

I. RESEARCH ARTICLES

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*ANIMALS DIE MORE SHALLOWLY:
THEY AREN'T DECEASED, THEY'RE DEAD.*
ANIMALS IN THE POLISH LINGUISTIC WORLDVIEW
AND IN CONTEMPORARY LIFE SCIENCES*

Abstract. The article compares the linguistic view of animals in present-day Polish with the findings of contemporary science. In the scientific worldview, animals constitute a hierarchically structured and an extremely diverse kingdom, which also includes humans: phylum Chordata, class Mammalia (subdivision Placentalia), order Primates, family Hominidae. Primatology, zoosemiotics, cognitive ethology, and paleoanthropology supply ever new evidence for links between apes and humans: both construct tools, operate by symbolic imagery and self-awareness, communicate, and are capable of learning an ethnic language. Various animal species, not only apes, are capable of pro-social and rescue-oriented behaviours.

In the Polish linguistic worldview, animals (which basically means mammals) are lower than humans in the hierarchy of beings and contrasted with humans in that: they belong to nature; they are primeval, wild, incapable of thinking; they lack self-awareness; they are driven by instincts rather than by conscience, reason, or will; they only experience lower emotions and biological needs. Semantic connotations of animal names, the derivatives, word-formations, and multi-word units they motivate, as well as the so-called “animal lexicon”, point to the strong axiological markedness of the human–animal opposition: animals are associated with everything that is bad.

KEY WORDS: linguistic worldview; anthropocentrism; animals; semantic connotations; valuation

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Over the last few decades, scientific research has significantly complicated our worldview, primarily by undermining the traditional concept of *Homo sapiens*. But even before that, the place assigned to humans in the scientific taxonomy had been very different to the one that could be reconstructed on the basis of the linguistic worldview. In a multi-level taxonomic system, the human race is treated as an element of the animal kingdom.¹ In zoological systematics, the animal kingdom is divided into two sub-kingdoms: Ahistozoa (Parazoa) and Histoza (Metazoa), which embrace 35–40 phyla of living beings. The Histoza subkingdom includes, among others: Cnidaria, Annelida, Ctenophora, Arthropoda, Mollusca, Echinodermata, and Chordata. The last, most organised phylum, includes, among others, the classes of Osteichthyes, Amphibia, Reptilia, Aves, and Mammalia. One of the mammalian infraclasses are Placentalia, including the order of Primates, which consists of Prosimians, Simians, and Hominidae. Only in the family of hominids, i.e. on the very low level of taxonomy, can we find the human species.

In recent decades, the boundary drawn between people and apes has become increasingly blurred. In contemporary primatology, the branch of zoology dealing with primates,² zoosemiotics, investigating animal communication, and cognitive ethology, which deals with cognitive processes in animals, ample evidence has been found for apes being very similar to humans: they construct tools, they exhibit symbolic imagination and self-awareness, they communicate and are able to learn an ethnic language. Hence, the terms *the naked ape* or *the third chimpanzee* have been used in reference to humans. The former appears in the title of a book by Desmond John Morris (1967), a British zoologist. The work shows that behaviours considered to be typically human are in fact simian instincts and reflexes that have undergone cultural transformation. Humans also have characteristics typical of pack-hunting predatory mammals that developed at a later stage. The other expression (*the third chimpanzee*) was used in the title of a book by Jared Diamond (1991), in which the author, an American evolutionary biologist and physiologist, describes how, in a relatively short

¹ In a recent zoology textbook (Dzik 2015), a survey of the animal kingdom ends with a presentation of the human species. In an interview, the book's author, a journalist for the Polish daily *Gazeta Wyborcza* and director of the Institute of Paleobiology of the Polish Academy of Sciences and head of the Department of Paleobiology and Evolution of the University of Warsaw, said openly that before the development of civilisation, "we were just one of many species of large mammals, which – with regard to the use of resources from the physiological perspective – did not stand out" (Dzik 2016: 8).

² *Homo sapiens* and its close ancestors usually fall outside the scope of research in this area. Some of the primatologists include chimpanzees and gorillas in the family of hominids.

time, a large mammal, whose closest relatives are the common chimpanzee and the bonobo (pygmy chimpanzee),³ dominated all living beings on Earth and now wants to subjugate the entire planet.

