

DREAMING HUMAN BEING ANIMAL:

A Shared Ontology

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Insofar as the production of man through the opposition man/animal, human/inhuman, is at stake here, the machine necessarily functions by means of an exclusion (which is also always already a capturing) and an inclusion (which is also always already an exclusion)...precisely because the human is already presupposed every time, the machine actually produces a kind of state of exception, a zone of indeterminacy in which the outside is nothing but an exclusion of an inside and the inside is in turn only the inclusion of the outside.

Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal*

But if the human essence is identical with non-animalness, then what constitutes animalness and what are animals? Almost no student of human society ever pauses to ask these questions, indeed, I have met very few with even a remote interest in animals for their own sake, let alone with the willingness to pose the same questions about animals as are being asked about humans.

Barbara Noske, *Beyond Boundaries: Humans and Animals*

Abstract

Enquiring into the human/animal relationship is as old as Western culture itself. As species loss and the genetic manipulation of animal life accelerate, questions about this relationship become more insistent. Ideas of “animal ethics”, whether questions of the granting of rights or moral standing, continue to depend on comparing animals to humanity within a hierarchical structure where the human is unquestionably at the top.

This paper explores the human/animal relationship and the construction of the human in Western culture as other than animal, other than nature. It proposes a shared ontology as both a more accurate representation of being in the world and as revealing the possibility of an ethical ground of both relationship and difference.

Introduction

The belief that humans are not animals is so pervasive in Western culture as to be a “given”, yet, clarifying this distinction has proved difficult. Ideas of what defines the human have been debated and reconstructed many times through the course of Western history. This construction of the human has relied on various proofs, such as suppositions that only humans have language, have souls, are self-aware, have culture, or some other such characteristic. While Darwin’s theories placed the human as animal, the human remained at the top of an evolutionary hierarchy. Human/animal dualism in essence remained unchallenged.

If humans are not animals, then animals are likewise not human. Animals are nature, wild, instinctual, lustful. They are assumed to lack morality, empathy, imagination, a sense of self and of community – and, importantly, both language and reason. Yet another argument focuses on that difficult to prove attribute, consciousness. In other words, one is defined by what the other – at least theoretically – is not.

We perceive difference, which we interpret as lack. The differently bodied status of the non-human immediately singles them out as “Other”, and this Otherness relies on arguments constructed upon *a priori* human values. Resting upon these arguments for Otherness are then the arguments for, and our actual treatment of, the non-human Other.

There is perhaps no other question so central to our ways of being in the world, as that of our animal status, and no finding that would have such potential to disturb the order and business of our lives, as would a profound apprehension of our relationship and conduct within, rather than without, the family of animals. The human/animal and its twin culture/nature divide together run like an unstable fault-line through Western culture – underground, out of sight and with the potential to shake down our carefully constructed mythologies of self, of world and the cultural systems and infrastructure which rely upon them.

This paper enquires into returning the human to the animal. It reconsiders the entrenched and static hierarchy of human/animal – not in order to eradicate difference, but to recognise and bring difference forward as a fluid pattern of relationship where hierarchies are flexible and mutable.

Drawing on Heidegger’s Freiburg lectures of 1929-30, Giorgio Agamben’s *The Open* and the work of anthropologist/philosopher Barbara Noske, I first consider the construction of the human as not-animal and as Dasein. Critiquing anthropocentric judgment and Heidegger’s arguments for animals being “poor in world”, I reframe the human as animal among animals, arguing that Dasein is not

particular to the human, but is actually part of a shared animal being. This leads to re-visiting Heidegger's clearing as both a liminal space of contact among beings and as a moment of choice in how we each perceive the other, opening possibilities for experiencing beings as relationships rather than as resources. Following a discussion of what it means to negotiate power-with the non-human, as distinct from power-over, I conclude that, given the will to change, the shift in perception and beliefs required to recognise a shared ontology is possible, and that such significant change embodies both great opportunity and challenge.

Discussions of animal/human relations are inevitably open to concerns or accusations of anthropomorphizing. In this paper I take the view that in attempts to understand, or encounter, another being or culture, one naturally moves toward the other through "imagining" oneself into the other's world, and that anthropomorphizing is, in actuality, the bringing of, or the attempt to bring, the non-human into the human construct in order to critique, assess, or otherwise measure by a human yardstick the being, the communication, the perception and the culture of what is not human. We cannot really enter the being, the perceptual world of a non-human, but might acknowledge mystery and difference, and by cultivating a much needed humility, allow ourselves to enter into something like what anthropologist Tim Ingold refers to as a relationship of trust [Ingold 69].

