



**AMORAL WOLVES AND CULTURED REINDEER:
ANTHROPOMORPHISM AND ETHICAL JUDGEMENTS IN THE CASE
OF THE REINDEER HERDERS OF EUROPEAN RUSSIA
AND WESTERN SIBERIA**

Kirill Istomin

European University at St Petersburg
6/1A Gagarinskaya Str., St Petersburg, Russia
Kistomin@eu.spb.ru

Abstract: Ethical evaluation and ethical judgements about animals are traditionally regarded as a manifestation of anthropomorphism and anthropocentrism, connected with a baseless attribution to animals of human qualities such as free will, and the extension to them of a human system of values. This opinion, however, is based on an implicit assumption that the logic of moral judgements about animals repeats the logic of such judgements regarding people. The present work, using ethnographic data about Komi and Nenets reindeer herders, shows that this assumption is wrong: moral judgements about both wild and domestic animals are based on a wide experience of interaction with them, take into account the variability of their behaviour and do not mechanically transfer onto animals the norms of human morality. Furthermore, in the case of domestic animals, one of the objects of judgement is the complexes of behaviour arising from the animals' interaction with their owners, whose activity is also an object of judgement. In this way, though it may be agreed that anthropomorphism is present in reindeer herders' moral judgements about animals, it is a particular kind anthropomorphism, based on knowledge and providing a powerful tool for understanding the animal. The ethical judgements themselves may therefore play a positive role in organising the herders' interaction with the animals and their mutual adaptation to each other.

Key words: cross-species anthropology, moral judgements, anthropomorphism, reindeer herding, Komi, Nenets.

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Kirill Istomin

Amoral Wolves and Cultured Reindeer: Anthropomorphism and Ethical Judgements in the Case of the Reindeer Herders of European Russia and Western Siberia

Ethical evaluation and ethical judgements about animals are traditionally regarded as a manifestation of anthropomorphism and anthropocentrism, connected with a baseless attribution to animals of human qualities such as free will, and the extension to them of a human system of values. This opinion, however, is based on an implicit assumption that the logic of moral judgements about animals repeats the logic of such judgements regarding people. The present work, using ethnographic data about Komi and Nenets reindeer herders, shows that this assumption is wrong: moral judgements about both wild and domestic animals are based on a wide experience of interaction with them, take into account the variability of their behaviour and do not mechanically transfer onto animals the norms of human morality. Furthermore, in the case of domestic animals, one of the objects of judgement is the complexes of behaviour arising from the animals' interaction with their owners, whose activity is also an object of judgement. In this way, though it may be agreed that anthropomorphism is present in reindeer herders' moral judgements about animals, it is a particular kind anthropomorphism, based on knowledge and providing a powerful tool for understanding the animal. The ethical judgements themselves may therefore play a positive role in organising the herders' interaction with the animals and their mutual adaptation to each other.

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Introduction

One day in August 2002, during fieldwork among Izva Komi reindeer herders in the Bolshezemelnaya Tundra, the author of these lines, while in charge of a herd of transport reindeer (bulls) was confronted with an emergency. Out from behind a long hill there suddenly appeared some unfamiliar reindeer (in the first moment there seemed to be a countless number of them), who ran towards "my" herd, which was lying down peacefully not far off. Among the Izva Komi the bull herd is almost always pastured separately from the main herd, and it is usually not large in size — a few hundred head, which makes managing it quite easy even without the help of dogs and allows its pasturing to be entrusted to adolescents, old men, or, as in the present instance, unskilled ethnographers. Nevertheless, the bull-herdsman (the Komi herdsman's own term) has a special responsibility: not under any circumstances to allow this small herd to mix with the brigade's main herd, and still less with any other brigade's herd. Considering the large size of the herds, and also the fact that both the Izva Komi

Kirill Istomin

European University
at St Petersburg,
6/1A Gagarinskaya Str.,
St Petersburg, Russia
Kistomin@eu.spb.ru

herdsmen themselves and their reindeer are on the whole much less accustomed to the use of the lasso than, for example, their Nenets neighbours, if the transport deer “dissolve” into a large herd, especially if it is controlled by their neighbours, the brigade may be rendered immobile for a long period and its members placed in a very disadvantageous position. At the same time, precisely because it is not large, the bull herd is anxious at the first opportunity to join a larger herd, and so the bull-herdsman has to keep his wits about him.

Jumping onto my sledge, I drove the reindeer harnessed to it as quickly as possible into the space between my bull reindeer and the advancing wall of foreign beasts. This space was diminishing rapidly, but, fortunately, I quite soon realised that I was in time. I calmed down completely when I saw another sledge coming towards me, thinking at first that it belonged to the herdsman in charge of the other herd. Quite quickly the herds turned round and ran off in opposite directions. I stopped my sledge and turned round, and only then did I realise that the herder who had turned the approaching herd back was M. from “my” brigade. The swearwords in a mixture of Komi and Russian that reached my ears betrayed his extreme displeasure at the incident. I hurried towards him and discovered that the reindeer that we had driven away belonged to a brigade from a neighbouring *sovkhos* and, judging by their numbers (despite my first impression, there were no more than three hundred head of them), they were a *polak* (a breakaway herd) that had been “lost” by their unfortunate herdsman. M. said that he had gone to put up some nets and on his way back had seen the *polak* going down the slope of the hill and clearly waiting for the moment to join our bulls. The deer’s “uncultured behaviour” showed M. that the *polak* had come from the neighbouring *sovkhos* even before he saw the animals’ ear marks.¹ M. proposed that we should together drive the *polak* back to our neighbours: he was intending to have a “direct conversation” with them about the behaviour of their herdsmen and their beasts and wanted to have someone from his own brigade beside him. I had to agree.

After driving the *polak* for a few kilometres, we came upon our neighbours’ main herd, grazing under the supervision of a herdsman who suspected nothing (somehow he really had lost sight of the *polak*). After greeting the herdsman, M. began to tell him off for letting his “bandit reindeer” stray onto his *sovkhos*’ land, where they had not only “trampled all our land”, but also “wanted to mix with our bulls”, which they would have succeeded in doing, if “our bull-herdsman had been asleep like you” and if he, M., had not happened

¹ Marks made on the ear with a knife to indicate ownership.

along. The herdsman said in reply that his reindeer could not have seriously trampled the land, because there were not many of them and they had gone off no earlier than the previous evening. There followed a sharp exchange:

— *Haven't they trampled it — how haven't they trampled it? The land stinks, there's dung all over the place. Our reindeer won't eat there, that's not how they're taught. Only your reindeer can eat there now. They eat where they shit, they've no culture* [the last sentence spoken in Russian. — K. I.].

— *Well, it's your own fault if that's how they're taught. You can read the newspaper to them while they're eating as well.*

— *We can and do teach them. And since you can't and don't, look after them properly, so they don't act like bandits amongst people* (jöd ordyn med iz banditašny).¹

Two things are most noticeable in this story, in my view. Firstly, the behaviour of animals, in this case reindeer, is systematically given an ethical evaluation, in this case a negative one. Secondly, the blame for this immoral behaviour is placed squarely upon their owners, the reindeer herders. At the same time, it is obviously not a question of the sort of moral responsibility that might be placed upon a driver, for example, whose clumsy use of his inanimate means of transport has caused someone some damage. It is more like the sort of responsibility imputed to parents who have failed to inculcate in their children the moral values and prohibitions that prevent unethical behaviour.

