Beyond Anthropocentrism: Interrogating the Roles of Language, Power, and Ideas in Maintaining Animal Exploitation

Finn Sadler

This paper critically examines the roles of Western linguistic and ideational norms in their supporting and legitimising of groups that perpetuate the exploitation of animals. This paper contains two sections. First, it examines the subject/object dichotomy, which positions humans as 'subjects' on account of their perceived moral agency and rationality whilst consigning animals to the status of 'objects' on account of their perceived irrationality and lack of moral agency. The section defines the 'subject' and discusses how specific manifestations of the subject/object dichotomy in language reinforce the anthropocentric ideas that contribute to a cultural acceptance of animal exploitation. In the second section, the paper synthesises a Foucauldian definition of 'rationality' with a Latourian approach to social relations and examines ideational norms that portray animals as irrational, along with the scholarly arguments supporting this thesis. The section concludes that adherences to anthropocentric norms and biases distort the framework within which these arguments are made. When applying a more appropriate framework, there is sufficient reason to conclude that animals are, in fact, rational. The paper closes by highlighting the importance of linguistic analysis in deconstructing anthropocentric norms and advocates for further research in this field through comparative methods.

Introduction

In October 2019, the multinational grocery and general merchandise retailer, Tesco, began airing an advertisement for their new range of plant-based sausages as a part of their 'Food Love Stories' campaign (Tesco 2019). Soon after its release, the advertisement was condemned by many representatives of the United Kingdom's (UK) farming industry as an attempt to demonise the industry (NFU 2019), which placed the advertisement at the centre of public debate in the UK as the topic made national headlines and received coverage on some of the country's most prominent television talk shows (The Independent 2019; This Morning 2019).

The advertisement itself depicted a young girl telling her father that she does not 'want to eat animals anymore'[1], prompting the child's father to buy Tesco's new range of plant-based sausages to prepare a non-meat meal for his daughter (Tesco 2019). The point of contention that members of the farming industry had with the advertisement pertained to the language used, with a representative of the National Farmers Union (NFU) arguing that 'the wording in the advert was totally unnecessary', 'I mean, why not just have a little girl saying "I'm not really keen on eating meat anymore"', the representative reasoned (This Morning 2019). The level of backlash that the advertisement received from the farming industry simply for using one word ('animals') in the place of another ('meat'), despite the fact that there is no real difference between 'eating meat' and 'eating animals'[2], highlights how important language choice is in order for the animal farming industry to maintain their control of societal and cultural norms.

Despite being what seems like a minor linguistic shift, the use of the word 'animals' in place of 'meat' challenges the animal farming industry's attempts to create a disconnect between consumers and the reality of animal slaughter, regardless of whether this was Tesco's intention. As Joy (2009) correctly identifies, the animal farming industry depends on concealing animal farming practices and preserving a disconnect between these practices and the

1 The quotes regarding the advertisement and the NFU's response are from video sources. See the bibliography.

2 Whilst it is true that the equivalency between 'eating meat' and 'eating animals' is not universal and is instead influenced by geographic and cultural contexts (Yates-Doerr, 2015), the advertisement under scrutiny is targeted at a mainstream British audience, which for whom, this equivalency holds true.

consumer to achieve financial success. Therefore, anything that threatens the preservation of this disconnect also threatens the financial success and profitability of the industry as a whole, creating an incentive for the animal farming industry to protect itself against these threats. One of the means by which the animal farming industry does this is by discursively constructing a social, political, and cultural atmosphere that legitimises their existence and contributes to the preservation of the disconnect upon which their existence depends.

Fundamentally, this paper argues that societally engrained anthropocentric beliefs often serve as the intellectual justification that leads us (human beings) to mistreat animals for our own gain. This is argued through a systematic close inspection of specific cultural and linguistic norms that are both produced and reproduced by the animal farming industry, academia, and other groups that have an interest in maintaining the exploitation of animals. This paper hopes to contribute to the existing literature in this field by deconstructing various specific manifestations of some of the supporting sub-narratives that work to uphold anthropocentric belief systems and, consequently, the cultural acceptance of animal exploitation.

Whilst it is the case that in recent years, linguistic analysis as a practical research method has enjoyed a modest surge in popularity within the field of critical animal studies (see Merskin 2022; Almiron, Cole and Freeman 2015), the existing literature has scarcely examined the specific manifestations of various discourses that are to be discussed in this paper. Moreover, the core findings of this paper, by virtue of its fine-tuned scope, carry pertinent implications for how we might form representations of animals and the animal farming industry in the media, advertising, and academia in the future. It should also be noted that in its analysis, this paper will maintain a focus on the English-speaking West. This paper recognises that there is a diverse range of perspectives and discourses in this region by virtue of its heterogeneous cultural makeup (Banks 1986) and that anthropocentrism is indeed challenged by certain groups in the West (for example, The Vegan Society 2021). However, this paper will solely contend with the dominating, mainstream narratives within this region that reflect and perpetuate standard practices concerning how animals are most typically treated in these societies (for example, their use as food, clothing, and entertainment). This choice has been made in accordance with the established scope of the paper as a critique of anthropocentric norms and beliefs.