The fundamental problem of modern paleoanthropology is this: at which stage of the evolutionary process (i.e., how late in that process) can humans be distinguished from hominids? Scientists are no longer able to list absolutely clear characteristics of individuals classified as *Homo sapiens* that would be different from those of *Australopithecus* or *Neanderthals*. Furthermore, our current understanding of evolution does not allow scientists to claim that there are features common to a species and also unique to it. Species are not a natural product but rather categories into which we group living beings for our own purposes. The boundaries between species are variable, depending on the adopted classification criteria and the state of research. For example, it has long been taken for granted that morality is only inherent in humans, yet currently scholars are inclined to regard it as atavism inherited from animal ancestors. Marc Hauser, a psychologist and evolutionary biologist at Harvard University, argues that it developed in animals because it helped unite the group and aided its survival; therefore, moral behaviour can be recognised especially in gregarious animals – not only apes, but also dogs and even bats. Animals can also help one another. Experiments conducted by Polish scientists (Ewa Joanna Godzińska from the Laboratory of Ethology of the Nencki Institute of Experimental Biology in Warsaw, Wojciech Czechowski from the Museum and Institute of Zoology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Marek Kozłowski from the Warsaw University of Life Sciences) have proved that animals are capable of pro-social and rescue-oriented behaviours.⁴

Unlike in modern science, the boundary between categories of people and animals in linguistic worldview is sharp and clear. The linguistically coded category ANIMALS does not include all heterotrophic multicellular organisms of limited growth⁵ whose cells lack cell walls: it has a much narrower scope, which is corroborated by lexicographic definitions. Even Witold Doroszewski's *Dictionary of Polish*, often criticised for its scientism, defines *zwierzę* 'animal' as "a living being that feeds only on organic food, popularly a mammal (usually not about humans)" (SJP Dor 1968: 1342). Although the dictionary also notes the possible use of this word "in reference to humans as representatives of the highest species in the zoological

³ From the genetic perspective, the differences between humans and chimpanzees are so negligible that it is justifiable to treat the two species as one.

⁴ See Mikołuszko (2016) for a number of interesting examples of such behaviours.

⁵ Even in late 20th century, single-cell Protozoa were included in the animal kingdom. At present, they are classified as a separate kingdom.

classification” (SJP Dor 1968: 1342–1343), the illustrative collocations are *zwierzę towarzyskie/społeczne* ‘a gregarious/social animal’, which have little to do with zoological issues but function as stylistically marked metaphorical extensions, highlighting a certain aspect of human personality. Mirosław Bańko’s *A Different Dictionary of Polish* is even clearer in emphasising the distinctiveness of the popular understanding of *zwierzę*: “An animal is a living being such as a dog, horse or mouse, but unlike birds, fish, or insects” (ISJP 2000, II: 1397–1398). Only later does the dictionary say that the word can also refer to “every living being exclusive or inclusive of humans” (ISJP 2000, II: 1398).

These different ways of categorising reality in science and in the Polish language have already been noted by Ryszard Tokarski:

The general variety of the language situates the relationship between the term *zwierzę* ‘animal’ and the terms such as *owady* ‘insects’, *ryby* ‘fish’ or *ptaki* ‘birds’ differently from science. While in the scientific, zoological taxonomy the latter fall into the higher-order class of animals, in the general language the situation looks different. *Owad* ‘insect’ (*pszczola* ‘bee’, *mucha* ‘fly’ etc.) or *ptak* ‘bird’ (*kukułka* ‘cuckoo’, *bocian* ‘stork’ etc.) are not hyponyms, semantically subordinate to *zwierzę* ‘animal’. We do not talk about animals pollinating flowers; animals swimming in the river would be associated not with fish but with tetrapods swimming across the river or taking a bath; mentions of animals building their nests in trees would not be recognised as referring to birds. It seems that in the general language the word *zwierzę* [...] functions as a substitute for the scientific term *ssak* ‘mammal’, an element in the fish–birds–animals chain. (Tokarski 1993: 338)

