

Multi-species anthropology: brief theoretical perspectives from anthropocentrism to the acceptance of the non-human subjectivity

Antropologia multi-espécie: breves perspetivas teóricas do antropocentrismo à aceitação da subjetividade não humana



Catarina Casanova^{1,2a*}; José Luís Vera Cortés^{3b}

Abstract The present article aims — albeit briefly — to reflect about the theoretical origins and development of multi-species anthropology. Our brief “journey” has its starting point in the paradigm of the human exceptionalism and the anthropocentric view of the relationship between human beings and the rest of the natural world. This gaze, having constituted the central paradigm of the origins of the anthropological discipline, is the result of profoundly western ways of looking at and interpreting the world and the diversity it contains. Traditional dualisms such as nature-culture are based on it, which justified the distinct treatment of the non-Western “other”. In turn, the end of this paradigm emerged as the result of the modernity rise

Resumo O presente trabalho visa — ainda que de forma resumida — refletir sobre as origens teóricas e sobre o desenvolvimento da antropologia multiespécies. A nossa breve “viagem” tem como ponto de partida o paradigma do excecionalismo humano e o olhar antropocêntrico sobre a relação entre o ser humano e a restante natureza. Este olhar, tendo constituído o paradigma central das origens da disciplina antropológica, é o resultado de formas de olhar e interpretar o mundo e a diversidade nele contida, profundamente ocidentais. Nele assentam dualismos tradicionais como natureza-cultura que justificaram o tratamento distinto do “outro”, não ocidental. Por sua vez, o fim deste paradigma surgiu como resultado da emergência de questões da

¹ CIAS – Research Centre for Anthropology and Health, University of Coimbra, Portugal.

² Universidade de Lisboa, Instituto Superior de Ciências Sociais e Políticas (CAPP), Lisboa, Portugal.

³ Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Ciudad de México, México.

^a orcid.org/0000-0003-2123-0262, ^b orcid.org/0000-0002-5493-4410

* Autor correspondente/Corresponding author: ccasanova2009@gmail.com; ccasanova@iscsp.ulisboa.pt

up questions such as the mediatization of environmental issues. In this context, a new area of research emerged, the Human-Animal Studies (HAS), as coined by DeMello, despite other designations used by different research areas (e.g. anthrozoology). In this new area of investigation, relationships with other animals are seen as co-constructed, interdependent and relational, just like ecosystems themselves, and are inside a new line of thought: an Anthropology beyond humanity.

Keywords: Human exceptionalism paradigm; multi-species anthropology; post human anthropology.

1. The origins of anthropology and of human exceptionalism

Portugal was no exception to the trend observed in the rest of the world where the origin of Anthropology is confused with the so-called “Physical Anthropology”. But that is not what we want to focus on, not even the great paradigm shift that took place in the 1950s in this subdiscipline of Anthropology and which gave rise to “Biological Anthropology”. In this text, when we speak of Anthropology, we speak of what was called in Portugal, before the 25th of April, Ethnology and which corresponds to what we call today Cultural Anthropology (Pereira, 2021).

Anthropology has followed different paths between Cultural Anthropology in the USA with Lewis Henry Morgan (1818-

modernidade, especificamente, a mediatização das questões ambientais. Neste contexto surgiu uma nova área de pesquisa, a Human-Animal Studies (HAS), assim cunhada por DeMello, não obstante outras designações utilizadas por diferentes áreas de pesquisa (ex. antrozoologia). Nesta nova área de investigação as relações com os outros animais são vistas como co-construídas, interdependentes e relacionais, assim como os próprios ecossistemas, e estão enquadradas numa nova linha de pensamento: a pós-humana.

Palavras-chave: Paradigma do excecionismo humano; antropologia multiespécie; antropologia para além do humano.

1881), and later with Franz Boas (1858-1942) and his school of historical particularism, followed by countless disciples including Mead (1901-1978), Benedict (1887-1948), Kroeber (1876-1960) and many others. Moore (2009) argues that Boas was probably the author who most influenced North American Anthropology in the first half of the 20th century. Erikson and Murphy (2021) and Moore (2009) state that the well-known four fields of North American Anthropology are also — but not only — a partial reflection of Boas’ broad interests and that did not accompany Anthropology in Europe, probably taking away the strength it could have had there, as a subject, as it is the case we see today in the USA.

The British School of Social Anthropology has its roots in the work of Tylor

(1832-1917) who was the first anthropology professor at Oxford University (Moore, 2009). But this School starts to reach a considerable projection with the structural-functionalism approach and with Radcliff-Brown (1881-1955). Radcliff-Brown students such as Evans-Pritchard (1902-1973), Fortes (1906-1983) or Gluckman (1911-1975) saw kinship, law and politicism as fundamental institutions of traditional societies (Eriksen, 2004). It is unavoidable not to mention Malinovsky's (1884-1942) functionalism in the British School of Social Anthropology. However, Erikson and Murphy (2021) argue that bridges were established between North American and British Schools. For example, Evans-Pritchard built a connection with American anthropologists by recognizing the importance of the historical perspective.