It is also true that this choice of scope may (i) limit the universality of the arguments and findings presented in this paper due to the often differing historical and social contexts of non-Western non-English-speaking societies; (ii) allow for the overlooking of valuable insights or approaches to the subject matter from these societies; and (iii) preclude criticism of non-English languages and non-Western manifestations of anthropocentrism. However, this focus has been chosen in accordance with the high level of influence that the English-speaking West has had and continues to have on the non-English-speaking, non-Western world through its wide-ranging and ever-increasing number of cultural exports (Nmah 2018; Petras 1994; Beck, Sznaider, and Winter 2003; Melitz 2016). Consequently, it is often argued that the West is most responsible for how animals are treated globally (Szűcs et al. 2012) and as such, this paper will focus its criticism on the West. This scope has also been chosen to reflect the nature of media organisations, advertising agencies, and academic journals, of which the majority are based in, and geared towards, the English-speaking West (Investopedia 2019; Majidi 2023; Canagarajah 1996). Moreover, through its focused examination of English-speaking Western societies, this paper also aims to serve as a reference for future researchers interested in conducting comparative analyses of anthropocentrism. As such, the findings and arguments presented herein hope to provide a valuable framework for exploring analogous subjects within non-English-speaking, non-Western societies in the pursuit of a more all-encompassing literature.

Section 1: The Subject/Object Dichotomy

1.1: Defining the *Subject*

Numerous scholars working in the field of critical animal studies have noted that the subject/object dichotomy remains a powerful discursive motif central to maintaining the prevailing

narrative of anthropocentrism in society (Lindgren and Öhman 2018; Nocella et al 2014). This binary achieves this, it is argued, by positioning humans as 'subjects' on account of their perceived moral agency and rationality whilst consigning animals to the status of 'objects' on account of their perceived irrationality and lack of moral agency (Lingren and Öhman 2018). To move beyond the confines of this dichotomy in our understanding of the nature of our relationship with animals, we must carefully define what the subject is. Defining the subject allows us to accurately deconstruct the subject/object dichotomy and identify how exactly it manifests in and upholds the anthropocentric narrative.

A comprehensive exploration of the subject began with the German idealists as an attempt to build upon Hume's (1739) radical scepticism.[3] Perhaps most notably of the idealists, Hegel argues that the subject is constituted by 'the process of reflectively mediating itself with itself' (1807, 9). Through this dialogue, the subject understands and makes sense of its own existence and the world around it. The subject establishes a relationship between its constituent perceptions, integrating them into a coherent whole. Thus, for Hegel, the subject is that which is capable of having a subjective and unique experience.

In his essay, 'What is it like to be a bat?', Nagel (1974) expands upon Hegel's definition, proposing that explaining subjective experience is beyond the reach of scientific inquiry due to the requirement of an objective perspective for scientific understanding. For Nagel, it is not possible for us to know what it is like to be a bat because we cannot objectively measure and consequently understand what a subjective experience is. Whilst Nagel's argument offers valuable insights that complement Hegel's conception of the subject, it also invites criticism. Dennett (1993), a cognitive scientist and philosopher, suggests that Nagel overlooks the potential insights that the field of animal cognition can provide in understanding the intricate behaviours, sensory perceptions, and cognitive processes of animals. In this sense, for Dennett, we indeed can gain some understanding of what it is like to be a bat through animal cognition. Whilst Dennett's much-needed critique does well to address the extremity of Nagel's argument in its total exclusion of animal cognition, Dennett's argument leans towards another extreme by suggesting that we can understand the experiences of a bat solely through animal cognition. Clearly, animal cognition can provide insights into the revealing of and understanding of the faculties that animals may possess, such as bats' faculty of echolocation (Dennett 1993) or the function of cortical activity profiles (Atkins 1993). However, whilst these cognitive insights allow us to consider *how* bats think, they do not allow us to consider what bats think. The limitation lies in our inability to objectively comprehend their subjective experiences, which should caution against making normative judgments about these experiences.

In conclusion, this paper, henceforth, adopts the understanding of the 'subject' as discussed previously, which is that of an entity capable of experiencing the subjective aspects of consciousness. It follows that this definition encompasses humans and extends to the perspectives and cognitive processes of non-human animals too.