There is of course nothing new in the actual fact of an ethical evaluation of animal behaviour. Stories about animals in which moral qualities are ascribed to them and moral evaluations made of their actions are an integral part of the vast majority, if not of all folklore traditions. It is widely known that in mediaeval Europe, for example, animals could be parties to legal proceedings, which gave them an advantage over certain categories of people [Evans 1906; Kantorovich 2018]. Nevertheless, any analysis of the content of such ethical judgements, and how they were reached, as opposed to the simple fact of their existence, has been extraordinarily rare. The reason for such a lack of attention has undoubtedly been that at least since the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century this sort of ethical evaluation has consistently been looked at as a manifestation of anthropomorphism.² Still, “since the early

¹ Here and elsewhere Komi words and phrases are written following the phonetic characteristics of the Ižva (Northern) dialect used by the reindeer herders. Their transcription may therefore vary from the accepted spellings of the literary norm (for example, *kul'turnej* instead of *kul'turnöj*).

² The concept of “anthropomorphism” may be used in a wider or narrower sense. In its narrow sense it means the attribution of visible human features to natural or artificial objects in perception, imagination or creativity. In this sense one might, for example, consider as anthropomorphism the habit

nineteenth century, historians, philosophers, and anthropologists have repeatedly linked the rise of modern science with the waning of anthropomorphic attitudes towards the natural world. For example, the beliefs that the planets and stars were celestial intelligences or that heavy objects fell because they were seeking their natural place — beliefs held by many European natural philosophers before the Scientific Revolution of the seventeenth century — were regarded as signs of a ‘primitive’ mentality” [Daston, Mitman 2005: 3]. For this very reason, anthropomorphism was until the middle of the twentieth century studied most consistently not by anthropologists, but by psychologists, at best as a stage, and a fairly primitive one, in the development of the psyche (the ontogenesis, that is the development of the individual human psyche during childhood, here repeated its “phylogenesis”, that is the historical development of the human mentality from “primitive” forms among “uncivilised” peoples to the evolved mentality of the European), and at worst as a psychological abnormality. The best-known examples of such research are, of course, Sigmund Freud’s *Totem und Tabu* [Freud 2005] and Théodule-Armand Ribot’s *The Evolution of General Ideas* [Ribot 1897], but this tradition reached its highest point in the 1920s with Jean Piaget’s *The Child’s Conception of the World* (1924). This last identifies an “animist” period in the evolution of the child’s psyche, an essential feature of which is a tendency to explain, and an attempt to predict the behaviour of animate and inanimate objects in nature by ascribing to them human feelings, desires, judgements, aims and (sic!) moral qualities, that is, in fact, by their anthropomorphisation in the wider sense. This makes it not only possible but necessary to pronounce moral judgements about such behaviour. Through this tendency towards anthropomorphisation a child may, for example, be angry with a stone that has fallen on his foot, and even attempt to chastise it physically [Piaget 1997: 169–251]. It is interesting that according to Piaget this period comprises four stages, and as each is succeeded by the next the sphere that the child explains anthropomorphically progressively shrinks, until in the fourth stage only animals remain within it, and not all of them [Piaget 1997: 185–187]. Like his predecessors, Piaget regarded direct analogies between the child’s psyche and the “primitive” mentality of “primordial” peoples perfectly permissible; his description of “infantile animism” refers directly to this. Though nowadays such

of seeing human forms and faces in the clouds (see, for example: [Guthrie 1993]). In its wider sense anthropomorphism is the ascription of human qualities, emotions, judgements, intentions, plans, etc. to animate and inanimate objects in nature. A child who is angry with the “nasty” nettles for stinging him is “guilty” of anthropomorphism precisely in this wide sense. It is interesting that this term entered modern science from theology, where it means ascribing a human image, qualities and features to the Divinity [Marmorstein 1937; Daston, Mitman 2005: 2], regarded as a mortal sin in all three Abrahamic religions. This origin may partially explain the concept’s negative connotations, which persist to this day.

parallels seem odd, to say the least, Piaget's research itself is still authoritative, which encourages the persistence of the view of anthropomorphism as a "childish error" which is natural and even endearing, but clearly undeserving of having the operations that take place within it taken seriously (see, for example: [Kennedy 1992]). Moreover, in recent decades this "childish error" has acquired a bad reputation in connection with the critique of anthropocentrism, particularly among ecological activists [Bruni et al. 2018: 104]. Indeed, "considered from a moral standpoint, anthropomorphism sometimes seems dangerously allied to anthropocentrism: humans project their own thoughts and feelings onto other animal species because they egotistically believe themselves to be the center of the universe" [Daston, Mitman 2005: 4].

It is not hard to see that the established tradition is unfavourable to posing research questions about the inner logic and rational foundations of anthropomorphism, even if these questions concern only specific aspects of it, such as moral judgements about the behaviour of animals. Certainly, asking such questions about an egocentric error of the undeveloped infantile consciousness that has persisted in some strange way among certain groups of uneducated adults would be a curious thing. These are nevertheless precisely the questions that I would like to pose and examine in the present work, on the basis of field materials gathered among reindeer herders in the north-west of our country. Such a desire (at least I sincerely hope so) is not just the result of a typical anthropologist's love of paradox and desire to attack generally held opinions. Rather it follows an approach towards anthropomorphism that has been emerging for some time and which regards it as a valuable and indeed essential instrument for the practical understanding and even the scientific explanation of animal behaviour. This approach, which relies on the ideas of Daniel Dennett's "intentional stance interpretation" [Dennett 1981; 1987] and has been formulated in the works of the recently deceased Frans de Waal [De Waal 1999], deliberately retains its agnosticism regarding whether animals "really" have those emotions, desires, thoughts, plans, etc. that are attributed to them by "anthropomorphists" (and on the basis of which conclusions are drawn about their morality). Rather, as in Daniel Dennett's celebrated example of playing chess with a computer [Dennett 1981], it concentrates on the utilitarian gnoseological value of such an ascription: in order to interpret and anticipate the computer's moves when playing chess, it is absolutely essential to ascribe intentions, judgements and plans to the machine ("the computer wants to take my bishop and hopes that if I attack his queen with my rook, I shall expose myself to a move by its knight whereby it plans to attack my bishop by means of a fork"). Although "in reality" the computer can hardly want anything, hope for anything or plan anything, such

a strategy is much more reasonable than to try to reproduce in one's head the switching of microchips or the execution of code that "really" takes place inside the computer, which would be much less effective even in the unlikely event that it were at all possible. At present, there is a literature about the value, justification and, moreover, the inevitability of such an approach for the understanding and predicting of the behaviour of animals both by researchers in ethology and by other people for whom such understanding and prediction has value¹ [Allen, Bekoff 1999; Arbilly, Lotem 2017; Bruni et al. 2018]. This literature, however, has, as far as I know, not yet touched upon the question of moral judgements with regard to animals, although they are a logical element of the phenomenon under examination. The present work has the quite modest aim of beginning to fill this gap.

Its empirical basis is the field materials collected by me over the last twenty years during fieldwork amongst Komi and Nenets reindeer herders in the European part of our country (the Kola Peninsula, the Timanskaya and Bolshezemelskaya Tundras in the Nenets Autonomous Region, and the north of the Komi Republic) and in Western Siberia (the Nadym and Tazovskiy [Taz River] districts of the Yamalo-Nenets Region). Most of this material was collected during research into the knowledge and practices connected with reindeer pasturing, which explains why it deals mostly with reindeer and dogs, the two species of animal whose interaction with each other and with people forms the basis for the process of pasturing in western reindeer husbandry, which uses herding dogs. Since for a large part of his career the author paid little attention to moral evaluations of the animals by reindeer herders, the collection of the material was fairly random. Still, in the author's opinion it makes it possible to draw certain conclusions.