The French School of Anthropology was deeply marked first by Durkheim (1858-1917) and Mauss (1872-1950), both sociologists — and later by Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908-2009) and the structuralism. This anthropologist argued that logic, being universal, was based on dualities of binary oppositions (probably influenced by the structural linguists of the Prague School) such as life after death or the opposition nature vs. culture.

Until now we have focused our attention on the existence of an institutionalized and professionalized anthropology, however the rational project that gave rise to the birth of modern anthropology is much newer and constitutes the materialization of a series of typically Western

representations about the human condition and that since its origin had important consequences in the shaping process of anthropology as a scientific discipline (Kuhn, 1962). We refer specifically to a rational project, which translated into forms of control, domination, exclusion, appropriation, marginalization, not only of the "others" considered by the West as "barbarous and savage" and therefore undesirable, and which by opposition allowed and justified the vision of the West itself as "cultured" and "civilized" and therefore desirable and necessary, but the construction of a hierarchy based on prejudices of race, gender, species, considering the human being, for more signs, white, masculine and western as the pinnacle of the mentioned hierarchy.

Thus, the nomenclatures based on Western dichotomous thinking: nature-culture, male-female, wild-civilized, human-animal, are not just neutral forms of the Western worldview. Knowledge is never naive and much less aseptic or pure. Every form of representation of the world, in addition to naming and creating identities, translates into forms of relationship, of appropriation, in general in general strategies of intervention in reality (Hacking, 1983).

All the aforementioned dichotomies carried in their seed the germ of forms of relationship, domination, control, marginalization, all of them consistent with the process of colonialist expansion.

With several centuries of existence, the costs that we as a species are pay-

ing today in terms of inequality, hunger, ecological deterioration, climate change, forced migration, are enormous. The greatest problems that we as humanity live today are a consequence of that project that began around the 17th and 18th centuries and of which institutionalized anthropology is only one of its manifestations, together with a scientific-technological development without ethics and without conscience.

Returning to the origins of the discipline, in the middle of the 20th century, Anthropology (both “physical” and “cultural”) appear undoubtedly linked to colonialism, often in an implied way (Pereira, 2021). Portugal was also no exception to this rule (Pereira, 2021). Here we speak of colonialism because of the question of alterity, the opposition between the “I” and the “other”, the dualisms that were established at the time between the so-called “savages” and “civilized”, that were also transported to humans and non humans. The “savages” needed to be tamed, ripped off their animality (to assume an identity similar to that of the Westerners) to be able to be “we” and not “them” (their own identity) as before that. In this way they were considered closer to animality than to humanity, embodied by the West. They were closer to animals than human beings (Vera, 2014). Due to the very nature and origin of the discipline, alterity was and is a central mark allowing anthropologists to understand the “other” (Casanova, 2016). And this is also why contemporary Anthropology is, in many countries, and

this needs to be said, at the forefront of though decolonization and at the forefront of the minority groups defense.

The growth of Anthropology accompanied not only the colonial expansion but also a long period of industrial scientific and technological expansion in Europe and the USA that gave strength to the Human Exceptionalism Paradigm (HEP) and which, according to Descola and Palsson (1996) had its roots in the Renaissance and was marked out by authors such as René Descartes. In the line of thought by Descola and Palsson (1996) in Anthropology, the HEP is intrinsically linked to alterity and the comparison between the “I” and the “other” (Casanova, 2016). Colonial ideology argued that the “other” was a “savage” that needed to be civilized, and the “I”, the Europeans, had thus a civilizing mission. Thus, anthropology was itself an instrument of a Western civilizing project that, as a condition of existence and functioning, should protect relationships with others and with nature. This difference allowed for the unequal treatment of the “other” by the colonizing powers, enslaving and exploiting them. The “other” still belong to a category inside “nature” (considered very proximal to other animals) and needed to be tamed and civilized (Vera, 2014). Now, duality and otherness are deeply linked to the very development of Anthropology based on the opposition nature vs. culture that began with the famous opposition “nurture” — “nature” (Casanova, 2016). We can argue that the nature-culture dichotomy

is one of the fundamental touchstones of the Western worldview and the foundation of anthropological thought, at least in its origin as a scientific discipline.

Anthropology, as a science, was born in the so-called “Western world” — to use the expression by Descola and Palsson (1996), such as most other sciences. Therefore, the Anthropology frame of reference reflects that: its place of origin and respective historical, political and philosophical contexts (reflects the worldview with which the West has looked at the world), among others.

Also, as a reaction to the positivist explosion and the reinforcing of the HEP, Anthropology (and other social sciences) ended up falling into what many named of “cultural imperialism”, a reductionist approach that wanted to reply to the geographical and biological reductionisms. This reductionism was responsible for placing a blindfold [to use the famous expression of Catton and Dunlap (1978)] that prevented these sciences from following up in due course many problems of modernity, such as environmental issues from the social and cultural point of view: climate change, mass extinction, biodiversity destruction, environmental justice, animal rights, environmental racism and neocolonialism, traditional and ecological knowledge, amongst many other themes. This reductionism was, of course, also the consequence of the reductionist exercise of Western science.