Being Human, Being Animal

At the most, humanity's 'animal' traits are thought to have served as a foundation for the development of 'real' humanness: the social and the cultural. Thus while humanity's 'animalness' is being restricted to its body, its real humanness lies in a vital addition to that body. We do not seem to have come very far since Descartes.

Barbara Noske, *Beyond Boundaries: Humans and Animals*

The stone is worldless; animals are poor in world, man is world-forming.

Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*

What does it mean to be animal? What does it mean to be human?

On one side of the divide is "man", the constructed human. To be human is to be a member of a single species, Homo Sapiens; to be a member of another species is to be generalized as "animal". The other side of the divide is, simply, "Other".

In scientific terms, a human is a hominid, "a primate of a family (Hominidae) which includes humans and their fossil ancestors" [Oxford English Dictionary online]. The species Homo Sapiens, as Giorgio Agamben tracks in *The Open*, is defined as that which recognises, or knows, itself as human. "Man is the animal that must recognise itself as human to be human" [Agamben 26]. Linnaeus, the "founder of modern scientific taxonomy", found little to otherwise distinguish humans from other primates, leading to the above definition. [Agamben 23]. It is

humans who decide what it is to be human. That we have been continually defining and rewriting the human over centuries is a matter of record.

For Heidegger, it is neither language per se nor being differently bodied that differentiates human from animal; it is Dasein. Literally translated, Dasein means “being there”, but for Heidegger, Dasein is something more. Dasein is Being embodied, self-aware, temporally aware, and it is only through Dasein that Being is recognised as such. Heidegger believes that, in contrast to Dasein, non-human animals are limited in perception and being. Instinctual, incapable of reflection, they are “captivated” by both the greater world and by their perceptions of it. They are “taken” by immediate stimulus and response [Agamben 52-53]. Because this is the case, they are not capable of recognising Being.

His argument is based on difference and hinges on perception – the assumed-to-be-limited perception of the animal as compared to that of Dasein. Whereas Dasein recognises “something as something”, the animal, according to Heidegger, cannot. “[S]uch a driven being-taken also excludes the possibility of any recognition of presence” [Heidegger, *Fundamentals of Metaphysics* 242]. These ideas are backed up in part by citing some rather uncomfortable experiments with bees and an illustrative example of a lizard on a rock. In no case has Heidegger selected a being more like a hominid as example – no primates, or mammals. Is this because he wishes to discourage anthropomorphizing, or because differences among beings might seem less obvious, the distinctions he craves more tenuously drawn?

In the first case, he cites an experiment where a bee's abdomen is cut away while it is feeding at a saucer of honey. That the bee does not seem to recognise the absence of its abdomen, and continues to take in honey until it runs out of the severed body, Heidegger interprets as evidence that the animal is so driven, so taken by its food that it knows nothing else [Heidegger, *Fundamentals of Metaphysics* 242].

At the risk of being deemed to be anthropomorphizing, one can readily locate human parallels, even with a bee. For example, one may consider being in shock after a particularly bad accident – one's spine might have been severed, or one might have lost a limb. Initially, one may be completely unaware that one has lost a body part. There are also documented cases of severe head trauma (such as metal penetrating the skull and brain), where the victim has no immediate sensation that there is anything amiss and no pain at all. And there is the familiar syndrome of "phantom limbs", where missing limbs become itchy, or painful. In its differently bodied state, one might hazard to say that the bee could have a similar reaction – or non-reaction as it were.

A lizard, displaced from sunning itself on a rock, might seek the rock again, or another rock. According to Heidegger, the lizard does not know the rock as a rock. A human, similarly sunning, interprets and recognises the rock as such.

That this distinction is supposition on Heidegger's part seems obvious. It seems more likely that rather than having no awareness of rockness, or of the rock as a particular rock, that the differently bodied being of the lizard has a different experience of these than does a hominid. If one is presuming (and that in fact, is

all one can do, besides attend), one can also presume different interests from those of a human. What is valued, or recognised as world and other, must differ radically from species to species.