One more question needs to be considered before we proceed to setting out the material. In the course of the exposition that follows I oppose the moral judgements of reindeer herders about wild animals (in particular, wolves, bears and wolverines) to their judgements about domestic animals — dogs and reindeer. The discussion of domestication, the meaning of this concept, its biological, social and symbolic content, the particulars of the process it denotes and the nature of the dichotomy it creates between "domestic" and "wild" has played an important role in the inter-species anthropology of the last decade (see, for example: [Anderson et al. 2017; Stépanoff, Vigne 2018; Losey et al. 2021]). A number of researchers, including specialists on the people engaged in hunting, reindeer husbandry and animal husbandry in Southern Siberia

¹ Including reindeer herders, as the author has attempted to show elsewhere [Istomin, Dwyer 2021].

[Brandišauskas 2019; Oehler 2020], problematise this dichotomy, showing that it is by no means as evident and unambiguous as we are used to think. A discussion of this discussion is beyond the scope of this work, but it must be acknowledged that it is particularly significant in the case of the northern reindeer, which since the time of Herman Kreps has been declared by zoologists “not to bear any [anatomical. — *K. I.*] traces of cultural influence and to be the only domesticated animal (with the possible exception of the camel)¹ that has remained the same as it was when man first tamed it” [Kreps 1934: 69]. Since changes in the genotype and phenotype of an animal that make it visually, anatomically and/or physiologically different from the wild form are, from the biological point of view, the essence of the process of domestication, the domestic reindeer was declared by Kreps, as is known, to be “half-wild”, that is, tamed rather than domesticated.² In the 1990s the biologist and specialist in reindeer husbandry S. B. Pomishin attempted to “give back” to the reindeer the status of a domestic animal in the biological sense, maintaining that it does have genetic changes connected with its domestication, but they are not manifested in its anatomy, exterior or physiology, but in genetically fixed, i.e. inborn particularities of its behaviour [Pomishin 1990]. This attempt, however, found no support among ethologists. As L. M. Baskin, Russia’s greatest specialist on the behaviour of the northern reindeer, showed as early as 1968, “the majority of the behavioural models of the reindeer are acquired [...] In the literal sense reindeer have few congenital instincts [...] and even the most important of them, such as the instinct to feed and the instinct for self-preservation, immediately become ‘overgrown’ with acquired models of behaviour, creating complicated behavioural complexes” [Baskin 1968: 6]. As a result, considering it from the standpoint of biology, in the case of the reindeer man has been living for millennia in interaction with a wild, even if tamed animal, and constructing multiple evolved cultures on the basis of this interaction: the purpose of the various terminological neologisms used by biologists such as “half-wild” or “semi-domesticated” is in fact simply to record the fact that there is a difference between the reindeer and a tame circus bear, which biology is, however, incapable of defining. The anthropologist or culturologist, however, cannot be satisfied with such terminological moves, and therefore I entirely agree with Tim Ingold’s opinion [Ingold 1980], further developed a few years ago by Alex Oehler, that “some forms of domestication are better expressed in terms of an animal’s belonging to a household [the

¹ In opposition to Kreps, contemporary zoologists consider that the camel does have anatomical changes connected with its domestication, and so in the quotation the camel should rather be replaced by the domesticated elephant.

² On this basis our Scandinavian colleagues prefer to use a similar term, “semi-domesticated”, with reference to the reindeer (see: [Beach, Stammer 2006]).

original sense of *domestication*. — K. I.] than in its altered phenotypic expression. [...] Not all animals may physically express changes as the result of a life spent with or near human households, but their countenance toward humans and other animals will be affected” [Oehler 2020: 161]. Oehler characterises such transformations as changes in “approachability” and “relatability”. The most important thing, however, is that unlike the biological concept of domestication, this sort of domestication is an ongoing and reversible process, something that humans and animals have constantly to work at. The correctness of this understanding of the process of domestication, at least in the reindeer’s case, is confirmed by many ethnographical data. Thus, the well-known Fennoscandian anthropologist Hugh Beach, a specialist in Saami reindeer husbandry, says that “Reindeer-herding control is therefore something a herder must impose, usually with considerable coercion, upon his herd” [Beach 1981: 41], since as soon as such “imposition” ceases, the reindeer’s behaviour reverts to its “natural”, wild state, through “a pull like that of a rubber band, as soon as the herder loosens his grip” [Ibid.]. It is the involvement in such a constant process of domestication, the active maintenance of a special complex of relationships — determined limits of the permissible — between man and beast that distinguishes the dog and the reindeer from the wolf and the bear, irrespective of the presence of genetic changes (in the dog’s case) or their absence. It is this understanding of the wild–domestic dichotomy that I shall use in the present work and attempt to show that it also has a moral dimension.

Moral evaluation of animals: objections and limitations

Before proceeding to the logic that underpins the moral evaluation of animal behaviour among reindeer herders, and discussing the extent to which such an evaluation is rational, it is worth discussing in brief the general objections to the possibility and/or meaningfulness or such an evaluation. What specifically, indeed, makes one regard the making of moral judgements about animals “a childish error”, beyond the fact that they are often made by children aged ten to twelve [Piaget 1997: 185–186], and the “primitivity of mind” associated with them [Ibid.]? As far as I can judge, there are two such objections, one general and one particular.

The general objection rests upon two criteria, already introduced by Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, that define the sphere of moral judgements (that for which one might be praised or blamed): the criterion of voluntariness (“it is only voluntary feelings and actions for which praise and blame are given; those that are involuntary are condoned, and sometimes even pitied” [Aristotle 1983: 95]) and the criterion of awareness (“an act done through ignorance is in every case not voluntary” [Ibid.]). These criteria arise from the general

proposition that the object of moral judgements is not the actions themselves, but the one who performs them, who is praised or blamed according to the said actions. Therefore, “acts done in conformity with the virtues are not done justly or temperately if they themselves are of a certain sort, but only if the agent also is in a certain state of mind when he does them: first he must act with knowledge [εἰδώς]; secondly he must deliberately choose [προαιρούμενος] the act” [Aristotle 1983: 83]. In other words, the agent is subject to moral evaluation only for those acts which he has performed voluntarily (i.e., could have refrained from doing or done otherwise, but deliberately chose to do as he has done them), and only to the extent that he could have planned and foreseen their possible effect. Acts which the agent could not choose and the effect of which he could not foresee are not subject to moral evaluation: a sheep is not praised for not eating meat, nor the wolf blamed because it does. Of course, anyone who has tried to examine the questions of moral philosophy knows that Aristotle’s criteria have many problems: which actions can, and which cannot be regarded as voluntary and on what basis (if there is one) can one establish whether a particular case satisfies the criterion of awareness are matters for acrimonious debate (see, for example: [Woolfolk et al. 2008]). Furthermore, even in those parts in which their interpretation is not problematic, they can by no means always be consistently applied in practice: it is sufficient to recall the discussion of “moral luck” (see, for example: [Nagel 1979]) that caused such a storm in ethical philosophy. Despite these problems, though, Aristotle’s criteria are not seriously denied by anyone who considers moral judgements possible in principle [Eshleman 2014] (see also: [Nagel 1979]). It follows that anyone who makes moral judgements about the behaviour of animals must either consider their behaviour not simply voluntary, but deliberately chosen, the result of a conscious decision based on a rational prediction of the results of such behaviour (that is, he or she must demonstrate anthropomorphism), or else fall into an even more infantile error and think that the object of moral judgements may be the acts as such, and not the agent who performs them. (Jean Piaget considered that this is how children aged four to six behave, and this is also connected with childish “pananimism”, see: [Piaget 1978]). In the latter case the act of evaluation can hardly be considered a moral judgement in our sense of the words, and in any case it is not a moral judgement of the animal, but rather a moral judgement of the act, and there is in principle no logical foundation for transferring its results to the animal. In the first case the judgement is logically vulnerable in the sense that it contravenes Lloyd Morgan’s famous canon: “in no case is an animal activity to be interpreted in terms of higher psychological processes, if it can be fairly interpreted in terms of processes which stand lower in the scale of psychological evolution and development”

[Morgan 1903: 292]. In other words, since an animal's behaviour may perfectly well be understood, for example, in terms of instinct, that is, without ascribing higher psychological processes such as judgement, deliberate decision or foresight to it, the rules of rationality demand that we should confine ourselves to that explanation as simpler and attended with less moral risk (so that there is less risk of condemning the innocent or rewarding the uninvolved) and refrain, accordingly, from moral evaluations.

