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Beasts of Excess: Nonhuman Cultural Studies and the Issue of Captivity

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Humanity is a complex entity. Gifted with faculties that go beyond basic instinct, mankind has forged far-reaching cultures that span conceptual, temporal, and spatial distances. Mankind's breadth has expanded so much so that a discipline of study has grown to analyze it: Anthropology. Anthropology is the study of man and, like all social sciences, is concerned on how people organize their lives and their interactions between culturally integrated societies. But what makes Anthropology distinct from other disciplines is its focus on the concept of culture, a comparative perspective, and its holistic perspective (Bonvillain 5). It is those key differences that allows anthropologists to analyze both the unifying factor of culture and its diversity. On the opposite end from Humanity is Nature. Where a person would philosophize, an animal would act. Unfeeling and unthinking. No culture, wit, or remorse, just utilitarian minds surviving from day to day.

More seasoned readers can probably guess where this digression is leading. The idea of Humanity's reason and Nature's utilitarian instinct are not as clear cut as they may appear. Through years of simultaneously studying culture and animal behavior, researchers from many different fields have found that not only has the culture of Humanity's, with all its grand ideas and philosophies, may have arisen from very natural and utilitarian origins, but Nature has produced several genera of animals that may have developed their own cultures as well. This essay will highlight some of these animal cultures through the lens of cultural anthropology and what it could possibly mean for society's current relationship with the natural world, specifically the controversy of animal rights and animal captivity.

Defining Culture

To start understanding the cultures of animals, one should start at defining culture. What comes to mind when a person thinks of culture? Artistic expression, philosophical quandaries, and personal meaning seem to be mainstays of human culture. Granted “high culture” seems to be uniquely human, but an actual inclusive definition of culture has been a matter of debate. British anthropologist Edward Taylor wrote in 1871 in *Primitive Culture* that “culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (Bonvillain 24). Since then, many researchers have set out to define culture, all referring to human behavior in the context of a group (family, community, etc.). Despite the differences between definitions each one shares the universal characteristics seen in culture. These characteristics are as follows:

- 1) **Culture is shared:** People are naturally social, building worldviews and moralities through interacting with other people. Societies are able to exist through the shared assumptions, or cultural models, most citizens share. These societal norms set a precedent for accepted behavior and customs. Despite the norms there are subcultures that form; a group of people who, as Bonvillain states, “think of themselves, and are thought of by others, as different in some significant way from the majority...” (Bonvillain 27).
- 2) **Culture is learned:** The advantage of social animals is the ability to pass on lessons from generation to generation; stories told by parents to their children, morals given from a priest to a community, tomes of the past interpreted by modern historians. But even without explicit cultural teaching, culture can be gleaned through mere participation and observation. Bonvillain describes these

processes, the formal instruction and the informal observation, as enculturation (Bonvillain 27).

- 3) **Culture is based on symbols:** Some ideas in cultures are best expressed through the use of imagery or sounds. These images and sounds that represent cultural ideas are known as symbols. Symbols have the ability to transcend language of not only its culture of origins, but can travel between various cultures. Symbols can range from art and religious imagery, to even names and ordinary objects used in sacred rituals.
- 4) **Culture is integrated:** Separate parts of a culture can come together as a cohesive whole. Religious ceremonies that seem distinct from other daily rituals can influence the day to day routine of individuals, becoming (as Bonvillain states) “an overarching, integrative system of beliefs and practices”.
- 5) **Culture is adaptive:** The planet is a tumultuous place, with an ever-changing environment. Despite this human cultures can be found all across the Earth, from the freezing tundra to the scorching deserts. Many cultural customs found in a population comprise the cultural core, practices by which people organize their lives for their survival. Despite this some cultural practices are considered maladaptive and can lead to the downfall of a civilization.

These inclusive traits form the basis for many human cultures, but their implications can reach even farther. These cultural characteristics can be found in several classes of non-human vertebrates; from our close-related cousins to more distant ocean dwellers.