Nothing has changed in this matter, despite the growing number of interferences between the scientific and popular rationality, compulsory education, and very easy access to popular scientific publications. This was confirmed in a simple test: a group of several dozen students were asked to answer the question “What animal bit John?”. The answers included a dog, cat, wolf, lion, tiger etc. but not a wasp, fly, bee, black fly, etc. Another question was “What living creatures can fly?”, with the answers mentioning birds, eagles, skylarks, sparrows, swallows, storks, insects, butterflies, flies, bees, wasps, bats, even humans, but not animals. When tasked with assessing two sentences: “It is a bird, but it cannot fly” and “It is an animal, but it cannot fly”, the young people judged the former as referring to an unusual element of its category (e.g. a domestic chicken, ostrich, penguin or a sick or mutilated bird), while the latter sentence was assessed as “somewhat strange, because usually animals are not characterised by flying”.

Linguistic sub-categorisations also point to differences in scientific and linguistic classification. For example, the expression *zwierzęta drapieżne* ‘predatory animals’ does not refer to all living beings that hunt and feed on other living beings – not to numerous species of reptiles, amphibians,

fish, birds, or insects. The largest predator is not the ladybird, although the amount of consumed aphids in relation to its body weight is really astonishing. We use this term only when referring to lions, tigers, leopards, wolves, foxes, martens, weasels, cats, etc. Similarly, the name *zwierzęta domowe* ‘domestic animals’ is not used in reference to all living beings that people breed in farms or keep at home for pleasure, but only to dogs, cats, horses, cattle and pigs, as well as to guinea pigs, white mice, etc. Hens, ducks, geese, turkeys, guinea-fowls belong to *ptactwo domowe* ‘poultry, domestic fowl’.

In the linguistic worldview, the category ANIMALS does not only have a different scope than in the scientific worldview, but it also clearly contrasts with the category HUMANS. Particular species of animals are assigned specific features but all animals belong to nature, not to culture, and stand in opposition to humans. Animals are deemed primitive, wild, unable to think, lacking awareness, and driven by instinct (rather than conscience, will, and reason). They are assumed to only experience lower feelings and to only have biological needs. Note the expressions *zezwierzęcieć* ‘become animalised’, i.e. ‘start acting primitively or cruelly’, *zezwierzęcenie* ‘animalisation’, i.e. ‘a state in which people behave primitively or act cruelly’, *zwierzęce instynkty* ‘animal instincts’, *zwierzęcy strach* ‘animal fear’ (extreme, intense), *zwierzęcy lęk* ‘animal anxiety’ (primeval), *zwierzęcy apetyt* ‘animal appetite’ (voracious), *zwierzęca żartoczność* ‘animal voracity’ (excessive). In contrast, we talk about a thinking, moral, cultural human being, human dignity and will, a man of conscience (but not about a thinking, moral, cultural animal, animal dignity/will, or an animal of conscience). The opposition humans–animals is strongly axiological. The anthropocentrism of language users leads them to recognise themselves as the most important beings, occupying the central place in the world and attributing to themselves what is good, whereas animals are assigned features that are bad or evil. Therefore, semantic derivatives or word-formations motivated by the words *człowiek* ‘human’ (n.) and *zwierzę* ‘animal’, as well as collocations containing these words carry different, polar valuations. The adjective *ludzki* ‘human’ or ‘humane’ means not only ‘relating or belonging to people’ but also ‘consistent with the human nature conceived as good, as it should characterise humans’ and ‘suitable or bearable for people, decent’, whereas the negated adjective *niehuman* ‘inhuman, inhumane’ has only two meanings – both evaluative. The noun *człowieczeństwo* ‘humanness, human nature’ does not designate all the features typical of humans but rather a set of positive, desirable features (in particular spiritual, rather than biological ones), as they relate to people but not animals. The idiomatic expressions *bądź człowiekiem* ‘be human’, *mów/zachowuj się/postępuj jak człowiek/po ludzku* ‘speak/behave/act like

