then be carried through the rest of the thesis.

Breaking down the word *anthropocentrism* produces two word stems: *anthro* (meaning, relating to humans, as in anthropology) and *centrism* (meaning, central). Putting these ideas back together, the notion of "humans at the centre" or "human-centred" is evoked, and this notion is indeed at the core of many definitions of the term. Figure 3 outlines some definitions, taken from a

variety of sources.

Definitions of Anthropocentrism (listed alphabetically by author)

- "a human-centred perspective" (Adams & Donovan, 1999, p. 4)

- "our vested interests in the prospects of our own kind"; "any moral perspective which takes the human case to be central or paradigmatic" (Benton, 1993, p. 75)

- "any view magnifying the importance of humans in the cosmos, e.g., by seeing it as created for our benefit" (Blackburn, 2005, p. 17)

- "the attitude that humans are the most important thing in the universe" (Brute Ethics, 2006, n.p.)

- "placing humanity and human interests at the center of value" (Katz, 1997, p. 122)

- (anthropocentric): "regarding human beings as the centre of existence" (*Oxford Canadian Dictionary*, 2006, p. 32)

- "stopping [our] frameworks [of morality and rationality] at the human species boundary" (Plumwood, 1997, p. 328)

- "human chauvinism: the idea that humans are the crown of creation, the source of all values, the measure of all things" (Seed, 2000, ¶ 1)

- "the 'human superiority complex' considering humans as superior to or the pinnacle of all forms of life" (Smith, n.d., ¶ 2)

- "the view that humans are primary and central in the order of things" (Steiner, 2005, p. 1)

- "the "human-centred principle, refer[ing] to the idea that humanity must always remain the central concern for humans. According to anthropocentrism, all things in the universe are to be judged in their relationship to man [sic] ... other life forms ... are only important as much as they affect people" (Wikipedia, 2006a, ¶ 1-2)

Figure 3: Definitions of anthropocentrism.

Some themes emerge upon reviewing the above definitions. First, the word *human* appears in every definition, which identifies anthropocentrism as clearly relating to humans. It could further be said that anthropocentrism relates almost *exclusively* to humans, since other living beings are referenced in only two of the definitions (Smith, n.d.; Wikipedia, 2006a) and in both instances they are referenced only to underscore that these "others" are subordinated to humans

through an anthropocentric worldview.

A second theme that emerges is that anthropocentrism relates to a frame of mind or a mental framework in general: it involves a "principle" (Wikipedia, 2006a), a "view" (Blackburn, 2005; Steiner, 2005), an "attitude" (Brute Ethics, 2006), or a "perspective" (Adams & Donovan, 1999; Benton, 1993)—words that suggest a particular way of thinking. One definition refers to anthropocentrism as an "idea" (Seed, 2000), and this too evokes the notion of a mental process. Anthropocentrism therefore refers to a frame of mind involving humans, and evoked by humans as well.

A third theme that emerges is that this principle/view/attitude/perspective/idea relates to the importance of humans: humans are "central/at the centre/as the centre" (Benton, 1993; Katz, 1997; *Oxford Canadian Dictionary*, 2006; Steiner, 2005; Wikipedia, 2006a), "paradigmatic" (Benton, 1993), "the crown of creation, the source of all values, the measure of all things" (Seed, 2000), "primary" (Steiner, 2005), the "most important ... in the universe" (Brute Ethics, 2006), and "the pinnacle of all forms of life" (Smith, n.d.). Thus, through anthropocentrism humans are considered to be of the utmost importance—more important than other living beings, and possibly the *only* beings of moral importance at all.

These three themes form the basis of anthropocentrism: it applies to humans, it refers to a mindset, and it suggests that humans are the most worthy species on the planet. Putting these ideas together, we could arrive at a definition of anthropocentrism as *a perspective whereby humans are considered the most valuable of all living beings,* but I am not satisfied that this definition is complete. What it is missing, from my perspective, is mention of anthropocentrism's outcomes for *other* living beings—beings who are, as a result, pushed outside the boundaries of moral consideration, or viewed only in terms of their usefulness to humans. Those beings, as I am considering in this thesis, are animals.[2]

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[2] A more comprehensive review of the term might also include nature itself, e.g., trees, plants, waters, rocks, etc.

I think it is worthwhile to consider the outcomes of anthropocentrism for humans and animals because both are impacted significantly by anthropocentrism, and because the conceptual human-animal divide that is a prominent characteristic of the anthropocentric mindset leaves both parties "positioned" under it, for better or for worse. Given that both humans and animals are impacted significantly by anthropocentrism, I think a more inclusive definition of the term should mention its meanings for humans *and* animals[3] and acknowledge that the "humans at the centre" attitude also results in one of "animals at the fringes."

One activist organization that appears to agree with this assessment is Animal Liberation Front (ALF), which offers the following definition of anthropocentrism:

Anthropocentrism

1. The belief that the only species that matters, has feelings, has interests, and has rights is the human one.

2. The belief that everything that exists on Earth belongs to humans, to do with as we will, for our own benefit and pleasure.

3. The absolute failure to recognize that animals have the right to exist on Earth without being commercialized and commodified for the comfort of humans.

4. The misguided perception that humans are the only species of import on the planet, rather than just one among many who have intrinsic value and who contribute to the equilibrium and beauty of the Earth.

5. The refusal to acknowledge that animals are sentient, conscious beings who are capable of suffering physically and psychologically and who value their lives, their homes, their mates, and their children.

6. The inability to see that all life is interconnected and interdependent—and that a sense of connection with and respect for animals enriches and enhances our own lives.

7. A profound sense of disconnection from nature and other life forms—with an attendant callous disregard for their wellbeing and the consequent erosion of our own characters. (n.d., ¶ 1-7)

Figure 4: ALF's definition of anthropocentrism.

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[3] Ironically, it could be said that a definition of anthropocentrism that excludes animals is, in itself, perpetuating anthropocentrism!

In my assessment, ALF's definition somewhat overstates the case, as I am not convinced that all of the facets outlined in the seven-part definition need to be held for a person or a viewpoint to be considered anthropocentric. For example, a person could believe that animals have feelings and are capable of suffering, but at the same time not care about their feelings or their suffering, and this would, I believe, position that person as anthropocentric. Similarly, a person could believe that animals make a contribution to the "equilibrium and beauty of the Earth" (as discussed in point 4) but still not accord them moral consideration, and this too would position their perspective in the realm of anthropocentrism. I therefore think ALF's definition is an overstatement, but at the same time I think it offers a valuable perspective concerning the outcomes of anthropocentrism—specifically, that it is characterized by a disregard for animal life, and that it involves a corresponding disconnect from animals on the part of humans. These ideas are relevant to the meaning of the term, as I will explore in the "Manifestations of Anthropocentrism" section of this chapter.

Having now reviewed some definitions of anthropocentrism, considered their salient themes, and outlined my own thoughts that animals warrant mention within an inclusive definition of the term, I offer an operational definition of *anthropocentrism* for this thesis: it is **a perspective whereby humans are considered the most valuable of all living beings and animals are excluded from the sphere of moral consideration.** I think this definition is more satisfactorily inclusive, but it requires further unpacking still as the categories of "human" and "animal" are themselves complex and unstable.

Troubling the binary: What does it mean to be "human?" to be "animal?"

Conventional understandings of the words *human* (meaning, *homo sapien*) and *animal* (meaning, any animal except a human) demonstrate how the "divide" mentality has crept into (or originated from?) the English language. These conventional understandings suggest a clear

demarcation between humans and animals; more so, they suggest that humans are *not* animals. Linguistically and conceptually, they separate humans from all other animals.

Interestingly, this separation is both supported by and contradicted by dictionary definitions of the terms "human" and "animal." The *Oxford Canadian Dictionary* (2006), for example, offers the following definitions for the word *human*:

> **1.** of, belonging to, or characteristic of people or humankind. **2.** consisting of human beings.
>
> **3.** of or characteristic of humankind as opposed to God, animals, or machines ... **4.** showing
>
> (esp. the better) qualities of humankind, e.g., kindness, compassion, etc. ... *n.* a human
>
> being, esp. as distinguished from an animal. (p. 474)

According to these definitions, *human* can be understood as being "opposed to ... animals" and "distinguished from an animal," but this becomes problematic upon considering the same dictionary's definition of *animal*:

> **1.** a living organism which feeds on organic matter, usu. one with specialized sense organs
>
> and nervous system, and able to respond rapidly to stimuli. **2.** such an organism other than
>
> man. **3.** a brutish or uncivilized person. **4.** *informal* a person or thing of any kind (*there is*
>
> *no such animal*). (p. 30)

The problem that becomes apparent upon considering these definitions is that the word *animal* both encompasses humans (as reflected in definitions 1, 3, and 4) and excludes humans (definition 2) at the same time. This leaves open two questions: (1) Are humans animals? and (2) Does *animal* encompass human? Paradoxically, the answer to both of these questions could be yes or no, depending on which parts of the definitions are considered. The result, then, is semantic confusion: while biologically humans are animals, from a linguistic perspective "human" and "animal" can also be considered, quite legitimately, as excluding each other.

To trouble this binary even further, there is also the tendency for humans to linguistically dichotomize the "human" and the "animal" within themselves. A person may, for example, be said

to be acting like an "animal" if he or she is not acting in a "rational" manner (as reflected in the third definition of *animal* above), or a person's sexual or aggressive energy may be understood as his or her "animal instincts." In this instance, the human/animal binary appears to work in concert with the mind/body binary, for what is considered "human" is associated with the mind, while what is considered "animal" is associated with the body.[4] Perhaps it can be said from this that humans both recognize and deny their membership in the animal community through the dichotomization of themselves via language: their "rational" side is "human"; their "primal" or "bodily" side, "animal."

The word "animal" comes from *anima*, the Latin term for "breath" or "life" (Kemerling, 2006). The concepts of breath and life, being characteristics that all living beings share, would seem to erase any conceptual divide between humans and animals and suggest that *anima* (and hence *animal)* encompasses human. Nonetheless, despite these original meanings of the word and their implications, English-speaking people have used the English language to define themselves outside of the animal order[5]—although, this defining has occurred in the context of a binary that appears to be in contradiction with itself.

To work around these semantic contradictions, I offer a more technically precise definition of *anthropocentrism*, as a perspective whereby humans are considered the most valuable of all living beings, and other-than-human animals are excluded from the sphere of moral consideration.

Manifestations of Anthropocentrism

As a mindset or perspective, anthropocentrism is manifested mentally by humans and

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[4] A third binary at work here is the man/woman binary, with human/mind/man in one camp and animal/body/woman in the other (see Jones, 2004). I explore this idea further in Chapter 3.

[5] This is not solely a phenomenon of English-speaking people; similar linguistic paradoxes exist in the French language, for example, and anthropocentric attitudes exist in various cultures.

expressed through their actions and behaviours. It is a perspective both conceived of and acted upon, and it may be manifested at an individual level and a cultural level. There are therefore multiple locations through which anthropocentrism may be manifested, and countless ways it may be expressed.

Given this reality, it is not possible for me to provide a comprehensive overview of anthropocentrism's manifestations. I offer, instead, a very broad review of some of its dominant expressions, and for more in-depth consideration of the ideas presented I reference other authors as appropriate.

Manifestations for animals.

Through an anthropocentric lens it may be argued that considering the consequences of anthropocentrism for animals is in itself moot: if animals do not count, morally speaking, then why consider them in the first place? It may be further suggested that since animals are not worthy of moral consideration, humans can (and perhaps should) use them in every conceivable way, and that any suffering endured by animals as a result of these usages is perhaps unfortunate, but in no way morally wrong.[6]

I believe it is worthwhile to consider anthropocentrism's manifestations for animals for three reasons: (1) because they are living, feeling beings who demonstrate their own life interests,[7] (2) because they comprise a significant "party" within the relationship that humans hold with the world, and (3) because an analysis of animals' experiences provides a richer understanding of the concept of anthropocentrism. To ignore the manifestations of anthropocentrism for animals is to

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[6] As D'Silva (2006) states: "If you take the traditional, anthropocentric view ... although some ... situations might be regrettable in terms of animal suffering, they are necessary in order to supply our own species with food, fun, adornment, medicine, a livelihood or just plain profit" (p. 273).

[7] I assume this statement holds an evident truth, as the question of animal sentience has long been proven. While animals demonstrate differing levels of sentience, it is my experience that observing carefully or getting to know an animal reveals that they are individuals with their own personalities and preferences.

turn a blind eye toward them (and hence to reproduce the anthropocentric status quo), and this is not the intention of my research.

As previously discussed, anthropocentrism is a perspective that translates into actions and behaviours, and it is these actions and behaviours that have direct consequences for animals (as arguably, our thoughts alone do not affect animals in any direct ways, other than by the means they translate into actions). As such, I limit my discussion here to some examples of anthropocentric actions and behaviours that manifest upon animals in western culture.

Intensive farming. Adams (1995) suggests the most common way western individuals may interact with animals is by eating them: the average North American consumes animal parts with every meal and will consume, in her or his lifetime, an average of "984 chickens, 37 turkeys, 29 pigs, 12 cattle, 2 lambs, 1 calf, and more than 1,000 fish" (p. 26). While land-based "food" animals may be procured through traditional-style family farms or hunting, the majority, in western culture, are raised in intensive farming situations. In the United States, for example, 99 percent of chickens kept for egg-laying purposes, 72 percent of all pigs, and more than half of all cows are intensively farmed in what some industry representatives call "full confinement systems" (Robbins, 2001).

Intensive farming demonstrates the anthropocentric notion that animals are not worthy of moral consideration, as the animals housed in these conditions are denied fulfillment of some of their most basic instincts, including the instinct to move around, to form social bonds, to procure their own food, to create their own homes, to live outdoors, and to raise their own offspring (Mason & Singer, 1980; Montgomery, 2000). In an effort to maximize profit, the animals are often raised in cages or stalls so small they may be unable to turn around or take a single step: chickens may be housed in cages with less than a square foot of floor space per bird (see Figure 5), pigs may be kept in "gestation" crates barely larger than their own bodies (see Figure 6), and dairy cows may

spend their lives in concrete stalls, tethered at the neck. These animals, numbered easily in the millions in North America, are raised in large warehouses with little to no stimulation, and many never see the light of day (Robbins, 2001).

Figure 5: Hens in battery cages.
Source: At Our Hands, 2006.
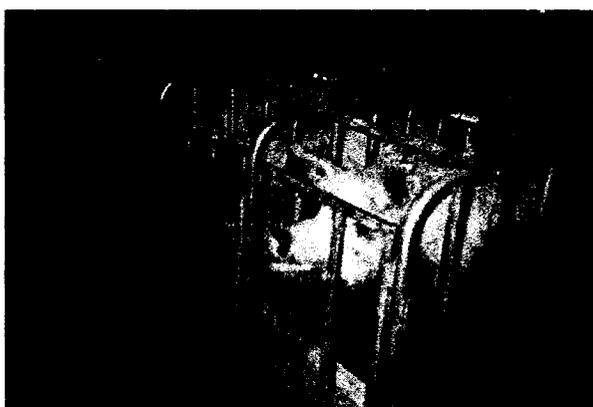
Figure 6: Pigs in gestation crates.
Source: The Farm Sanctuary, 2006.

Not surprisingly, intensively farmed animals suffer physical pain and/or psychological distress. Unable to exercise and often bred to be abnormally large, many become crippled and/or obese. Foot and leg sores are particularly common among all types of intensively confined animals, as bedding is often not provided and the animals must sit, stand, or lie on metal slats (Regan, 2004). In addition, all confined animals breathe in high levels of ammonia from the urine and feces that collects below them, and this commonly results in eye infections, breathing problems, and illnesses such as pneumonia (Robbins, 2001). Psychological problems are evident as well; in response to the deprivation that characterizes their lives many animals exhibit stereotyped behaviours such as chewing the bars of their cages, thrashing back and forth, ongoing vocalizations, self-mutilation, and "sham chewing" (chewing the air) (Mason & Singer, 1980; Montgomery, 2000; Regan, 2004).

It is clear that animals raised in intensive farming situations are not being granted moral consideration. It is also clear that humans are conceptually at the centre of these confinement systems, having created them in the first place and having done so to fulfill their own interests. An anthropocentric bias permeates this type of farming, and this is particularly evident when it is

considered that most humans do not need to consume animal products to survive[8] (Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, 2005), rendering the animals' suffering ultimately unnecessary.

Research. In Canada, approximately two million animals are used each year for research, divided among three categories: general research, educational use (e.g., for research or dissection), and product testing. Close to 90 percent of the animals used for research are rats, mice, fish, and fowl, and the other 10 percent are comprised of other mammals and birds as well as reptiles and amphibians (Canadian Council on Animal Care, n.d.). Most animals do not emerge from laboratories alive (Dunayer, 2004).

Figure 7: Rabbits restrained for testing.
Source: At Our Hands, 2006.

As a "subject," an animal may be used in virtually any type of research deemed worthwhile to human interests, such as drug testing, experimental surgery, eye research, radiation research, brain research, aggression research, isolation research, studies of "learned helplessness," stress research, military research, pain research, experiments where diseases or injuries are induced, vivisection, dissection, and experiments involving burning and skin irritation (Montgomery, 2000; Regan, 2004 - see Figures 7-8). Rohr (1989) adds to this list by noting that in psychological research "countless animals have been surgically dismembered, drugged, starved, fatigued, frozen, electrically shocked, infected, cross-bred, maddened, and killed in the belief that their behaviour ... would cast light on the nature of humankind"

Figure 8: A research subject.
Source: At Our Hands, 2006.

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[8] An exception to this are people in northern parts of the world, who rely on animals as their primary food source.