Chimpanzees

Chimpanzees present humanity with a unique opportunity to observe its own origins. As the closest living ancestors to humans, the genus *Pan* and its two species (*paniscus* and *troglydytes*), they provide researchers the opportunity to study the habits of our ancient ancestors, as well as give us insight into how and why culture may have developed.

The intelligence of the chimpanzees have been covered in great detail, most notably by Jane Goodall. Goodall's work on the Gombe Stream Chimpanzees, first reported in 1960, changed public perception on chimpanzees and also questioned man's uniqueness as the intelligent tool-maker (Boulanger 109). In the decades prior to these remarkable observations, it is now established that many animals engage in tool use. The tool use of primates have been well documented (Haviland 86). Even animals far from the evolutionary line that has led to mammals have been found to use tools, including crocodilians (Dinets) and cephalopods (Finn). What makes the tool use of chimpanzees, and other primates, so remarkable is the modification of tools. Many animals would use tools found in the environment without tampering with it; an octopus will use a coconut as a coconut, a crocodile will use a stick as a stick. But chimps are often seen modifying sticks into sharpened spears by chewing the ends down to points. This type of modification demonstrates not only the intelligence to use tools, but the ingenuity to create tools as well.

One of the first articles to academically acknowledge the cultural complexity of chimpanzees was written by Andrew Whiten and co-written with Jane Goodall, aptly titled *Cultures in Chimpanzees*. Whiten, a psychologist from St. Andrews University, compiled data from the seven most long-term studies of wild chimpanzees and analyzed

patterns of variation in socially transmittable behavior (Whiten). Whiten remarks that many animals show variation in behavior, but this variation is usually relegated to only one behavior. Chimpanzees, however, show an unprecedented degree of variation in multiple behaviors, including tool use, grooming, etc. Many of these behaviors differed even when ecological limitations were ruled out; many of the troops of chimps had access to the same resources, yet used these resources in varied ways from one another. This variation is key when it comes to culture. Simpler species usually don't vary in terms of solutions to a problem; direct and utilitarian. The fact that the chimps had the same resources and the same obstacles overcome, but still managed to vary in solutions shows that it's not strictly instinct dictating the solution.

The origin of learned behavior amongst chimpanzees is also of considerable interest in terms of culture. Andrew Whiten took his work from the field to the laboratory to study behavior in more controlled conditions. One such study observed conformity amongst chimpanzees. The study went as follows: a representative from each of two chimpanzee troops were taken and taught to use a "pan-pipe device" in one of two ways to retrieve food. Each chimp that was reintroduced to their respective troops soon taught the others how to use the device. Virtually all of the chimps in the two populations learned how to use the device, while a third population with no local expert were unable to learn. Eventually, an alternative method was learned in each of the two troops, but never could rival the popularity of the preceding method. The chimpanzees engaged in a socially sustainable behavior; a preference towards conformity and tradition, two words often associated with human cultural customs. Tradition plays a very integral part of cultural integration, as it guides the day to day lives of individuals in a community. An

evangelical Christian will find itself following certain customs because tradition dictates it. This sort of environment also allows for the creation of subcultures, thinking themselves different from the majority group (Bonvillain 27). This subculture forming behavior was seen as some individuals in Whiten's chimp troops adopted the novel behavior when retaught how to use the pan-pipe device.