humans do', *ludzki człowiek* 'a human person', *ludzki stan czegoś* 'a human state of something', *ktoś wyszedł na ludzi/na człowieka* 'somebody turned human' (i.e., 'made something of themselves'), *ktoś wyprowadził kogoś na ludzi* 'somebody guided somebody else to be human' (i.e., 'made something of somebody'), *z kogoś będą ludzie* 'there will be people of someone' (i.e., 'there is hope for someone to make it big') carry positive evaluation, while collocations such as *z kogoś wyszło zwierzę* 'the animal came out of someone', *zwierzę, nie człowiek* 'he's an animal, not a human', *ktoś żyje/mieszka/zachowuje się jak zwierzę* 'someone lives/behaves like an animal', or *ktoś jest wyzuty z ludzkich uczuć* 'someone is deprived of human feelings' carry negative evaluation. There is no doubt that if we compare someone (directly or indirectly) to an animal, we critically evaluate their behaviour as unworthy of a human being.⁶ The adjective *zwierzęcy* '(characteristic of) animal' is used to refer to something that we stereotypically associate with animals: wildness, inability to think, savageness, etc., for instance *zwierzęcy wyraz twarzy* 'animal-like facial expression', *zwierzęca bezmyślność* 'animal-like mindlessness'. The exponents of even more negative valuations are semantic derivatives and word-formations motivated by hyponyms of the word *zwierzę*, such as *bestia* 'beast'⁷ and *bydło* 'cattle'. The former refers to an exceptionally cruel and degenerate person,⁸ *bestialski* 'bestial/brutal' means extremely cruel and *bestialstwo* 'bestiality/brutality' is an extremely cruel conduct. A derivative of the term, the verb *rozbestwić* 'beast-V, make a beast of somebody' means 'to contribute to cause aggression and cruelty in someone', and *rozbestwić się* 'beast-V, reflexive' means 'to become wilful and insubordinate, get used to reprehensible practices'. The neosemantism *bydlę* 'horned animal' means 'a person of low moral value, exceptionally mean, uncultured, not in line with other people', *bydło* 'cattle' is used in reference to people, in particular an undifferentiated crowd, to which one feels reluctance. *Bydlęcy* 'bovine/relating to cattle' means 'unworthy of a person', e.g. *bydlęce życie* 'cattle life', *bydlęcić* 'cattle-V, became cattle-like' (i.e., 'to lose human dignity, to become corrupted'), *bydlęcić* 'cattle-V, induce cattle-like behaviour' means 'to cause moral degeneration, demoralise', and *zbydlęcenie* 'cattle-isation' is the condition of being cattle-like.

Culturally determined valuation also reveals metaphors based on the names of animal species; in particular, the names of domestic animals

⁶ In a tweet in April 2018, President of the USA Donald Trump referred to Bashar al-Assad, President of Syria, as an *animal*, after the latter's use of chemical weapons in the town of Douma. [editor's note]

⁷ The word comes from Latin, where it simply means 'animal'.

⁸ *Beast* is also used as a term for a person, animal, or device that evokes strong emotions, such as fear, anger, a sense of helplessness, but also admiration.

often have secondary meanings. For instance, referring to someone as *pies* 'dog' is humiliating and offending. *Suka* 'bitch' is a contemptuous term for a dissolute woman or any woman that someone wants to offend; this word is also used as a negative expression referring to a car for transporting prisoners. The word *szczeniak* 'puppy' (feminine *szczeniara*), in reference to a non-adult, expresses disrespect or contempt, as does *kundel* 'mongrel', used for any person treated with disrespect. *Piesek* 'a little dog' is also a contemptuous term for someone ready to resort to anything in order to gain the favour of the person they depend on. *Świnia* 'pig' is used for someone acting indecently or immorally, while *wieprz* 'hog' may designate a very fat, slovenly, and voracious man. A little less offensive term is *prosię* 'piglet', a common euphemistic or jocular name for a sloppy, disordered person or someone behaving inappropriately. *Baran* 'ram' is used in reference to someone considered stupid; *kocica* 'cat, feminine' to a woman who behaves provocatively towards men; *kobyła* 'mare' to a tall and unshapely woman or something large; *krowa* 'cow' to an unshapely, sluggish, and perhaps a lazy woman; *byk* 'bull' or *byczyisko* 'bull-AUG' to a heavy and sluggish or unintelligent and lazy man; *wół (roboczy)* '(working) ox' to someone who works very hard, especially physically, who is exploited and cannot rebel. *Cielę (na niedzielę)* 'calf (for Sunday)' is someone with little energy and unable to cope in life; *ciotek* 'young male calf' is used for someone slow on the uptake, not particularly bright. A stupid and stubborn person is called *osioł (dardanelski)* 'donkey (of Dardanelles)', *muł* 'mule', or sometimes *koziół* 'billy goat'. *Cap* 'an old male goat, usually gelt' refers to an old and stupid male that is lecherous with women. Excessive sexual activity is emphasised in the common names for a man, such as *ogier* 'stallion', *byk rozplodowy* 'breeding bull', *(stary) knur* '(old) boar', *buhaj* 'stud bull'.