1.2: The subject/object dichotomy and the animal farming industry

The subject/object dichotomy plays a central role in maintaining the disconnect that the animal farming industry requires to legitimise its existence and continue its operations. By positioning animals as the 'object' devoid of moral value and humans as the 'subject' endowed with rationality and moral value, the dichotomy creates a hierarchical relationship between humans and animals that functions to justify the exploitation of animals and, consequently, the existence of the animal farming industry. As is the case with many ideas that function to support controlling groups (Foucault 1980), this framework is communicated to society via pervasive linguistic norms. In fact, many scholars have emphasised the key role that language plays in the 'othering' of marginalised groups, including animals (see Freeman 2009; Stibbe 2012; Glenn 2004; Dunayer 1995). Therefore, it follows that analysing the discourse and linguistic norms that reinforce this dichotomy is likely to be the most effective means by which we can deconstruct the subject/object dichotomy and identify how it manifests in society.

3 Radical scepticism refers to the belief that knowledge does not exist and, therefore, absolute certainty about anything is never justified.

A term commonly used within the animal farming industry and society as a whole to describe animals raised for agricultural purposes is 'livestock'. 'Livestock', a word that first appeared in the 1520s, is etymologically derived from a combination of the adjective 'live', in this case denoting animal, and 'stock' (Etymonline 2016), denoting something that is purposed to generate profits for the owner. The use of the term 'livestock' in exchange for 'animals' implies that farmed animals are to be primarily regarded as commodities used for monetary gain, reinforcing the objectification inherent in the dichotomy. Whilst in the context of animal farming, it is the case that the existence of animals is purely defined by their ability to generate profit, as that is the nature of the industry; However, when profit is prized as the sole priority, aspects that are important to the wellbeing of an animal are likely to be disregarded, as the animals are viewed as objects that do not require any sort of attention that the human subject does. It is this rationale that leads intensive battery farms, for example, to minimise the personal space, medical care, and general attention available to the animals that they house (Glenn 2004).

Perhaps it is also the case that the use of the term 'livestock' within the farming industry acts as a means to preserve the disconnect between the industry's farmers and the animals they exploit. In other terms, farmers within the industry do not feel as though they are exploiting living beings but instead objects of no moral value because of how the term 'livestock' has discursively constructed their social environment and attitudes to be one of disregard toward animals. This disregard benefits the industry, as such a disconnect is likely to encourage farmers to minimise spending on welfare in pursuit of higher profits overall. This phenomenon is well documented by various researchers, such as Kılıç and Bozkurt (2013), who find a positive correlation between farmers' perceptions of animal welfare and the actual welfare standards that farmers impose. As such, continuous language use purposed to undermine the subjectivity of animals is likely to result in a stronger disconnect between farmer and animal, resulting in a lack of animal welfare standards.

The term 'livestock' also serves a function in mainstream society, implying that these animals exist wholly for human use, prioritising their economic value rather than their intrinsic value as living beings, as subjects. This objectification of animals as 'livestock' contributes to a discursively constructed cultural acceptance of their use as products which frames animal products such as meat or dairy as commodities rather than the result of the exploitation of a being with individual experiences. It is this very disconnect that the animal farming industry depends on, for it facilitates the cognitive dissonance required to wilfully fund the exploitation of animals whilst also claiming to love them, as is the case with the vast majority of consumers of animal products (RSPCA 2022; FSA 2014).

Terms such as 'processing', which is used by the farming industry to euphemistically describe the process of slaughtering animals and cutting apart their bodies, are often used alongside 'livestock' (see Koller and Braunegg 2015) to reinforce the objectification of animals further and consequently preserve the disconnect between consumers and the reality of animal farming. Such a term creates the impression that the slaughtering of an animal is merely a clinical procedure that need not warrant an emotional response, for such an emotional response is likely to threaten the disconnect and, consequently, the profitability of the animal farming industry. Similarly, terms such as 'pork' and 'beef' as opposed to 'pig meat' and 'cow meat' further serve to mask the immediate connotations of slaughter associated with terms like 'pig meat' or 'cow meat'. These terms, ultimately, reinforce the notion that animals exist as commodities for human use and consumption, a notion inherent to the subject/object dichotomy.

1.3: The subject/object dichotomy outside of the animal farming industry

Though most easily observed within the context of animal farming, the subject/object dichotomy exists in many domains of society, deeply embedded in our institutions, social conventions, and language. Whilst it would be beyond the breadth of this paper to examine all dwellings of the subject/object dichotomy, a comprehensive analysis of the domains of society that most pertinently reinforce the subordination of animals would ensure a succinct

exploration, nonetheless. As such, this section will delve into the influence of language itself[4] in maintaining the oppression of animals.