The material culture of chimpanzees and the organization of their behavior is remarkably complex, but it has been shown that they also have a comprehension of symbolic culture. The use of sign-language in captive primates demonstrates their ability to associate a hand gesture to an idea, but one could argue that this behavior is adapted for an artificial environment, making observation in the field highly improbable. But a recent report from Ammie Kalan and Hjalmar Kühl of the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology suggests that chimpanzees engage in symbolic behavior in the wild. After examining 31 research sites within the range of common chimpanzee communities, Kalan and Kühl found repeated instances of a very strange behavior: chimpanzee accumulative stone throwing. Members of several communities targeted hollow trees and ritually threw stones into them. There was no foreseeable reason for the chimpanzees to have been throwing these stones; they weren't trying to claim territory or forage for food. Environmental constraints were also ruled out, with plenty of available of both stones and hollow trees, but this distinct behavior only occurring in particular populations. Kalan and Kühl continue further to remark on the similarity between these aggregations of stone and human cairns, and how observation of chimpanzee behavior may allow archaeologists to study how ritual behavior may have arisen in the first place. This study shows that chimpanzees are capable of symbolic ritual, with the stone

throwing behavior representative of something beyond mere foraging and territorial display. Some have even argued that this could be indicative of some proto-religion, since this display of tradition, ritual, and symbolism is also seen in human religion (King). Granted that statement may seem a tad sensational, definitely something to publish as an article title, but the idea of chimpanzees engaging in tool use outside of foraging behavior is humbling to say the least.

The study of chimpanzees has had a huge impact on the definition of culture. From the varied use of material resources and the bias towards tradition to symbolic gestures and ritual, chimpanzees have shown that they too possess complex social behavior that is comparable to that seen in human cultures. But one could argue that studying chimpanzee culture is simple in terms of relation to humans. They are humanity's closest living ancestors and are similar in both form and environment. How does one study culture in animals far removed from the comparable human body plan and distant on the evolutionary tree?

Cetaceans

The ocean is another world, with alien inhabitants that seem to defy logic. Lightning fast monsters that bite, poison, engulf, constrict, and so much more. Despite the bizarre habits seen in this alien world one could find tradition and symbolism. Cetaceans (whales, dolphins, and porpoises) are a unique group of mammals that demonstrate complex social learning abilities that rival apes. Hal Whitehead, a professor of biology at Dalhousie University, studies the behavior of cetaceans in the wild through ethnographic studies of their cultures. One may find it surprising, maybe even a bit disarming, to refer to a study of whale culture as an ethnography, a distinctly

anthropological term. The parallels that Whitehead presents between studying human culture and studying cetacean culture demonstrate the need for applying cultural anthropological methods to a broader spectrum of cultural studies and the complexity of cetacean social behavior.

In Whitehead's paper *Culture in Whales and Dolphins*, he looks at three different behavioral patterns: rapid-spread, mother-offspring, and group-specific. Rapid-spread is the proliferation of a new behavioral variant within a time span that is less than one generation, which can rule out any genetic factors for novel behavior. The novel behavior could have arisen through environmental factors with the animals responding through individual learning on their own, or through social learning as a whole, as a culture (Whitehead). The example Whitehead uses for these examples are the vocalization and feeding habits of certain population of humpback whales. Male humpbacks in the Pacific observed over a two year period had stable vocalization patterns and would change in the same way. This homogeneity seen in their songs could not be explained away by environmental factors, suggesting a horizontal-diffusion of a behavioral variant. This diffusion is also seen in songbirds, but the scale in which homogenous songs are heard in thousands of humpbacks vastly differs from the few songbirds in a particular locale, suggesting a much more significant cultural factor. Another example of rapid-spread of novel behavior is seen in the feeding grounds of the humpbacks, in which "lobtailing" was seen in the usual hunting techniques. Many calves were seen performing this behavior with no assistance from their mothers who have never been observed lobtailing. This accelerated learning is indicative of social learning, though Whitehead states that independent individual learning events is also possible. This change in behavior was also

proportional to the food source instead of as a response to an environmental factor. This novel behavior was seen before a change in environmental resources instead of the other way around.