The process of neosemantisation also encompasses the names of non-domestic animals found both in Poland or Europe and on other continents. The former include: *tchórz* 'polecat' – 'a coward, someone who does not behave as they should, for fear of danger, risk or difficulty';⁹ *lis* 'fox' – 'a clever, crafty, and devious man'; *jeleń* 'deer' – 'a man who can be easily deceived or exploited'; *kłępa* 'female elk' – 'a graceless, disgusting woman'; *wydra* 'otter' – 'a woman to whom one feels aversion, especially one that behaves or is dressed provocatively'; *niedźwiedź* 'bear' – 'an unshapely, clumsy man, unable to move or behave properly'; *chomik* 'hamster' – 'a person who stores things excessively, making unnecessary supplies'; *borsuk* 'badger' – 'a gloomy, secretive man, cherishing his solitude'; *myszka* 'mouse-FEM-

⁹ In modern Polish, this meaning dominates over the chronologically primary meaning (an animal species), e.g. it is mentioned first in lexicographic sources.

DIM' – 'a modest, inconspicuous, unattractive woman'. The second group comprises the following words: *małpa* 'monkey, ape' – 'someone whom we suspect of malice and at whom we are angry'; *koczkodan* 'vervet' – 'a person, usually a woman, who is ugly or badly dressed'; *stoń/słonica* 'elephant, masc. or fem.' – 'someone big, heavy, and moving awkwardly'; *bawół* 'buffalo' – 'a sluggish, dull man'; *hiena* 'hyena' – 'someone ruthless, preying on others' misfortune'; *szakal* 'jackal' – 'a man deriving profit from someone else's misfortune'.

Some of those semantic derivatives arose from observation of animals, their appearance and behaviour, but more frequently through anthropomorphism: animals are being endowed with human traits and intentions, typical (at least according to popular belief) only of humans – this then serves as the basis for metaphorical transfer. Animal metaphors usually express negative valuation. Positive valuation appears only occasionally and is frequently contextual, as in religious contexts: *owieczka* 'sheep-DIM', *baranek* 'lamb-DIM, masc.', *jagnię* 'lamb', *owczarnia* 'fold', *trzódka* 'flock-DIM' – these words are used in reference to the faithful. The diminutive suffix in some of them is worth noting here: it reverses the negative valuation of *baran* 'ram' and *trzoda* 'a herd of sheep; a sounder of pigs'. It can also mark a unique liking for certain creatures, as in *kociak* 'kitten', which also means 'a young and attractive girl'. Even the colloquial expression for a young, cheerful, and usually reckless girl, *koza* 'goat',¹⁰ is somewhat offensive.

Evaluative terms also include adjectives constructed on the basis of animal names, such as:

– *pieski, psi* 'of a dog', i.e. 'bad, miserable, pitiful': *pieski/psi czas* 'a lousy time', *pieska/psia pogoda* 'bad, rainy weather', *pieski/psi los* 'miserable fate', *pieskie/psie życie* 'miserable, poor life', *pieski świat* 'bad, miserable world', *pieski humor* 'bad mood', *pieskie szczęście* 'poor luck, bad luck', *pieska śmierć* 'a miserable, disgraceful death', *pieska służba/praca* 'menial, unrewarding service or work';

– *szczeniacki* 'of a puppy', i.e. 'characteristic of a non-adult, frivolous, and irresponsible person': *szczeniacki wybryk/szczeniackie zachowanie* 'juvenile prank; irresponsible behaviour';

– *kocia muzyka* 'cat-like music', i.e. 'noisy, unmelodious music that is unpleasant to the human ear', *kocia wiara* 'non-Catholic faith, usually in reference to Jehovah's Witnesses, thus an evil, despised faith';

– *barania głowa/teb* 'ram's head', i.e. 'a stupid person';

¹⁰ The negative semantic connotations of this word are even clearer in its other meanings of 'an arrest or a prison' and 'a lump of dried discharge in the nose'.