Merskin (2022) correctly notes that whilst the gradual move away from human binary pronouns represents a progressive change in how humans are categorised, the comparatively far slower progress that is being made in how we categorise animals serves as a testament to how little we regard them as beings worthy of fair treatment. It is not uncommon to hear humans use the pronoun 'it' to describe an animal, particularly when that animal's sex is not known. It would be highly unlikely, on the other hand, to hear a human refer to another human in this way because the notion that humans are subjects and not objects is firmly concretised in society, to the extent that it would likely be perceived as highly disrespectful to objectify another human like this. However, this same reasoning is rarely extended to include animals, resulting in a continual normalisation of language that actualises and reinforces living beings as belonging to the category of object rather than subject. The natural consequence of this subordination to the status of objects is the continued exploitation and oppression of animals because, due to their lack of subjectivity, they are deemed not important or valuable enough to provide fair treatment. In this sense, pronouns, therefore, become 'epistemic tools that link the [un]said, the suppressed, the taken for granted, and the unnoticed' (Cowley 2021, 406) in constructing the realities of animals.

Whilst investigating linguistic norms is an effective means of deconstruction, scholars such as Almiron, Cole and Freeman (2015) argue that the English language itself should also face scrutiny for its inherent encouragement of language use that results in the subordination of animals. Plural nouns that are transposed in meaning into common nouns used to describe entire groups encourage the subordination of one group and the promotion of another. For example, Almiron, Cole and Freeman assert that 'referring to non-human species as "animals" in the aggregate objectifies them, removes any individuality, and plays into the hegemonically speciesist institutions that survive and profit from their bodily parts and their deaths.' (2015, 44). However, we are bound by the language we use and cannot overcome the tendency in the English language to aggregate individuals resulting in the objectification of a particular group. Nevertheless, it is important to remain critical of the embedded anthropocentrism inherent in our language despite our incapability to escape it (Almiron, Cole and Freeman 2015).

Section 2: The Notion of Animals as Irrational

2.1: Defining and deconstructing *rationality*

Similarly to the subject/object dichotomy, the notion that animals are wholly irrational is often expressed dichotomously too, opposing the inverse view that humans are, by virtue of species, wholly rational, at least far more so than animals. Whilst this dichotomy is not reinforced through linguistic norms to the extent that the subject/object dichotomy is, the notion of animal irrationality remains a prevailing narrative within academia (see Davidson 1982; Sousa 2004; Evans 2013). In particular, this narrative, through the observation of animal behaviour and human behaviour, epistemologically constructs the idea that the differences between animal and human behaviour are substantial enough to prescribe animals as irrational and humans as rational. The wide acceptance and deep-rooted nature of such a narrative in academia and society at large provide humans with another justification to perceive themselves as superior and consign animals to an inferior status, advancing the dominance of anthropocentrism as an ideational norm in society. As such, it is necessary to interrogate the notion that animals are irrational and examine a taxonomy of scholarly arguments that argue in its support. Defining what we mean by '*rationality*' allows us to decide on the scope and allows for a more fine-tuned analysis.

Early attempts to define *rationality* often focused on the perceived intersection of reason with morality (see Kant 1785; Hume 1735). In defining his famous categorical imperative,[5] Kant asserted that we ought to 'act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law' (Kant 1785, 421). In this sense, for Kant, rational actions are only rational if they are also moral actions done out of a general sense of duty. Whilst Kant's arguments deserve praise for laying the groundwork for scholarly

4 I am only considering the English language in this analysis.

5 Introduced in Kant's Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals, the categorical imperative encourages us to act as we would wish all others would act towards each other.

discussions on rationality, and his contribution of the categorical imperative to the field of moral philosophy, it is the case that the strength of his attempt to investigate rationality is weakened by its focus on morality, rather than rationality as a standalone concept. Hume, on the other hand, opposes Kant's arguments, asserting that reason is simply 'the slave of the passions' (1735, 415) in the sense that rationality is only concerned with the most reasonable and effective course of action in achieving a goal, regardless of the moral character of the goal being pursued, and whether it should be pursued at all. This argument is far more effective in investigating the nature of rationality by virtue of its fine-tuned scope, which excludes the superfluous information as to whether a goal is moral or not.

In contemporary philosophy and political theory, investigations into the nature of rationality are often approached through a goals-oriented, Humean framework, with scholars such as Rawls arguing that the most rational decisions are made through a 'veil of ignorance' (1971, 118) representing moral impartiality to allow for a focus wholly on the efficiency of the course of action involved with achieving a goal. Fundamentally, when the subject of morality is excluded from this characterisation of rationality, we are left with the assertion that rationality is the capacity to be guided by sound reason and to act reasonably. It entails having valid justifications for one's actions and decisions.