The HEP was strengthened with technological and scientific advances

and was as well a reaction to positivism (Catton and Dunlap, 1978). This defense of unrealistic and scientifically outdated assumptions was also fueled by and exaggerated optimism that emerged with the post war period and which included the following principles (see Schmidt (1999) also for these HEP principles in the case of Sociology):

- i) Humans were the only beings who had culture (although Jane Goodall proved this to be wrong in the 60's with chimpanzees): they were the only ones with accumulated cultural heritage distinct from the genetic heritage of animal species, so there was no biological continuum between humans and the rest of the animal kingdom: in fact humans do not even see themselves as animals (see Edmund Leache's studies on the views of animals in cultures living under the influence of the Jewish-Christian paradigm that, although dated, are still accepted amongst many scholars as valid in the present). Here we call attention upon the so-called Natural Scale of Beings, a graphic representation of the place assigned to biological diversity, that placed the human being at the top of the hierarchy. The implications of such a graphic representation that emerged during the 17th century, popularly maintain a disturbing validity (Lovejoy, 1936);
- ii) Only social and cultural factors determined human actions (environmental issues were not even considered by some anthropologists and other social scientists)". Culture was infinitely diverse

- and changed much more rapidly than biological traits;
- iii) Human differences were a product of social and disadvantageous aspects that could be eliminated, that is, social and cultural environments were those that matter for the human actions and the environment and other species were of little relevance to human beings. The other species were only relevant if they had an instrumental value for the “chosen” species, the human one;
 - iv) Cultural accumulation would lead to limitless technological and social progress that would solve all social problems.

The HEP is therefore based not only in an anthropocentric but also in an ethnocentric view of the world, which projected nature and culture as separate spheres. This view is common but in the “western world” (Descola and Palsson, 1996). The anthropocentric view of the relationship between human beings and the rest of nature is right in a central paradigm of the origins of anthropology and was the result of a profoundly Western way of looking at and interpreting the world and the diversity it contained (Descola and Palsson, 1996). The prejudice of anthropocentrism has its roots in the hegemonic vision of HEP that was extrapolated to all societies.

The human superiority towards other all beings (Kortenkamp and Moore, 2001) is a clear speciesist prejudice (Casanova, 2016). In anthropocentric narratives, there are numerous efforts to show the

special place occupied by human beings amongst all other beings of the planet and understand its exceptional status in almost all contexts (Calarco, 2013), mainly in societies that live under the Christian-Judaic Paradigm (Casanova, 2016).

The cultural and scientific *milieux* where Anthropology was born created human beings to the image of God (Casanova, 2016) and the representations of this God usually have human features but also mostly a white skin colour, a masculine gender (and sometimes even blue eyes and blond hair). The Paradigm of Anthropology beyond humans is supposed to be free of a colonialism, male, racist and speciesist approaches, hence the importance of the search for new positions or theoretical frameworks in contemporary anthropology (e.g., post-human anthropology, amongst other).

2. The emergence of a new paradigm or searching for new alternatives: an anthropology beyond humans

With the emergence of environmental problems in the 60s of the last centuries in the USA and also in Europe (e.g., Germany), a state of distrust and concern was established and reached the HEP, especially with regard to the independence of the human species from the planet ecological laws, and the importance of social and cultural contexts alone. The HEP and many of the sciences based on it were also crumbling with the discoveries of other sciences ranging from

Primatology to the studies of Ethology and Cognitive Ethology, Neurobiology and Neurophysiology, also from the last century. *The Cambridge Declaration on Consciousness in Nonhumans*, back in 2012, only confirmed what these scientific fields had already been demonstrating since the 1960s. Paradoxically, some evidence emerged in the field of traditional anthropology, which showed that the “others” did not share the dichotomous thought of the West, with which the supposed universality of the nature-culture dichotomy was questioned (Descola and Palsson, 1996).

From the societal point of view, this paradigm shift was clear with civil society’s focus of interests targeting environmental issues ranging from the fight against the dangers of the nuclear energy to the protection of endangered species (Schmidt, 1999), fighting for animal welfare and animal rights, social movement against animal experiments and other non-humans who shared human daily-lives: from livestock farms to companion animals, to laboratory animals.

Simultaneously, and from other approaches and other geographies linked to what has been called the “Global South”, various criticisms emerged articulated in the so-called “Decolonial Perspective”. A critique of traditional Western epistemologies based on colonial expansion is proposed from Latin America through various authors such as Aníbal Quijano in Peru, Enrique Dussel in Mexico or Walter Mignolo in Argentina

articulated in the Modernity/Coloniality Group. From this position, alternatives to the coloniality of power, to the processes of domination and liberation, and to alternatives to the condition of subalterity are criticized and sought. All of them of importance for the issue at hand and specifically for the HEP: for traditional epistemologies subordinating some human beings to the condition of animality and nature, to a project of economic and political expansion based on domination, exploitation and control.

As Sociology, Anthropology was drawn into these issues through ethnography and field studies. There was, in fact, a time when it was common amongst the social sciences to neglect the dependence of ecosystems on the part of human communities and to neglect the laws of other sciences: such was the case of the Entropy Theory of the Law of Energy Conservation, as if the human condition was not affected by laws other than the social ones (Schmidt, 1999).