(p. 57). One of the most common forms of animal research is toxicity testing, in which animals are forced to ingest, inhale, or have applied to their skin or eyes commercial products such as bleach, nail polish, perfume, and glue. These tests, while not legally required, are conducted to give manufacturers legal cover in case a consumer is accidentally poisoned or harmed by the product (Regan, 2004).[9]

Like intensively farmed animals, animals used in research suffer physically and psychologically. Their use as research subjects reflects the anthropocentric bias whereby their lives are not considered morally important and, as such, may be compromised or ended to satisfy human curiosity and/or further human knowledge. Humans are clearly at the moral centre of such research as it is almost always conducted for their benefit; in some cases the benefits themselves are questionable. In the case of drug testing, for example, cardiovascular specialist Pippin (2005) states that animal testing is moot because the results of such testing cannot reliably predict humans' responses to the drugs[10] (and at times the results of such animal tests have been devastating to human health: for example, the drug Thalidomide was deemed safe for human use on account of animal testing that produced no adverse results (Greek, n.d.)). Some suggest the benefits of animal testing are generally overstated given that the majority of the most important health advances have resulted from changes in hygiene and improvements in living conditions (Regan, 2004; Rohr, 1989); others note that more viable alternatives exist (e.g., live human cell research, in vitro research, and computer simulations) (Pippin, 2005). The value of subjecting animals to painful and/or distressing situations is also questionable when it is considered that, without any mandatory system for sharing protocols or experiment results, there is vast duplication of research and relatively few studies ever reach publication (Spiegel, 1996).

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[9] Toxicity tests are commonly known as LD-50 tests (LD standing for *lethal dose*). After 50 percent of the "test" animals die from toxicity, a company can reliably print on their product that it is harmful if ingested or otherwise improperly used. The company then has legal recourse if a person misuses a substance, becomes ill, and attempts to initiate a lawsuit (Regan, 2004).

[10] For example, Aspirin killed six species of animals used to test the product, and saccharin killed all male rats used in testing, but both products are deemed safe for human use (Pippin, 2005). Greek (n.d.) states that scientists "are now going on record stating that there is only a 5-25% correlation between animals results and human results" (¶ 5).

Entertainment. Countless animals are used for human entertainment, which may take the form of circuses, zoos, marine parks, rodeos, and racing events such as horse or greyhound racing. Animals objectified for these types of entertainment have the autonomy over their lives taken away, and many are forced to live in unnatural environments and/or perform unnatural behaviours for the satisfaction of the human gaze (see Figures 9-10). Since arguably no species of animal is exempt from being targeted for some human entertainment purpose, all animals are potential victims to these anthropocentric practices.

Many "entertainment" animals are also victim to physical abuse and/or deprivation, particularly those forced to perform for humans. For example, animals used in circuses (e.g., lions, tigers, bears, elephants) may be assaulted with whips, metal bars, chains, electric prods, or even human fists to learn their tricks, and when they are not performing they spend their time in small cages and/or in transport to the next city (Masson & McCarthy, 1996). Many marine animals, such as dolphins, also suffer in myriad ways: from the trauma of being captured from sea and separated from their pod, from the deprivation in the tanks in which they live, and from possible mistreatment at the hands of trainers, who may deny them food until they "learn" to perform. The "bucking broncos" in rodeos are also subject to human cruelty, as the majority of these horses are not wild but rather may be "frightened and in pain" (Regan, 2004, p. 152) on account of the use of electric prods administered as they leave the chute, flank straps cinched tightly

Figure 9: Bears in a circus.
Source: At Our Hands, 2006.

Figure 10: Captive orca whale.
Source: At Our Hands, 2006.

near their abdominal regions, and/or spurs digging into their bodies from riders' shoes (Masson & McCarthy, 1996; Regan, 2004, Singer, 1975). These performing animals' suffering is, like that of the animals who are intensively farmed or used for research purposes, negated from consideration in favour of human interests.

The above examples barely scratch the surface of the manifestations of anthropocentrism for animals; much, much more could be written about each of these examples and many other topics could be considered as well, such as the use of animals for sport, clothing, ecotourism, exotic pets, etc. It is impossible to put numbers around the animals who suffer and die for human interests each year, although it is known that that number is in the billions.[11] This demonstrates how, on a wide scale, the usage of animals in western culture is a normalized, hegemonic idea.

Kincheloe (2005) describes hegemony as a Gramscian term denoting concealed domination held by institutional powers, or a blanketing worldview that effectively becomes invisible on account of its ubiquitous, "normal" nature as promoted by the institutions themselves. The idea that animals do not count, morally speaking, is hegemonic because animals are used so widely in society. This is not to say *all* animals are victims of anthropocentrism, or *all* individuals and institutions are themselves anthropocentric, but the notion of animals as worthy of moral consideration is rejected in significant, institutionalized ways in western culture, which contributes to the hegemonic idea that humans are the only ones who morally count.

This idea is further represented by a legal system that grants rights to humans alone. Dunayer (2004) explains how in current law, animals are subsumed under humans as property: they are either considered personal property (e.g., a person is understood as "owning" animals such as a dog or cows; they are his or her personal property), or public property (e.g., free-living animals). Either way, animals are legally positioned as belonging to humans, and humans have the

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[11] Adams (2004) writes that for food sources alone, 31.1 billion animals die each year.

power to decide their fate. This is, in the end, what anthropocentrism means for animals: they exist for humans, and they are not granted autonomy over their own lives.

Manifestations for humans.

If animals are the "losers" under anthropocentrism, then humans are clearly the "winners" or the ones who benefit from it. Unlike animals, humans are considered moral agents, and they are granted legal status as such under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. The Charter provides each person with the assurance of basic rights and freedoms, including "legal rights: the right to life, liberty and personal security" (*Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, 2006, ¶ 3). These rights are granted to all persons regardless of sex, race, ethnicity, mental or physical capacity, age, etc.; as such, humans are legally considered beings with their own intrinsic worth, granted to them on account of their membership in the human community. In some significant ways, being the "winners" of anthropocentrism results in humans gaining basic rights and freedoms on account of their species.

There is also a downside to anthropocentrism for humans, however, as the parochial vision that accompanies this perspective may result in a short-sightedness that can limit a person's worldview and her or his ability to connect, both with herself/himself and with other species. For example, as previously discussed, anthropocentrism may result in a disconnect from seeing oneself as a member of the animal community, or it may lead to semantic or conceptual confusion as to whether humans are animals, and where the boundaries between *human* and *animal* are drawn. More deeply, that confusion can lead to us thinking that we are, as humans, somehow outside the animal order and more "special" than other species. As Best (2003) notes: "The tragic flaw in the human species is its historical need to define itself as not only radically different from all other species, but also as infinitely greater and more advanced" (¶ 13). This "tragic flaw" reflects a chronic misinterpretation of evolutionary theory, which considers all animals to be

evolutionarily netted together, and it also seems to deny the ecological perspective that all life on earth is bound in a web of mutual interdependence (Darwin, 1871/1976).

Anthropocentrism may also lead to a disengagement from other animals, or, as ALF's definition put it, "a profound sense of disconnection from nature and other life forms" (n.d., ¶ 7). The insistence on humanity's moral superiority may lead to an inability to appreciate the conceptual "other"; it may also lead to a denial or refusal to acknowledge that humans and animals have a great deal in common. For example, animals share with humans many life patterns and experiences that accompany those life stages; all animals feel emotions and physical sensations to varying degrees; all animals sleep; all animals demonstrate preferences; and all animals can suffer (Balcombe, 2006; Singer, 1975). Perhaps more generally it can be said that all animals are, as Regan (2004) explains, "subjects-of-a-life" (p. 50), meaning all animals have some sort of consciousness dwelling inside their bodies, and all animals care about what happens to them, regardless of whether anyone else cares or not. To put this another way, all animals experience what Evernden (1985) calls an "interrelation of self and world" (p. 81).

The inability or unwillingness to acknowledge animals as beings worthy of moral consideration leads to humans adopting the role of the oppressor. Refusing to acknowledge animals as having intrinsic worth may lead to humans rationalizing animal suffering as either unimportant or non-existent, and in doing so we arguably degrade ourselves. As Kant (1785/1996) wrote, we demean ourselves when we demean animals, and our cruelty toward them taints the name of human: "[V]iolent and cruel treatment of animals is ... intimately opposed to a human being's duty to himself [sic], and he has a duty to refrain from this; for it dulls his shared feeling of their suffering and so weakens and gradually uproots a natural predisposition that is very serviceable to morality" (pp. 192-193). By acting as the oppressor we turn away from a more compassionate side of our nature; further, as Kant expressed, cruelty toward animals may lead to cruelty toward other human beings.

In the English language, anthropocentrism manifests itself in disparaging animal

metaphors. Animal names are often evoked in negative ways—as previously discussed, humans may conceptually dichotomize their "human" (read "rational") and "animal" (read "bodily") natures; they may also move animals into positions where they become symbols of evil, as evidenced by Freudians or philosophers who speak of a "beast within" (Midgley, 1978). Humans further disparage animals by making the term "animal" an insult, and the names of many species also function as insulting human labels: *chicken* suggests a person who is afraid, *dog* suggests a person who is ugly, *cow* suggests a woman who is overweight, *rat* suggests a person who betrays another person, *bitch* suggests a selfish or pushy woman, *jackass* suggests a stupid man, *fox* suggests either a deceiving person or a "trophy" woman, *snake* suggests an unscrupulous man, *pig* suggests a chauvinistic male or a person who overeats, and so on. Dunayer (1995) notes that while these pejorative meanings are not intrinsic to the nature of the animals themselves, they often become attached to the animals and contribute to their oppression. As for humans, such metaphors perpetuate a linguistic system that promotes false stereotypes about animals' natures.

In general, then, even though we, as humans, benefit from anthropocentrism, we are also hampered by it because it imposes limits around our self-understanding, our ability to connect with other species, the enactment of our own humanity, and the accuracy of the English language. More generally, it is a narrow way of understanding the world and one that requires that any contradictory evidence regarding animals' worthiness be ignored or repressed. By insisting that humans are the sole moral entities on the planet, much richness of vision is surely being lost. Einstein labelled this limiting worldview an "optical delusion," and suggested humans should strive to break from it:

> A human being is part of the whole, called by us 'Universe,' [but] he [sic] experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us ... our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty. (Einstein, cited in Wilber, 2000, p. 136)

Rationalizations of Anthropocentrism

Why is anthropocentrism rationalized? If it is a biased way of thinking and a limiting worldview, why do many humans continue to subscribe to it and justify it? Two general possibilities suggest themselves: (1) it is the worldview we have inherited, and we accept it without question, and (2) humans benefit from it and therefore adhere to it.

The general adherence to anthropocentrism might be very different if humans were the "losers" under this perspective. If it were us who were being used for the purpose of another's agenda, or us whose lives were severely hampered as a result of a dominant worldview or regime, we would likely feel very differently, and perhaps act out against our oppression as well.[12] Acting out against oppressions is evidenced by the nature of social emancipation movements, which tend to emerge when a particular group of people are being discriminated against or are not being awarded equal rights. Hence, when people are subjugated there tends to be resistance, and on the flip side when there is no subjugation, it follows that there is no resistance,[13] and efforts might even be extended to maintain the status quo. I think this is likely the case with anthropocentrism, as it is guarded and justified in various ways.

The quest for human uniqueness.

Some people have searched for a distinguishing characteristic that makes humans unique and that can be heralded as "proof" of humans' superiority. To this end, a final distinction has been sought to divide humans from animals and confer praise upon humanity, as well as provide a point upon which anthropocentrism can rest. Several "markers of humanity" have been proposed (see Figure 11).

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[12] A rather silly defense to the moral rightness of humans using animals is that since (a) groups rise up against oppression when it becomes intolerable and (b) animals, as a group, have not yet launched a "revolution," then our treatment of the animals must be tolerable to the animals themselves. The validity of this argument is quickly thrown into question when it is considered that most animals have virtually no defense against humans.

[13] Although, a person may resist on behalf of another person or group or species.

language	self-awareness
tool usage	culture
stories	intelligence
rationality	spirituality
morality	awareness of mortality

Figure 11: Markers of humanity?

There are two general responses to this list. The first is acceptance that, in a variety of ways, humans *are* unique and unparalleled. If we are looking for characteristics to separate ourselves as a group from animals we can certainly find some,[14] but it does not follow that these characteristics mean we are "better" than other animals. It is illogical to choose human-centric characteristics and then hold them up as criteria for what makes humans superior (Noske, 1997). By this logic, any person could define what is "good" in relation to himself or herself, which is a selfish and biased way of thinking; we can see the unfairness of such thinking if we imagine the world was run by frogs, for example, and their criteria for exceptionalism and moral consideration was dependent upon how "frog-like" another being was.

A second response to the list is that some characteristics on it are shared by other animals in varying degrees. If we move outside a human framework, we see that many animals communicate using a "language" of sorts, although their language may be based on scent or vibration or songs rather than words (Bekoff, 2002). By the same token, all animals have their own version of rationality and intelligence—as Bekoff (2002) states: "[I]t is not very useful to ask if cats are smarter than dogs or chimpanzees are smarter than wolves, for each individual has to do what she or he needs to do in her or his own world" (p. xx). In some ways, then, the entire project of comparing humans to animals and attempting to extrapolate who is "higher" or "lower" (or "in" and "out") in terms of abilities is pointless.

Nevertheless, there are some interesting examples of animals who demonstrate what were once thought of as exclusively human traits. Consider the following:

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[14] For example, as far as I know humans are the only species to cook their food.

Tool usage: Woodpecker finches, who reside on the Galapagos islands, use cactus spines as tools to pry grubs out of trees. The finches have been observed to grasp cactus spines in their beaks, shorten them if necessary by snapping off parts to make more manageable "tools," and then carry them from branch to branch for reuse (Millikan & Bowman, 1967) (see Figure 12).

Figure 12: Tool-using finch.
© Tufts University, 2005.

Remembering the dead?: McComb, Baker, and Moss (2006) note that African elephants seem to pay homage to the bones of their dead by gently stroking them with their trunks and feet. In a study in which elephants were presented with skulls from their own species and skulls from other large mammals, the elephants showed exclusive interest in the skulls of their own kind and congregated around them, with some elephants becoming highly agitated. This suggests elephants can recognize the remains of their own kind, years after death (see Figure 13).

Figure 13: Elephants touching elephant skulls.
© Karen McComb/Royal Society.

Figure 14: Koko, signing "stupid."
© The Gorilla Foundation, 2007.

Language—on human terms: Koko, a female lowland gorilla born in 1971, began learning American Sign Language a year after she was born. Today she has a working vocabulary of more than 1000 signs, and understands approximately 2000 words of spoken English. On average Koko signs sentences between three and six words, and she uses sign language to express humour, emotions, preferences, and imagination (Haraway, 1989; The Gorilla Foundation, 2006) (see Figure 14).

Culture: Whale behaviour indicates that whales have what humans would call culture, as they learn from each other and pass on their learnings to other whales. Humpback whales, for example, sing songs to attract females or ward off other males, and these songs evolve over the course of a season. At the beginning of the season the whales sing one song, but the song changes a bit over the season so it is different by the end; in the course of a few years the song changes completely. Whales also express regional "dialects," and there are dialects within each pod as well (Whitehead, 2004) (see Figure 15).

Figure 15: Humpback whales.
Source: NOAA, 2006.

This microscopic glimpse into animal research suggests animal worlds may be much richer than we currently understand or previously imagined. It further suggests that the quest for human uniqueness may be a fruitless one, for who can name a single characteristic that is possessed by *all* humans but shared by no other animal?

Further rationalizations.

Beyond the quest for human uniqueness, various other rationalizations may be offered to defend anthropocentrism. One such rationalization is that it is innate; according to this perspective it is "natural" for humans to consider themselves most morally worthwhile, just as other species might, in turn, consider themselves or their kind most worthwhile. This type of reasoning may be followed by a hypothetical "lifeboat ethics" scenario—a situation in which a person must choose between saving the life of a human and saving the life of an animal.[15] In such a scenario, if the person answers that she or he would save the human, then the anthropocentric bias is taken as innate. The problem with this rationalization is that it distorts the question about whether it is

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[15] For example, if you were in a lifeboat with one other person and a dog, and someone had to be thrown overboard or the lifeboat would sink, would you toss the human or the dog?

"natural" for humans to deny moral consideration to animals, as it only presents a no-win (as well as abstract, decontextualized, and extraordinarily unlikely) situation in which one being, either a human or an animal, must be killed.[16] This does not prove, however, that anthropocentrism is innate or that humans only care about other humans.

Related to this rationalization is the argument that since many animals do not accord moral consideration to each other (i.e., some animals kill other animals), then the "laws of nature" give humans the right to kill animals. Interestingly, this argument may be reliant upon the understanding that humans are animals, and suggest that because this is the case, humans should (at least in this scenario) act like animals too. Perhaps not surprisingly, it is in humans' benefit to model their behaviour after animals in this scenario, whereas many other types of animal behaviour would not be considered appropriate to humans. This line of thinking may also ignore the fact that animals who kill other animals usually do so for survival (e.g., feeding), which cannot be said nearly as often about humans.

A third rationalization of anthropocentrism is that humans have a long history of disregarding animals and therefore this practice is natural and "right"; according to this perspective what has been done in the past can serve as a guide to the present. This argument loses strength when it is considered that tradition does not make for a reliable guide to moral rightness: there was a long history of human slavery, for example, and today this is considered immoral; similarly, women and Aboriginal people were once denied rights on the grounds of not being "persons," and this too is now considered wrong. Thus, pointing to an anthropocentric past does not make the anthropocentric present natural or "right."

In western culture, the positioning of humans at the centre of the moral universe is reflected in Christian ideology, making Christianity a possible rationalization for anthropocentrism. Christianity can be interpreted as supporting anthropocentrism through its depiction of a

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[16] Although, Bekoff (2002) recounts how some children, upon being presented with a similar scenario, came up with alternative responses such as everyone taking turns swimming alongside the lifeboat.

human-like God, as reflected in the biblical idea that God made humanity in his [sic] own image (*The Holy Bible*, 1987, Genesis 1:27), thus promoting a connection between humanness and holiness. Anthropocentrism is also established in the creation story when God grants humanity dominion over all other creatures: after the flood, Noah thanks God by making burnt offerings "of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl" (Genesis 8:20), and in return God proclaims to Noah, "And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea" (Genesis 9:2-3). This marks the beginning of several biblical stories, in the Old Testament in particular, of humans sacrificing, slaughtering, and otherwise disregarding animals as a means of pleasing God, which may all be considered a rationalization for anthropocentrism. It must also be noted, however, that many biblical passages advocate compassion and kindness toward animals, and this complicates a singular perspective or ethic on the matter (Linzey & Yamamoto, 1998).