It is obvious that the human perception of world is intelligible to the human – but how could the strangeness of a lizard’s perception of rock and rockness be intelligible to the differently bodied, differently perceiving hominid? Similarly, why on earth might a lizard be required to perceive rockness in the same way as a hominid? It seems that for us to acknowledge the perception of the other, we must know it to be like our own. The question which is begging here is whether it is more anthropomorphic and/or anthropocentric to consider possible similarities between/among bodied beings, or to judge and measure them against the human.

If this discussion seems to be “reaching” into questionable territory, perhaps that is precisely where we need to go. Anthropologist/philosopher Barbara Noske has spent some time considering the human/non-human relationship and insists that similar sorts of questions should be asked about non-human being and dwelling as are asked about the human. Instead, we still begin seeking to understand non-humans through their biology, and continue to view other beings as if they were primarily mechanism and/or instinctual. We would not presume to learn about the being of a person, or of a human culture, in such a way.

What do we know of the worlds of other beings? What can we know, except only in part? How can we presume to judge the worlds of other beings as impoverished? We cannot really know how a lizard, as a lizard, perceives a rock,

or anything else for that matter, in the way we can know the perception of a human other. We can only suppose and theorise, and through our imaginal supposing we gaze at what we can perceive of the lizard and the lizard's given world, which overlaps with ours. But the whole perceptual world of the lizard, so far as any experiencing of it, belongs to the lizard.

That a lizard is not a hominid is obvious, but neither is a lizard a horse. In fact, neither is a wolf a whale, or a raven a bear. Each being is differently bodied, has a different way of moving through the world, or dwelling. Each has different requirements and endowments and because of these things, each perceives the world differently. If a thing is of value to one being, why should it necessarily be of the same value to another?

Agamben discusses the profound influence of the work of Jakob von Uexküll on Heidegger's thinking. The bit that is of interest here is the idea that different beings experience and live in completely different perceptual worlds. Rather than a hierarchical order of living beings von Uexküll "supposes an infinite variety of perceptual worlds" [Agamben 40].

We are asleep to the perceptual worlds of animal others, to their ways of knowing. We see these others, when we see them at all, at a distance, through filters of isolated interest. Eyes cast back on ourselves, we are busy dreaming the human.

Being Dasein

Always a world for us, never
the nowhere minus the no:
that innocent, unguarded
space which we could breathe,
know endlessly, and never require.

Rilke, “8th Duino Elegy”

Through excluding non-human others, Dasein is made exclusively human. This exclusion positions Dasein to objectify everything not-human. Yet Dasein as interpreter of being and meaning is central to how we dwell in the world. If Dasein interprets beings according to its perceptions, and if there are, as von Uexküll proposes, an “infinite number of perceptual worlds”, then Dasein might itself be open to interpretation.

Heidegger explains that beings “presence” in the clearing made possible only through Dasein. Michael Zimmerman, drawing from *Being and Time*, describes the clearing as where Dasein encounters and interprets beings – beings are revealed and Being itself is “unconcealed”. Beings acquire meaning through the encounter in the clearing, with this meaning rooted in usefulness to Dasein, in being resource in Dasein’s world [Zimmerman 77-78].

There is no question that this sounds particularly anthropocentric and objectifying, and if it were not for the duty of care laid upon human Dasein, it would be bleak. Yet this duty of care implies a dualism, a paternalistic stewardship [Zimmerman

80] that must continue to rely on judgements of meaning, value and the usefulness of beings within the world of Dasein. While Dasein might be constrained to “let beings be” [Zimmerman 80], it can be only on Dasein’s terms, given the doctrine of usefulness stated above.

If beings become, manifest, as resource, then how is one indeed to let beings be? Within this doctrine of usefulness there is an odd glimmer of hope. Heidegger claims the ready-to-hand is only seen for itself, for what it is, when it breaks down. Zimmerman explains as follows.

For tools to function as tools, neither their being, nor the world in which they are involved may become explicitly manifest. According to Heidegger, the ‘inconspicuousness’ and ‘unobtrusiveness’ of tools are positive ontological traits that characterize the ‘being-in-itself’ of beings “ready-to-hand.” When tools cease to function for Dasein as tools or resource, then the world “lights up”, meaning that we then “become aware of tools as things intertwined in complex sets of reference relationships (“the worldhood of the world”). [Zimmerman 78]

As the utility of an object diminishes, we can gain a different understanding of what it is [Zimmerman 78]. It might be objected that beings are not in fact tools – but objects, beings and tools seem interchangeable in that they all acquire meaning only through their utility to human Dasein.