The end — due to the maladjustment and limitations — of the HEP gave rise to a more inclusive and ecocentric Anthropology, the post-human paradigm: an anthropology beyond humanity (e.g.,Kohn, 2013). The post-human paradigm began to incorporate data from other sciences, and which also reflected the concerns of civil society, organized in social movements, NGO’s, etc. But this did not happen without tensions (Haraway, 2013; Casanova, 2016). In fact, for some anthropologists the anthropocentric

prejudice was (and is) so strong that everything that as to do with nonhumans as agents/social actors (that cannot have agency) is not Anthropology. In some cases, due to profound ignorance, multispecies anthropology is confounded with Biological Anthropology due to the fact that this subdiscipline of Anthropology includes knowledge from primate behavior, evolution, conservation or just simply the presence of nonhumans. As we were saying, when prejudices are strong, even after well-established positioning (such as the beyond human paradigm), tensions and paradoxes continue to emerge (Haraway, 2013; Casanova, 2016). It would be ridiculous to consider that Geertz (1973), when conducting his field studies in Bali, just because he wrote on the importance of cock-fighting (and its meaning), was doing Biological Anthropology. Or when the already mentioned Lewis Henry Morgan wrote *The American Beaver and His Works* (1868) was doing Biological Anthropology. In this work, Morgan designs similarities between basic engineering works between humans and beavers (Dapra and Casanova, 2020). Another example is Roy Rapaport and the pigs that were used in rituals for the ancestors in New Guinea (1969) as being seen, ridiculously, a biological anthropologist.

These anthropologists are considered by some as the Multispecies ethnography founders (Kirksey and Helmreich, 2010). But more recent works are considered for the foundation of the

new positioning, beyond human another anthropologist: that is the case of Lévi-Strauss (1966) who analyse the totemic powers and social orders attributed to different types of plants.

Regarding Multispecies Anthropology, Locke (2018) is very clear: this approach corresponds to another more than human view within cultural anthropology where it is shown that we cannot totally understand humanity if we isolated ourselves from the rest of the animals and ecosystems where we live.

On the other hand, Edmund Leach (1964) in a predecessor work on ethnobotany and ethnozoology, analyzed nonhumans and plants as “repositories” of totemic power, even structural order, as it was the case of Lévy-Strauss (Dapra and Casanova, 2020). Evans-Pritchard (1996 [1940]) saw the central importance of cattle for the Nuer people.

Although less common, such tensions still arise. This is not surprising considering the already mentioned colonialist and ethnocentric past of our science: there was always the anthropological “exotization” of the nonhumans in the so-called “Western cultures” which implied the construction of dubious boundaries between humans and nonhumans as if humans were not animals (Casanova, 2016; Dapra and Casanova, 2020). This anthropological “exotization” of the “other” can still be seen. In fact, archaeologists (Ingold, 1994) have already shown that the dichotomies and boundaries between humans and nonhumans are far from clear-cut. That is why

today some anthropologists argue that nonhumans are the ultimate “others” of anthropology (Casanova, 2016).

The end of the HEP allowed for multiple changes and for the emergences of new study fields where *HAS* and multi-species anthropology have new places (Ogden et al., 2013). The mentality that accompanied the end of the HEP indeed change allowing for the emergence of *HAS* (Casanova, 2016) and with that knowledge, other sciences were incorporated in Anthropology and other social sciences: animal agency, sociability, culture in nonhumans, amongst many other previous taboos (Desprest, 2008; Casanova, 2016; Dapra and Casanova, 2020). This new positionings constituted by premises that, while not denying the importance of human beings, places them in a particular space within an ecological context, defined by its relationships and interactions, where its role, but also that of the species that surround it, is active in defining the entire system. Niche construction theory emphasizes the agency and feedback of components that make up the human environment, but also that of any other species, occupying ecosystems shaped, but that also influence and shape human societies in a process of co-influence and co-construction. Human beings are seen in a specific historical, political, and economic context: the Capitalocene. Human life and its activities are now framed in ecological laws. In this text we adopted the term Capitalocene [first coined by

Haraway and latter followed by Moore (1996)] because we argue that the term Anthropocene (Crutzen, 2002) — as it is used now — is less appropriated from the anthropological point of view: in fact, we cannot consider the Yanomani or the Runa from Amazonia or the Maasai from Kenya equally responsible for the state of the planet such as States like China, USA, Germany, just to mention a few. Also, when using the Malthusian term Anthropocene, history is the first victim (such as colonialism, imperialism, and racism). Not all human communities and societies along the history of humanity (or even today) had the same impact on the disastrous state of our planet as the current hegemonic social and political system: this is the era of capitalism, or Capitalocene (Moore, 2016).

We recognize that the choice of the term Capitalocene is not naïve: it is because the term Anthropocene masks an at least debatable position that affirms the Hobbesian aphorism that “man is the wolf of man”. For it is not the human condition *per se* or the sole activity of any human society in any time or space that is responsible for the current economic, political, and ecological crisis, but rather a specific project of economic development based on exploitation, control and domination of alterity (human or animal) as the capitalist project supposes, with a temporality and a specific historical context. Thus, for example, we see climate change not as having anthropogenic reasons but capitalogenic ones.