The more particular objection rests upon the principle of relativism, well known to anthropologists: even if we suppose that a certain animal satisfies Aristotle's criteria and is a moral agent, moral judgements about its behaviour should not be made within any "human" system of moral principles and norms, but only within a system proper to the animal itself, which is unknown to us. Thus, judging a mouse for stealing cheese means not only to assume that it could take a free and informed decision so to act, but also that mice are acquainted with the concept of property and that of theft and that they are not followers of Prudhon and condemn attacks on property and not its possession. To think like that is to extend to mice not only human morality, but the morality of our capitalist society, which is foolhardy at best, and at worst an amoral anthropocentrism and ethnocentrism. Since in any case we have no means of knowing the views held by mice on the relationship between morality and property, we should refrain from making any moral judgements of the rodent's action.

These objections are serious and can hardly in themselves give rise to any doubts. However, they are based on an important implicit assumption, that the moral evaluation of the behaviour of animals proceeds in exactly the same way, on the same principles and logic, as the moral evaluation of human behaviour. The fundamental content of these objections is, precisely, the demonstration of the falsity of such an evaluation. But how far can we be sure that this assumption is correct?

Once, hearing a young herdsman berating his transport animals for idleness and unwillingness to work in the sledge, I decided to intervene like this: "You shouldn't scold them. You think they're like people and can decide whether to lag behind or not. But perhaps that's just how they're made. Then you're annoyed with them for something they can't help doing. Have you thought about that?" To which I received the reply: "Of course I think about it! If I didn't think about it I'd probably be annoyed with the reindeer even because they don't wish me good morning." This answer, in my view, hit the bullseye, whether that was what the herdsman intended or not. Indeed, if it is a necessary condition for making moral judgements about animals either to change the object of judgement

(transferring it from the agent to the action) or to anthropomorphise the subject and extend human norms of morality to it, then why are herdsman not offended that their animals do not greet them (if not in words, then by gestures)? Fulfilling those conditions makes such a moral evaluation possible, logical and even in some measure necessary. Not only that: if we direct our attention not only to the situations when moral judgements about animals are made, but also to the situations when such judgements would be appropriate if the one who makes the judgements really were convinced that he or she is dealing with a rational agent capable of free, informed choice and sharing his or her complex of moral norms and responsibilities, then it becomes quite evident that moral judgements about animals are always made extremely selectively: a significant number of their “actions” do not become the object of moral evaluation, although they undoubtedly would have, had they been performed by people. This immediately allows the rejection of the proposition that reindeer herders, like little children, apply their moral judgements to the act and not the agent. Furthermore, it shows that even if such judgements are based on anthropomorphism, that anthropomorphism is not, in any case, a simple mechanical transfer of human qualities. All this casts doubt upon both the aforementioned objections and shows that the field of moral judgements about animals need not by any means be the result of a logical error, and therefore it may be a legitimate field of research. In the remaining part of the article, I shall attempt a tentative incursion into that field.

The amoral wolf: moral judgements about wild animals

The analysis of the logic of moral judgements is best begun with judgements about wild animals, as simpler: the moral evaluation of domestic animals, at least among Komi and Nenets reindeer herders, includes, according to my field observations, many more nuances. As for wild animals, the greatest number of moral judgements about them by the reindeer herders recorded by the author concern the wolf, and therefore it is best to begin the analysis with these.

Like most of the peoples of the world engaged in husbandry, Komi and Nenets reindeer herders “are not fond” of the wolf: both in their folklore and in interviews, wolves are depicted as deeply amoral creatures — faithless, malicious and greedy.¹ Although the author of these lines believes that, particularly in the case of animals, the

¹ Another image of the wolf — as a wise animal, often appearing in the guise of a cultural hero, the educator and teacher of the ancestors, is typical for the most part of the folklore traditions of hunter-gatherer peoples [Boitani 1995; Fogg et al. 2015], but it is sometimes found also among agriculturalists (for example, the myth of Romulus and Remus) and pastoralists (for example, the Turkic myth about the origin of the Ashina tribe). In the latter case this image is often paradoxically juxtaposed with the image of the amoral wolf (see: [Brandišauskas 2019: 204–207]). The author is grateful to the linguistic anthropologist Roza Laptander for this information.

moral image of the agent (such as that just described) and the moral judgements directly concerning the behaviour/actions of the agent (more of this anon) must be kept separate, it cannot be denied that these two things are interconnected: the moral image undoubtedly influences the moral judgements, and, vice versa, it may be formed and transformed by moral judgements, although to a large extent we receive it as part of an assimilated cultural tradition.¹

Considering the moral image described, one might be surprised that negative moral evaluations of the actual behaviour of the wolf are not in most cases connected with attacks on the reindeer as such, although it might seem that they best correspond to that image and most often come to the reindeer herders' attention. Nevertheless, the wolf is most often condemned not for the actual fact of attacking reindeer, but for particular features of the attack, if such there were. Thus, the most severe condemnation is provoked by cases when the wolves kill more deer than they can actually eat: "The wolf must hunt, everybody knows that. But it happens that a pair of wolves (*köin gožja*) comes and kills five or so deer. Yes, they kill as many as they can. They eat one, and that not completely. They might bite a bit of the tenderest part of the others' underbelly, no more. Why do that sort of thing? That's not hunting." Sometimes it is specially emphasised that not all wolves behave like that: "There were wolves living on the Adak. They would kill reindeer one at a time, didn't even panic the herd. They'd come, kill, and eat. What else do you do if you're a wolf? Those were good, decent wolves" (Komi reindeer herder, male, 52 at the time of the interview).

The mention of panicking the herd reflects another frequent reason for the moral condemnation of the wolf: "It would come and kill a deer. And then it would start to chase the herd. It would run after the deer like a dog, and split the herd into *polaks* (groups of reindeer), chase one this way, another that. Sometimes you couldn't gather the herd together again in a week. Why chase them? Had it too much energy? It chases them out of spite" (the same informant). Again, as in the previous quotation, there are wolves that do not scatter the herd when they attack.

Finally, the third, and in my opinion the most interesting reason for the moral condemnation of the wolf is deviation from the usual behaviour characteristic of the species, particularly when going after food (for example, hunting during daylight, "slipping into" the herd near the herdsman, attacking a dog near the tent, etc.). It is usually said that the animal did not behave the way it "ought to / needed

¹ For example, in [Prokop et al. 2011; Gieser 2023] it is described how the moral image of the wolf, assimilated within the cultural tradition (the "Red Riding Hood complex"), obstructs activists in their attempts to restore the population of these animals, once completely annihilated in Europe.

to” (*byt’ loö / byt’ kolö*), and it is often accused of treachery on that account. Deviation from proper behaviour, however, is determined not in relation to the action as such, but in relation to the animal’s species and the patterns of behaviour characteristic of that species. For example, an attack by predators on the herd during daylight usually takes the herdsman by surprise. However, whereas such an attack carried out by a wolf invites condemnation (because a wolf is “not supposed” to act like that), the same action carried out by a bear is not condemned, because for a bear it is in the nature of things. However, when a bear plunders the sledges with provisions left behind by the herdsman during their summer travels, this is condemned, because “the bear is supposed to be afraid of them.”