Philosophical and theological traditions may also be pointed to as a rationalization for anthropocentrism, as several philosophers and theologians addressed the question of what makes humans distinct from animals and came to anthropocentric conclusions. For example, Aristotle argued that animals exist to serve man [sic]; Kant wrote that animals are a means to an end and that end is man [sic]; Augustine argued that animals are not self-aware and are therefore inferior to self-aware humans; and Aquinas forwarded the idea that it is pointless to extend charity to animals because they are not rational creatures and the order of nature is for "irrational" beings to serve "rational" ones. Perhaps most famously, Descartes believed animals lacked souls and were therefore *mechanisms*, as opposed to *beings*, and as such he argued that humans did not owe them any consideration. These ideas contributed to an intellectual tradition influenced by anthropocentrism, although once again it must be noted that philosophers' and theologians' ideas were not uniformly anthropocentric (Preece, 2005; Steiner, 2005).[17]

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[17] Plutarch and St Francis of Assisi form two notable exceptions, as both advocated for the moral consideration of animals (Steiner, 2005).

Finally, anthropocentrism may be rationalized through the simple maxim of "let's solve humanity's problems first." Through this perspective, it is suggested that given all of the problems in the world, one can only concentrate one's efforts in one area, and that area should be aimed at helping humans first. It does not take much consideration to see that this maxim means animal concerns may *never* be addressed, for when might we arrive at a world without any human problems? This perspective also suggests that working on multiple problems in tandem is not conceivable, which is incorrect—in fact, given the intersecting nature of many oppressions, working on some "animal problems" may work toward helping humans, as well.[18]

These rationalizations outline some of the ways anthropocentrism may be justified or protected from critical consideration. In the end, the anthropocentric perspective is just that—*a perspective*—and humans may defend it any way they choose: perhaps on account of the benefits it brings them, or perhaps because it is a hegemonic worldview that they either have not thought to consider or do not care to challenge, or both.

The purpose of this chapter has been to discuss some of anthropocentrism's meanings, manifestations, and rationalizations, and to unpack the concept and consider some components that comprise it. Throughout this chapter I hope to have identified that anthropocentrism is a common, although perhaps not closely examined bias in western culture, and that it is one that bears consequences for animals and humans alike. It is also a perspective that humans may defend vigorously, although the reasoning behind their defenses may not be especially compelling. I believe this consideration of anthropocentrism leads to further questions about the elements of power embedded in this mindset and how they are enacted in human-animal relations; to delve deeper into these questions I turn next to some bodies of theory that provide further insight.

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[18] For example, Ascione (1993) identifies linkages between childhood cruelty toward animals and later violence toward humans, suggesting intersecting oppressions between humans and animals, and humans and other humans.

CHAPTER THREE

Anthropocentrism Through Three Lenses

In this chapter I review ideas from three bodies of theory—animal liberation/animal rights theory, ecofeminism, and poststructuralism—and consider some insights each lens has to offer in relation to anthropocentrism. I chose to review these three lenses because each provides, in my opinion, interesting means of thinking about anthropocentrism, as well as interesting insights into human-animal relationships and the power dynamics within them. I find these lenses generative and compelling, although I recognize they are by no means the *only* lenses through which anthropocentrism could be considered.[19]

There are some key points of overlap among the three positions. One is that each considers how power functions to create uneven categories or identities, such as *oppressor* and *oppressed*, *subject* and *object*, and *master discourses* and *subjugated knowledges*. These categories are then applied directly to humans and animals (in the case of animal liberation/animal rights theory and some ecofeminist perspectives), or can be applied indirectly to them (in the case of poststructuralist theory), and in doing so can contribute to an understanding of anthropocentrism. A second point of overlap is that each lens is, in its own way, critical of the anthropocentric status quo, seeing it as unethical (animal liberation/animal rights), bound with gender oppression (ecofeminism), or on shaky ground to begin with (poststructuralism). Finally, the three lenses connect in that each articulates some form of alternative to anthropocentrism, or response to it.

There are also notable differences among the three positions. In particular, each has its own distinct subject matter, and of the three only animal liberation/animal rights theory considers animals consistently and foundationally. Some ecofeminist writings consider animals directly, but

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[19] Other possible lenses include deep ecology, religious writings, postmodern theory, and various types of anti-oppression theory, to name a few examples.

more commonly the categories of nature, ecology, or environmentalism are taken as central and animals are subsumed within them. Finally, within poststructuralist theory animals are far from being the main subject matter; however, some poststructuralist ideas can be applied to animals and to human-animal relations in general. The lenses therefore differ considerably in their engagement with the concept of anthropocentrism, and they also differ in the "worldview" each proposes. I consider each lens in turn.

Animal Liberation/Animal Rights

Popularized by Singer (1975) and Regan (1983) respectively, animal liberation and animal rights theory challenge anthropocentrism by advocating that humans should extend moral consideration to animals. Both theories outline philosophical arguments to make the case that animals are deserving of moral attention, but the criteria backing each argument differs (hence the two titles, *animal liberation* and *animal rights*).[20] The theories are therefore different, but their prescribed outcomes are similar, as I discuss below.

Singer: Expanding the moral community.

In his groundbreaking book *Animal Liberation* (1975), Singer argues that membership in the moral community, currently restricted to humans, should expand to include animals on the grounds of their sentience. His argument is positioned within a utilitarian framework, one concerned with producing the greatest happiness for the greatest number. Singer's philosophy is that utilitarian theory's current restriction to humans, and our ability to experience pleasure and pain, is blatantly speciesist: if animals also experience pleasure and pain, then their interests must

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[20] Both positions differ from *animal welfare,* which is concerned with "ensuring that animals are treated humanely, or as humanely as possible given whatever humans have decided ... to do with them ... The animal welfare world does not challenge the established social order ... except to urge that whatever is done to [animals] be done as kindly as possible" (Montgomery, 2000, p. 3).

be taken into consideration, as well. If not, the theory is incoherent.

Singer draws on the words of utilitarian Jeremy Bentham, who said about animals: "The question is not, Can they *reason*? nor Can they *talk*? but, Can they *suffer*?" (Bentham, 1789, Chapter 17, section 1). Animals can and do suffer, Singer argues, and we can be fairly confident of this because of their behavioural and physiological responses to pain-inducing stimuli, the similarities between their nervous systems and our own, and animals' presumed evolutionary adaptation to be sensitive to pain. This evidence qualifies animals as sentient,[21] Singer proposes, and as sentient beings they deserve a place in the moral community where "the interests of every being affected by an action are to be taken into account and given the same weight as the like interests of any other being" (1975, p. 5). In other words, every sentient beings' interests should count, whether human or animal; everyone's satisfaction and pain matters and should be taken into consideration. Singer notes that just as the moral community has expanded in the past to include previously excluded humans (e.g., women and slaves), it should now expand to include animals.

Including animals in the moral community would lead to a revisioning of human-animal relations. Singer suggests that to this end, we should enact a calculation of harms and goods, or a weighing of interests that takes into consideration the interests of both humans and animals. All practices in which humans use animals should be re-examined and, in many cases, stopped: Singer argues that we should not eat meat because it causes suffering and is a luxury rather than a necessity, we should not wear furs or leather for the same reasons, and we should not conduct experiments on animals unless, generally speaking, we would be prepared to conduct the same research on humans. His argument for animal liberation is therefore one of moral extensionism, in which he argues that the moral community should expand to include animals and, in doing so, liberate them from human usage.

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[21] Conversely, the lack of such evidence in plants, fungi, microorganisms, and mollusks disqualifies them from Singer's scheme of sentience.

Regan: Equal consideration for "subjects-of-a-life."

Regan's ideology, expressed most comprehensively in his book *The Case for Animal Rights* (1983), is grounded in natural rights theory. Regan's theory is that animals should not be used for human ends because they are, in his words, "subjects-of-a-life" (1983, p. 243). All subjects-of-a-life have an experiential welfare, which Regan explains as meaning that "what happens to us—whether to our bodies, or our freedom, or our lives themselves—matters to us because it makes a difference to the quality and duration of our lives, as experienced by us, whether anyone else cares about this or not" (2004, p. 50). For Regan, any being (human or animal) who is a subject-of-a-life should be considered as having inherent value, and all beings with inherent value should be granted moral consideration.

Regan's philosophy is a response to Kant's idea that the inherent value of humans lies in their rationality and ability to make autonomous moral decisions, and that because of these characteristics humans are owed moral consideration as "ends" as opposed to "means to ends" (Kant, 1785/1996). Regan points out that Kant's argument is flawed because not all people are rational or capable of making autonomous moral decisions: infants, children, and people with severe mental disabilities may be "irrational," for example, yet they are still treated as "ends." Regan proposes that instead of rationality and autonomy, being a *subject-of-a-life* should count as the criteria for possessing inherent value, and hence being granted moral consideration.

In Regan's scheme, all beings who are subjects-of-a-life have the right to be treated with respect, and treated in a way that does not reduce them to the status of *things*. From this position the outcomes of his animal rights philosophy are categorical: "the total abolition of the use of animals in science, the total dissolution of commercial animal agriculture, and the total elimination of commercial and sport hunting and trapping" (1986, p. 32). Regan argues it is wrong for humans to use animals for reasons other than their own survival (e.g., for information, career advancement, entertainment, culinary habit, convenience, or profit) because doing so constitutes treating them as *things*, and this is in conflict with animals having inherent value. Animal rights is not a matter of

improving the conditions of animal treatment, he stresses, but one of stopping the perspective and usage of animals as resources altogether. As he puts it, the goal is not bigger cages, but *empty* cages.

Regan's philosophy is more aligned with current expressions of the animal rights movement than is Singer's utilitarian weighing of harms and benefits.[22] Animal rights is often expressed as the philosophy that animals have claims on their lives and an interest in leading their own lives, and as such humans should not use them. Montgomery (2000) summarizes the position in saying that animals "are not here on sufferance or as raw materials until we need them for dinner or for an extra body organ or for a science experiment. They have rights, to use the language we are most familiar with, or perhaps inherent rights. Their value does not depend upon how useful they are to us" (p. 2). Similarly, the animal rights organization People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals summarizes their position as follows: "[Animals] are capable of suffering and have an interest in leading their own lives; therefore, they are not ours to use—for food, clothing, entertainment, experimentation, or any other reason" (2006, homepage).

Challenges to anthropocentrism.

The animal liberation and animal rights philosophies challenge anthropocentrism in various ways. Most obviously they do so through their arguments, which disrupt the idea that humans alone are worthy of moral consideration. The "humans at the centre" mentality is contested through the flaws Singer and Regan identify in traditional ethics philosophy, be it utilitarianism's myopic focus on humans' abilities to experience pleasure and pain, or the limits of natural rights theory's focus on rationality and autonomy. Their arguments render philosophy's privileging of humans illogical, and in doing so challenge the human-animal divide that

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[22] In spite of this, Singer is often erroneously labelled the "father of the animal rights movement" (a label contested by feminists who argue that women comprised the genesis of the movement, as I discuss in the "Ecofeminism" section of this chapter).

characterizes anthropocentrism.

Both theories also challenge anthropocentrism on an "active" level as they make animals their central subject matter. By providing readers with detailed accounts of the conditions humans inflict upon animals (and animals' responses to them), animals are continuously evoked in readers' imaginations, which in itself disrupts anthropocentrism. Further, animals are evoked in deep ways as readers are called upon to consider that animals experience pain, stress, loneliness, despair, frustration, depression, and a host of other emotions which, in an anthropocentric vein, might be thought of as belonging only to humans.[23] These detailed accounts make it difficult to cancel out consideration for animals, and as such they engage readers in a process of actively resisting anthropocentrism.

The philosophies also challenge anthropocentrism through any counter-anthropocentric outcomes of their arguments, i.e., any changes people make after considering the arguments. While it is not known to what extent the books influence action, Regan's book is widely recognized as a foundational book in the movement and Singer's *Animal Liberation* has been especially popular, having sold over 450,000 copies and been translated into 15 languages (Bailey, 2000). With this popularity, it is hard to imagine that *no* readers have been influenced by their arguments.

Speaking for myself, I found *Animal Liberation* highly convincing that, on a massive scale, animals suffer at the hands of humans. Reading the book was, for me, a harrowing experience, despite the fact I was somewhat familiar with the information Singer outlined in it. About a year before reading the book I had started to gain awareness of the treatment of animals in the various industries that use them, and by the time I read the book I had stopped eating animal-derived foods (meat, milk, cheese, eggs) and had decided to stop purchasing products tested on animals or made of animal skins. This being the case, I didn't need much "convincing" from Singer's argument;

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[23] While Singer and Regan focus primarily on animals' capacities for suffering, other authors have rounded out the discussion by researching animals' capacities for pleasure (e.g., Balcombe, 2006).

nonetheless I thought his book outlined a strong case that the harms animals endure in becoming

"products" outweigh any pleasure I might derive from using them. Regan's *subject-of-a-life*

criteria also resonated with me, as it evoked, and continues to evoke in me, a position in which I

consider other animals as *beings*, that is, as individuals with their own consciousness who care

about what happens to them. These animals are, as Regan says, "subjects" in their own lives, and

to me it seems vitally important to keep this in mind when contemplating an ethic toward them.

Animal liberation and animal rights theory also inform an entire movement that challenges anthropocentric thoughts and/or behaviours. This movement is expressed in multiple ways and through multiple spheres, including a performative or artistic sphere (e.g., via street theatre or protests - see Figures 16 and 17), a personal lifestyle sphere (e.g., via personal decisions to resist anthropocentrism), an educative sphere (to be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5), a legal sphere (e.g., by creating or challenging laws pertaining to animal (ab)use), an *il*legal sphere (e.g., via "live rescues" of animals from laboratories or fur farms), and any combination of these or any other spheres.

Figure 16: Protest for laboratory animals.
Source: Arkansas Indymedia, 2003.

Figure 17: Protest against fur usage.
Source: Houston Indymedia, 2003.

There are therefore many facets to the movement, each of which hold the potential to disrupt the

status quo, and each which is at least in part informed by the philosophies of Singer and Regan.

The animal rights movement and its history are further discussed by Francione (1996),

Montgomery (2000), and Beers (2006).

Ecofeminism

Ecofeminism is a movement that combines theory and action to address intersecting environmental and feminism concerns. Gaard (1998) identifies five streams of thought and action that comprise the movement: peace and antinuclear activism, feminist spirituality, animal liberation, environmentalism, and antitoxics work. The movement is inherently plural with no singular perspective or theory or action guiding it. Some feminists (e.g., Mies & Shiva, 1993) see this diversity as keeping the movement vital.

Plumwood (1993) suggests ecofeminism may be feminism's third wave, building on the waves that came before it—the first wave being the liberal feminism of the 19th century, and the second wave being the radical feminism of the 1960s/1970s. Both the first and second waves were concerned with expanding understandings of who "counts:" liberal feminists fought for women to be recognized and granted legal rights, while radical feminists turned a critical eye toward the feminist movement itself, criticizing it for addressing exclusively the concerns of white, middle-class women and pushing it to respond to the intersections between gender-based oppression and oppressions based on race, class, sexuality, and ability. Ecofeminists continue this push toward a more inclusive feminist agenda, this time bringing nature, environmentalism, and animals into the fold. I consider below some feminist contributions connected to what Gaard (1998) labelled the "animal liberation stream" of the ecofeminist movement.

Anthropocentrism or androcentrism?

Some feminists argue that the oppression of women and the oppression of animals are linked under the wider banner of patriarchy, and that as such anthropocentrism should be renamed *androcentrism*, meaning "man at the centre," to reflect the idea that it is not only animals who are pushed outside the boundaries of moral consideration, but women along with them (Jones, 2004; Plumwood, 1997). Warren (1994) suggests this occurs as women and nature/animals are linked

together and devalued in tandem: "[T]he exploitation of nature and animals is justified by feminizing them; the exploitation of women is justified by naturalizing them" (p. 37).

Jones (2004) identifies several linkages between the oppression of women and the oppression of animals, arguing that "speciesism and sexism are so closely related one might say they are the same thing under different guises" (p. 139). She cites as evidence that women and animals have historically both been seen as the property of males, that patriarchy and pastoralism appeared on the historical stage together, that both women and animals are seen as less rational and more constrained by their biology than men, and that both suffer by being reduced to their bodies or body parts. She also notes that tactics of objectification, ridicule, and control of reproduction are used to exploit both women and animals, and that there is also a form of "double oppression" combining sexism and speciesism that affects farmed animals, as the female animals endure a particularly heavy brunt of abuse.[24]

Adams (2004) sees women and farmed animals linked in a cycle of "objectification, fragmentation, and consumption" (p. 58)—women on a metaphorical/sexual level, and animals literally. She argues that both are objectified as "meat" (women as sexual objects; animals as actual meat); both are fragmented into body parts (parts of women's bodies are deemed sexual and focused upon; animals' bodies are literally fragmented); and both are then "consumed" by men. She labels this consumption (and indeed the entire cycle of objectification, fragmentation, and consumption) a masculine pursuit by suggesting that in relation to women, men are the primary consumers of pornography, and in relation to animals they are the primary eaters of meat.[25]

As discussed in Chapter 2, anthropocentrism manifests itself in disparaging linguistic

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[24] For example, in modern "factory farms" female cows and pigs (sows) are kept in a near-constant cycle of impregnation throughout their lives; when their reproductivity wanes they are sent to slaughter (Robbins, 2001).

[25] Men eat disproportionately more meat than women, Adams notes, and in historical periods when meat has been scarce (e.g., during wartime) it has been reserved for men, making it a "patriarchal text" (2004, p. 33). There are also connections between meat-eating and notions of masculinity, as it is considered "manly" to eat large portions of meat, and preparing meat for consumption (barbequing, "carving the roast") is often considered a man's job in western culture.

metaphors as the names of animals are used to insult humans and the word "animal" functions as an insult itself. Many animal terms are applied to women, who may be described as "pets, cows, sows, foxes, chicks, serpents, bitches, beavers, old bats, old hens, mother hens, pussycats, cats, cheetahs, bird-brains, and hare-brains" (Warren, 1994, p. 37). These terms are insulting to women, and Dunayer (1995) suggests that by implication they are insulting to animals as well, as they merge them into a homogenous, derogatory category: all dogs, for example, become *Ugly*. On a linguistic level, then, women and animals are linked through language that may be simultaneously sexist and speciesist.