The scientific discoveries coming from the mid last century (ethology, primatology, archaeology, neurology, amongst many other) allowed for a less anthropocentric and ethnocentric view of anthropologists regarding other animals and nature (where we are included). Human beings cannot be seen as not making part of a global system. This global system acts in an interdependent way just like what happens in an ecosystem. Human beings are involved in an entanglement relationship with the rest of the animals also having a boomerang effect as they are part of nature too. Just like the consequences of a beaver that builds a dam, human actions have innumerable consequences in our planet when we change (or destroy) ecosystems. We depend on the planet that has biophysical limitations and these, provoke strong physical and biological restrictions and constraints on human actions. Despite the conquests of humanity (although inequality is rising, racism is still a major problem, neocolonialism seems to be here to stay, amongst so many other problems), we cannot keep ignoring ecological laws.

With this new positioning and this new kind of thoughts, Anthropology (and other social sciences) began to leave its cultural imperialism and began to address the concerns of the communities they themselves study.

Multispecies Anthropology, just like Environmental Anthropology, are areas that emerge from these “new” thoughts

in the middle of the last century (60’s). In the case of Multispecies Anthropology, this new subdiscipline of Anthropology appears in this context that encompasses a wider field that is the so-called *Human-Animal Studies* (HAS), coined by anthropologist Margot DeMello (2012).

There are other names that are similar and that sometimes even partially overlap HAS, as it is the case of “Anthrozoology” (mainly used by colleagues working from the veterinary medicine research area) or the case of “Animals and Society” (mainly used by our colleagues from Sociology). But *Human-Animal Studies* (HAS/ Multispecies Anthropology, but not only) is the designation coined by the field of Cultural Anthropology.

This disciplinary area is not theoretically linked to subfields of Biological Anthropology such as primatology or ethno-primatology. *Human-Animal Studies* (HAS) have been always anchored in a social and cultural perspective (DeMello, 2012). This explains why the first thematic files dedicated to the HAS were named “multispecies ethnography” and were published in journals such as *Cultural Anthropology*. According to this new position where anthropology adventures itself beyond humans, the other animals are seen in their relationships with us, relationships that are co-constructed, interdependent and relational. The same can be applied to the relationship between human beings and other elements of an ecosystems. HAS and Multispecies Anthropology did benefit from the

knowledge of primatology, ethnoprimateology and other ethnosciences, psychology, physiology and neurophysiology but they are anchored in Cultural and not Biological Anthropology.

Multispecies Anthropology (Fijn and Kavesh, 2020; Kavesh, 2022) implies ethnographic research (e.g., focused on beings/social actors with agency) but also quantitative research. The relationships between several organisms (plants, humans, and nonhumans) with particular emphasis to the humans that emerge from these relationships have been widely studied (Ogden et al., 2013). What started as multispecies ethnography (e.g., Kirksey and Helmreich, 2010) has now a theoretical corpus of several research decades and it has been coined by many as Multispecies Anthropology (e.g., Fijn and Kavesh, 2020; Kavesh, 2022) with publications specifically dedicated to methodology (e.g., Swanson, 2017) or the combination of different methodologies (Remis and Robinson, 2020). This represents a major epistemological shift within the social and humane sciences (Dapra and Casanova, 2020). Theoretically such works have contributed to reconceptualize what it means to be human (Ogden et al., 2013). The return of nonhumans to social sciences (e.g., Desprest, 2008) took back anthropologists and other social sciences to classical ethnography (Smart, 2014). If nonhumans are seen as active agents, active beings, and actors, then the Latour definition (2008) to everything that makes a difference in the fields of

interaction is essential — and it will be necessary to admit that what human being does not understand, has impact on them (Dapra and Casanova, 2020).

3. Agency and nonhuman subjectivity

The most conservative scientific views stated that the absence of language confined the remaining animals to behaviour that were only genetically inscribed and that were limited to being performed following a previously determinate order. Howell (2019) recalls that in the traditional Cartesian view, it is the human ability to reason that separated us from other animals (and it relegates the latter to a level of programmed automata). Nonhumans as beings without agency were an inescapable dogma. This reality served the purposes of Anthropology until quite recently. After all, as we have seen here, this science has anthropocentric roots (speciesists) and was built on the platform of anthropocentric language. We dictated a world seen from an exclusively human perspective, leading to the representation of metaphorical, allegorical, or symbolic animals to explore anthropocentric themes. In fact, Ingold (1994) pointed out that anthropology always looked to emphasize specifically human attribution of symbolic imagination and its products, drawing a contract with the apparent deficiencies of the nonhumans, and this characterization was quite negative and was being reinforced over time,

given more strength to the HEP.

The basis of all marginalization, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, speciesism (anthropocentrism), among other variables, originates from an exclusive normative subjectivity that endorses a universal definition of the subject that occupied the center. In fact, it was the exclusion and subordination of “other” humans and “other” “animals” that made the oppression and domination of the “others” morally permissible and ethically possible. The human, as a being of intellectual and rational superiority, could torture and subjugate other animals without any moral repercussions. And, as every practice requires discourses that justify it, anthropology found in the supposed human intellectual superiority, the justification of the domain of what is considered not only non-human, but inferior, and all this without assuming any responsibility of an ethical nature.