Whilst with this definition, we may be able to prescriptively evaluate the extent to which another human being acts rationally; it would be misguided to do the same with animals as doing so would be an act of 're-presentation' (Almiron, Cole and Freeman 2015, 45). 'Re-presentation' is a form of *Power/Knowledge* in a Foucauldian sense[6] in that it allows one group, 'us', to make claims about another, 'them', in order to assert 'our' superiority and 'their' inferiority (Almiron, Cole and Freeman 2015). In this case, for example, if we made a judgement on the rationality of animals by using our definition, we would be applying our human standard of rationality, our human conception of reason, and our human understanding of what a goal is to the behaviour of a being of a different species that is unable to represent themself because they do not use our language, so we can only 're-present' them ourselves.

Foucault's conception of rationality addresses the issue of re-presentation to some extent. Unlike the scholars mentioned previously, Foucault rejects the notion of universal rationality entirely (Townley 2008), arguing that what we understand to be rationality is determined by historical contexts and shaped by power dynamics. In this sense, rationality is not based on any objective standard of reason. Therefore, for Foucault, prescriptively labelling human or animal beings as 'rational' or 'irrational' has no bearing on anything particularly significant. Moreover, through his genealogical approach, Foucault asserts that rationality is used to reinforce and justify ideologies and dominant discourses that often result in the oppression or exploitation of others (Foucault 1984). The attention that Foucault pays to the prevailing discourses that shape our conceptions of rationality makes his argument compelling. By virtue of being one of the dominant narratives present in human society, anthropocentrism also shapes our conceptions of rationality by encouraging us to judge the goals and processes by which goals are achieved to the standard of human priorities and concerns. Henceforth, when dealing with rationality, this paper will adopt the characterisation of rationality proposed by Foucault, synthesised with the characterisation of rationality as the capacity to be guided by sound reason and to act reasonably.

2.2: 'Solving' the problem of animal re-presentation

Whilst Foucault's conception of rationality warrants merit for reasons previously discussed in §2.1, it only addresses the issue of animal re-presentation insofar as rationality is concerned. 'Solving' the problem of re-presentation more fully allows for us to avoid the errors made by other scholars in their characterisations of animal behaviour in our own judgements on animal rationality. As such, it is important that we consider various possible theoretical and practical solutions to the problem of animal re-presentation that extend beyond the notable but limited, Foucauldian approach.

In considering animal re-presentation and animal subjectivation more widely, Candea (2010) argues that the central theoretical question one must consider when examining

6 See Foucault (1980)

social relations between species is, in effect, 'what counts as a social relation and who can participate?'. Candea outlines two primary frameworks through which we can answer this question. First, Candea presents what might be considered a more Durkheimian approach to social relations, with an emphasis on social relations as 'relations between subjects, eventually mediated by objects (actual or symbolic)'. This claim very clearly takes a firm position on the ongoing debates concerning animal subjectivity: To treat animals as part of human society is to treat them as subjects and not objects (actual or symbolic). Nevertheless, this approach does not offer a suitable solution to the issue of re-presentation. This approach essentially holds that an animal becomes a subject when it is integrated into human society and interacts with humans. In this sense, the way in which we think about animals and how we conceive of them is wholly dependent on their status as a component of human society. It follows that under this framework, our presentation of animals is subject to the distorting effects of anthropocentric thinking, making it an unworthy approach to solving the issue of re-presentation.

By contrast, Candea also invites us to consider a Latourian approach, which holds that social relations are simply the association of different entities (Latour 2007). One particular advantage of this approach is its disregard for the affective, intentional, and cognitive properties of the 'entities' that it describes; the status of an entity as a subject or object is irrelevant. Whilst the Durkheimian approach encourages us to anthropomorphise animals, this approach, however, encourages us to think of animals, humans and things as existing on the same 'level' by suspending our emphasis on intentionality. Consequently, to understand social relations through this framework we need only examine the effects these various human and non-human actants have on each other (Candea 2010). By virtue of its aversion to the distorting effects of anthropocentric bias, this framework is able to provide a compelling theoretical solution to the problem of re-presentation. Transposing this theoretical approach to a practical one developed during his ethnographic study of meerkats, Candea proposes we practice 'inter-patience' with animals, which advocates for a 'mutual suspension of action'; that is to say, we should not actively interfere or intervene in the affairs of animals that we are faced with, while the animals we encounter do not act either. Inter-patience, in this sense, allows us to consider animals as both different from humans and social actants as the animal influences the behaviour of the human and vice versa; both actants self-suspend their action as a response to one another.