In addition to the imposed linkages between women and animals, women and *nature* are often coupled as well. Women are often constructed as closer to nature or more connected to it; as life-givers themselves they are sometimes considered more "in tune" with "mother earth" (Roach, 2003). The "mother earth" moniker itself demonstrates how the linkage works both ways: while women are constructed as closer to nature, nature is constructed as feminine. Merchant (1980) and Roach (2003) discuss how this construction of nature as feminine has given rise to dichotomous "good mother/bad mother" conceptualizations of nature, which may be portrayed as a bounteous, kind, and life-giving woman or a threatening, wild, and uncontrollable one. Masculinist discourses run through both of these conceptualizations: for example, nature may be constructed as a damsel in distress who must be "protected" or "saved" from being "raped" (Kheel, 1995); conversely nature may be conceptualized as a wicked mother whom the "men of science" must conquer, master, and tame (Warren, 1994).

By linking women to nature, women are also linked to animals, since animals are associated with nature. While many of the linkages outlined above affect women metaphorically, women and animals are also linked in the realm of physical abuse, as both groups experience such abuse predominantly at the hands of men. Overwhelmingly it is men who batter, rape, and kill women, and overwhelmingly it is men who hunt, trap, and slaughter animals (Adams, 1995; Kheel, 1995). For these reasons feminists in the animal defense movement suggest androcentrism, not

anthropocentrism, is the problem affecting animals (see Figure 18). In the domestic sphere women and animals may also be linked in abuse: some men who batter women may abuse or kill a companion animal as a means of exerting control over the woman, and sometimes women will not leave an abusive situation if they cannot take the animal with them, for fear of what might happen to the animal if they go (Ascione, Weber, & Wood, 1997).
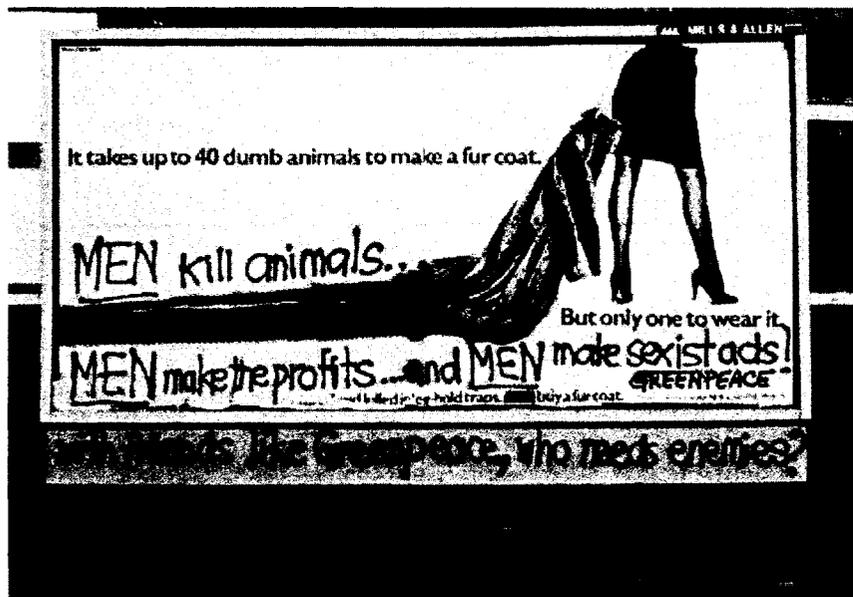
Figure 18: Anthropocentrism or androcentrism? A feminist response to a Greenpeace billboard.
© Jill Posener, 2006.

By outlining some of the ways women and animals are linked together and disregarded, and by considering some of the insights a gendered analysis can reveal about violence toward women and violence toward animals, ecofeminism identifies a masculine power element in anthropocentrism. If anthropocentrism is equal to "humans at the centre," then ecofeminists suggest an even deeper centre exists which is comprised of men. The existence of this deeper centre demonstrates the need to consider anthropocentrism not only within a human-animal framework but a gendered framework, as well.

Criticisms of animal liberation/animal rights theory.

An overarching feminist concern with animal liberation and animal rights theory is that the arguments they forward cannot provide an adequate response to anthropocentrism/androcentrism

because they are constructed within, and rely upon, a worldview that is in itself flawed. Utilitarianism and rights theory, emerging from the 17th/18th century Age of Reason, begin with the depiction of society comprised of independent, autonomous agents who are, in a Hobbesian vein, competing with each other for scarce resources (Jaggar, 1983). Animal liberation and animal rights theory rely on this framework as they position animals as potentially competing "rights holders" within the moral community, whose interests or inherent value should be recognized by existing "rights holders" (i.e., humans). Feminists suggest this scheme is problematic for at least two reasons: (1) it ignores the reality that individuals are *relational* by nature and that during at least some stages of our lives (e.g., infancy and childhood) humans are deeply dependent on others (Jaggar, 1983; Zimmerman, 1995), and (2) it ignores the fact that most companion animals are deeply dependent on their human caretakers throughout their lives (Donovan & Adams, 1996). For these reasons, feminists suggest an ethic guiding human-animal relations must start with the acceptance that relationships are intrinsic to human identities, and intrinsic to at least some animals' lives.

Feminists also find fault with animal liberation and animal rights theory's attempt to negate emotion from the process of moral reasoning. Both philosophies exist within a rationalist framework where emotions are denied value or, at the very least, are subordinated to reason (Donovan, 1990). This is evident in Singer's *Animal Liberation* as he states on the second page of his book that he is not especially "interested in" animals and does not "love" them; it is also evident in Regan's *The Case for Animal Rights* as he explains, also on the second page of his book, that he has made "a concerted effort not to indulge our emotions or parade our sentiments" as he presents his arguments (1983, p. xii).

Feminists argue that in trying to eliminate emotion, Singer's and Regan's rationalist positions shut down part of what it is to be human. Midgley (1978) suggests that trying to separate reason from emotion is ultimately counterproductive because the two are inherently connected to each other: thoughts are often powered by feelings, and feelings turn into thoughts. Kheel (1989)

adds to this idea that emotions are inherent to the process of formulating an ethic, and in relation to animals "we cannot even begin to talk about the issue ... unless we admit that we care (or feel something)" (p. 259). From an ecofeminist perspective, then, an appropriate ethic should take into account emotion alongside reason.

Some suggest emotion may be the most natural place to begin contemplating an ethic toward animals, more so than engaging in a utilitarian calculation of harms and benefits or a reasoned deliberation of who qualifies as a subject-of-a-life. Donovan (1990) suggests that feelings, intuitions, sympathies, and the senses can provide us with the moral guidance we seek, and as such we do not need abstract philosophies to tell us "what we can already know with our own eyes and ears. Nonhuman animals are communicating ... when they cry out, struggle to escape, or exhibit signs of stress or distress .... We should not exploit animals because they do not want to be so treated, and we know that. If we listen, we can hear them" (p. 375).

In addition to animal liberation and animal rights theory ignoring interdependence and emotions—characteristics that feminists note are often associated with women—they also ignore the contributions women have made, and continue to make, to the animal defense movement in general. While Singer and Regan are often credited for galvanizing the contemporary animal rights movement, there is a long history of women's involvement in animal defense. Donovan (1990) states that 19th century feminists were concerned about vegetarianism and animal welfare issues; on a more contemporary note, Shapiro (1994) notes that women comprise the majority of the current animal defense movement. Feminists suggest the gendered composition of the historical and contemporary movements should at least be recognized by Singer and Regan, and perhaps from this recognition a new or modified ethic might emerge.

Finally, the formal, universalizable rules that govern animal liberation and animal rights theory are subject to feminist criticism, as it is pointed out that such rules prevent decisions from being made in context. Warren (1994) suggests an appropriate ethic should allow for a particularized, situational response, one that can be made in the midst of a situation with attention

to context, as opposed to being a formal code or rule-bound system that must be deontologically "obeyed." She suggests ethics should emerge from a place: that is, one's geographic location[26] should be reflected upon when considering what counts as appropriate human-animal relations, and situations should be addressed individually instead of having a universalizing rationalist philosophy applied at all times.

In light of the criticisms outlined above, a feminist ethic toward animals—one that begins from a position of acknowledging interdependence, honours insights borne of feelings as well as reasons, and is contextual rather than universal—might garner more response among some people than the rigid philosophies of animal liberation and animal rights. As Donovan and Adams (1996) note, "some people, especially women—who compose the majority of the animal defense movement—might respond more to a discourse rooted in care theory than to one based on rights" (p. 11). Given Gilligan's research contributions, as discussed below, this may well be true.

Revisioning human-animal ethics.

As outlined in the section above, there are flaws in traditional moral philosophy: it is rooted in a competitive worldview that precludes a relationship-based ontology, it exalts a masculinist perspective while ignoring the experiences of women, and it dismisses emotion in favour of universal rules based on reason alone. These characteristics translate it into a moral philosophy that ignores "feminine" patterns of moral reasoning, according to Gilligan (1982), whose research countered Kohlberg's (1975) previously published stages of moral development.

Gilligan's research into male and female patterns of moral reasoning suggested that females tend to follow different patterns of moral decision-making than males: masculine conceptions of morality tend to be associated with fairness, rights, and rules, while feminine conceptions of it tend to be associated with care, responsibility, and relationships. From this

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[26] I think cultural and temporal location would also apply.

Gilligan suggests females tend to prioritize different sets of values in the process of moral decision-making than do males (hence the title of her book, *In a Different Voice*), but this does not mean one set of values is superior to the other, only that they are different. Applying this idea to anthropocentrism or to the process of developing an ethic to guide human-animal relations, it may be argued that there is no singular ethic that constitutes the correct response to it; space should be made to accommodate differing patterns of moral reasoning as opposed to privileging the so-called "masculine" pattern alone.[27]

Proceeding from Gilligan's understandings, Kheel (1989) suggests the first step toward a feminist orientation to nature, and to animals by extension, entails uniting our capacities for reason and emotion. She suggests that instead of imagining ourselves in a position of domination over nature we could imagine ourselves as being on a continuum with it; instead of considering all entities as competing rights holders we could operate from the perspective that we are all connected, we are all "one." This perspective could contribute to dismantling the hierarchical mindset of humans over animals, as well as the echo of that mindset in philosophies which honour the mind at the expense of the heart. This ecofeminist perspective thus suggests that when it comes to responding to anthropocentrism we should start in a different place altogether: one not bound by abstract rules or rationalizations, but an engaged response incorporating reason and emotion in tandem.

To conclude this limited discussion of anthropocentrism through an ecofeminist lens, ecofeminism has contributed to an understanding of the concept in various ways: by providing a gendered critique of it, by identifying shortcomings associated with the dominant theory responding to it, and by envisioning an alternative ethic rooted in a relational ontology. These

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[27] The notion of "masculine" and "feminine" patterns, modes, or identities has been the subject of much feminist theorizing. The polarized positions in this theorizing are that of essentialism (or "difference feminism"), which proceeds from the belief that women possess a set of distinct characteristics based on their sex, and social constructionism, which suggests differences between the sexes are socially constructed, not biologically innate. Related to the feminist ethic of care, some see risks in celebrating an association between women and caring, such as MacGregor (2004) who argues that this linkage can impose limitations on women as political actors.

contributions, I believe, provide a richer understanding of the concept and the responses available to it. To me, they speak to the need to consider power in a more nuanced context: not just as existing between humans and animals, but also between men and women and, more generally, between different groups of humans who enact power over each other. All oppressions may be emerging from the same source, and that source may be the competitive, hierarchical mindset itself. As Lorde (1983) famously said, "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (p. 94); in relation to anthropocentrism this suggests we may need to think in new ways if we want to realize alternatives to it.

Ecofeminism also speaks to me about the role emotional responses can play in determining one's ethic toward animals. For me, what counts as an appropriate ethic emerges, in part, from how I feel: when I look at a picture of a calf in a crate, for example, or when I think about the empty look of resignation I once saw on a caged monkey's face at the Winnipeg zoo, I *feel* something; I feel an abuse of power is taking place. It hits me first at an emotional level, and I think that that emotion is a valid guide that can and should be used, alongside reason, in the formulation of an ethic. Can emotion and reason even be separated in the first place (Plumwood, 1997)? Both are human faculties, and as such I think that any ethic or philosophy will only be strengthened, and made more holistic, by employing the two together.

Poststructuralism

Poststructuralism emerged in France in the 1960s in response to structuralism, and is often associated with the writings of Derrida, Foucault, Lacan, and Kristeva (Blackburn, 2005). As a body of theory it represented a rebellion against some of structuralism's main tenets, such as the idea that there are underlying structures that can explain the human condition, that all texts have intrinsic meaning waiting to be uncovered, or that there are "ultimate answers" or meta-theories that can provide objective explanations of reality (Sim & Van Loon, 2004; Williams, 2005).

Poststructuralists are often defined by their rejection of structuralist claims. They argue that what we know, or what we think we know as fact, is inherently unstable or slippery because our "knowledge" is produced in parcel with political and social contexts that shift over time. Through a poststructuralist lens there is no foundation of "truth" in the world, there are only understandings that are deeply and irrevocably influenced by context. Poststructuralists thus study both the "facts" and "truths" that comprise our knowledge, as well as the systems that work together to produce them. In this way, it can be understood as an inquiry into how knowledge itself is produced (Lye, 1997; Wikipedia, 2006b).

Poststructuralism draws attention to the relationship between knowledge and power. Power, as Foucault (1980) understood it, is relational, mobile, and mediated through social relations—meaning that it, alongside knowledge, can shift. Foucault argued that power is multi-faceted and exists on multiple levels: between individuals, between groups in society, and perhaps most prominently, between people and social institutions. One of the primary means by which power is mediated is through knowledge, and thus the study of knowledge, and the structures through which it emerges, offer possibilities for understanding anthropocentrism.

The discourse of anthropocentrism.

According to Derrida (1974) language is always "mediated" through cultural texts,[28] and as such it holds no fixed meanings. Derrida argues that texts have multiple meanings, that readers bring multiple interpretations to texts on account of their diverse identities, and that the time period in which a text is read influences its interpretation, and because of these factors it is impossible to arrive at a final, complete analysis of any text. All text is ambiguous, according to Derrida, and correspondingly language itself is ambiguous, displaying the property of *différance*—Derrida's word to evoke the meanings of "difference" and "deferring" simultaneously. There is "difference"

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[28] A text can be taken to mean a written or spoken text, or more generally any sort of "communicative event," such as a traffic sign (Titscher, Meyer, Wodak, & Vetter, 2000).

inherent in language, according to Derrida; specifically, there are differences whereby words are understood in the context of their opposite or "different" meanings, further, since meaning is never solid or complete, it is constantly being put off or "deferred." Derrida's own writing reflects the idea of *différance* as it is characterized by multiple meanings, interpretations, and wordplays; Collins and Mayblin (2005) describe it as a matrix of intentional "derailed communication" and "undecidability" (p. 16).

Language has a particularly strong focus within poststructuralist theory as it is understood as not only mediating reality, but in fact *creating* it. Davies (2000) notes that "within poststructuralist theory, language is *the* most powerful constitutive force shaping what we understand as possible and what we desire within those possibilities" (p. 181, emphases mine). Language is a discourse, one of the "power discourses" or "master discourses" Foucault (1980) identified. Scott (1988) defines discourse as a "historically, socially, and institutionally specific structure of statements, truths, categories, and beliefs" (p. 415), which work together to constitute the "truth" as it is currently understood. Discourse permeates social institutions, as Foucault studied in detail,[29] and these institutions are bound with a power that creates an illusion of truth while simultaneously subjugating other, competing knowledges.

Considering from a poststructuralist perspective the workings of language and the power discourses surrounding humans and animals suggests that anthropocentrism may be, above all, a construct rather than a "natural fact." As previously discussed, dominant understandings of "human" and "animal" function to elevate humanity from animals, and disparaging animal metaphors further support this divide. These are two ways anthropocentrism is upheld linguistically; an "archeology," to borrow Foucault's (1969) use of the term,[30] of the discourse of anthropocentrism could generate a multitude of words, meanings, and beliefs working in concert to support the mindset. Some possibilities are outlined in Figure 19.

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[29] He studied, for example, the discourses permeating hospitals, prisons, schools, and the institution of sexuality.
[30] Foucault labelled his early research style as an "archaeology" of historical information relating to the institutions he studied.

Discursive Phrase	Function in Relation to Anthropocentrism
that/it (as animal pronouns)	constructs animals as objects, not beings
describing animals by human-imposed function: *dairy cow, game animals, furbearer, specimen, standardized production unit*	makes animals' usage by humans seem inevitable
meat	constructs animals as food; erases animals' identities and individualities; suggests animals exist inherently to be eaten
game	turns (the killing of) animals into sport or recreation
euphemisms related to killing animals: *cull, manage, thin the herd, harvest, sacrifice, destroy, put down*	rationalizes and creates emotional distance from the act of killing

Figure 19: Examples of the anthropocentric power discourse.

According to Foucault (1980), humans' experiences are deeply shaped by the discourses that purport to explain them. In very direct ways the same could be said about animals' experiences, except in the case of animals they are constrained by *human* discourses and not their own. "The way we speak about other animals is inseparable from the way we treat them," Dunayer says (2004, p. xiii); as some of the examples in Figure 19 illustrate, our discourse surrounding animals both constructs and constrains the ways we think about, and consequently treat them.