As Chakraborty (2021) states, the ride of post-humanism came to question this position of the human being at the center of the universe and seeks to dethrone *Homo sapiens sapiens* from any particular privileged position in relation to questions of meaning, information and cognition (Dupré, 1996).

Animal agency can also be seen through the need all animals have to interact with their environment in order to survive and reproduce. In this case, agency is a central adaptive feature of animal life (Špinka, 2019). In this line of thought, Špinka (2019) proposes four

levels of agency:

- i) Passive/Reactive agency (a non-human can be behaviorally passive or purely active);
- ii) Action-oriented agency (an animal that behaviorally pursues current desirable outcomes);
- iii) Skills building agency (an animal that engages with the environment to obtain skills and information for future use) and
- iv) Aspirational agency (the animal achieves long-term goals through individual autobiographical planning and reflection).

Recent advances in affective neurobiology show that, at least in mammals, each level of agency is underpinned by a different type of affective functioning. Specific levels of agency can be linked to different degrees of consciousness as defined by recent theories of individuality.

Anthropology beyond humans looks at the other animals from the point of view of content, theme, and object of knowledge (the “animal” studied by animal studies) but also from the point of view of a theoretical and methodological approach (how “animal studies” study “the animal”). Authors such as Derrida and Baudrillard argue (*in* Cadman, 2016), for example in fiction, that the act of representing animals leads to the end of animal subjectivity as we speak of an existence that refuses to be conceptualized (Cadman, 2016). How then should anthropologists speak for other animals? (DiNovelli-Lang, 2013). As Ittner (2006) says, when we think of an animal, we build this animal

in our consciousness, and this is reflected around and our own existence. Our representations of other animals are based on an analogous connection between humans and them. This line of thought that emerged emphasizes the false discontinuity between humans and other beings (Spanning, 2019; Calarco, 2020; Dapra and Casanova, 2020).

In fact, it is important not to forget that throughout the evolutionary processes of both humans and nonhumans, human agency was important during the domestication process but the same can also be said about nonhuman agency. So, it is not acceptable anymore to argue that only humans have agency (Edmund, 2011). We are far from the days where nonhumans were just seen as “lumbering robots” (Dawkins, 1976).

Amongst the most brilliant works on agency and nonhuman subjectivity, the studies by Hoffman et al. (2018) on agency in rhesus macaques (*Macaca mulatta*) or the works by Irene Pepperberg (1995; 1996; 2002) with gray parrots from Gabon stand out. Pepperberg explores the relationships between three individuals: Alex, Kyaro and Alo and the emergence of subjectivities between the different individuals around the classifications of food, colors, shapes, and other variables.

In this new line of thought, in an Anthropology beyond humans, humans along with other animals are seen as belonging to multiple ecologies that are in constant flux and mutation over the centuries, where non-human animals

have gone from creatures seem as totally disconnected and distinct from human beings to instigators of our own political, ethical, and ontological reflections (Kirksey and Helmreich, 2010).

Humans and nonhumans inhabit the sameworld sharing sensory perceptions. There is an ontological proximity between all living beings, and this is a fundamental starting point to see the similarity between different species and therefore the foundation of connection and communication.

In fact, in this new paradigm, there are more *avant-garde* authors such as Herman (2018) or Kooij (2020) who even claim that it is irrelevant that this interaction (between humans and nonhumans) means the same for both species, since the driving force for current post-humanistic thinking about interconnectivity among all animals (humans included) is the shift from the rational thinking to accepting bodily perception and experience as a valid starting point for the production of knowledge. The human measure is thus no longer an accepted standard for checking the state of mind of a nonhuman (Herman, 2018; Glock, 2019; Kooij, 2020). This positioning supposes leaving behind the old aphorism that argues that the human being is the measure of all things and that the non-human is signified and makes sense based on the human scale, even more so in the context of traditional epistemologies, they constructed a notion of restricted, hierarchical, and exclusive humanity.

In conclusion, and in line with the *Cambridge Declaration* (Low et al., 2012), nonhumans are conscious beings who form their own perception of the worlds of life in which they exist and according to which they act in relation to their species and other species. This profound transformation in social research gave rise to individuals who were previously seen as passive or subjugated objects and how they became active subjects: Velden's (2017) work on dogs (*Canis lupus familiaris*) as fundamental actors decisive in the encounters between the Puruborá and the Karitiana in the state of Rondônia before and after the arrival of the Europeans is just one example if this investigation.

Regarding the role of dogs as agents and actors, it is also important to mention the study by Kohn (2013) in Amazonia (Brazil) where lives of dogs and people mixed together via the dogs' dreams that are inseparable of the Runa ethnic group.

Conclusions

The path walked from the beginning of Anthropology until today is complex and full of contradictions that are the result of different paradigms and schools of thought, and the evolution of science itself within specific historical, philosophical, political, and other context that revolutionized the way science evolved (Kuhn, 1962). In that sense, Anthropology is like other sciences (Kuhn, 1962). A long way has come up from a subject that had its foundation in alterity (that was pro-

vided by colonialism itself) to the *avant-gard* position occupied today by many anthropologies, that are at the forefront of the defence of minority groups, or the anthropologists that recognize agency and subjectivity in other animals.