- *owczy pęd* ‘sheep’s rush’, i.e. ‘the herd instinct; mindless imitation of others, succumbing to the mood of a larger group’;
- *cielęcy* ‘of a calf’, i.e. ‘naive, stupid or lacking judgement’: *cielęcy wzrok* ‘goo-goo eyes’, *cielęcy zachwyt* ‘blind admiration’, *cielęcy wiek* ‘salad days’;
- *kobylasty* ‘like a mare’, i.e. ‘excessively large, awkward; (about a text:) too long, lengthy’: *kobylasta powieść* ‘a lengthy novel’, *kobylasty artykuł* ‘a lengthy article’;
- *końska twarz* ‘horse-like face’, i.e. ‘excessively elongated face’, *końskie zęby* ‘big, protruding, yellow and unattractive teeth’, *końskie zdrowie* ‘very good health’, *koński organizm* ‘strong, sturdy organism’;
- *świńskie oczka* ‘pig-like eyes’, i.e. ‘very small eyes, sunk in fat folds, very light, almost white’, *świński blondyn* ‘a man with very fair hair, eyebrows, eyelashes and skin’, *świńskie postępowanie/zachowanie*, *świński postępek* ‘behaviour or deed that is immoral and harmful to others’, *świńskie słowa/świński dowcip/kawał/film/rysunek* ‘indecent words, joke, film, or drawing with sexual content’;
- *świniowaty* ‘pig-like’, i.e. ‘indecent and dishonest, of a person, behaviour or deed’;
- *ośli upór/ośla głupota/głowa* ‘donkey-like stubbornness/stupidity/head’, i.e. ‘obstinate and stupid’, *ośla ławka* ‘a separate school desk for the worst students’, *ośla łączka* ‘an area with a gentle slope for beginner skiers’, *ośle uszy* ‘donkey’s ears’, i.e. ‘corners of book pages bent over out of negligence’;
- *małpi* ‘monkey-like, ape-like’, i.e. *małpia zręczność* ‘monkey-like dexterity’, *małpie miny* ‘monkey-like faces, lacking seriousness’, *małpia złośliwość* ‘monkey-like malice’;
- *borsukowaty* ‘resembling a badger: secretive, fond of loneliness, gloomy’: *borsukowaty character* ‘a badger-like character’, *borsukowaty wygląd* ‘a badger-like appearance’;
- *wilcza natura* ‘wolf-like nature’, i.e. ‘predatory, cruel, deceitful, ruthless, evil’, *wilcze prawo* ‘the law of the jungle; violence, anarchy’;
- *lisi* ‘fox-like’, i.e. ‘insincere, hypocritical, deceitful’: *lisie spojrzenie* ‘fox-like gaze’, *lisi uśmiech* ‘fox-ADJ smile’;
- *wydrowata kobieta/blondynka* ‘an otter-like woman/blonde’, i.e. ‘one that is dressed provocatively, with a provocative make-up; rarely: a quarrelsome woman’;
- *słoniowaty* ‘elephantine’, i.e. ‘resembling an elephant through one’s movements or silhouette; heavy, fat, clumsy’: *słoniowate ruchy* ‘elephantine movements’, *słoniowata postać* ‘elephantine silhouette’, *słoniowate nogi* ‘elephantine legs’.

Nearly all these collocations express negative valuation. Positive valuation is only occasional (e.g. *końskie zdrowie* ‘very good health’, *koński organizm* ‘strong, sturdy organism’) and is usually justified by the exceptional status of certain animals. It is striking that animals are perceived through the prism of human-like categories. Even the seemingly most objective features of referents such as an elongated muzzle, large teeth, or small eyes are relativised: people judge them with respect to human aesthetic standards. Paradoxically, however, animals are often assigned features that in the light of the linguistic worldview they cannot have. A specific temperament, higher feelings, thinking, morality are characteristic only of people. It is humans, and not animals, that can be characterised by a set of permanent psychological features that affect their emotional life and reactions to stimuli. In Polish, there is also a strong conviction that only people act in accordance with or against moral principles, only humans are capable of conscious and purposeful behaviour. Therefore, connotations of animal names are clearly anthropocentric. Human features are first projected onto particular animal species, then the image of that species can be used to refer to human affairs: this is how we begin to believe that we are not cruel, cunning, ruthless, vicious, stupid etc. – it is them, animals.