There are, however, multiple discourses, some of which are competing with the anthropocentric one. The equation of animals with their usefulness to humans, or their portrayal as "means to ends" as opposed to "ends" in themselves, is challenged by other "statements, truths, categories, and beliefs" (Scott, 1998, p. 415) about animals. There are multiple narratives that operate in tandem; for example, we might say there is an agricultural discourse, a biomedical discourse, an economic discourse, a religious discourse, an animal rights discourse, an animal welfare discourse, a "Walt Disney" discourse, and so on. According to Foucault (1980) discourses emerge and disappear through chance, and as such, from this poststructuralist perspective, anthropocentrism should not be considered a stable "truth." I think it must also be recognized, however, that various forces give anthropocentrism a stronghold in western culture, such as economics and habit or tradition, and so while it may not be seen as a stable truth, it is unquestionably a strong one.

Identities in flux: Deconstructing the human-animal binary.

> Poststructuralism unsettles the security and centrality of the complacent human subject,
>
> and this opens the gates to more productive, malleable understandings of animals, which
>
> no longer need to be locked into the rhetorical role as humanity's negative "other." (Baker,
>
> 2001, 194)

Scott (1988) notes that the current patriarchal order is characterized by dichotomous thinking which results in a world divided into "opposites": mind vs. matter, man vs. woman, nature vs. culture, universality vs. specificity, human vs. animal, and so on. These opposites are then arranged hierarchically, with one accorded primacy and associated with masculinity and the other associated with femininity and positioned as a corruption of the first. The second becomes, in de Beauvoir's (1949) words, the "other," but can animals be humanity's "other" if the identity of "human" is itself in flux?

Poststructuralism contests the idea of humanity as developed by Enlightenment thought and philosophy. It argues against the idea that humanity is universal or unchangeable in its essence, suggesting that humans are instead structured through culture and discourses (Scott, 1988). As Baker says in the quote above, through a poststructuralist perspective there is nothing "complacent" about the human subject, and so by extension there is nothing stable about the human/animal binary, either.

The notion of the human identity in flux, shifting with social, political, and cultural contexts, becomes evident upon considering the multiple identities humans assume toward animals. Individually, culturally, and cross-culturally, humans assume multiple, and often contradictory identities toward them: for example, according to the anthropocentric discourse in western culture there are some animals we are to love (e.g., dogs, cats), some we are to admire (e.g., eagles, lions) some we are to disparage (e.g., skunks, rats), some we are to eat (e.g., pigs, chickens), some we are to use as decoration (e.g., tropical fish), some we are to experiment on (e.g., mice,

frogs), some we are to associate with superstition (e.g., black cats) and so on; this demonstrates the discursive push to assume multiple identities at once. These identities are largely culturally constructed, and as Figures 20 and 21 show they may shift cross-culturally.

Figure 20: Cow in India, roaming free.
© Zoe Malinova, 2006.

Figure 21: Cow in America, raised for veal production.
Source: The Farm Sanctuary, 2006.

Can we deconstruct ourselves, or the dominant narratives that constitute us? I think that to some extent we can, based on my own experiences of revisioning human-animal relations. Through exposure to what might be termed "competing discourses" to anthropocentrism, my "identities," or my thoughts and actions in relation to animals shifted; I *became* someone different, my "truths" changed along with my "knowledge." Shifts such as these can happen when we pay attention to marginalized voices or textual silences, one of many paths Derrida (1974) employed as a means of deconstruction. When we pay attention to what is *not* being said, when we follow the silences, we can locate subjugated knowledges. Anthropocentrism relies on silence: by focusing on humans or making them the exclusive centre of attention, animals become negated from consideration and are made almost unthinkable.

Davies (2000) discusses two responses to poststructuralist theory: one where the power of discourses is seen as so strong that it rules out the possibility for human agency, and one where the inherent instability of knowledge is seen as an optimistic "opening up of possibilities for undermining the inevitability of particular oppressive forms of subjection" (p. 180). In relation to

anthropocentrism, poststructuralism seems, to me, to illuminate a bit of both: the deep shapings of the anthropocentric discourse on humans' thoughts and behaviours, and the inherent uncertainty of anthropocentrism itself.

Yet, that uncertainty needs to be interrogated if it is to be disrupted, and in various ways language constrains that interrogation in the first place. It becomes a circular process: how do we represent animals in our discourse, and to what extent do those representations dictate their/our reality? More to the point, can we think ourselves into a new reality, if our reality is dictated by our thoughts? Perhaps here we hit some form of a limitation—although this is far from a matter of defeat. To quote Fudge (2002), maybe what needs to be done is to "acknowledge the limitations of our own perspective, but simultaneously accept that what we can achieve within those limitations is important and worthwhile, even if it is only the best that we can do" (p. 159).

The purpose of this chapter has been to consider anthropocentrism through three lenses, to explore the insights three differing perspectives can generate in regard to the concept. Each lens makes a contribution to understanding human-animal relations and how power is exercised within them: animal liberation and animal rights theory demonstrates the human-centrism of moral philosophy, ecofeminism outlines the connections between animal oppression and other forms of oppression (particularly sex- and gender-based oppression), and poststructuralism identifies some of the structural ways power is dispersed. This chapter, and the previous one, comprise my analysis of the concept as it relates to my overarching argument: that anthropocentrism should be considered, and challenged, in the context of education. I turn attention to education next.

CHAPTER FOUR

Anthropocentrism and Education

In this chapter I consider the relationship between anthropocentrism and the educational system. As discussed in the previous two chapters, anthropocentrism is a wide-reaching perspective that is rooted in various social institutions and discourses; education is no exception. In the first part of this chapter I outline some indicators of an anthropocentric bias in the western educational system, specifically in primary and secondary schools,[31] as well as some of the ways this mindset is produced and reproduced in those schools—most notably, through silence and a lack of its consideration.

Is the production/reproduction of anthropocentrism congruent with education and its conceptual aims? Are schools places where the human-animal divide should be addressed, or should any attention be paid to it at all? I consider these questions in the second section of this chapter, while forwarding my argument that anthropocentrism *should* be addressed in education[32] because (a) it is a biased way of seeing the world that has significant effects on humans and animals, even if it is being produced unconsciously and (b) the lack of its consideration is at odds with what I see as some fundamental tenets of education: namely, critical thinking, caring, and coming to a critical consciousness. In my opinion students deserve an opportunity to critically consider anthropocentrism in education so that they are aware of it and can decide for themselves whether they find it a tenable worldview. Further, I think the educational system is as an ideal place for this to happen because it is an institution that is concerned with (or should be concerned with) developing students' abilities to understand themselves and the world around them, and such abilities could only be augmented through an awareness of anthropocentrism.

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[31] A broader scope might also take into account higher education institutions, as well as informal educative settings such as museums or parks.

[32] In the next chapter, I discuss *how* it might be addressed.

In the final section of this chapter I consider where anthropocentrism fits within a critical pedagogy approach to education. While the field of critical pedagogy focuses predominantly on human concerns alone (Bell & Russell, 2000), I find that this humanist framework is in conflict with some of the dominant ideas that guide critical pedagogy praxis. I conclude this chapter by exploring some of the (dis)connections between critical pedagogy and the study of anthropocentrism, explaining why I believe an inclusive critical pedagogy should recognize and challenge the human-animal divide.

A (Hidden) Curriculum of Anthropocentrism?

The term "hidden curriculum" was reportedly coined in 1968 by Jackson, a sociologist who argued in his book *Life in Classrooms* that education is a socializing process through which social norms and values are transmitted (Jackson, 1968; Wikipedia, 2007a). The hidden curriculum is said to refer to all of the outside-the-curriculum knowledge that is passed on through schools and that students pick up without being explicitly taught—through the hidden curriculum students learn what counts as socially approved knowledge, and what attitudes, perspectives, and beliefs are considered appropriate to hold (Kincheloe, 2005).

Students thus learn through both the hidden curriculum and the explicit curriculum[33] alike. Together, these two forms of curricula wield a great deal of power over students, as they communicate to them what counts as legitimate or appropriate knowledge and, conversely, what is considered *in*appropriate or unworthy of study. Since choices are made as to what to include and what to omit in curricula, education can be seen as a deeply political institution. As Kincheloe (2005) writes, "Any time teachers develop a pedagogy, they are concurrently constructing a political vision" (p. 9), and this speaks to the nature of education as intimately bound with politics and power.

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[33] Meaning, the documents that outline the curriculum and what students are to learn.

Foucault (1977) argued that power is exercised not only through the overt controls it maintains over people, but also by what it prevents or makes unthinkable: what barriers it places on the mind. This applies to education, the explicit curriculum, and the hidden curriculum as it could be argued that students are *overtly* controlled by what they are taught, how they are organized, and what they must do to advance through the system, and they are *covertly* controlled through the hidden curriculum and what it silences or renders unthinkable.[34] Together, these overt and covert controls create a political climate in education by formulating the boundaries of what is deemed legitimate thought.

Orr (1992) speaks of "omissions and commissions" in curricula: *omissions* of perspectives or information resulting from choices of what (not) to make part of the official curriculum, which often constitute *commissions* to the dominant discourse or social order. While Orr evokes this discussion in relation to ecological literacy (and is not taking a Foucauldian perspective, per se), I see it as applying equally to anthropocentrism and education, where the *omission* of anthropocentrism's consideration in education also comprises a *commission* to the anthropocentric status quo. Together, these omissions and commissions construct a (hidden) curriculum of anthropocentrism, as well as an educational system that both produces and reproduces the anthropocentric status quo in western culture. I explore some forms of this production/reproduction next.

Anthropocentric silences.

Silence can, ironically, say a lot. It can suggest a person has nothing to say, or that he or she has something to say but doesn't have the language or the discursive tools with which to say it. It can communicate the message that a subject is so trivial it is literally not worth talking about, or it can suggest complicity in the absence of dissent. It can also suggest a subject matter is taboo or

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[34] This connects to the poststructuralist focus on discourse and power, as discussed in the previous chapter.

unmentionable, or, as previously discussed, literally un*thinkable*. In relation to anthropocentric silences in education I think all of these explanations may apply, and together they can make the human-centred bias, as well as any of its competing discourses, almost unspeakable.

I see silence as the main way anthropocentrism is perpetuated in education. Thinking through the standard subject areas of the educational system—e.g., math, science, social studies, English, physical education, health, history, geography, drama, art, music—it seems to me that these subjects are primarily and overwhelmingly about humans and the human world. There are, of course, some entry points within them for discussion about animals or consideration of human-animal relations, but a critical consideration of such topics is not a central part of these subjects. Further, anthropocentrism does not appear to be a highly valued topic in the educational system in general, as subjects in which its consideration might take place (e.g., environmental education or humane education, to be discussed further in Chapter 5) remain marginalized in the system, if they are represented at all (Orr, 1992; Selby, 2000). This being the case, students might easily go through a school day or several days without ever contemplating the relationships they hold with animals, despite the fact that our lives are in many ways enmeshed with animals' lives.

I should step back for a moment here to stress that I can in no way make sweeping generalizations about what "education," a complicated and multi-faceted category, is singularly achieving. There are so many factors that influence a person's educational experience, including his or her teachers, peers, the general school environment, the curricula, the resources, the school's guiding principles and framework, and so on—not to mention a person's background, experiences, cultural location, socio-economic status, worldview, and identity. All of these factors, and likely many more, coalesce to comprise a person's "educational experience," and because of this no simple statements can be made as to what we "learn" or "teach" in education. As it likely goes without saying, we all come from different places and experience the world in our own ways; we are all unique. It is not my intention to gloss over difference in this chapter, but only to discuss

some anthropocentric trends I see in the system as a whole.

One of those trends, then, is in the curricula, where the subjects of animals and human-animal relations tend to be marginalized. This is a trend that rings true to my own educational experience; thinking back to my first 12 years of education it is surprising to me how little time I spent contemplating animals, learning to appreciate them or their needs, or coming to understand the larger industries that rely on them to remain profitable. I can, in fact, count on one hand the times I can recall an educational experience that focused explicitly on animals: there was a report I wrote about dogs in Grade 4, the dissection of a worm in Grade 7, the dissection of a frog in Grade 10, and a brief debate in a Grade 12 elective philosophy course about the intelligence of dolphins (if they could talk, would they be as smart as humans?). These are, as far as I can remember, the times in which I expressly considered animals in education.

Of course there may be much I am forgetting, particularly from my younger years, because as a young person my world was, like that of most young people in western society, filled with representations of animals. In recent years I have come to notice how animals appear almost ubiquitously in children's worlds: they are represented in stories, fairy tales, nursery rhymes, songs, cartoons, television shows, movies, stuffed animals, toys, clothing, wallpaper, bed sheets, and so on; they are a recurring motif in children's worlds to say the least! Although these representations are often highly distorted and anthropomorphic, the point remains that children's worlds are (figuratively) inhabited by animals, and correspondingly children's imaginations seem to be inhabited by them, too.[35]

Our consideration of animals seems to wane as we grow older. The representations of animals in our worlds diminish; our worlds, in general, become much more anthropocentric. Fawcett (2006) suggests that as we grow older animals become cultured out of us and

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[35] For example, a dream database of over 16,000 dreams maintained at the University of California demonstrates that animals comprise up to 50 percent of all characters in children's dreams, compared to only 5 percent in adults' dreams (Schneider & Domhoff, 2007).

consequently lost to our "ethical imaginations"; this is in part fostered by the educational system as students learn to stop thinking about animals. This connects to both the explicit curriculum, where content and resources pertaining to animals diminish, and the hidden curriculum, as students learn that animals and the ethics surrounding human-animal relations do not count as "official" subject matter and hence, legitimate knowledge.

My perception that animal representations in curricula diminish as students advance in the system is also based on my six years' experience editing provincial curricula for the Manitoba department of education. From 1999-2005 I edited Kindergarten-Senior 4 (Grade 12) curricula and related educational materials, and I noticed that while animal representations were somewhat common in curricular materials for younger students (especially in children's books and videos), they dropped off rather quickly in the materials for older students, to the point that in the senior years' materials it was unusual to find any animal representations at all. I also noticed that representations of animals in the materials for older students were clustered in English Language Arts curricula, where one might find, for example, a poem, picture, or short story featuring an animal. Finally, I noticed a shift in terms of *how* the animals were portrayed or represented in curricula: for younger students there was often an educational component of learning about an animal, or perhaps learning about the similarities between humans and animals, whereas for older students animal representations, especially those outside of English Language Arts curricula, had largely taken on an anthropocentric bent.[36]

There are two points I am making here: the first is that representations of animals seem to diminish in education as students advance through the western educational system, and the second is that the ways in which students are encouraged to consider animals changes as well. This second point is deeply connected to the idea that anthropocentrism is promoted through the hidden curriculum, because it is not just a matter of *how much* animals are considered in education, but

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[36] For example, animals were discussed in terms of dissection (science curricula), animal agriculture (an elective agriculture course), and food (health/physical education curricula).

how they are considered there, as well. This opens up another point of inquiry concerning what discourses are forwarded about animals in the educational system, or what possibilities surrounding human-animal relations are cultivated in education or conversely, closed off.

Bell and Russell (2000) note that when animals are discussed in education, the discussions tend to occur outside of a context of ethics. This holds true to my experiences as both a student and an editor of curricula, where discussions of ethics were notably absent. These absences, as previously discussed, are not neutral; they send a message through their silence that the subjects are not worth discussing. In this case they also contribute to the perpetuation of human-centrism, as they make education an institution that allows to pass a general ignorance or lack of consideration about anthropocentrism, animals, and the ethics of human-animal relations. This seems especially true in regard to the "hot button" issues surrounding animals that are often the focus in animal rights communities, such as the usage of animals for food, research, clothing, and entertainment.

The fact that there is a general ignorance about the details of animals' usage by humans has been noted by at least two university professors who teach animal studies courses, Andrzejewski (2003) and Bryant (2005). Andrzejewski, who teaches at St. Cloud State University in Minnesota and began incorporating animal rights content into her courses in 1990, says it is a rare student who is well-informed about the human uses of animals or has considered the issues from an ethical perspective, but conversely all students already know the "other side": "They have already been taught to believe that humans are superior to all other species, most specifically non-human animals. They have been taught to believe they must eat meat to be healthy, that animal testing is beneficial, and so on" (p. 2). Similarly Bryant, who has taught animal law courses at UCLA since 1995, says she finds at the beginning of the semester that students are "not fully aware of what happens to animals in our society ... students expect, and I think the broader society expects, that the anti-cruelty statutes ... will be sufficient to protect animals from the types of harms that they see and read about in my class .... There is this disjuncture ... [students are unaware that] there are all

kinds of reasons why it is legally okay to exploit and harm animals" (Bryant, 2005, podcast). This disjuncture is largely manifested and maintained through silence, while what Andrzejewski refers to as the "other side" is the hegemonic status quo.

The experiences of these two professors, as well as my own experiences and observations, suggest there is a general ignorance about anthropocentrism and the ethics surrounding human-animal relations, and education seems to be complicit in this ignorance as it does not consistently or foundationally address the issues or raise critical awareness of them. While there is always the possibility that a particular teacher or a particular assignment will prompt student engagement with these issues, it seems safe to conclude that on the whole, students are subjected much more to the "other side," that is, the anthropocentric view, than they are exposed to any of its competing discourses.

Humans-only spaces.

A second trend in education that may contribute to the promotion of anthropocentrism is the nature of educational spaces as predominantly humans-only spaces. Spaces can be considered part of the hidden curriculum as the physical layout of the school and the manner in which students are organized within it communicate messages regarding norms and values (Sociology Central, n.d.)—for example, the traditional classroom set-up with the teacher at the front of the classroom reinforces a structure whereby the teacher is perceived to have knowledge and authority over the students. I think that the organization of schools, as overwhelmingly human environments that are often cut off from "nature," contribute to an anthropocentric mindset in education by keeping animals outside of the context of education, literally and figuratively.

In discussing schools as environments at odds with nature, Weston (1991) forwards that "human thought must be understood as ... profoundly constituted by its 'environments'" and that "exclusively human environments may underwrite and inscribe anthropocentrism" (¶ 2-3). I agree

with his assertion that our environments help to shape us, and I think that the manner in which animals are kept out of all "civilized" spaces (for of course this trend is not exclusive to schools[37]) contribute to an "out of sight, out of mind" reality that once again sends a message that humans are the ones who count. Weston (1991) suggests the anthropocentrized world closes out possibilities to transcend it, and if this is the case then the nature of schools as human-only environments is an important point to ponder.