If worldhood is characterised, by interconnectedness, by being, as Zimmerman says, relational, then it might also be characterized as an ecology – “ecology”

being defined by the Oxford Dictionary of Ecology as “the interrelationships among organisms and their environment”.

When beings are no longer present as resource for Dasein, they can present increasingly in their own worldhood – an integral-unto-itselfness which is always at the same time intertwined within a shared ecology – rather than being defined by utility to Dasein.

The above discussion presents the clearing as primarily a space where Dasein meets and interprets the non-human in terms of usefulness – at least until utility fails. But considered differently, the clearing offers alternative possibilities for human/non-human relations. In order to consider these, it is necessary to first reconsider the being of Dasein.

That Dasein is conflated with the human belongs to the interpretation of human Dasein that non-human animals are “poor in world”, that they are instinctual, driven, captivated and therefore incapable of being Dasein. This interpretation of Dasein leaves out the possibility of Dasein and its attributes being other than human. For humans, only the human recognises, is aware of, and names “Dasein”, and so Dasein is only human. Yet it is the case that the human cannot know, but only surmise, that the properties of Dasein are exclusive to itself. It is the idea of the animal being poor in world, or having no world, which would *reserve* Dasein exclusively for the human, rather than Dasein *belonging* intrinsically to the human.

If human Dasein perceives and interprets everything other-than-human (difference) as resource, object, it would then follow that Dasein must therefore perceive all that is human as not-object, not-other, but rather as “belonging”, as related to itself, within its world, or family. If this is the case, then Dasein makes judgements about relationship, the relationship of “objects”, of others, and of world in relation to itself. This means that Dasein *could* interpret difference differently from how it does.

Because Dasein is that which interprets and perceives beings and world in light of particular bodied being, sets of beliefs and values, then for Dasein to interpret, or for beings to unconceal themselves to Dasein as something, as beings or resource, is specific to the sensory possibilities and the cultural construct of Dasein in each case.

According to anthropologist Tim Ingold in *The Perception of the Environment*, not all human cultures dream the human outside the animal, outside a mutually enviroining world. To many human cultures, non-humans are interpreted as differently bodied beings within a shared world. Although impossible to really know the other, the relationship is central to dwelling, to being-in-the-world. Complex stories and traditions are woven about animal/human relations that involve mutable boundaries which at times disappear entirely. It is easy to see how a jaguar might present differently to a native of the deep Amazon rainforest than to a native of New York. Because ways of dwelling differ, it follows that the Dasein of a human from Papua New Guinea must be radically different from that

of a resident of Paris – although perceptions of world and other change as human cultures become increasingly Westernised.

Waking in a Clearing

When you awake, if you follow the river into the trees I will be somewhere ahead or beyond, like a flight of crows. When you are suddenly overwhelmed with a compassion that staggers you and you begin to run along the bank, at a moment when your fingers brush the soft skin of a deer-head orchid and you see sun-drenched bears stretching in an open field like young men, you will know a loss of guile and that the journey has begun.

Barry Lopez, *River Notes*

Michael Zimmerman describes how Dasein makes possible the clearing, or the open, through a stepping beyond itself, a “temporal movement”, a self-aware consciousness of the finite which unconceals the concealed. While Heidegger claims that “only man can see the open which names the unconcealedness of beings” [Agamben 58], consider for a moment the possibility of a Dasein peculiar to each manner of being, each perceptual world. If there is human Dasein, might there not also be avian Dasein, cetacean Dasein, etc?

That such a proposal might be dependent upon the temporal and self awareness of other beings should not stop us here. Beyond what we cannot know of the being of beings very different from ourselves, we can acknowledge the presence within those more like ourselves of those attributes named above as making possible the

clearing. For anyone who has spent considerable time with other beings in their going about their lives, attending, as far as is possible, without preconceived notions of their being and capacities, it is possible to find at least a narrow trail snaking toward somewhat familiar, or possibly shared, aspects of perception. This allowing of the other, this opening of perception to possibility might require the laying aside of much that is “human” as that which holds the preconceptions which act as blinders and filters of experience.

If Dasein is perceiving, interpreting, then Dasein is inescapably rooted in the body, in a greater world of beings. To perceive is at its source a sensuous being in the world, which we then filter through cultural understandings. What we perceive is a world that is oddly not-us, differentiated from us, and yet we are always at the same time *of* it. Because this is the case, differently bodied beings, differently interested beings, will perceive differently.