Mother-offspring behavior patterns, a kind of vertical transmission from one generation to the next, are also seen amongst cetaceans. Spread of behavior in this fashion can come from imitation or teaching. The examples Whitehead cites are the offspring of migrating whales being able to trace the same route themselves after following their mothers. Another fascinating example is the “sponging” seen in the bottlenose dolphins of Shark Bay, Australia. Of the 60 individuals known from the area, only five dolphins performed in the behavior. These five dolphins were all female and tended to be more solitary than the others, rarely engaging with large groups. Despite the unique behavior of these five dolphins, their environment was a common site for other dolphins. The rest of the pod had access to the same resources, but did not engage in the behavior, with several dolphins aware and curious of the behavior. One of the calves of a sponging dolphin, on the other hand, has adopted the behavior. Other dolphins in this site also engage in another form of foraging specialization- feeding from humans who offer them food. Again, this behavior is passed through vertical transmission, with mothers teaching offspring. Whitehead refers back to Whiten’s paper on chimpanzee behavior, remarking how the variable types of foraging techniques in the dolphins of Shark Bay are comparable to the variable techniques seen in chimpanzees.

The final behavior pattern Whiten discusses is group-specific, which combines vertical and horizontal diffusion amongst a particular population. The two cetaceans Whitehead use as examples are killer whales and sperm whales. Both cetaceans engage in

unique vocalization and foraging behavior, despite the fact that they overlap with other populations of the same species. Even though there is an overlap in populations, they remain culturally distinct. Whitehead remarks that this is unique outside of humans. Many populations of various animals are culturally distinct, but this distinction is based on geography, and thus rarely interact with other populations. Cetaceans, on the other hand, have populations that interact with one another, and yet maintain their cultural identity.

Whitehead continues the paper with questioning the flaws of a process-centered definition of culture, narrowing the spectrum in which novel behavior is created and maintained. Teaching and imitation seen in experimental settings limit the ways cetaceans are able to transmit culture, neglecting to address the importance of stimulus enhancement when engaging in cultural behavior. The experimental approach is not feasible in terms of studying cetacean culture, rather Whitehead emphasizes the use of ethnographic field work to conclude that cetaceans are cultural creatures. I believe Whitehead aptly states the need for an ethnographic approach, “The approach is clear; systematic field observation...enables the elimination of ecological and genetic factors potentially causing behavioural variation; what is left must be cultural” (Whitehead).

The organization of behavior is a prominent part of culture, but one can't forget the relevancy of symbolism. Symbolism in cetaceans can be difficult to identify. At least when studying symbolism in apes, the comparative anatomy between the human researchers and the apes being studied make it somewhat easier to relate to symbolic gestures; ceremonial stone throwing, highly expressive faces, etc. But cetaceans are so far removed from the usual mammalian body plan that symbolic gestures could be seen as

more adaptive behavior than cultural nuances. This problem requires a broader definition of symbols. According to anthropologist Clare Boulanger, a symbol is an element of communication to which meaning is assigned via social consensus. This can be applied to both sounds and images. If you'd show someone a red octagon, one would most likely associate it with a stop sign. There is nothing inherently indicative of stopping with red or an octagon, but due to social consensus these images have significant sway on our everyday lives. Language too is considered symbolism. To the general citizen of the United States, the German word "schadenfreude" is not an idea that is readily known. Even amongst populations in a single country a single idea can have several words for it; "soda", "pop", and "coke" all refer to the same sugary beverage depending on what part of the United States one is in. Even something simple as a name is a social consensus. My name is "Anthony Turner" to professionals, "Ant" to family, "Tony" to friends, and even "Tones" to a smaller group of friends. All these monikers refer to an idea that relates to a specific individual and their individual traits, despite myself being no different on a physical level to any other human. I am made of the same cells and have the same deep instinctual drives as any other person, but the name "Anthony Turner" refers to me as a distinct and cultural individual.