It is also a tricky one, though, as there are obviously some good, practical reasons why humans need to uphold, at least to some extent, a physical divide between themselves and animals (e.g., some people have allergies, "wild" animals can be dangerous to humans). It would probably not do as a response to simply make schooling an outdoor activity, for example,[38] but perhaps there are ways to work toward transcending the anthropocentric trend in education through different school designs or increased outdoor activities (I address the idea of spending time outdoors in Chapter 5). Such possibilities might contribute to a challenging of anthropocentrism by increasing students' opportunities to have encounters with the world beyond the human.

I am not suggesting here that having contact with animals necessarily leads to a transcendence of human-centrism. As I discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, anthropocentrism is a complex and multi-faceted perspective that is supported and inscribed in various ways, including through our language, belief systems, "truths," and so on. As such, there is no simple "fix" to it. What I am trying to suggest instead is that *one* of the ways anthropocentrism is produced and reproduced in education is through the physical environment, which is predominantly reserved for humans, and that this contributes to a "forgetting" about animals and hence a reinforcement of human-centrism.

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[37] Far from it; schools are just one example of anthropocentrized spaces. Most buildings are human-dominated spaces, which limit people's contact with animals. This represents another form of anthropocentrism—one concerning land usage and ownership of space—in which animals' needs are disregarded in favour of human interests.

[38] Or might it? I am not sure, but such a change would certainly require a massive overhaul of the system!

Dissection.

A third way anthropocentrism may be promoted in education is through animal dissections. Animalearn (2005) estimates that approximately 75-80% of students will dissect at least one animal during their schooling experience, although the vast majority of those students will never enter a career where the dissection experience is even remotely related to their work.

It is not known how many animals are dissected each year in Canada, as the Canadian Council on Animal Care does not require schools or universities to maintain records on dissection activities. In America, however, Balcombe (quoted in Rosenberger, 1998) suggests that between 10-12 million animals are killed for dissection each year; of these he estimates the vast majority are wild caught animals such as frogs, turtles, grasshoppers, crayfish, starfish, and earthworms. Other commonly dissected animals include fetal pigs (procured from slaughterhouses), and rats, mice, dogs, and cats, which may come from dealers, shelters, pounds, and biological supply companies (Animal Alliance, n.d.) (see Figure 22). Perusing the website of WARD's, one of Ontario's largest biological supply companies, shows that schools can purchase animals online and in bulk, dead or alive—for example, three live crayfish cost $8.99, a pail of 10 dead mice cost $19.95, a pack of 10 dead frogs, $89.00 (WARD'S Natural Sciences, 2007). It is clear that this industry, which relies on the traffic in animals, is anthropocentric, making schools that purchase from it supporters of anthropocentric practices.

Figure 22: Frogs in a biological supply company, awaiting shipment.
Source: Animal Alliance.

Beyond the procurement of animals for dissection, dissection is in itself an anthropocentric activity, as it positions animals as "resources for our disposal, not living organisms who experience pain and suffering, and desire only to lead their lives" (Animal Alliance, n.d., ¶ 3), and reduces them to "mere commodities, disposable resources for our curiosity and convenience,

possessing no value in their own right" (Selby, 1995, p. 255). It likely goes without saying that animals in no way benefit from the dissection process, which makes it an entirely human-centric activity that promotes, in an educational context, an anthropocentric view of animals.

While proponents of dissection point to the human medical gains that have resulted from dissection (which is anthropocentric reasoning in itself), these same ends can now be achieved through alternatives such as computer simulations, CD-ROMS, plastic models of animals, and books and diagrams (Jukes & Chiuia, 2003). Such alternatives are used and respected by numerous medical schools, many of which choose them over animal dissections.[39] The alternatives are also more economical than animal dissections, as the materials can be used over and over and shared among classes, and they present a viable alternative for students who object to animal dissection on personal, ethical, or religious grounds.

The choice to include dissection in the curriculum or to employ alternatives to it is one that each school makes. Dissection is a practice that is inherently, and at all of its stages, in the interests of humans alone, and so schools that offer it and students who pursue it engage with the anthropocentric viewpoint of animals as commodities for human purposes.

Classroom pets.

A final topic I wish to consider in this section is the practice of keeping classroom pets and its connections to anthropocentrism. This is a less straightforward topic than that of silence, space, and dissection, for in some ways having contact with animals can *challenge* anthropocentrism, but at the same time the reasoning for keeping classroom pets is often anthropocentric.

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[39] The Vancouver Humane Society reports that the top 10 medical colleges in the United States (including Stanford, Harvard, and Yale) do not use animals to train doctors, and in Canada, several medical schools have adopted similar policies including the University of Calgary, the University of Toronto, Queens University, the University of Laval, and the University of Manitoba. Indeed, it is now possible to obtain a medical or veterinary university degree without ever killing or dissecting an animal.

Certainly, there are many potential benefits to students in keeping a classroom pet.
Students who are shy, isolated, or aggressive may be positively affected by caring for an animal
(Selby, 1995), *all* students may experience the therapeutic effects of being around animals and
being responsible for them (Naherniak, 2004), and some suggest children's psychological
well-being is generally enhanced by having contact with animals (Kellert & Wilson, 1993).
Beyond that, many children are captivated by animals and genuinely enjoy being in their company.
From the students' perspective, then, having a classroom pet may be beneficial in various ways.

It can be a different story for the animals, though, as they are made entirely reliant upon
their human caretakers and have no choice but to live in an enclosed area which may be noisy,
busy, stressful, understimulating, or otherwise unsuitable to their needs. Classroom pets also suffer
the risk of being neglected, mishandled, or mistreated—for example, as Naherniak (2004) notes,
children may treat the animals as toys or as human-like babies in need of hugging (a response
which can scare prey animals).

On account of this, organizations such as the British Columbia SPCA outline some
important factors a teacher must consider before adopting a classroom pet, including asking
themselves *why* they want to adopt a pet and whether alternative means could be used to achieve

Figure 23: A pair of guinea pigs.
Source: FreeDigitalPhotos.net

their goals.[40] Should they still choose to adopt an animal,
one of the most important factors is to choose an
appropriate pet for the classroom. The BC SPCA
suggests the most appropriate choice is probably a pair
of same-sex guinea pigs (see Figure 23), followed by
pairs of gerbils and domestic rats and mice.[41] Other
responsibilities involved with keeping classroom pets

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[40] Alternative means might include trips to parks, playground walks, visiting speakers, a field trip, videos, films, picture books, stories, computer software, or puppets.
[41] *In*appropriate animals for classroom pets include turtles (who do best left in their native habitat) and hamsters (who are nocturnal and should not be disturbed or handled during the day) (BC SPCA, 2007).

include providing the animals with the best possible habitat, ensuring they reside in an appropriate spot where the temperature is stable and they will have quiet time, caring for their needs throughout their lifetime (and having a realistic picture of the costs of doing so), committing to being the principal caregiver to the animals (which includes caring for them on weekends and during holidays), educating students on the proper care of the animals and monitoring students to this end, and being prepared to deal with students' grief should an animal die.

Beyond all of this, the teacher's responsibility as a humane role model toward the animals cannot be understated (BC SPCA, 2007). It is ultimately the teacher who will determine whether the experience of keeping a classroom pet sends anthropocentric messages to students or, conversely, cultivates in them an appreciation for animals. Teachers must examine their values, attitudes, and practices, and consider any mixed messages they may be sending to students. For example, if a teacher respects classroom animals but stomps on a spider, or puts off cleaning or feeding the animals because of other commitments, or surrenders the animals to a shelter at the end of a school year, she or he is sending very mixed messages to students about the value of animals and their place in the world.

Education: A Place to Consider Anthropocentrism?

Having considered some of the ways a curriculum of anthropocentrism may be promoted in education, I now turn attention to the question of *why* I think anthropocentrism should be addressed in education. I see this question as nested in a larger philosophical one, and that is, what is the purpose of education? I think that addressing the question of the purposes of education is important, as it can help to determine the relevance of addressing anthropocentrism in education as well as *how* raising awareness of anthropocentrism might mesh with those purposes.

A corollary question that arises is one concerning the extent to which the educational system should mirror the dominant values of the culture (and in doing so, reproduce the cultural

status quo), and the extent to which it should promote a critical awareness of that cultural status quo as being just that: *the cultural status quo*. To put this another way, is it the purpose of education to follow the dominant values of a culture, or is its purpose to raise awareness of those values and prompt students to critically evaluate them, so they can decide for themselves whether they find them tenable?

In my opinion, the conscious or unconscious reproduction of the cultural status quo is *not* what education is about, nor what it should be for. Operating from a position of "omissions" or "commissions," as previously discussed, seem to me to be deeply problematic stances for education to take because neither position fosters critical inquiry, which I see as being at the root of education. When I think of *education* as a concept, I think of learning new information or perspectives and being exposed to new ideas, as well as making connections within my existing knowledge base. I think of learning about myself and the world around me, and expanding my abilities to understand and perceive myself and that world. In the most basic sense, I think of broadening my thoughts, understandings, and perspectives. This, to me, is what education is about.

When I think of anthropocentrism, on the other hand, very different ideas are evoked, as I think of a *narrowing* of the mind in which a person's thinking or consideration of others is cut off at the human boundary. Anthropocentrism, like racism or sexism, evokes a singular, uncomplicated perspective: that humans (or in the case of racism and sexism, particular groups of humans) are the only ones who ultimately count, and that the worth of those who fall outside the select boundaries should only be measured in terms of the benefits they might offer to those in the "centre." The human-centric mindset is therefore characterized by a degree of closed-mindedness, which may be exacerbated by a refusal to accept any evidence that runs contrary to anthropocentric beliefs, much like a prejudice. The fostering of this kind of thinking is obviously at odds with my understanding of education, for contrary to being about learning, anthropocentrism seems to rely on a refusal *to* learn or critically contemplate.

Having said all of this, I don't think it is safe to assume that most people are critically

aware of anthropocentrism, as many may have not been presented with an opportunity to consider it critically in the first place. This lack of opportunity is no coincidence: as Luke (1999) discusses, the various industries that use animals often go to great lengths to minimize or obfuscate information about that usage, which results in both a lack of information and a general silence about the topic. With these factors working together, combined with the various ways anthropocentrism is inscribed in western culture as "natural" and "right," I don't think it is reasonable to expect that people will suddenly "see it," or become critically aware of the human-centric bias on their own.

Speaking from my own perspective, I know I did not critically question the anthropocentric status quo for the first 28 years of my life, until my husband's decision to stop eating meat brought me into contact with information about a world of animal cruelty of which I was previously unaware. Suddenly, I found myself questioning my role as a person contributing to the anthropocentric framework, and ethical questions surrounding what I consider to be appropriate human-animal relations began to surface. I found I was both frightened to learn about humanity's (ab)uses of animals and compelled to learn about them at the same time; the information in books such as Singer's (1975) *Animal Liberation* struck me as deeply important but also deeply disturbing to learn. I persevered through such books as a form of self-education, and this is how I began to learn about anthropocentrism.

This education thus took place on my own initiative; for whatever reason the concept of human superiority over animals was one I felt the need to explore in depth, difficult and painful as it was (and still is) to me. In spite of this difficulty, I have found this education deeply worthwhile, for it has opened my eyes to many of the realities of the world concerning animals, as well as the many ways that humans enact and perpetuate their perceived superiority. It has illuminated the functioning of society through new lenses which I find important to consider; to me *not* considering them now seems like a delusion, for it means a very pervasive facet of our lives remains unexamined. In sum, learning about anthropocentrism has taught me much about myself

and the world around me, and for me this has added up to a rich education.

hooks (1994) makes the point that it is reasonable for students to expect that the knowledge they receive in schools will be meaningful and will connect to their lives. As I see it, the study of anthropocentrism fulfills both of these criteria, as it can be profoundly meaningful and it connects to our lives in various ways, including connections to our thoughts, language, actions, worldview, and relationships with other animals.[42] I see this last point—our relationships with animals—as especially important to consider from an ethical perspective, for as animals are living and dying at our hands and for our purposes, do we not at least owe them the consideration of being aware of what is happening to them? And, as the ones perpetuating this usage, do we not also owe it to ourselves to understand the impacts of our actions? Anthropocentrism is a far from meaningless or benign concept; it implicates us, and other animals, in deep material ways.

To sum up, I see anthropocentrism as a matter worthy of consideration in the educational system because education, in my opinion, should be about challenging ignorance rather than promoting it. I also think that schools are the ideal places for this exploration because they are institutions of learning, broadly speaking, and because the study of anthropocentrism is significant, meaningful, and connected to students' lives in various ways. Such consideration is also connected to two characteristics often associated with education—critical thinking and caring—which I explore next.

Critical thinking.

Critical thinking is one of the most widely discussed issues in contemporary educational theory (Hare & Portelli, 2001). I see good reason for this, because the capacity to think critically is a highly important skill. It is important because without it, we may become stuck in a process of absorbing information without being able to critically appraise it, and this leaves us in a position

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[42] For a discussion of the meanings students take from learning such information, see Andrzejewski (2003).

where we are not actively engaging with information on an intellectual or critical level. From an educational standpoint critical thinking is also very important because without it, students may fall victim to indoctrination, which clearly runs counter to the purposes of education.

As Socrates famously said, "The unexamined life is not worth living." This speaks to me of the rich insights that can come from philosophical examination, as well as the ways that without that examination, our lives can be diminished. I see critical thinking as akin to living that "examined life," as it is a tool we need to partake in that examination. As for *what* we should examine, I return to hooks' (1994) ideas about what is meaningful and connected to our lives as logical starting points.

Critical thinking is also important because it can connect to a form of freedom or, at the very least, I think we are *less* free if we cannot think critically, because without this capacity we are less able to make informed, engaged judgments or decisions. This ultimately connects to the process that Freire (1970) identified as *conscientization*—the act of coming to critical consciousness—and its connections to personal empowerment and social change. I am in agreement with Freire that this *conscientization* can (and should) be fostered through education, and I see the development of critical thinking as a crucial component to this end.

While I think it is important for students to develop critical thinking skills in education, a problem that arises for me is the question of how can we be critical about that which we do not know, study, engage with, or otherwise consider? In other words, how reliant is critical thinking upon being exposed to information, competing discourses, or alternate points of view (Brookfield, 1987)? As I explored earlier in this chapter there are various anthropocentric silences in education, and these silences can make it difficult for students to come to a critical consciousness about the topic (if not outright prevent them from thinking about it in the first place). My point here is that it is not enough to pay lip service to critical thinking without providing students the information required to think critically, and as such it is important to examine the omissions in curricula.

Strike (1982) discusses his belief that students should be respected as "moral agents." For him, this means teachers must give students information and reasons as to why they are being asked to believe that information, but that students reserve the right to make choices for themselves and come to their own conclusions. He states that "responsible choice depends on information and evidence. One cannot consistently demand that a person make a responsible choice and at the same time withhold information relevant to that choice" (1982, pp. 43-44). In regard to my research, I see a withholding of sorts that is going on in education in relation to anthropocentrism, and it is one that hinders students' abilities to make responsible choices as informed moral agents.

This withholding of information is at odds with critical thinking and can lead to the perpetuation of bias or prejudice. As Siegel (1997) states, holding a prejudice is a violation of critical thinking because prejudices are by nature "protected from, or guarded against, reflection" (p. 179). In relation to anthropocentrism, this evokes to me a circular process, whereby critical thinking is essential to studying our perceptions or biases, but without exposure to appropriate information critical thinking is hindered in the first place, and on account of that hindrance our perceptions and biases remain unexamined and untouched. This is a loop that can continue forever, but as I have discussed, it is not congruent with the concept of education for it to do so.

Caring.

> There is only one subject-matter for education, and that is Life in all of its manifestations.
>
> (Whitehead, 1929/1967, p. 6)

Caring—about life in all of its manifestations—strikes me as a facet that, like critical thinking, should be fundamental to education. I see caring as essential to education in a general sense because, as discussed in Chapter 3, humans are an interdependent species by nature, and as such caring is part of what it is to be human. *Not* caring, by contrast, would seem to entail a

counterproductive attempt to separate the mind from the emotions (which I am not convinced can be achieved in the first place), and so from this reasoning it seems natural that schools be places where caring relationships exist.

There are also many good reasons, from students' perspectives, for schools to be caring environments. For example, Noddings (1988) suggests an ethic of caring in education can help students to establish a sense of safety, trust, and collaboration, all of which are needed for them to pursue the challenges of education. Selby (1995) echoes this idea, suggesting that students who do not feel confident or cared for may be unwilling to extend themselves or take risks in learning new material. Further, Lewis, Schaps, and Watson (1996) find a range of positive outcomes associated with caring relationships in schools, including higher student achievement, an increased motivation to learn, a greater interest in school, and fewer behavioural problems. From an educational standpoint, then, there are various reasons why a culture of caring in education is in students' best interests, as it can connect intimately with their self-perceptions and learning processes.

Establishing caring relationships, between teachers and students and among students themselves, is also important because schools are helping to develop the "citizens of tomorrow," so to speak. These citizens are inheriting a world with a long list of complicated problems, including environmental exploitation and devastation, economic elitism and poverty, warfare, terrorism, human slavery, animal exploitation, nationalism, ethnocentrism, and so on—and as such *not* caring, or teaching through the hidden curriculum that caring is not important or valued, is clearly not an appropriate solution unless we wish to ultimately contribute to the lifespan of these problems.

For all of these reasons, it makes little sense for schools to *not* encourage caring relationships or to focus solely on the cognitive elements of education while ignoring or repressing those associated with care. I am thus in agreement with philosophers of education who see the importance of caring in education, but this leaves open the question of *whom* we should care about

in education: should caring be reserved for the human community? Or, as I am exploring in this thesis, should we extend care to animals, and if so, why?