We know how a particular being – i.e., a bear – appears to us, but how can we really know how we appear to the bear? That the human/non-human interface is territory that requires navigation seems apparent, and if we persist in leaving out the other side of the discussion, of the relationship – or not even acknowledge that such a thing exists, then we are well and truly outside, and alone. Indeed, Western culture has for some time seen no need to negotiate with world and other.

Think now of the clearing, of the open, as a liminal space – a shared openness, full of possibility, free of hierarchy. In this space being encounters being and makes sense of and locates itself in relationship to an other. If anything is apparent here,

it is difference. Being and perception can only be embodied. It is through our differently bodied beings that we experience. It is through this experience that we interpret. Because the all-at-onceness of sensory stimulus would overwhelm, we select what we attend to. We foreground that which we choose as important, or of value, and background what we consider to be less so. We then filter again through the lessons and memories of experience and our own peculiar cultural assumptions.

The way of Western human culture that looks to all outside itself as resource, as if there were no other way to perceive the greater world and the other-than-human, shows us so little, allows for only a tiny human world bounded by prescribed patterns and a proscribed “outside”. We have come to embody a walled city, ringed by an outside much greater than the inside and that we now consider so foreign to who and what we are, that we cannot conceive of it. The outside feeds us, waters us, warms us – all unseen and unknown as it might be for itself. Sleeping while life – and death – go on about her, the princess, dreaming in the tower, awaits the awakening kiss. Our eyes can open upon an outside so full of possibility as to spin us right round.

In the open, prior to all interpretive conclusions, at this place of meeting lies choice. At this moment, suspended, we become for one another – what? Can we acknowledge, navigate this strangeness and difference without objectification? Can we filter perceptually for a common ground among differences, for the shared? Perhaps at times the most commonality we can locate might be the shared world, the air, the being-bodied – and perhaps this is enough, a good beginning.

With this opening, the perceptual, interpretive space of the clearing can return us to a greater world, to a web of relationship and reciprocity.

Although we nominally refer to ourselves as “human animals”, we don’t really accept this. In *The Beast Within*, Joyce Salisbury explores the medieval European attitude toward animals, tracking some of the history of the fear of being animal which (Western) humanity has, and the pains to which humans have gone to make the distinction. Overcoming centuries of programming the human as not-animal is a challenging prospect, and it is this which we must overcome, or at least come to a different understanding of, in order to open to the other. To meet without a presumed hierarchy requires humility, to be animal among animals requires a letting go of our special status of “dominion over”.

Beastly Behaviour

“They are called Beasts because of the violence with which they rage, and are known as “wild” (ferus) because they are accustomed to freedom by nature and are governed (ferantur) by their own wishes. They wander hither and thither, fancy free, and they go wherever they want to go.”

Joyce Salisbury quoting the medieval Bestiary, *The Beast Within*

If we are all animals, are humans then beasts? According to the definition set forth in the above quote, we might be constrained to respond affirmatively.

We might also ask, are animals beasts?

If we attended, without prejudice, to the other, we would find that non-human animals are no more beastly than we, and have their own social contracts and complex language skills – apes, whales, monkeys, wolves and yes, bees for example [Noske 133-137]. And, as John Leake recently reported in *The Australian* newspaper, humans have realised that individual dolphins have names by which they call one another.

Non-human animals also often show great compassion, assisting one another in need and at times raising human offspring as their own. Noske comments that “animal-adopted” children disturb our perceptual field and interpretations of human/animal relations by having been enculturated within an animal family.

Many people refused to believe or would even be appalled by the idea that animals could adopt human children and, worse, teach them to act (and think) like themselves. The notion that animals culturally construct their own world some people already find hard to digest, let alone that animals could actively imprint humans with their culture! [Noske 161]

Such skepticism belongs, for the most part, to dominant Western culture. In *A Story As Sharp as a Knife*, Robert Bringhurst has translated traditional Haida stories in which humans take on the shapes of birds, of fish, of bear – and non-human animals, those of humans. All beings are “peoples”, and it is as if Being itself takes many forms and is not in any way static. This lateral fluidity of being and becoming is at direct odds with that of Western culture’s linear hierarchy of

beings. We might call this way of being in the world, of sharing power, a “power-with”.