As can be seen from the descriptions above, despite the extremely negative image of the wolf, moral judgements about its behaviour do not proceed directly from its image. Nor are they the result of an automatic transfer of moral judgements about humans onto the animal. To all appearances the reindeer herders in their moral judgements try to take into account Aristotle’s first criterion of the moral agent: moral judgements may be made in those cases when the reindeer herders have reason to suppose that the animal could have chosen different behaviour, either because they know of examples of wolves in similar situations who behave otherwise, or because their behaviour is different in principle from the usual behaviour of the species. In other cases they refrain from moral judgements, even if the predator’s behaviour has inflicted a considerable loss on the herders.

Another important feature of the moral judgements described above is that they are based upon knowledge of the animals’ behaviour, both at an individual level (differences in the behaviour of different individuals and pairs of wolves) and at the species level (behaviour that is “proper” to the wolf). Since until recently the wolf was, perhaps, one of those wild mammals whose behaviour (directly or in the form of its traces and consequences) the reindeer herders encountered most frequently, this knowledge was common amongst them. Its role may be understood in greater detail if we compare moral judgements about the wolf with moral judgements about other wild animals which have the same kind of effect on the reindeer herders’ lives, but are less familiar to them. Besides the wolf, the bear and the wolverine can cause considerable harm to the herds. The bear population is quite large in the eastern part of the Bolshezemelskaya Tundra and the Tazovskaya [Taz River] Tundra, particularly near partially or completely wooded areas, while the wolverine is found, but comparatively rarely. In both Komi and Nenets culture the image of the bear, although somewhat contradictory, is on the whole positive. It does not have any stable negative moral features. Moreover, the reindeer herders constantly stress the similarities between bears and humans,

and at the moral level too: although the bear is not wicked by nature it is sometimes quite capable of doing some “nastiness”. Since the image of the bear is neutral, it is hard to determine how it influences moral judgements about specific ursine behaviour. Like the wolf, the bear is not usually condemned for attacking reindeer, and moreover reindeer herders often compare it advantageously with the wolves, asserting that unlike the latter, bears always behave decently: they kill only as many deer as they want to eat, they eat most of the carcass, and they do not run after the deer and chase them. As already mentioned, bears are not condemned for hunting in the daytime, because that is “what they are supposed to do”. They are, however, condemned for “insolence” if they plunder sledges that have been left behind by the herders, attack a deer right in front of the herdsman, and do not go away when they see a human being. It is pointed out that since bears are wild animals, they are supposed to be afraid of people.¹ There is a completely different attitude to the wolverine. These animals are regarded as exceptionally cruel — “They don’t just kill the deer, but when it’s dead they tear it to bits with their claws, and tear off the head and the feet” (Komi reindeer herder, male, 32 at the time of the interview) — and wily: “They lie in wait, can hide for many hours until a reindeer comes by, and then they jump on him, and always from behind” (the same informant). Attacks by wolverines on the reindeer are on the whole quite rare, but they always provoke indignation on the part of the reindeer herders and condemnation of what they consider to be their excessive cruelty. It is interesting to compare this attitude with that of the reindeer herders of the Timan-skaya Tundra (in the western part of the Nenets Autonomous Region), where wolverines are encountered significantly more often than bears. During a short period spent among these reindeer herders in 2023, I observed how during their morning ride around the herd the herders found the remains of a deer that had been killed, torn to pieces and almost entirely eaten by a wolverine. In their comments, however, the reindeer herders not only did not condemn the wolverine, but compared it favourably with the wolf, in almost exactly the same terms as the reindeer herders to the east compare the bear with the wolf (it only kills one deer, eats it quite cleanly, and hides specially so as not to frighten the herd). When I remarked that the bear also behaves like that, they replied that the bear is worse than the wolverine, because it hunts also in the daytime and can attack people.

All this, in my opinion, indicates the following particularity of moral judgements about animals: if the person making the judgement has

¹ At the same time, many reindeer herders are afraid of bears. They are regarded as strong, fast animals quite capable of attacking a man. For this reason, the herders often do not risk attacking a bear that falls upon their herd and kills a deer in their sight.

no personal experience of interaction with the animal or knowledge of its behaviour at the individual level, his or her judgement is based overall on the image of the animal that he or she has assimilated, usually as part of the cultural tradition (compare: [Prokop et al. 2011]). An example would be the judgements of the wolverine by the reindeer herders of the Polar Urals and the Tazovskaya Tundra. However, the more the person making the judgement has personal experience of interaction with representatives of a particular species of animal and observations of their behaviour, the more this becomes the basis for moral judgements, which become more differentiated and take better account of distinctions and general limitations on the status of the moral agent. An example might be the judgements about the wolf and the bear described above. There is hardly anything new in this observation, since, in the end, moral judgements about other people follow the same logic. It has long been known that moral judgements about a relative stranger are often strongly influenced by stereotypes about the group to which he or she belongs (ethnic, social, gender, etc.), some of which are part of the assimilated cultural tradition. These stereotypes become less significant for making moral judgements as one becomes better acquainted with the person (see, for example: [Nagel 1979]). Nevertheless, the author does not know of any examples of this principle being applied to moral judgements about animals, although it could easily explain why such judgements might include a hefty dose of anthropomorphism or even anthropocentrism when they are made by a person without much experience of interacting with the animal (for example, a resident of a large city), and be free of these shortcomings when they are made by a person with experience of interacting with the animal (for example, a reindeer herder).

Finally, it is interesting to note what aspects of the behaviour of wild animals are liable to moral condemnation in these judgements. One, as we have shown, is deviation from the norm (or from what the reindeer herders consider to be the norm) for the species as a whole. In other cases behaviour is criticised that does no apparent good to the animal itself, but does harm to the reindeer herder: killing more deer than the animal can eat, or scattering the herd. It is evidently that the motives for such behaviour are hard to correlate with any benefit to the animals themselves, so the reindeer herders conclude that the animal's intention is to harm them. Leaving aside the correctness of such a conclusion, we may remark that it is, by and large, quite logical.

The cultured reindeer: morality and the “upbringing” of domestic animals

As has been said, the process of making moral judgements about the behaviour of domestic animals appears more complicated,

according to the field data, than the process described above regarding wild animals. This is partially explained by the fact that the experience of interaction with those domestic animals about which there are judgements in the field material (reindeer and dogs), like the experience of observing their behaviour among the reindeer herders, is naturally much more extensive than experience of any wild animal.¹ Perhaps for this reason these animals do not, as far as I can tell, have any integral moral image as part of the cultural tradition like the images of the wolf, bear and wolverine described above: in order to make moral judgements about such familiar animals such an image is evidently simply unnecessary.² However, the main reason is that reindeer herders (the Komi at least) regard the fundamental difference between domestic and wild animals as being that the behaviour of domestic animals is (or should be) at least in part the product of human activity, as imposed or developed by humans. This, on the one hand, seriously shifts the character of moral judgements and gives them an additional dimension, and, on the other, inevitably extends the judgement about the animals' behaviour to their owners.

It is even more important, in my opinion, that, as was said in the introduction, the genesis and maintenance of "domestic" behaviour in animals requires constant interaction between them and people, and constant work on the part of the latter. Without such interaction and work the reindeer, as every herder knows, quite quickly loses the behavioural characteristics of a domestic animal and becomes wild; the same, though to a noticeably lesser degree, is true of dogs.³

¹ It would of course be interesting to analyse the reindeer herders' moral judgements about the behaviour of those domestic animals which are familiar to them, but with which they have little experience of interaction because of the nature of their activities (for example, the cat or the cow). Unfortunately, such animals were not the subjects of interviews during my fieldwork in the tundra, neither were any spontaneous judgements about their behaviour recorded. It remains to hope that this topic will be the topic of future fieldwork.