To risk answering a question with a question, my answer is: why not? Why *shouldn't* we care about animals? Under what pretenses do we reserve caring for the human community? In my opinion, cutting off our caring abilities at the human species makes caring, as a concept, incoherent, for many people *do* claim to care about animals, or at the very least do not wish for animals to suffer or be abused, and as such truncating the focus of caring at human concerns alone makes no sense.[43] It is also inconsistent with the principle of caring itself, and by not discussing care in the educational system as it applies to human-animal relations that inconsistency remains unchallenged. In Chapter 2 I considered some rationalizations of anthropocentrism or reasons that may be forwarded to stop our caring at the human species, but as I discussed, these rationalizations are not particularly compelling or satisfying.[44] On the simple grounds that there is no satisfactory answer as to why animals are *not* worthy of our consideration or care, I think that caring for animals should be a part of education.

Resisting Anthropocentrism as Critical Pedagogy?

In this final section I wish to examine the relationship between anthropocentrism and critical pedagogy, a body of theory and a practice of teaching concerned with helping students to recognize and challenge prevailing forms of dominance (Wikipedia, 2007b). Critical pedagogy raises questions about the power relationships between those at the margins and those in the centre, and in doing so attempts to educate for social equity (Giroux, 1992). Critical pedagogues recognize that education is not a neutral process but is one inscribed with power, and by critically

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[43] For example, a 2003 poll conducted by ICR Survey Research Group found that two-thirds of people agreed that an animal's right to live free of suffering is just as important as the right for a human to live free of suffering (ICR Survey Research Group, 2003).

[44] One reason that is perhaps more satisfying, but ultimately still anthropocentric, is that caring for animals is important because it can lead to caring for other human beings (see Ascione, 1993).

examining social norms, values, and structures they aim to help students come to a critical consciousness about power and its functionings (Kincheloe, 2005).

As I hope is clear by now from my previous discussions, I see many of these tenets (some of which I have already discussed) as supporting my understanding that the study of anthropocentrism and human-animal relations fit well as categories of analysis and consideration in a critical pedagogy approach to education. I outline some of these connections in more detail below:

Foundational tenets of critical pedagogy	How the consideration of anthropocentrism and human-animal relations connects to foundational tenets of critical pedagogy
Identifying and challenging forms of dominance	Anthropocentrism is a pervasive form of human dominance over animals. That dominance may be minimized, trivialized, or otherwise disregarded, but it exists nonetheless and has implications for all living beings.
Concern with uneven power distribution and resulting oppression/suffering	Anthropocentrism results in deep power differentials between humans and animals and vast animal suffering. Suffering is suffering, regardless of the species it affects, and as such it makes no sense to cut off our concern at the human species.
Grounded in a vision of social justice	A social justice that excludes animals is not one that is particularly "just" at all, as it denies billions of animals consideration of their basic needs. Surely a vision of justice can do better than this?
Recognizing that education is inherently political	Omissions in curricula constitute a political agenda, making anthropocentrism a political matter worthy of consideration.
Examining social norms, values, and structures	Anthropocentrism qualifies as a social norm, value, and structure, and a pervasive one at that. As such, it is worth examining.
Educating for the development of students' critical consciousness	No one can expect to be critically conscious of that which is not discussed. Students are denied an opportunity to develop a particular form of critical consciousness if anthropocentrism and human-animal relations are not integrated as topics of critical inquiry.

Figure 24: Interconnections: Critical pedagogy and the study of anthropocentrism.

The above chart outlines some of the foundational connections I see between critical pedagogy and the study or challenging of anthropocentrism, and why I see it as important for critical pedagogy approaches to education (and indeed all critical discourses) to examine prevailing ideas about human-centrism. As I have attempted to demonstrate so far in this thesis,

anthropocentrism is a pervasive mindset with significant consequences, and as such it deserves critical attention. It should no longer be relegated to the realm of the private or the unspoken; it should be addressed and considered critically, along with all of the complicated questions it raises.

Despite the various connections outlined in Figure 24, Bell and Russell (2000) note that a humanism remains inscribed in critical pedagogy as "humans are assumed to be free agents separate from and pitted against the rest of nature" (p. 193). This takes place while significant amounts of scholarship emerging from the critical discourses focus on understanding and resisting *human* biases and prejudices, such as sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, and oppressions related to age, size, income level, religion, and national identity. Further, as evidenced by coalition-building between movements, it is often recognized within critical theory that different forms of oppression intersect, and consequently attempts are made to understand multiple forms of oppression at once (e.g., Gaard, 1997; Weber, 2000).

In general, much less has been said in critical pedagogy about anthropocentrism and human-animal relations. Animals are often outright ignored in critical theorizing, or they may be merely implied in it through what Russell (2005) calls the "and so forth" category, that is, the catch-all category theorists may evoke to encompass unmentioned "others," although this often amounts to no more than a glossing over of those "others" with no foundational consideration given to them. While I recognize that the analysis of animals as a category adds new depths of complexity to critical theorizing, *ignoring* animals or relegating them to the "and so forth" category are not appropriate solutions. What is needed is a balance, one that allows space for understandings about the linkages between the oppression of humans and the oppression of animals to emerge, while also recognizing the often vast differences between humans and animals, and positioning animals in their own category of analysis as appropriate.

This is a complicated task, but it is not one outside the purview or capacities of critical pedagogy. As hooks (1994) acknowledges, critical pedagogy is not easy: it is taxing, it is a form of political activism, and the choice to challenge the status quo can have negative consequences. It

also requires ongoing critical thinking and engagement. These ideas apply directly to the challenging of anthropocentrism, which is, as I have discussed, not a topic that a critical pedagogy approach to education should ignore, but rather one that should be engaged in all of its complexity.

In this chapter I have attempted to outline some of the ways I see education, as a system, being silent about anthropocentrism and therefore perpetuating it, as well as why I believe that this perpetuation is unwarranted. I have also attempted to outline some of the ways I see the study of anthropocentrism as connected to a critical pedagogy approach to education, which is one I believe is vitally important to enable students to become critically conscious people who more fully understand themselves and others in the world around them. I consider some educational responses or strategies toward this critical consideration next.

CHAPTER FIVE

Educational Responses to Anthropocentrism

My goal in this chapter is to transition from the largely theoretical discussion of the last chapter into the realm of praxis, or the blend of theory and practice, to discuss some educational responses to anthropocentrism. A final question I wish to explore in this thesis is *how* educators might help to foster a critical consciousness of this mindset among students, or *how* education might disrupt anthropocentrism. To this end, I will outline some ideas and discuss their potential, as well as some challenges associated with them.

I should state at the outset that the ideas I present here comprise a very small sampling of many possible responses, and I discuss them in a general way, without providing specific details as to how they might be organized or customized to suit different age groups. Later in the chapter I outline some resources that offer more specific and detailed suggestions, but my general vision for this chapter is to present some ideas, or the genesis of some ideas, that could be further developed as needed.

I should also clarify that in suggesting these ideas I am not trying to imply that students should be told what to think about anthropocentrism, but rather that they should be provided an opportunity to *critically engage with the concept in the first place*. This is an important distinction to make in the context of education, as it speaks to the difference between indoctrination and education. While indoctrination involves telling students what to think, without allowing them the freedom to be critical of the information presented or to come to their own conclusions, education entails providing students with information and allowing them to respond to it, and question it, on their own (cf. Hare, 2001; Strike, 1982). With this in mind, I am by no means trying to dictate what student responses to anthropocentrism "should" be—in fact, given the complexity of anthropocentrism and human-animal relations, as well as the sometimes politically charged nature

of these categories, I would expect student responses may be multiple and varied.

And so, I present here some ideas for educators to consider in broaching the topic of anthropocentrism. After presenting these ideas I give some attention to the question of where they might fit into primary or secondary schools' curricula, and I discuss two possibilities: (1) through a curriculum of humane education, and (2) through integration in existing subject areas. Finally, I consider some challenges that may arise with the integration of this material, and how those challenges might be contextualized.

Educational Responses

As discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, through an anthropocentric mindset animals' needs are often erased from moral consideration or relegated to the margins of that consideration. A key point of disrupting human-centrism therefore rests on moving animals from that marginalized position toward the moral "centre," or conversely diffusing that centre so that it is not an exclusively human terrain. This notion, of moving from margins to centre, is a familiar one within discussions of social justice, as attention is often given to identifying and dismantling barriers that keep various social groups in marginalized positions and with limited power (Giroux, 1992; hooks, 1984).

The application of this idea is not as straightforward when it comes to animals, however,[45] because animals (with some very rare exceptions, such as Koko the gorilla, as mentioned in Chapter 2) cannot join in on these discussions in the first place, and even if they could it is quite possible that the conceptualization of such ideas would be outside their capacities. It is therefore not reasonable to expect that animals will simply "emancipate" themselves or raise awareness in others about their marginalized positions. Here, the differences between humans and animals

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[45] This is not to imply that this process is "straightforward" for any oppressed group, as inequities and power relations are often built into systems insidiously (Foucault, 1977).

preclude animals (and anthropocentrism by extension) from being simply added on to a social justice agenda, and instead point to the need for a more complicated and nuanced perspective to be adopted (Russell, 2005). To put this another way, while in some ways anthropocentrism can be linked to other forms of oppression (some similarities were explored, for example, in the ecofeminist section of Chapter 3), there are also significant differences between it and other forms of oppression, which makes a blanket approach to the problem unfeasible. Singer (1975) speaks to these notable differences as he outlines three challenges the animal liberation movement faces: animals cannot speak for themselves,[46] humans benefit from the use of animals, and humans are in the habit of using animals.

On account of these reasons, a step over the conceptual human-animal divide needs to be initiated, in a significant way, by humans. This initiation is in turn predicated on consideration or engagement with the ideas in the first place, as well as a willingness to challenge the pervasive silence that often surrounds anthropocentrism. To counter that silence and to engage in that consideration, I suggest the following ideas which could be undertaken by educators, students, or the two together.

Exploring alternative discourses.

Anthropocentrism is by no means the only viewpoint available to us, nor is it one that is universally adopted. Even within western culture, where anthropocentrism is arguably the dominant mode of thinking (Plumwood, 1996), it is contested by alternative discourses about humans, animals, and their perceived "places" in the world. One educational response would therefore be to discuss, write about, represent, role play, or otherwise consider and express ideas of

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[46] Although, I don't want to take animals' agency away here; I think that they do communicate in their own varied ways, but those ways may either not be recognized by humans or may be negated with the assertion that we cannot ever really *know* how an animal is feeling. Bekoff (2002) suggests such assertions remain prominent in scientific circles, where it may be argued, for example, that we cannot know if an animal feels pain. (Technically, of course, the same assertion could be made about a human.)

these alternative discourses.

In Chapter 3 I outlined three discourses that pose a challenge to human-centrism: animal liberation/animal rights, ecofeminism, and poststructuralist thought. Each of these bodies of theory raises questions about human identity and the expressions of human power in conjunction with animals (either directly or indirectly), and in doing so each offers new ways of thinking about human-animal relations. Each thus holds the potential to destabilize taken-for-granted notions about humans and animals, and correspondingly each could provide a means for contesting anthropocentrism.

These are not, of course, the *only* discourses that could be considered in an educational context: I think it could also be generative to consider bodies of theory that start from an understanding of humans as embedded in nature, as opposed to being conceptually "above" it, outside of it, or in control of it. Here I am thinking of discourses such as ecocentrism (Eckersley, 1992), biocentrism (Bonnett, 1997), and deep ecology (Drengson & Inoue, 1995), which all proceed from a philosophical position in which *all* beings are considered to have inherent worth, irrespective of their usefulness to humans. Through such perspectives, where humans are not necessarily privileged above animals, a focus is placed on the ecological whole and the interconnections among all forms of life on earth. Such perspectives, especially if taken as starting points for how we see the world, can drastically challenge anthropocentrism.

Aboriginal and Inuit perspectives, stories, and artwork (see Figure 25) can also offer perspectives beyond anthropocentrism. While I am reluctant to generalize the ideas of such a diversity of peoples and perspectives, themes like the blurring of the divide between humans, animals, and spirits are prevalent, as are perspectives where relationships are valued over

Figure 25: "The Plains" by Al Manybears.
Source: MorgueFile, 2007.

dichotomy, all of nature is seen as infused with spirit, and animals are considered to have spirits and consciousness. In such perspectives humans are by no means at the centre, but rather are seen as one part of a larger, animate whole (Cruikshank, 2004; George & Hirnschall, 2004).

Considering these worldviews or discourses can open up alternatives to anthropocentrism. While it is beyond my purview to explore these ideas in this thesis (and certainly others are much more qualified to do so), my point is simply that many different viewpoints are available to us, and by exploring them and creating ways for students to engage with them, anthropocentrism can be critically examined.

Exploring the diverse lives of animals.

> Human superiority is ... a lie. Gorillas are stronger yet gentler than humans, cheetahs swifter and more graceful, dolphins more playful and exuberant. Bees who perceive ultraviolet light and dance a message of angle and distance; fish who simultaneously see above, below, forward, and behind while swimming through endlessly varied tropical color; birds who navigate over hemispheres, sensing the earth's magnetic field and soaring in rhythm with their flocks; sea turtles who, over decades, experience vast stretches of ocean—what wisdom and vision are theirs? Other animals have other ways of knowing. (Dunayer, 1995, p. 23)

Learning about animals and their "other ways of knowing" can be fascinating, and the seemingly infinite diversities among animals make such an exploration virtually limitless. The scope for such an exploration can also be taken in countless directions and through various levels of intensity, making it customizable to students of all ages. Learning about animals can work toward interrupting anthropocentrism because it involves a consideration of the world beyond the human, which is an important first step[47] in coming to care about animals in a way beyond simply

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[47] Although not necessarily a direct one—see Russell (1999).

considering their usefulness to humans (Goodall & Bekoff, 2002).

And certainly, an intriguing world of animals abounds! For example, in the past couple of months, I have been fascinated to see the newly "discovered" blonde-haired crustacean, the *Kiwi hirsuta,* a lobster-like creature living in hydrothermal vents of the South Pacific sea floor (see Figure 26) (CBC News, 2006). I have also been surprised to learn that a female Komodo dragon (see Figure 27) in a Chester, England zoo, having never been exposed to a male, has recently
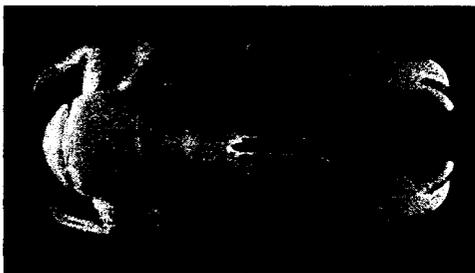
Figure 26: *Kiwi hirsuta*, the blonde-haired crustacean.
© IFREMER.

Figure 27: A Komodo dragon.
© Photohome.com

produced a "virgin birth" of five hatchlings—an amazing story from a member of an endangered species (Associated Press, 2007)! On a more light-hearted front, I was amused to learn recently how lemurs and capuchin monkeys will use millipedes as recreational drugs. As Balcombe (2006) describes, the primates will gently bite the body of a millipede, who in response exudes defensive chemicals; the primates will then take turns rubbing the millipede on their skin. This causes them to enter a trance-like state for about 20 minutes, complete with glassy eyes and drooling, after which they will drop the millipede to the ground, usually unharmed. The world beyond the humans is certainly a rich one, and while the point is not to turn animals into spectacles, there are plenty of intriguing and entertaining stories about them!

Books such as *The Pleasurable Kingdom: Animals and the Nature of Feeling Good* (Balcombe, 2006); *When Elephants Weep: The Emotional Lives of Animals* (Masson & McCarthy, 1996), and *Good Natured: The Origins of Right and Wrong in Humans and Other Animals* (de Waal, 1996) provide enriching fodder for

such an exploration. They are devoted to story after story about animals, who indeed do seem to display, to greater or lesser degrees and in their own varied ways, all of those characteristics Darwin (1871/1976) surmised they felt: pleasure, pain, anxiety, grief, dejection, despair, joy, love, devotion, ill-temper, sulkiness, determination, anger, disdain, contempt, disgust, guilt, pride, helplessness, patience, surprise, astonishment, fear, horror, shame, shyness, and modesty. In doing so, they demonstrate how the master narratives supporting anthropocentrism, such as the idea that nature is homogenously "red in tooth and claw," are so very superficial.

The ways in which animals' lives could be explored in an educational setting are virtually limitless, be it through telling or listening to stories about animals, illustrating such stories, researching a particular animal and sharing the results, watching nature programs, role playing stories about animals, and so on. Given the enormous scope of stories to be told, the possibilities are only constrained by one's imagination!

Animal encounters.

Spending time with an animal or animals, or being outdoors and being in the company of animals, are obvious ways anthropocentrism can be, quite literally, disrupted. In Chapter 4 I mentioned some possible means for animal encounters in an educational context, such as keeping "pet" animals in the classroom, going on field trips to learn about animals, or simply spending time observing or being

Figure 28: An animal encounter.
Source: Can Stock Photo, 2007.

with an animal (see Figure 28). All of these "animal encounters" can provide means of coming to learn about and appreciate animals, and—depending on how they are undertaken and the level of student involvement—can provide powerful catalysts for disrupting anthropocentrism.

This is not to say that having contact with an animal equates to a transcendence of anthropocentrism. Dewey (1938) made the point that while learning occurs by experience, not all experiences are educative ones: "An experience may be immediately enjoyable and yet promote the formation of a ... careless attitude ... It is not enough to insist upon the necessity of experience, nor even of activity in experience. Everything depends on the *quality* of the experience which is had" (pp. 26-27). This quality, according to Dewey, can be measured by its effects on later experiences toward learning, or the manner in which students can build on their experience in the future. Some learning experiences may in fact be uneducative, he suggests—and in relation to my research, I see this as true: not all experiences will be helpful in coming to understand anthropocentrism. In other words, while we can all have (and do have) "animal encounters," this does not mean we will automatically become critical of anthropocentrism in doing so.

Russell's (1999) research into whalewatchers' experiences exemplifies the lack of a straight connection between having a nature experience and coming to care or act on behalf of another species. In querying whether whalewatching might help the whale conservation movement, Russell found the assumption of a linear progression between animal encounters and commitment or action to be false. This idea applies to my topic as well, although it is complicated at the same time because I don't want to dismiss that for some people (I am thinking of young people in particular), connecting with an animal may have a much greater impact than working with representations of animals or discussing them as abstract categories.