The 'intra-species mindfulness' approach of Moore and Kosut (2014), however, advocates for a slightly different method of how we can move away from the pervasive influence of anthropocentric biases in forming our conceptions of animals. In its essence, this method is a 'practice of speculation about non-human species that tries to resist anthropomorphic reflections' (Moore and Kosut 2014, 520). As such, it advocates that in social interactions with animals, through engaging our senses, we are able to acquire new modes of embodied awareness that help us to confront the reality that 'humans' and 'other' are social constructions influenced by a tacit reliance on anthropocentric biases. Whilst these two approaches appear distant in their ethos (i.e., the former's emphasis on inaction contrasted with the latter's emphasis on creating intersubjectivity), their shared purpose of creating a practical route toward a de-centring of the human self provides a basis for their reconciliation. Through the heuristic surrendering of our anthropocentric inclination to intervene in the affairs of other species, as advocated by Candea's ethics of 'inter-patience', we are able to create a liminal state between both actants, human and animal, characterised by mutual inaction. This state ought to serve as the basis for the practice of Moore and Kosut's 'intra-species mindfulness', through which we can attempt to de-centre the human self and strive to understand the animal actant from a perceptual position liberated from the distortive qualities of anthropocentric bias. Combining these two approaches into one practice (informed by the Latourian model of social relations) helps us to consider and overcome the problem of re-presentation. This is achieved by removing the necessity to make anthropomorphic judgements about the nature of animals for them to qualify as, and be considered as a part of social relations. This combined approach helps us overcome the problem of re-presentation by also creating a social dynamic between

the human actant and the animal actant that naturally facilitates the de-centring from our human selves, a state from which we can begin to engage in speculation about non-human species – speculation that resists anthropomorphic re-presentations.

2.3: Scholarly attitudes toward animal irrationality

In the past, scholarly arguments pertaining to the rationality of animals almost always favoured the position that animals were incapable of rational thought (see Rousseau 1755; Descartes 1637). Philosophers such as Rousseau often argued that animals are simply biological machines enslaved by their desires, unlike humans who possess the reason and complex faculties to overcome becoming slaves to their desires (Rousseau 1755). This argument, of course, fails to recognise that humans are unable to choose their wants and desires in this way either (Skinner 1971), condemning them to the same position as animals, at least in terms of the possession of free will. However, in another attempt to draw an anthropocentric distinction between humans and animals, Rousseau also introduced his concept of 'perfectibility' (1755, 17), the idea that humans are set apart from animals by their ability to constantly improve themselves through the developing of civilisation and their insatiable desire for perfection. Whilst it may well be the case that humans possess this faculty, the argument Rousseau makes for this can still be applied to animals, albeit on a smaller scale. Evidence of perfectibility in humans is clear because it is permanent. Humans have built societies and technologies that have left a permanent physical imprint throughout history, whereas animals have not. This disparity is consistent with the differing levels of intelligence between humans and animals, which also accounts for differences in the priorities and needs that humans and animals possess. However, animals exhibit perfectibility far more subtly than humans do; suppose a cheetah is chasing a gazelle, and the gazelle is effectively outrunning the cheetah. When the cheetah makes the decision to speed up to be able to catch the gazelle, they are making use of their faculty of perfectibility. In this sense, the innovation that animals are capable of is restricted to their needs and desires, which, depending on the particular species of animal in question, can significantly differ from the needs and desires of humans. As such, perfectibility in animals is far more challenging to identify than in humans due to its transient, ephemeral nature.

It is the case, however, that Rousseau's views on animals were influenced by the prevailing philosophical and scientific ideas of his time, so in a sense, it would be unfair to challenge these arguments as if they were made in contemporary years. However, Rousseau's arguments undoubtedly contributed to the emergence of anthropocentrism as a prevailing narrative within academia; as such, it is still helpful to analyse his arguments, as doing so is also analysing the foundations of anthropocentrism as a motif within academic work.