² To be fair, it should be said that among both the Nenets and the Komi the dog is the main hero of a series of tales and legends with moral content. For example, the Nenets have a popular story about how the dogs were once given reindeer and a tent by a divinity, but because of their quarrelsome character and inability to plan ahead they lost it all, thereby proving that the only possible way of existence for them was to live with people and serve them (recorded in field materials). The Komi and the Kolva Nenets have a legend about how at the beginning of the world a dog, seduced by a bribe, allowed a devil to approach the human child whose cradle it had undertaken to guard. The devil took advantage of this to spit on the child, thereby making the human race mortal and liable to sickness. As a punishment the dog was allotted the fate of serving man and guarding his property until the end of the world (however illogical that might sound). One could certainly construct some moral image of the dog out of these folkloric works, but I have the impression that no such image is usually constructed, and the stories themselves are used rather to "justify" the existing relationship between people and dogs. I do not know of any folkloric texts that would allow one to construct an integral moral image of the reindeer.

³ After the sharp decline in the population of the Vorkuta agglomeration in the 1990s, one of the most important problems for the local reindeer herders were the feral dogs that appeared in large numbers around the deserted mining villages. As the herdsman recall, they did great harm to the herds above all because they were not afraid of people and attacked the reindeer in broad daylight from downwind

It follows directly from this, that the basic distinction between the domesticated and wild animal is that the first, at least in particular aspects, can behave in two different ways: “as domesticated” (at least if it has the necessary contact with humans) and “as wild”.¹ From the reindeer herders’ point of view, to the extent that I am capable of interpreting it, this possibility makes the animal a moral agent, and its behaviour in the relevant aspects the basis for its moral evaluation. It is, however, interesting that the aspects that permit of alternative behaviour do not embrace all the animals’ behaviour, and that part of their behaviour which is outside those aspects is also outside the purview of moral evaluation. In the end, as the already mentioned young informant remarked, nobody criticises the reindeer for not wishing the herdsman good morning. This shows that, as in the case of wild animals, the reindeer herders try, firstly, to observe Aristotle’s criteria of the moral agent, and secondly, they do not extend human criteria of moral evaluation to the reindeer.

At the same time, the scale of values applied to domestic animals is quite unambiguous: any “wild” behaviour is morally censured (although, to varying degrees) and any “domesticated” behaviour is approved. The most severely censured is an animal’s aggression towards a human being and particularly its owner. Such behaviour on the part of domestic animals is regarded as so repugnant that I have more than once observed reindeer herders killing reindeer and dogs belonging to them when these had been openly aggressive to them. It is interesting that the stories about people being attacked by wild animals (usually bears) that I heard from the reindeer herders, though they did contain an element of criticism (the bear is supposed to be afraid of humans), it was not, I think, quite so strong. The other sort of behaviour that is condemned is open and systematic disobedience to the owner: ignoring his commands,

(that is, even though they could smell the herdsman, who usually deliberately positions himself and lights his fire upwind of the herd, so that his smell is carried over the herd and deters predators), sometimes before the herdsman’s very eyes. One of my Komi informants ended his story about these dogs with the words “Vot sëtšëmës völi (That’s what they were like), ‘man’s best friend’, they betrayed their friends.”

¹ It is appropriate to point out here that neither Komi nor (as far as I am aware) Nenets has native words equivalent in meaning to “domesticated” and “wild”. Komi reindeer herders actively use the Russian loan-word “*dikëj*” [wild], which, like the Russian equivalent, has the secondary meaning “unrestrained”, and thus acquires a negative nuance. The antonym, where animals are concerned, is *vidzan* (“under protection/care”), e.g. *vidzan kör* (“a domesticated reindeer, a reindeer under protection, a reindeer that is taken care of”), or *ram* (“calm, quiet”). From the latter word is derived the verb *rammödnj*, which the reindeer herders use of animals meaning “to tame”. The words *ram* and *rammödnj*, however, are also used to denote differences within the deer population: to denote deer that have been trained to pull sledges, as distinct from untrained deer, the word *ram* is used, and for the process of their training, *rammödnj* (“to calm, to quieten”). Finally, as I shall attempt to demonstrate below, also relating to the differences between the “domesticated” and “wild” behaviour of an animal is the word borrowed from (or rather through) Russian *kulturnëj* (compare the Russian expression *kulturnoye rastenije*, “a cultivated plant”). Unfortunately, I do not know Nenets well enough to make any equally confident analysis of its vocabulary.

threats, and so on. At the same time, as with the majority of moral judgements about domestic animals, it is not only the animal that is censured, but also its owner, who cannot “manage” it.¹ Still, the reindeer hunters do show a differentiated approach here, based on their knowledge of the animal and, to all appearances, their understanding that particular behaviour (or avoiding it) demands a different effort depending on what sort of behaviour it is. Thus, according to one informant, a Taz Nenets, “it’s one thing if you can’t stop a dog from chasing deer, another if you can’t even make it get out of the tent.” The point is that most Nenets groups, including the Taz Nenets, allow their dogs to live in the tent, but they must immediately go outside at the command “*pin hañ!*” which is often given as a punishment for some misdemeanour (defecating on the floor of the tent, fighting with other dogs, etc.). In exactly the same way, although herdsmen’s dogs do feel the urge to “herd” deer (that is, run at them and gather them into a tight group; it is interesting that the reindeer herders regard this behaviour as innate and not domesticated/cultivated), they must stop doing it and return to their owners at the command “*le!*”. Ignoring either command is disapproved of, but taking no notice of the command “*pin hañ!*” is regarded as much more unforgivably wild than ignoring the command “*le!*” (which, by my observation, is ignored by a third to a half of the reindeer herders’ dogs). As for the reindeer, it is considered unacceptable not to follow the herd in the direction commanded by the herdsmen, or to run away from the herd when the herdsmen are carrying out various operations, when they are corralling it or lassoing some of the deer, or especially to “tear the herd”, that is, to break away from it and lead other deer away too. This last, incidentally, is regarded as typical behaviour for wild reindeer. Finally domestic animals must not encroach upon the property and personal space of the reindeer herders. Reindeer and (where the Komi are concerned) dogs are not supposed to enter the tent,² steal food from inside the tent or round about it, spoil hides laid out on the ground near the tent, damage sledges, etc. For neglect of these rules animals may be punished with a beating, and their owners admonished for “not teaching” their animals.

As with wild animals, the moral judgements described have the character of censure for certain behaviour regarded as bad and incorrect. But while wild animals are approved for refraining from such forbidden behaviour (a wolf, for example, for not killing more deer than it can eat, see above), I have never observed a dog being

¹ It is interesting that, as Donatas Brandišauskas states, the Orochen believe that “a dog owner (man or woman) must have a ‘good hand’ to raise a dog properly, and that a person’s luck can be shared with a dog and vice versa” [Brandišauskas 2019: 201]. Therefore, hunters sometimes give their puppies to “luckier” neighbours to be trained.