The Anthropology beyond humans tries to be free of prejudice (but we argue that all people, even anthropologists have a specific world view, with particular prejudices), free of racism, colonialism and neocolonialism, and free of gender biased approaches harbouring more ecocentric views of shared and co-build ecosystems and where ethical concerned and inequalities between people (and other non-human species) have to be overturned. Environmental racism and environmental justice and the responsibilities by the "Global North" must be assumed.

This new line of thought owes a lot, initially, to the feminist and radical studies, which were followed by twists that brought out nonhuman agency and its subjectivity.

In human-other animal relationships, despite the power imbalance, animals are not mere objects but agents. They shape our material world and our encounters and influence our way of thinking about the world and about ourselves.

Human life in modernity — particularly in the "Global North" — has been and is shaped by sentience, autonomy, and physicality of various kinds (Räsänen and Syrjämaa, 2017). Given the advances in the scientific areas mentioned along this work, these issues are no longer contro-

versial for many anthropologists. But, of course, despite the advances in the scientific areas mentioned throughout this work, some issues may still be controversial for some anthropologists. However, returning to the idea that the forms of representation of the world are translated into forms of intervention in it, the possibilities offered by these new perspectives of relationships, more egalitarian and fair between human beings and the rest of the nature, are worth the attempt to reformulate the principles with which anthropology was founded, which, many years after its origin, seeks alternatives that give viability to the anthropological project, but also to the future of the beings that populate this planet.

References

- Cadman, S. 2016. Reflections on anthropocentrism, anthropomorphism and impossible fiction: towards a typological-spectrum of fictional animals. *Animal Studies Journal*, 5(2):161–82.
- Calarco, M. R. 2013. Being toward meat: anthropocentrism, indistinction, and veganism. *Instantes y Azares. Escrituras nietzscheanas*, 13: 19–36.
- Calarco, M. R. 2020. *Animal studies: the key concepts*. London, Routledge.
- Casanova, C. 2016. Serão os não humanos os últimos outros “outros” na Antropologia? Representações sobre a superioridade humana. *Trabalhos de Antropologia e Etnologia*, 56: 106–134.
- Catton, W.; Dunlap, R. 1978. Environmental sociology: a new paradigm. *The American Sociologist*, 13: 41–9.
- Chakraborty, S. 2021. “But she was woman; he was dog” – a posthumanist approach to canine subjectivity in Virginia Woolf’s *Flush*. *Consortium: An International Journal of Literary and Cultural studies*, 1(2): 52–59.
- Crutzen, P. J. 2002. The “anthropocene”. *Journal de Physique IV (Proceedings)*, 12(10): 1–5. DOI: 10.1051/jp4:20020447.
- Dapra, D.; Casanova, C. 2020. “Ele é meu filho”: sobre o significado das aves. *Estudos de Sociologia*, 25(49): 31–55. DOI: 10.52780/res.14293.
- Dawkins, R. 1976. *The selfish gene*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- DeMello, M. 2012. *Animals and society: an introduction*. New York, Columbia University Press.
- Descola, P.; Palsson, G. 1996. *Nature and society: anthropological perspectives*. London, Routledge.
- Despret, V. 2008. The becomings of subjectivity in animal worlds. *Subjectivity*, 23: 123–39.
- DiNovelli-Lang, D. 2013. The return of the animal: posthumanism, indigeneity, and anthropology. *Environment and Society*, 4(1): 137–56.
- Dupré, J. 1996. The mental lives of nonhuman animals. In: Bekoff, M.; Jamieson, D. (eds.). *Readings in animal psychology*. Cambridge, MIT Press: 323–336.
- Edmund, R. 2011. *Evolutionary history: uniting history and biology to understand life on earth*. New York, Cambridge University Press.
- Eriksen, T. H. 2004. *What is anthropology?* London, Pluto Press.
- Erikson, P. A.; Murphy, L. D. 2021. *A history of*