Ultimately, then, I think it's important to proceed cautiously around the idea that animal encounters equate to a challenging of anthropocentrism, but at the same time, they could hold that potential. With a nod to Dewey (1938), perhaps what is important is for such experiences to be "educative" ones, as well as ones in which an authentic interaction between people and animals can take place. Weston (1994) suggests that such interactions occur when animals are recognized as subjective beings who have a point of view: "What 'connection' with other animals ultimately requires is a set of practices and comportments that invites connection, that approaches them as

co-inhabitants of a shared world from the start; by taking them seriously as creatures who *have* a point of view, and by ... paying attention" (p. 153).

Paying attention to animals does not always require having actual encounters with them, though; these encounters can also take place in students' imaginations. Fawcett (2006) speaks to the importance of keeping animals alive in our ethical imaginations, and there is virtually no limit of stimulating materials that might assist to this end. Some possibilities include stories, as previously discussed, but also images, artwork, photos, audio recordings of animals, videos of animals, and so on.

Of course, another caveat is needed here regarding animal representations, for we can't assume that hanging a poster of an animal in a classroom, for example, equates to a critical consideration of anthropocentrism! Certainly, the nature of animal representations, as well as *how* they are discussed or engaged with, matters, as many such representations may do little to challenge the anthropocentric status quo. Baker (2001) makes the point that all animal representations—whether in photos, artwork, or told in stories—are ultimately human constructions; we, as humans, *create* the animals we depict. This points to a need to be critical in considering animal representations and to scrutinize the (human) constructions of them—which could be a productive learning activity in itself, especially among older students.

Vance (1995) discusses the narrative construction of animals in her article, "Beyond Just-So Stories: Narrative, Animals, and Ethics." Too often, she suggests, stories construct animals as "good" (e.g., songbirds, pets), "bad" (e.g., bears, mountain lions), or inconsequential (e.g., frogs, insects), and these constructions feed into an anthropocentric dialogue. To counter this, she proposes four criteria for narratives that disrupt utilitarian and anthropocentric depictions of animals. Such narratives, she suggests, should (1) be ecologically appropriate to a time and place, giving plausible roles to animals and not presenting them solely as resources awaiting human use; (2) be ethically appropriate, rejecting the notion that any part of the world exists for the use and pleasure of another part; (3) give voice to those whose stories are being told (as an example, she

Figure 29: Multiple narratives?
Following Vance's (1995) criteria, at least three
stories may be embedded in this picture: that of
the hunter, the dog, and the dead bird.
Source: Animal Picture Society, 2007.

suggests that in a story of a wolf hunt, the hunter's story should not be centralized over the story of the wolf); and (4) make us care. Here, she evokes what Ruddick (1989) calls "attentive love, the habit of asking 'What are you going through?' and *waiting for the answer*" (Vance, 1995, p. 184). In my opinion, these are excellent criteria for narratives that move beyond anthropocentrism, and could also inform analyses of other animal representations (see Figure 29) .

We can thus have animal encounters in various ways; some can do little to nothing to challenge anthropocentrism, while others may involve overcoming the Cartesian view of animals as lacking in subjective experience in seeing them, in Regan's words, as "subjects-of-a-life" (1983, p. 243). This may involve stretching our imaginations or developing empathy toward animals, or perhaps asking ourselves the simple question of how they might be feeling or experiencing the world. I don't think this is a particularly difficult thing to do (certainly, pet owners seem to do it all the time), but it may require a guided perspective from educators to ensure that such experiences, whether they involve actual animals or evoke them in students' imaginations, are educative ones.

Self-reflection.

Following Vance's (1995) criteria that an appropriate ethic is one that gives attention to all relevant parties, part of coming to understand anthropocentrism entails self-reflection. While human-centrism might be disrupted by exploring alternative worldviews, learning about animals, and/or having experiences with them, another key strategy involves looking inward and considering our own beliefs, values, and lifestyles in relation to animals. After all, since

anthropocentrism involves an attitude of humans at the centre, it makes sense to consider that centre from a personal perspective.[48]

Such introspection may well reveal, for many people, that anthropocentrism is far from a blanket attitude in regard to human-animal relations. Since the ways humans *dis*regard animals are often silenced, the ways we *regard* them, respect them, and love them tend to receive much more attention. While I have not spent much time in this thesis addressing the feelings of kinship humans often hold toward animals, there is a rich tradition here as countless people have great love and/or respect for them. For example, many companion animals are loved and cared for throughout their lives, and many organizations exist to care for animals directly (e.g., animal shelters, veterinarian services) and/or indirectly (e.g., animal welfare and rights groups, conservation groups). In some cases, people will go to great lengths to rescue random animals from dire situations—more than once I have seen people canoe out, through precarious and partially frozen waters, to rescue a duck stuck in ice in the lake near my parents' home, for example. Clearly, in some contexts, and toward certain animals, people display a great deal of compassion.[49]

Delving deeper into an autobiographical search may reveal more complicated or contradictory attitudes held toward animals. About five years ago in my own life, an autobiographical search revealed to me that my interactions with animals were very mixed: there were some animals I loved, admired, and mythologized, while others I disliked, feared, or considered to be "pests." Yet other animals I ate, dissected, or wore their skins, and these animals I didn't consider at all: they were invisible to me, even though I had a relationship of sorts with them. This autobiographical search thus proved very insightful, and I think that such reflections, especially if done in the context of other strategies, can destabilize anthropocentrism by bringing to the surface, and calling into question, the cultural scripts we hold in relation to animals.

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[48] This idea, concerning the importance of looking inward, is also found in anti-racist work where the need for white people to examine their whiteness and identify their privilege is stressed (e.g., Bishop, 2002).

[49] For a critical case study of humans reacting to and rescuing trapped whales, see Clayton (1998).

Much like the previously discussed ideas, self-reflection can take place in myriad ways and be customized to various age groups. It can range from simple expressions of one's relationships toward specific animals to deeper autobiographical searches that are perhaps shared and discussed with others. This process can prompt thinking about animals and thinking about the relationships we hold toward them, and in doing so can open up these relationships to a critical consideration.

Incorporating Responses into the Curriculum

Having now discussed some general ideas, I will address the question of *where* they might be incorporated into the curriculum. Three possibilities present themselves: (1) they could stand on their own, in a course developed to explore anthropocentrism, (2) they could be incorporated into a curriculum of humane education, or (3) they could be infused into existing subject areas. All three of these options hold potential, in my opinion, as they all provide means of engaging with the concept, but it is the latter two I will focus on as these seem most feasible at this time. Given that the first option would necessitate curriculum development, it doesn't seem particularly promising at this time,[50] but the other two options are more feasible as materials already exist for implementation, and to some extent a precedent has already been set for them. I explore these two possibilities next.

Humane education.

Humane education is a wide-reaching field of education that makes connections between human, animal, and environmental forms of social justice. Its overarching purpose is to raise critical awareness about, and educate for, a more humane world, and to do so it addresses values and behaviours that connect to oppression, suffering, and planetary destruction (Selby, 1995; Weil,

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[50] Although, such a course would certainly not be out of place in a university setting, where there seems to be growing interest and course selections in the field of animal studies.

2004). Humane education is therefore extremely wide in scope and draws from a range of fields including human rights, animal rights and welfare, environmental ethics, peace studies, anti-discriminatory education, moral education, and social justice movements in general.[51]

Humane education emerged from the efforts of humane societies and animal protection groups. Selby (2000) notes that in Canada, humane education emerged in the 1870s as humane societies were formed, which had mandates encompassing animal protection and child protection, and that focused on fostering humane sentiments toward animals through education in schools. In America, humane education emerged in the late 1800s from animal protectionists' efforts to instill empathy for animals in children, and to strengthen the animal welfare movement (Antoncic, 2003). It also arose in conjunction with character education, on account of a recognized connection between violence toward animals and violence toward humans, and it was envisioned that the two forms of education in tandem could help shape students into democratic, humane citizens (Antoncic, 2003).

Implicitly, then, humane education includes a focus on animal protectionism, as well as other areas relating to animals, human-animal relations, and anthropocentrism. To list some of those areas as published in two contemporary books on humane education—*Earthkind: A Teacher's Handbook on Humane Education* (Selby, 1995) and *The Power and Promise of Humane Education* (Weil, 2004)—humane education involves lessons and activities related to learning about animal needs, pet care, the similarities and differences between humans and animals, media images of animals, animal adjectives, vegetarianism, hunting, trapping, fishing, animal experimentation, dissection, factory farming, circuses, zoos, the animal welfare and rights movement, land usage and its effects on animals, and human-wildlife relations (and this is not an

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[51] Weil (2004) suggests a one-year humane education course might comprise of five units: human rights (addressing prejudice, modern-day slavery, sweatshop labour, political oppression, poverty); cultural issues (media analysis and corporate influences); environmental preservation (pollution, habitat destruction, resource depletion, global warming, and human overpopulation); animal protection (the uses of animals for food, clothing, testing, companionship, and entertainment); and "connections, conflicts, and meaningful solutions" (p. 117) related to all of the above.

exhaustive list). In addition to the animal-related topics, other areas pertaining to human and environmental justice are also explored in depth.

While the focus of humane education extends beyond the scope of my research, I think it offers an excellent venue for a critical consideration of anthropocentrism. Its widened scope is, in fact, in many ways beneficial, for it makes sense to explore multiple forms of oppression in tandem because there are many points of interconnection among them. Of course, in keeping with my focus on anthropocentrism I would not want the "human agenda" to usurp the other areas of focus within humane education, or for the "animal agenda" to become an afterthought or add on, but this hardly seems to be the case. As Weil (2004) states, following a discussion of what humane education could look like in practice:

> Humane education, unlike other forms of social justice or environmental education,
>
> includes the plight of individual animals and invites students to explore our obligations and
>
> responsibilities toward them .... If I've belabored the issue of animal protection here, it is
>
> because animal issues are generally neglected in education, even in sustainability
>
> education, environmental education, character education, social justice education, and
>
> media literacy education. (p. 49)

While humane education curricula offer a valuable means for exploring anthropocentrism, my optimism for it is tempered by the fact that it is a marginalized area of study, if it is represented at all. Selby (2000) notes there is currently no mandated implementation of humane education in schools in Canada, and its lack of success may be due to various factors: a lack of available resources, a lack of funding on the part of humane societies to create such resources, the perception that it is not a valuable subject, and the "back to basics" climate of education that emerged in the 1990s. Whatever the reason(s), it has not, as of yet, taken hold in a Canadian context.

And yet, it appears that interest in the field is growing. Academic research related to

humane education has increased significantly since 1984,[52] there are numerous websites devoted to it, and in 1996 the Maine-based International Institute of Humane Education was launched, offering a certification program and a master's degree in humane education. In general, humane education seems to have a stronger hold in America than in Canada, as thirteen states have humane education laws that endorse the importance of educating for the humane treatment of animals and the preservation of the environment, and in nine of those states humane education is mandatory (Antoncic, 2003). In New York City there is a full humane education curriculum in place in the elementary years (Antoncic, 2003), and in California a humane education charter school, which promotes humane living in addition to teaching the standard subjects, has been launched (Weil, 2004). Given these milestones, it appears that humane education is a growing movement, and I would think that its subject matter, which addresses some of the most pressing ethical and environmental issues of our time, may well be considered important enough for inclusion in the educational system in the future. Whether this will occur through a humane education curriculum, or via integration in existing subject areas, remains to be seen.

Infusion across the curriculum.

Given the current status of humane education in Canada, a more optimistic fit for a consideration of anthropocentrism and human-animal relations might be for this content to be infused into existing subject areas. This would likely lead to a more watered-down focus than would otherwise be undertaken in a humane education curriculum, but at the same time there are many opportunities for this infusion across subject areas without compromising the focus of the subjects themselves.

The previously discussed humane education books (Selby, 1995; Weil, 2004) outline

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[52] Evidence for this is provided by the two versions of the "Annotated Bibliography of Research Relevant to Humane Education" published by the National Association for Humane and Environmental Education. The first bibliography, published in 1984, is 10 pages long; while the second bibliography, which is undated but outlines research published between 1985-2001, is 37 pages long.

numerous ways such content could be incorporated into existing classes. A very truncated list of their suggestions include: inquiring into the arguments for and against animal testing (science); analyzing themes of fairness, rights, and responsibilities as they relate to animals (social studies); interpreting statistics pertaining to human exploitation of animals (mathematics); investigating the geography of animal use locally (geography); studying how the agricultural revolutions impacted farm animals (history); creative writing on animal-related topics (English); exploring animal welfare and animal rights arguments (philosophy); studying conventions that artists used to depict animals in different time periods (art); discussing or role playing around animal-related issues to increase communication abilities (English as a second language); making animal recordings and incorporating them into compositions (music); movement sessions based on the movements of particular animals (physical education); comparing and contrasting vegetarian and omnivorous diets (health class); and considering the economics of intensive farming practices versus free-range ones (economics). While not all of these suggestions are appropriate for all ages, many could be customized to different age groups, and many other suggestions are provided that target younger or older students specifically. The intensity and complexity of the activities are also customizable; they could be incorporated at a shallow level or could be intensified to become long-term or community projects.

The subject of language arts may be particularly compatible with an exploration of anthropocentrism, given its focus on reading, writing, reflecting, and responding to various texts. Language arts also provides a good fit on account of the various ways language constructs, constrains, or negates animals from consideration (as explored in Chapters 2 and 3). Bell and Russell (1999) outline a list of recommendations for how language arts instruction could disrupt anthropocentrism by encouraging students to "bear witness to other life" (p. 74); some of their suggestions include asking students to keep a nature journal and record observations or interactions with an animal or plant over time (for younger classes, one journal could be kept per class), evaluating misconceptions and stereotypes about animals through a true or false activity,

exploring linguistic metaphors associated with animals, acknowledging differing forms of human-animal relations in different cultures and time periods, and drawing attention to the links between lifestyle choices and ecocide/biocide.

Stout (2001) suggests both the language *and* visual arts may be appropriate venues for teaching students to care about the world beyond the human. Motivated by an incident in which she witnessed a student kicking a dog and other students laughing about it, Stout began incorporating into her arts courses instructional units aimed at "stimulating students' imagination, developing empathetic awareness, and instilling the capacity to care" (p. 84). Using art forms from different times and cultures to evoke empathy and imagination, she reformed her curriculum and found that students demonstrated modest, but clear results that they were becoming more curious, more willing to listen to others' ideas, and more expressive of their own thoughts. As a result of this, she suggests the arts provide a good venue for exploring others' subjectivities in meaningful ways.

This is just a limited sampling of ways a curriculum could be infused with material that engages students with the concept of anthropocentrism and promotes consideration of human-animal relations. This is not to say that each suggestion will lead to a transcendence of anthropocentrism, but they may offer some beginning steps in that direction.

As a final note to this section, I want to acknowledge that the integration of many of these ideas may well be easier said than done, on a few levels. First, many educators may find that they require an education on these topics themselves, which can be difficult because such information is sometimes silenced, suppressed, or otherwise dismissed as unimportant. This can make finding information a challenge. Second, the resources pertaining to these topics are limited, which again can mean work for educators in finding the resources, or adapting them or creating their own. And third, there is the ongoing problem of time constraints, and the challenge of trying to fit yet more

material into already busy schedules.

There is also, I think, a possible challenge at a deeper emotional level. Delving into this topic can be a sometimes painful process of learning (or *un*learning, as the case may be); I can attest to this in writing this thesis. This point is worth bearing in mind in regard to educators and students alike; it is important to keep a sense of balance around this topic and to make an effort to ensure that it does not become an exercise in hopelessness or despair. Such emotions are obviously counterproductive as they can result in a desire to stop learning or engaging with the topic. In recognition of this, many authors have discussed the importance of countering emotionally difficult material with learning experiences that are uplifting, positive, and hopeful, as well as ones that promote a sense of empowerment in students and a recognition that choices can be made that make a difference (e.g., Andrzejewski, 2003; Bell & Russell, 1999; Selby, 1995; Weil, 2004).

Perhaps keeping in mind that many positive outcomes can come from this sort of education helps to contextualize these difficulties. Learning about anthropocentrism can be deeply meaningful and even life-changing, and it can (re)connect students with a wider scope of life itself. It can broaden our ways of thinking, seeing, and being in the world, as well as our understandings of ourselves and the world around us—all excellent reasons, I think, for it to be incorporated into education.

AFTERWORD

In this thesis I have aimed to explore and provide an introduction to the concept of anthropocentrism, as well as outline the connections I see between it and education. I hope by now I have made clear my argument that an engagement with the concept of anthropocentrism, along with the corollary study of human-animal relations, comprise important parts of an education concerned with fostering critical thinking, caring, and the development of a critical consciousness. Finally, I have attempted, through the last chapter, to outline some possible starting points for educational engagement with these ideas.

I realize I am by no means telling the whole story here. Much, much more could be said in each chapter of this thesis, and many of the ideas I have raised warrant a greater depth of exploration. I hope, however, to have made some level of contribution to the dialogue on anthropocentrism and education, and that my ideas may be of some value to those interested in this topic. As I wrote in the introduction, this research is aimed at a wide audience, including students, teachers, philosophers, ethicists, and animal defense and social justice scholars and activists, as all of these groups, I think, have a stake in analyzing anthropocentrism. It is my hope that I have addressed the interests of these groups fairly and have outlined my ideas clearly, so that they may be of value to members of these groups.

A final stakeholder I see in relation to this work is the animals themselves, and while it is difficult to presume what their interests are, I hope to have represented them fairly while keeping intact their dignity and the value of their lives. I am a person who has always gravitated toward issues of social justice, and in the past five years animals have been at the forefront of my mind as a group worthy of inclusion, and highly in need of inclusion, on the social justice agenda. To that end, I hope to have made a positive contribution and presented a case for their inclusion in education.

In considering animals, we are not taking away the relevance of humans and human concerns. We are not choosing one side over the other, but rather are expanding our framework altogether to see a wider, richer picture of life itself. Anthropocentrism rests on a divide between humans and animals and a presumption of human superiority, but by inquiring into that constructed divide, and by educating ourselves about it, I believe we can come to see its inherent falseness. This can only benefit us all, human and animal alike.

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