² An exception is made among the Nenets for hand-rearing ngawko deer.

praised for not stealing food or for leaving the tent at the command “*pin hañ!*” or for not attacking its owner. However, unlike wild animals, domestic animals also have “prescribed” behaviour, patterns of behaviour that with human help they can and to a certain degree must acquire. It is these patterns in the behaviour of domestic reindeer that Komi reindeer herders call “cultured”.¹ Animals are approved for following these patterns, but when they refuse to follow them it is not so much they, as their owners/herders who are censured, as not having been able to “teach” them (see the description at the beginning of the article). It is the existence of such approved, prescribed “cultured behaviour”, besides the condemned, forbidden “wild” behaviour, that is, in my view, the main difference between moral judgements about domestic animals and judgements about wild animals, from whom “cultured” behaviour cannot be expected by definition.² Thus, in the case of the reindeer, cultured behaviour includes above all an opposition to the “wild” urge to join other herds, so that “cultured” reindeer, it is considered, should not do so even when they find themselves in a small *polak* that has been separated from the herd. It is noteworthy that Komi reindeer herders place the blame for “tearing” the herd, leading to the formation of a *polak*, either on the leading reindeer, that “led away” other reindeer from the herd, or on the herdsman who allowed too great a “dispersal” of the herd over the territory. The Taz Nenets, who do not stay constantly with the herd outside the mosquito season, regard its separation into different groups as normal and even to some extent desirable, as it allows a more even use of the resources of the territory. Nevertheless, Taz reindeer herders also consider that well trained reindeer (the Nenets do not use the word “cultured” in this context) should not go looking to join other herds, but once they have eaten their fill they should return to the reindeer herders’ camp, where they can join their own herd again (see: [Istomin, Dwyer 2010;

¹ It should be specified that although further on in the text I refer to “cultured behaviour” in relation to all domestic animals, the Komi herdsman themselves regularly use the word *kulturměj* only with respect to deer (if they do call dogs “cultured” or “uncultured”, it is very rarely), and only in regard to their behaviour in the herd, not in harness. This does not mean that there are no expected/prescribed models of behaviour for dogs and harnessed reindeer (*pelej*), but following them is considered a manifestation of their “learning/training” (*velëdöm*), not “culture”. However, the “culture” of the main herd of reindeer also comes from the fact that the herdsman have “taught” them (*velëdiny*).

² It is perhaps worth mentioning here that in opposing prescribed/approved behaviour to forbidden/censured behaviour, I mean precisely their different roles in the generation of moral judgements (as is the rule in the theory of ethics), and not the differences in their imperative content. As we know, there is no difference in content between a prohibition and a prescription: the prohibition against doing x can always be reformulated as a prescription not to do x, and vice versa. However, I prefer to speak of a prohibition for dogs against ignoring a human being’s orders, rather than a prescription for them to follow those orders, because the reindeer herders are more inclined to censure dogs for ignoring orders than to praise them (and their owners) for carrying them out. In the same way, I shall speak below on the prescription for reindeer not to linger too long on their pastures rather than a prohibition on lingering, because the reindeer herders are more inclined to praise the beasts for leaving the pastures “untrampled” than to scold them for leaving them “trampled”.

2021]). As well as not joining other herds, “cultured” reindeer are expected to graze “carefully”, that is not run about the pasture all the time, alarming other reindeer and trampling the vegetation, but spend most of their time eating, alternating about two hours’ active grazing with two hours’ passive “rest” for rumination.¹ The animals are not only supposed to move to the passive phase more or less simultaneously, but to observe it uniformly: individual animals must not jump up and move about from place to place, disturbing the other animals’ rumination. The herd should move across the pasture at a moderate tempo, not too fast and not too slowly, so that after it there should remain enough resources for another passage across it (should that be necessary). In other words, the animals should not “spoil” the land too much. Finally, cultured reindeer are expected to endure mosquitoes and gnats with fortitude, and not “start running round and round (*bergödčny*) or be blown about as soon as a couple of mosquitoes have bitten them” (Komi reindeer herder, male, 52 at the time of the interview). This refers to the two frequent reactions of a herd of reindeer to an onslaught of insects: to bunch together and run round in a circle, or to run into the wind. It is interesting that discrimination in the quality of food and place of pasture, about which the informant spoke in the episode recounted in the introduction, does not, as far as I have been able to discover, form part of the behaviour expected from “cultured” reindeer. It does, however, by all accounts correspond to the reindeer herders’ idea of how “excessively” cultured behaviour should look, that is, the sort that could result from reindeer herders’ taking too much care over the “cultural education” of their reindeer.

As already noted, reindeer herders place the responsibility for developing “cultured behaviour” in animals, unlike their avoidance of “wild”, forbidden behaviour, not on the animals themselves but entirely upon their owners. Moreover, it is the constant work to develop that behaviour that is, evidently, alongside punishment for “forbidden” behaviour, the content of that very interaction with people that prevents animals from returning to the wild state. In this way the “cultural education” of reindeer is a moral imperative for reindeer herders, their moral duty to their beasts, the price they must pay for their reindeer and dogs to remain domestic animals that they have the right to own, that is, remain *their* reindeer and dogs. It was of neglect of this duty that the reindeer herder M. accused the herdsman, hinting at the moral consequences of this neglect. Accordingly, his words about how our reindeer were too

¹ As with any ruminant, the reindeer’s digestion consist of two cycles: during active grazing the deer eats the vegetation, with which it fills the rumen, from which it afterwards returns to the animal’s mouth for chewing the cud, and only then does it enter the stomach. While chewing the cud the animal for the most part lies motionless in one place, with its legs folded beneath its body and only its jaws moving rhythmically.

cultured to graze on a place “trampled” by other reindeer (a hint at reindeer behaviour which, were it actually to take place, would be the source of considerable problems most of all for their owners, since finding places in the tundra that have not been trampled at all is a big problem) should be understood as an assertion that M. himself has a totally serious attitude to the moral duty to educate his reindeer — so much so, that he is prepared to suffer inconvenience and loss for the sake of fulfilling that duty as best and as completely as possible. Such an attitude, according to the logic described, shows that M. is a reindeer herder in the full sense of the word and that his connection with his animals is beyond dispute. Thus moral judgements about animals turn into moral judgements about people.

Discussion and conclusions

The descriptions in the previous parts of the article leave no doubt that Komi and Nenets reindeer herders’ moral judgements about animals are not based on any automatic transfer of any human qualities or system of values to the animals. Though it is possible to speak of anthropomorphism in connection with such judgements, it is only in one quite narrow sense of that word. Unlike learned ethologists and like many, perhaps even the majority of members of industrial societies without a specialised education, reindeer herders do not adhere to Lloyd Morgan’s canon in their judgements and do not attempt to explain animal behaviour at the lowest possible level of “psychological organisation” for such an explanation, that is, proceeding from innate or acquired instincts and not from a free conscious choice. Instead, to all appearances, they use the complete opposite of this canon: an animal’s behaviour should be interpreted proceeding from the same psychological processes on the basis of which we would, in analogous circumstances, interpret analogous behaviour on the part of a human being, provided that there is no evidence that qualitatively different psychological processes lie behind it. In other words, from their point of view it is not that the animal’s psychological processes are qualitatively similar to a human’s that requires proof (or at least justification), but that they are qualitatively different. Ethologists would without doubt call this position anthropomorphism (see: [Kennedy 1992]), but, considering present-day ideas about man’s place in nature, in many respects it appears much more consistent than Lloyd Morgan’s canon. Indeed, in those very frequent instances, particularly among the higher animals and birds, when there is no indication of the instinctive character of behaviour (the notorious “rigidity and stereotypicality” are absent, though it may be doubted how unambiguously they indicate instinct, see: [de Waal 1999]), the denial of any “higher” psychological processes behind the behaviour is based only on the fact that we are dealing with an animal and not a human

being.¹ Even the popular argument that such an explanation is preferable as being simpler, and that Lloyd Morgan's canon is nothing more than an adaptation of Ockham's razor to the study of behaviour, does not really work: to explain the formation, transformation, variation and specificity of animal behaviour exclusively through the "lower processes", present-day ethologists have to construct so many epicycles within epicycles that the simplicity of these explanations in comparison with explanations that bring the "higher processes" into play is highly doubtful [Sober 2015: 51–58; Andrews 2020: 11–12]. At the same time, if we really consider human beings as part of nature, as living organisms that do not differ qualitatively from other living organisms (and that is what present-day science insists on, and that is what lies at the heart of the rejection of anthropocentrism), then it is very hard to find a basis for the requirement to explain human and animal behaviour differently as long as it is possible to do so. In this respect the reindeer herders' "anti-Morgan" canon looks far more logical. In any case, even ardent supporters of Morgan's canon must admit that their disagreements with the reindeer herders concern preferences for particular alternatives under conditions where there is no empirical basis for choosing between them, and therefore the reindeer herders' position cannot, strictly speaking, be considered an error.