Nowhere in recent Western thought do we find this sharing, this power-with, but oddly, some of the writings of Nietzsche contain the possibility. Although he backs away from dismantling the hierarchies of power-over and attendant dualist thought, Nietzsche, in his prologue to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, does propose returning the human to a kind of wildness, a sort of pagan being in the world. While he does not stray far from the safe, traditional territory of non-human animal as “beastly”, his ideas are of interest here because they propose a kind of opening in their rejection of the world of the “ultimate man”.

If in many ways the world that Nietzsche proposes is “red in tooth and claw”, it is a world in which the human is intrinsically embodied. The power that Nietzsche invokes is a primal power of Being, shared among animals, the wild, and those humans sufficiently strong to cast aside the social contract of the “ultimate man” and step into this being, this world. But because Nietzsche remains unwilling to let go of the hierarchical dualism of man/animal, his will-to-power remains that of a “power-over”, rather than a “power-with” the other. The social contract of Nietzsche’s world is therefore a continual, and “beastly”, struggle for dominance. Fortunately, in opening to the wildness in ourselves, Nietzsche’s is not the only path to take.

Instead, abandoning the traditional hierarchy of beings could, in part, allow an opening to the other, to the more lateral “power-with” relationship. Possibly in the

bracketing out of preconceived ideas and constructs, we can allow the other to shine forth in its own being, and can perceive and allow the strangeness and the difference of the other at our side. Stretching wide the open as an inclusive space, not only does the other presence for us, but we are also revealed for the other.

Dreaming Ourselves Animal

Very strange creatures they were: two legged like Raven, but otherwise very different. They had no feathers. Nor fur. They had no great beak. Their skin was pale, and they were naked except for the dark hair upon round, flat-featured heads. Instead of strong wings like raven, they had thin stick-like arms that waved and fluttered constantly. They were the first humans.

Traditional Haida tale of Raven finding the first men, as retold by
Barry McWilliams in *Raven Finds the First Men*

Again as expressed in Bringham's translation, in the world of the Haida, as in Christian tradition, others were here before humans. One difference is that for the Haida, while there is jockeying for power, there is no dominion over, but an ongoing negotiation, competition and trickery among beings in the world. A relationship of trust, as Ingold describes it, is neither a given, nor is it easily maintained [Ingold 69].

Acknowledging a shared ontology does not automatically mean a change for the better in human behaviour toward non-human others, but it does remove dualist

ideology and dispose of lingering aspects of the mechanistic view of life and non-humans.

Heidegger's duty of care toward other beings rests on dualist models, so in a shared ontology we must reconfigure what it means to care. Ideas of stewardship and utility are both based on the hierarchy which places the human at the top; control, or power-over, however we justify it, never leaves the hands of the human. This mindset enables Western human culture to, for example, set aside habitat, such as that of the calving grounds of the Porcupine Caribou in Alaska, from corporate destruction, and then a few years following, change that decision and justify exploiting oil resources.

A shared ontology means that we level the playing field of being in the world, in such a way that we have neither a duty of care, nor a perceived precedence of human utility, but have instead a responsibility to relationship.

Such responsibilities are not simple or easy. They require constant attention and negotiation. To dwell with many different others in community is a challenge which immediately brings to the fore ethical questions in new configurations. In other words, such a radical and comprehensive change in our way of being in and with world and other, while not impossible, would significantly test our resolve.

We choose how the human is constructed, our ways of interpreting and of acting in the world, which means we can choose to change. The extent of a shift of perception and belief which would bring us alongside non-humans in a shared

ontology is surely no greater than that required to perceive of world and other as mechanism, no greater than that required for dualist thought, or even for linear perspective. We are less set in our ways than we like to think we are. Rather, if we do not change and adapt quickly to something, it is because we as yet perceive little value to ourselves in doing so. In this way, we may be just as “captivated”, as “taken by our food”, as is (perhaps) Heidegger’s bee.

To date, we seem addicted to a privileged status in which everything exists *for* us. That status and the hubris which goes along with it may be our undoing; it is certainly the undoing of many other beings.

What is required for change is a radical humility and a willingness to be one among many. This would involve some discomfort in addition to loss of status and of the privileges which go with it. There are likely to be, however, compensations that we cannot even imagine without going there. Whether we are collectively up to the challenge is a very good question indeed.

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