Lo and behold, it appears that cetaceans possess the same cultural and linguistic depth as human language. Behavioral biologist Stephanie King and Director of Scottish Oceans Institute Vincent Janik researched communication amongst Bottlenose Dolphins and found that they call each using a vocal label, a name. Individuals in a pod will develop a signature whistle, a call that is unique to them, but other members of a pod will copy this call in order to gain the attention of that specific individual. This unique use of

signature whistles was discovered when King and Janik recorded signature whistles of bottlenose dolphins, recreated them digitally, and had these whistles playing in the water. Dolphins wouldn't respond to random chatter, but would instantly respond, approaching the source, whenever their signature whistle was played (King and Janik). This utilization of signature whistles demonstrates the ability of dolphins to utilize symbolic knowledge. They understand that the signature whistle stands for an individual dolphin, just as a name stands for an individual person. This sort of communication is unique outside of nonhuman mammals (King and Janik). One could even go so far as to imply that if one has a concept of other as a whole individual, they may even have an awareness of self, making them fully conscious individuals, leading to bigger philosophical and moral quandaries.

It is apparent from the evidence presented, both the complex social organization and the use vocal labeling, that cetaceans should be considered subjects of cultural studies and ethnographies just as much as apes, both human and nonhuman. Application of cultural studies would help us understand the full cultural capacity these creatures possess and give us perspective into a myriad of other philosophical concepts; what it means to be a person and the evolution of the mind. These studies would also guide us in terms of our relationship we need to sustain with these and other culturally cognizant animals.

The Issue of Captivity

Nature is scary. There are animals that can be more powerful than any individual man. There are things that claw, bite, and poison, sometimes simultaneously. It is no wonder that man gets a kick from conquering the primal forces of Nature, from culling it

to trivializing it. Those times are coming to an end. Sentiments have changed rapidly in the past few years, with documentaries such as *The Cove* and *Blackfish* gaining notoriety in popular culture, as well as unfortunate situations in which the safety of animals in captivity has been called into question. Unfortunately, the most vocal opinion in the debate of animal rights and animals in captivity seems to be one of the more extreme sides, with rights given to anything that has a pulse. With the current research going into nonhuman cultures, perhaps one can find a more tempered path for animal rights that does not fall into the trap of anthropomorphism.

21st century views on animals have changed in the decades. As more and more research is compiled, it becomes increasingly difficult to treat animals the way we do. The animal rights movement of the 70s followed the remarkable observations made by Jane Goodall. I would even go so far to argue as the movement owing its start to Dr. Goodall's work. The movement has a far-reaching philosophy on preserving the rights of all animals; captive or free, domesticated or wild. For the sake of this paper we shall focus on animals in captive environments.

The case against animals in captivity has gained credence by the general population lately. One could see a correlation with the start of the current anti-captivity trend and the release of the documentary *The Cove*. Headed by former dolphin trainer Ric O'Barry, a team of filmmakers covertly filmed the little known annual dolphin hunt of Taiji, Japan. Despite the worldwide ban of commercial whaling in 1986, and most cetacean species being protected under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, the dolphin hunt continues under the protection of misguided bureaucracy (Casey 120); smaller cetaceans are not protected under the whaling ban, and

officials from Japanese fisheries reason that if fewer cetaceans are in an area, the more fish is available, which is contradictory to ecological evidence (Casey 120). The most influential catalyst behind the annual hunt is the market for live, theme-park worthy dolphins. A dead dolphin will nab about \$500 for the Taiji Fishermen's Union, but a live one can be sold for over \$150,000, making Taiji a hotspot for major aquariums to purchase dolphins.

Once *The Cove* was released, and nabbing an Oscar for "Best Documentary", awareness of cetacean conservation gained traction. The current movement against captivity reached its zenith with the spiritual successor to *The Cove*, *Blackfish*. The 2013 film covers the lead-up and consequences of the death of Dawn Brancheau. Brancheau was unfortunately killed and mutilated in 2010 by a large male orca known as Tillikum, who had a troubled history of aggression since his own capture from the wild in 1983, killing two other people before Brancheau (Casey 87). This film catapulted the debate of cetaceans in captivity into mainstream media and the general masses. The effect of the film was so palpable that it was informally dubbed "the *Blackfish* Effect", as it pressured SeaWorld to changing its entire PR strategy, prompting them to eliminate their captive orca breeding program and shows (Chattoo). Unfortunately, in a matter of months, another log was thrown into this activist fire.