In more contemporary years, Davidson (1982), argues that a snail, for example, is not rational compared to a human because the snail is incapable of propositional attitudes, such as belief, intention, or shame. This is the case, Davidson argues, because snails are incapable of using language. However, aside from recent developments in ethology indicating that language is not a requirement for rational decision-making (Buckner 2017), Davidson's argument is limited by its engrained, unjustified, anthropocentric framework. As detailed in §2.1 and §2.2, it is wise to be cautious of the influence of dominating discourses on our conceptions of rationality, as such influence results in a distorted analysis of rationality, making it no longer a standalone concept. Davidson's application of human propositional attitudes to snails represents an adherence to the anthropocentric narrative, supported by an implicit, unjustified acceptance of the Durkheimian model of social relations. Whilst it may be true that snails are incapable of propositional attitudes, when working with a framework of rationality that has not been influenced by the anthropocentric narrative, there is sufficient reason to suggest that snails are, in fact, rational. Simply the act of a snail endeavouring to eat food demonstrates their rationality insofar as they are being guided by sound reason. They understand the implications of not eating and have judged these implications to be significant enough to want to attempt to prevent them from occurring. It is irrelevant how snails make these decisions, whether they are the product of a complex, conscious logical

chain of reasoning or a biological instinct, the result remains the same: the snail finds food to eat, the snail behaves rationally.

Closing Remarks

Through our analysis, we have examined various linguistic manifestations of the subject/object dichotomy and investigated how they perpetuate the cultural acceptance of animal exploitation. Moreover, we have discussed how dominant ideas around the capability of animals to behave rationally result from an unjustified logic adherent to anthropocentric norms and biases. We have also discussed how these ideas further perpetuate the cultural acceptance of animal exploitation. The primary takeaway from this discussion ought to be that we should begin to recognise the inherent anthropocentrism and speciesism in how we think, talk, and write about animals. Recognising and interrogating these norms will encourage us as a society to develop policies to protect animals against exploitation and to pioneer a future where humans and animals live in harmony with one another, to the benefit of both groups.

Moving away from the anthropocentrism inherent in our language and ideas is, fundamentally, a difficult task. Humans will not want to interrogate their own behaviours that discursively perpetuate the exploitation of animals, partly because the exploitation of animals benefits them. Many humans living in contemporary society enjoy consuming animal products and betting on exploitative sports, for example. As such, further work is needed in not only identifying expressions of anthropocentric norms but also in repairing our broken relationship with animals as a whole and reconciling our desire to advance our species with the rights of other animals to live free of suffering and exploitation. The first step to liberating animals is to convince humans of their value. Only then will societies begin to collectively and critically reflect on how animals are unjustly and needlessly exploited for the gain of humanity.

Akins, Kathleen (1993) 'What is It Like to Be Boring and Myopic?' in Bo Dahlbom (ed) *Dennett and his Critics: Demystifying Mind* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Wiley)

Almiron, Núria, Matthew Cole and Carrie P Freeman (2015) *Critical Animal and Media Studies* (New York: Routledge)

Banks, James (1986) 'Cultural Diversity in Western Societies: Challenges and Opportunities', Association for Supervision and Curriculum and Development conference, San Francisco, 1-4 March, U.S Department of Education

Beck, Ulrich, Natan Sznaider and Rainer Winter (2003) *Global America?: The Cultural Consequences of Globalization* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press)

Buckner, Cameron (2017) 'Rational Inference: The Lowest Bounds', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 98:3, 697–724

Canagarajah, Athelstan Suresh (1996) ''Nondiscursive' Requirements in Academic Publishing, Material Resources of Periphery Scholars, and the Politics of Knowledge Production', *Written Communication*, 13:4, 435–472

Cowley, Stephen (2021) 'Ecolinguistics reunited: Rewilding the territory', *Journal of World Languages*, 7:3, 405-427

Davidson, Donald (1982) 'Rational Animals', *Dialectica*, 36:4, 317–327

Descartes, René (1637) Discours de la Méthode Pour bien conduire sa raison, et chercher la vérité dans les sciences, Maclean, Ian (2008 trans) *A Discourse on the Method* (Oxford: Oxford University Press)

Dunayer, Joan (1995) 'Sexist Words, Speciesist Roots' in Carol J Adams and Josephine Donovan (eds) *Animals and Women* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press), 11–31

Etymonline (2016) 'livestock | Etymology, origin and meaning of livestock by etymonline'. Available at: https://www.etymonline.com/word/livestock#:~:text=livestock%20

Evans, Johnathon (2013) 'Two minds rationality', *Thinking & Reasoning*, 20:2, 129–146

Foucault, Michel (1984) *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon Books)

Foucault, Michel (1980) *Power/knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other writings* (New York: Pantheon Books)

FSA (2014) 'Food and You Survey, 2014', UK Data Service

Glenn, Cathy B (2004) 'Constructing Consumables and Consent: A Critical Analysis of Factory Farm Industry Discourse', *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 28:1, 63–81

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich (1807) Phänomenologie des Geistes; Miller, Arnold V (1977 trans) *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Clarendon Press)

Hume, David (1739) *A Treatise Of Human Nature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press)