- anthropological theory*. Toronto, Toronto University Press.
- Evans-Pritchard, E. E. 1996 [1940]. *The Nuer: a description of the modes of livelihood and political institutions of a Nilotic people*. New York, Oxford University Press.
- Fijn, N.; Kavesh, M. A. 2020. A sensory approach for multispecies anthropology. *TAJA: The Australian Journal of Anthropology*, 32: 6-22.
- Geertz, C. 1973. Deep play: notes on a Balinese cockfight. In: Geertz, C. (ed.). *The interpretation of cultures*. New York, Basic Books: 412-454.
- Glock, H. J. 2019. Animals, intelligence and reasons in animals. *Philosophy*, 94(4): 645-71.
- Low, P.; Panksepp, J.; Reiss, D.; Edelman, D.; Van Swinderen, B.; Low, P.; Koch, C. 2012. The Cambridge declaration on consciousness. In: *Francis Crick Memorial Conference on Consciousness in Human and non-Human Animals*, Churchill College, University of Cambridge, July 7, 2012. Cambridge, University of Cambridge.
- Hacking, I. 1983. *Representing and intervening: introductory topics in the philosophy of natural science*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Haraway, D. 2013. *The companion species manifesto: dogs, people and significant others*. Chicago, Prickly Paradigm Press.
- Herman, D. 2018. *Narratology beyond the human: storytelling and animal life*. New York, Oxford University Press.
- Hoffman, M. L.; Beran, M. J.; Washburn, D. A. 2018. Rhesus monkeys (*Macaca mulatta*) remember agency information from past events and integrate this knowledge with spatial and temporal features in working memory. *Animal Cognition*, 21: 137-153.
- Howell, P. 2019. Animals, agency and history. In: Dean, H.; Howell, P. (eds.). *The routledge companion to animal-human history*. New York, Routledge.
- Ingold, T. (ed.). 1994. *What is an animal?* London, Routledge.
- Iltner, J. 2006. Part spaniel, part canine puzzle: anthropomorphism in Woolf's "Flush" and Auster's "Timbuktu". *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal*, 39(4): 181-196.
- Kavesh, M. A. 2022. *Animal enthusiasms: life beyond cage and leash in rural Pakistan*. Series multispecies anthropology: new ethnographies. London, Routledge.
- Kirksey, S. E.; Helmreich, S. 2010. The emergence of multispecies ethnography. *Cultural Anthropology*, 25(4): 545-576.
- Kohn, E. 2013. *How forests think: toward an anthropology beyond the human*. Berkeley, University of California Press.
- Kooij, D. L. 2020. *Empathizing with animals: non-human subjectivity in documentary film*. Doctoral dissertation, Liverpool John Moores University.
- Kortenkamp, K. V.; Moore, C. F. 2001. Ecocentrism and anthropocentrism: moral reasoning about ecological commons dilemmas. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 21(3): 261-272.
- Kuhn, T. 1962 *The structure of scientific revolutions*. Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.
- Latour, B. 2008. *Reassembling the social: an introduction to actor-network-theory*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Leach, E. 1964. Anthropological aspects of language: animal categories and ver-

- bal abuse. In: Lenneberg, E. H. (ed.). *New directions in the study of language*. Cambridge, MIT Press: 23–63.
- Lévi-Strauss, C. 1966. *The savage mind*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Locke, P. 2018. Multispecies ethnography. *The International Encyclopedia of Anthropology* [Online]. DOI: 10.1002/9781118924396.wbiea1491.
- Lovejoy, A. 1936. *The great chain of being: a study of the history of an idea*. Harvard, Harvard University Press.
- Moore, J.D. 2009. *Visions of culture: an introduction to anthropological theories and theorists*. Plymouth, Altamira Press.
- Moore, J. W. (ed.). 2016. *Anthropocene or Capitalocene: nature, history, and the crisis of capitalism*. Oakland, PM Press.
- Ogden, L. A.; Hall, B.; Tanita, K. 2013. Animals, plants, people, and things: a review of multispecies ethnography. *Environment and Society: Advances in Research*, 4(1): 5–24.
- Pepperberg, I. M. 1995. Grey parrot intelligence. *Proceedings of the International Aviculturists Society*, 1: 11–15.
- Pepperberg, I. M. 1996. 5 Categorical class formation by an African grey parrot (*Psittacus erithacus*). *Advances in Psychology*, 117: 7–90.
- Pepperberg, I. M. 2002. Cognitive and communicative abilities of grey parrots. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 11(3): 83–87.
- Pereira, R. M. 2021 *Conhecer para dominar: a antropologia ao serviço da política colonial portuguesa em Moçambique*. Lisboa, Parsifal.
- Rapaport, R. A. 1969. *Pigs for the ancestors: ritual in the ecology of a New Guinea people*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Räsänen, T.; Syrjämaa, T. (eds.). 2017. *Shared lives of humans and animals: animal agency in the global north*. New York, Routledge.
- Remis, M. J.; Jost Robinson, C. A. 2020. Elephants, hunters, and others: integrating biological anthropology and multispecies ethnography in a conservation zone. *American Anthropologist*, 122(3): 459–472.
- Schmidt, L. 1999. Sociologia do ambiente. *Análise Social*, 34(150): 175–210.
- Spanning, R. 2019. Ecological citizenship education and the consumption of animal subjectivity. *Education Science* [Online], 9(1): 41. DOI: 10.3390/educsci9010041.
- Spinka, M. 2019. Animal agency, animal awareness and animal welfare. *Animal Welfare*, 28: 11–20.
- Swanson, H. A. 2017. Methods for multispecies anthropology: thinking with salmon otoliths and scales. *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Anthropology*, 61(2): 81–99.
- Velden, F. V. 2017. Narrating the first dogs: canine agency in the first contacts with indigenous peoples in the Brazilian Amazon. *Anthrozoös*, 30(4): 533–548.
- Vera, J. L. C. 2014. Between human and non-human: between nature and culture. In: Casanova, C.; Frias, S. (eds.). *Memórias, 16 (Special issue on environmental anthropology)*. Lisboa, Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa: 14–25..

(Página deixada propositadamente em branco)