The Cincinnati Zoo was thrown into disarray when a child fell into the gorilla enclosure and was dragged about by a large western lowland gorilla named Harambe. In order to save the child, the zoo made the controversial, but rational, call to euthanize the gorilla. Again, the argument arose once more over whether or not one can successfully keep these wild animals safe and secure in these captive environments. Unfortunately the

fallout of this staggering event has been obnoxious jokes made by internet trolls on the zoo's twitter feed. These jokes mock the real emotions, people, and animals involved in this tragic incident, and deter rational conversation from a topic that needs to be discussed. As I have emphasized over and over in this paper, our relationship with Nature is changing. This change requires society to take an introspective look at how it treats its fellow organisms; alien, but neighboring minds.

The debate over animals in captivity is usually dominated by the most vocal and emotional side, vying for rights for anything that hops, crawls, or slithers. Social media sites and biased news outlets are littered with defamatory language against animals in captivity. While certainly coming from a place of genuine concern, the fervor is misguided by emotion, rather than logic. *The Dodo*, a website showcasing stories about animal rights, uses charged language in nearly all of its headlines, and the content of its stories are no better. Some of the more ridiculous stories include a woman transporting a lobster 2,000 miles to return it home (Diamantopoulou), and random animal pairings being best of friends. Not every animal is built the same, so why should we give them all the same rights?

Speaking from personal experience of a decade of work at the Roundhouse Aquarium of Manhattan Beach, CA, I have come to the conclusion that fish are simple animals. Any animal in a captive environment should receive the utmost care, but some animals are much easier to care than others. A fish requires room, food, and clean water. Given the right care, a fish can live for decades in captivity. My two favorite eels have been living in the same tank for 15 years. But our tiny little aquarium was not immune from the Blackfish Effect. Many guests asked if what we were doing at the aquarium was

“the right thing to do”. Zoos and aquariums remain an important part of a community, imparting the need for conservation and how to respect Nature. Many species destined for extinction were brought from the brink, thanks to captive efforts. The Cincinnati Zoo itself spearheaded a successful conservation program for the critically endangered Sumatran Rhinoceros, a species that was dwindled down to a few hundred individuals left (Kolbert 220). Even still, many protest against captivity in general, arguing that the well-being of the animals are threatened. To those adamant protestors, I would say “you’re right...sort of”. The most advanced zoos can provide a great deal to not only the individual animals, but to species as a whole. But even these advanced zoos cannot recreate an environment and all its intricacies, especially when it comes to its social aspects. Through the use of animal ethnographies, studying nonhuman cultures with all the skill of a cultural anthropologist, one could determine which animals are eligible for captivity.

It is clear from what has been studied from apes and cetaceans, and their complicated social environments, captivity may seem to be a detriment to their species. Cultural beings, such as ourselves, can thrive in one social setting, yet languish in another. A stereotypical frat may not be able to understand the nuance of a *Dungeons and Dragon* game, nor would a clichéd dungeon-master appreciate the Super Bowl. This dramatic change in cultural context is apparent to us, but we expect an orca from a transient pod to live with a residential orca in the same concrete pool for the remainder of their lives. These two types are as culturally different as Los Angeles is to Tokyo, with drastic differences in communication and behavior. The artificial environment created by zoos and aquariums is a far cry in terms of cultural context to what is seen in the wild.

Primate behavior, including care towards offspring, is based on the social setting one is brought up in (Petter & Desbordes 27). If one takes in a wild chimp before she learns to care for offspring, and expect her to care for offspring in a captive setting, the social effects could be detrimental to all involved. The same goes for cetaceans and their complex social structures, as illustrated by Whitehead's paper. Hunting can be instinctual for many animals, from fish to mammals, but it is the subtle cultural cues that captive environments fail to provide.