Investopedia (2019) 'The World's Top 9 News Companies', 11 Septembe. Available at: https://www.investopedia.com/stock-analysis/021815/worlds-top-ten-news-companies-nws-gci-trco-nyt.aspx

Joy, Melanie (2009) *Why We Love Dogs, Eat Pigs, And Wear Cows* (San Francisco: Red Wheel Weiser)

Kant, Immanuel (1785) *Groundwork For The Metaphysics Of Morals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press)

Kılıç, İbrahim and Zehra Bozkurt (2013) 'The Relationship between Farmers' Perceptions and Animal Welfare Standards in Sheep Farms', *Asian-Australasian Journal of Animal Sciences*, 26:9, 1329–1338

Koller, Martin and Gerhart Braunegg (2015) 'Biomediated production of structurally diverse poly(hydroxyalkanoates) from surplus streams of the animal processing industry', *Polimery*, 60:5, 298-308

Majidi, Michele (2023) 'Leading advertising agency groups worldwide in 2022, by revenue', *Statista*, 24 April. Available at: https://www.statista.com/statistics/273879/revenue-of-the-worlds-largest-agency-companies/

Lindgren, Nicklas and Johan Öhman (2018) 'A posthuman approach to human-animal relationships: advocating critical pluralism', *Environmental Education Research*, 25:8, 1200–1215

Lycan, William G and Daniel C Dennett (1993) 'Consciousness Explained', *The Philosophical Review*, 102:3, 424

Melitz, Jacques (2016) 'English as a Global Language' in Victor Ginsburgh and Shlomo Weber (eds) *The Palgrave Handbook of Economics and Language*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan), 583–615

Merskin, Debra (2022) 'She, he, not it: Language, personal pronouns, and animal advocacy', *Journal of World Languages*, 8:2, 391–408

Nagel, Thomas (1974) 'What Is It Like to Be a Bat?', *The Philosophical Review*, 83:4, 435–450

NFU (2019) 'NFU disappointed with Tesco advert'. Available at: https://www.nfuonline.com/archive?treeid=138601#.XaFxLdYofgU.twitter.

Nmah, Patrick E (2018) 'Christianity and Islamic encounter in North Africa: its ambivalence', *Journal of Religion and Human Relations*, 10:1, 1–33

Nocella, Anthony J, John Sorenson, Kim Socha and Atsuko Matsuoka (2014) 'INTRODUCTION: The Emergence of Critical Animal Studies: The Rise of Intersectional Animal Liberation', *Counterpoints*, 448, 19–36

Freeman, Carrie P (2009) 'This Little Piggy Went to Press: The American News Media's Construction of Animals in Agriculture', *The Communication Review*, 12:1, 78–103

Petras, James (1994) 'Cultural Imperialism in Late 20th Century', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 29:32, 2070–2073

Rawls, John (1971) *A Theory of Justice* (London: Belknap Press)

Rousseau, J (1755) Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes; Philip, Franklin (2009 trans) *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press)

RSPCA (2022) 'The Animal Kindness Index 2022 Report | RSPCA'. Available at: https://www.rspca.org.uk/whatwedo/latest/kindnessindex2022/report

Skinner, Burrhus F (1971) *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf)

De Sousa, Ronald (2004) 'Rational Animals: What the Bravest Lion Won't Risk', *Croatian Journal of Philosophy*, 4:12, 365–386

Stibbe, Arran (2012) *Animals Erased* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press)

Szűcs, Endre, Rony Geers, Tadeusz Jezierski, Evangelia Sossidou and Donald Broom (2012) 'Animal Welfare in Different Human Cultures, Traditions and Religious Faiths', *Asian-Australasian Journal of Animal Sciences*, 25:11, 1499–1506

Tesco (2019) 'Food Love Stories | Carl's "All Change" Casserole', YouTube. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hgn1jjiRelk

The Independent (2019) "'Distressed' farmers condemn Tesco vegetarian advert and suggest teenage girls should eat more meat", 17 October. Available at: https://www.independent.co.uk/climate-change/news/nfu-complaint-tesco-vegetarian-range-meat-farmers-teenage-girls-climate-change-a9160181.html

The Vegan Society (2021) 'Definition of veganism'. Available at: https://www.vegansociety.com/go-vegan/definition-veganism

This Morning (2019) 'Farmers Outraged by New Tesco Advert for Meat Free Products | This Morning', YouTube. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cIUpwFZKnjQ

Townley, Barbara (2008) *Reason's Neglect: Rationality and Organising* (Oxford: Oxford University Press)

Yates-Doerr, Emily (2015) 'Does meat come from animals? A multispecies approach to classification and belonging in highland Guatemala', *American Ethnologist*, 42:2, 309–323