Furthermore, as the ethnographic material demonstrates, the reindeer herders' "anthropomorphic" moral judgements about animals are not the result of "ignorance", as Ribot thought. On the contrary, in most cases they are based on detailed empirical knowledge emerging from experience of interaction with the animals. Admittedly, not always. Thus, moral judgements about the wolverine are made by reindeer herders of the Polar Urals without empirical knowledge or experience on the basis of the animal's moral image in the cultural tradition. In comparison with them, judgements about the wolverine made by the reindeer herders of the Timanskaya Tundra, who have experience of interacting with the animal, contain many more nuances and are much less stereotypical. This fact recalls Frans de Waal's hypothesis that there are two kinds of anthropomorphism. One results from a lack of information about the animal, the subject's lack of knowledge of its physiology, requirements and way of life, which makes him or her interpret the animal's behaviour on the basis of meagre second-hand information,

¹ As shown by the discussion of so-called philosophical zombies, which has been going on for several decades (see: [Chalmers 1996: 94–99; Dennett 2005: 1–24]), there may not be any convincing grounds even for confidently ascribing consciousness, freedom of action and moral agency to other people, to the extent that theories that deny people's free will (see, for example: [Harris 2012]) become both logically and empirically invulnerable. This fact, along with some others, was recently used by the well-known specialist in the methodology of the cognitive sciences, Kristin Andrews, to justify the rejection of Lloyd Morgan's canon both as a methodological principle for scientific research and as a general requirement in thinking about animals [Andrews 2014; 2020].

systematically filling in the gaps with a transfer of knowledge about the animal with which the subject is most familiar — him- or herself. De Waal calls this type of anthropomorphism “anthropocentric anthropomorphism”, while Cameron Buckner introduces an even more apt name for it — anthropoconfabulation [Buckner 2013: 185]. It is opposed to the anthropomorphism that is founded on a profound knowledge of the particulars of the animal’s life, its needs and strategies for satisfying them, which allows the subject really to put him- or herself in the place of the animal and see the world through its eyes. De Waal thought that such an “animalcentric anthropomorphism” was a powerful means of understanding nature, and called upon his ethologist colleagues to employ it [de Waal 1999]. The reindeer herders’ moral judgements are made for the most part on the basis of the second type of anthropomorphism, and in this way they are radically different from the analogous judgements made by children that Piaget studied, as they are from those of children and adults in thrall to the “Red Riding Hood complex” [Gieser 2023]. Ignoring this difference can lead to serious errors.

In this way the logic of the reindeer herders’ moral judgements proves perfectly permissible and does not involve any crude distortion of reality. This does not in itself, however, explain why this logic exists. What, indeed, in principle makes the reindeer herders make judgements about wolves and reindeer? In what, apart from an essentially irrational desire to widen the frontiers of the “moral world”, do the principles of such judgements consist? I shall attempt to conclude my article with a brief exposition of my as yet very preliminary thoughts on this subject.

It is considered that the basic function of moral judgements is to maintain and organise social interaction: they not only make certain types of behaviour, marked as morally inadequate, less probable, but also allow the modification of social interaction with actors depending on the behaviour that they have demonstrated in the past. This last assumes that evaluations of the behaviour of moral agents have a differentiating and individualising function: they create differences between agents and do not merely allow, but require different behaviour towards them on the part of the person or persons making the moral evaluation. This differentiating function of moral evaluation is quite evident, but it is rarely emphasised and becomes the object of separate research in those cases when moral judgements are made about people. The reason for this, of course, is that the necessity of the “individual approach” towards people is quite understandable even without recourse to the moral sphere, and a readiness to see in a person a unique individual personality deserving of a particular relationship derived from their individual characteristics is usually present within any moral evaluation, and

not a consequence of it. Where animals are concerned the situation is quite different: in their case, perhaps excepting domestic pets with whom a firm emotional connection as individuals has been established, we see in each specific animal first and foremost a representative of a particular species and construct our interaction with it (insofar as we construct it at all) precisely as a representative of that species. Our actions in respect of a wolf that lives in the nearest forest, a mouse that we have seen on the carpet of our room, or a squirrel sitting on our windowsill will be determined by the fact that we are confronted by a wolf, a mouse or a squirrel, and the thought that wolves, mice and squirrels are all different, if we entertain it at all, will not normally enter into our actions and judgements.

Moral judgements about animal behaviour founded on animalcentric anthropomorphism are unique in that they allow animals to be individualised depending on their behaviour in those spheres in which there are distinctions in that behaviour. Moral judgements about the behaviour of wolves allow reindeer herders to have different attitudes towards them depending on their behaviour: to tolerate or even welcome some individuals despite the material loss they cause them, and pursue and destroy others, spending time and resources sometimes disproportionate to the loss that they have suffered, simply to satisfy their sense of justice. Such a capacity and indeed need to adapt one's behaviour to individuals rather than species is to all appearances absent both in people who do not make moral judgements about animals and in people who make such judgements on the basis of anthroponfabulation. At the same time, it not only allows limited resources to be invested more precisely (for example, to pursue those animals that are most dangerous more vigorously), but also the avoidance of unnecessary cruelty. For example, the wolf population in Western Europe was completely annihilated at the beginning of the twentieth century precisely because wolves as a species were considered noxious, and no account was taken of possible differences in their individual behaviour, even if it was not always denied [Boitani 2010]. If the organisers and employees of pest control agencies had armed themselves with the moral logic of reindeer herders, their descendants might not have to make such an effort to reintroduce the grey predators [European Commission 2023]. One might even suggest that an individualisation of attitudes towards animals would create the conditions for artificial selection and the dissemination of particular models of behaviour within animal populations: in conditions when the appearance of mechanical transport has greatly increased reindeer herders' ability to punish "amoral" wolves, moral individuals have much greater chances of survival and leaving progeny and, therefore, spreading their genes through the population (if, of course, this behaviour

or the psychological qualities that give rise to it are genetically heritable).

This last consequence of moral judgements, obviously, plays a special role in the case of domesticated animals, since here humans bear a direct moral duty to propagate particular behavioural standards amongst animals. As a result, objectionable behaviour amongst domestic animals rarely goes unpunished: dogs and reindeer that engage in it may be beaten, and in the case of particularly severe transgressions of the moral norms, such as attacking their owners, even killed. Once again, the sense of moral justice often makes reindeer herders disregard any material loss ensuing from their actions. Moreover, the idea that the approved, “cultured” behaviour of animals is also a virtue in their owners makes people’s interaction with their animals much more insistent and focused, makes them spend energy and resources on achieving behaviour which, while undoubtedly having an economic effect, is hardly worth the expense. This training, however, increases the quality of the interaction between man and beast, and if the reindeer herders (and Hugh Beach and Alex Oehler) are right that the reindeer’s status as a domesticated animal is unstable and requires constant human effort to preserve it, then moral judgements play a major role in the maintenance of that status. It may be said that to a large extent the reindeer remains domesticated because the reindeer herders “require of it” what they do from a domestic animal.

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