The need for in-depth cultural studies amongst animals is needed for an objective approach to animal ethics, and for a comparative study of the emergence of the mind. It is clear from the evidence presented that primates and cetaceans are cultural beings that can understand symbolism as well as a person may understand a name, or even a shrine. It is this key understanding that may be able to guide us on animal ethics, especially in terms of captivity. The use of symbolic language can be indicative of what one would call "consciousness"; to understand symbolism is to understand the self. Take the research by King and Janik for example: if a bottlenose dolphin can understand that a vocal signal stands for a behaviorally distinct individual, couldn't one infer that it also has an understanding of itself as a behaviorally distinct individual; a deduction for consciousness? It is this understanding of symbolic language and, by proxy, the understanding of the self that should guide ethics. One of the most mysterious aspects of subjective experience is consciousness and its origins, but it's becoming clearer that primates and cetaceans have self-awareness. One of the most profound tests for self-awareness is also one of the simplest: can an animal recognize itself in a mirror? This test has been done on a variety of animals, with cetaceans and apes passing it (Casey 157). It

is this self-awareness that should guide how we treat these animals in captivity. Again, inferring from the evidence presented, if an animal can understand the self, can it not understand pain and suffering. With an animal as mentally complex as an orca or a gorilla, shouldn't one consider the need for cultural context in its upkeep? This is where a more in depth study of nonhuman cultures may come in handy, guiding zoos towards more ethical captivity programs, and providing a hypothetical control group when studying the emergence of the mind.

The history of Anthropological study has seen conflicting views and approaches; emic versus etic, structuralism versus interpretive anthropology, the list goes on. These various approaches to study have their uses, according to the scale of study or the goal of the researcher. These many differences seen amongst anthropologists is seen in one species, humans. This range of differences is staggering, but limited. Staggering for its breadth, limited for its human-centric views. In order to truly understand what it means to be human, one should have something to compare, or even challenge, the definition of "Humanity". Perhaps that great breadth of anthropological study can be applied to studying nonhuman cultures? One could come from a perspective based in Structuralism, explaining the differences between cultures in terms of differences between forms (Bonvillain 55). By examining what human cultures have in common with nonhuman cultures, a pattern variance may be deduced. There is an underlying cause for the chimpanzee-made stone collections seen by Kalan and Kühl, and the human-made stone cairns. Obviously this sort of approach would require an understanding of chimpanzee symbolic language that researchers currently do not have, but could eventually be developed with increased fieldwork and in-depth ethnographies. Another perspective one

could adopt when studying nonhuman cultures is Cultural Materialism, with cultural differences stemming from cultural adaptations to the environment (Bonvillain 54). Nonhuman cultures could be dependent on resources of a physical or social environment, though a lot of researchers try to eliminate the environmental factors involved in these studies. Nonetheless, a materialist perspective can give insights to new and emergent nonhuman cultures, such as the proliferation of new songs used by humpbacks, as seen in Whitehead's paper

Conclusion

Social network feeds are constantly filled with pictures and videos of cute animals. It is apparent that people long to connect to Nature. The fuel for discussion is there, it just needs to be set aflame. That's what I have hope to have done with this paper. My goal was not to present a comprehensive review of nonhuman cultural studies, animal cognition studies, or the history of the activism movement, but to start discussion for a new and methodical approach to the discussion of animal rights. Through studying the behavior of select species with the same scrutiny as one would study human cultures, we can finally have a metered and sensible discussion of animal rights and the future of captive environments without falling in the trap of emotional fanaticism and anthropomorphism.

There are still species worth discussing, and have the potential for cultural analysis, that did not receive their due in this paper, including the mourning behavior of elephants and the cleverness of corvids. Still, primates and cetaceans are still important case-studies for nonhuman cultural studies due to their intelligence and their relevancy in captive environments. Zoos provide an important service in terms of conservation,

rehabilitation, and education. Despite these benefits, they are not flawless and need to acknowledge how, like Nature, need to change.

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