Evaluative cultural and semantic connotations of animal names also motivate the meanings of verbal derivatives (cf. above). Consider a few other examples: *baranieć* (from *baran* ‘ram’) ‘to lose the ability to reason, not to know what to do out of confusion, surprise etc.’; *byczyć się* (from *byk* ‘bull’) ‘to do nothing, to laze around’; *chomikować* (from *chomik* ‘hamster’) ‘to collect and store things, somewhat redundantly’; *bobrować* (from *bóbr* ‘beaver’) ‘to rummage around in search of something without being authorised to do so’; *myszkować* (from *mysz* ‘mouse’) ‘to look into different places, usually searching for something, without the owner’s knowledge’; *małpować* (from *małpa* ‘ape, monkey’) ‘to ape, imitate someone uncritically’; *psieć* (from *pies* ‘dog’) ‘to fall into decline, to lose importance’; *psuć* (also from *pies* ‘dog’)¹¹ ‘to spoil, damage; to cause something to cease to function normally or to become useless’, also ‘to cause someone to get worse’; *najeżyć/zjeżyć się* (from *jeż* ‘hedgehog’; reflexive) ‘to take on an aggressive attitude, to become inaccessible, distrustful’; *rozwydrzyć się* (from *otter* ‘wydra; reflexive’) ‘to start behaving boldly, breaking generally accepted rules, to stop listening to anyone’; *świnić* (from *świnia* ‘pig’) ‘to dirty or litter somewhere’, ‘to do things that are morally reprehensible, to harm someone’; *świntuszyć* (from *śwania* ‘pig’) ‘to talk about things that are considered indecent, usually

¹¹ The link between this verb and the noun *pies* seems opaque to contemporary speakers of Polish.

related to sex'; *wyświnić się* (also from *świnia*; reflexive) 'to get really dirty'; *ześwinić się* (from the same noun; reflexive) 'to become dishonest, immoral, mean'; *tchórzyc* (from *tchórz* 'polecat') 'not to have the courage to do what should be done in a given situation'; *złisić* (from *lis* 'fox') 'to discourage, put off, dishearten'; *złisić się* (from *lis*; reflexive) 'to discourage, put off oneself', 'to start doing things one's own way, to spend most of the time out'.

To this necessarily cursory list, one can add vulgarisms, e.g. *sukinsyn* 'son of a bitch', *psubrat* 'varlet' (lit. 'brother to a dog'), *psiakrew* 'dammit' (lit. 'dog's blood'), etc. But even this incomplete survey allows us to capture evaluative regularities. General axiological tendencies are also corroborated by collocations and phraseological units that contain animal names or their derivatives, e.g. *coś jest pod psem* ('something is under the dog') 'something is very bad'; *ktoś czuje się pod psem* ('somebody feels under the dog') 'somebody feels very bad'; *ktoś schodzi na psy* ('somebody goes down to the dogs') 'somebody deteriorates in moral terms'; *coś schodzi na psy* ('something goes down to the dogs') 'something gets worse'; *pies z kulawą nogą (nie przyszedł gdzieś, nie zainteresował się czymś* etc.) ('not even a dog with a lame leg came somewhere/was interested in something', etc.) 'no-one expressed any interest'; *ktoś wiesz psy na kimś/czymś* 'somebody hangs dogs on somebody else/something') 'somebody insults, slanders somebody else/disparages something'). There is a series of multi-word units referring to dogs that are used to express, in a disrespectful manner, the speaker's decision not to take note of someone else: *pies kogoś trącał* (lit. 'a dog nudged someone'), *pies z kimś tańczył* (lit. 'a dog danced with someone'), *pies komuś mordę lizał* (lit. 'a dog licked someone's kisser'), *jechał kogoś pies* (lit. 'a dog rode someone'). Cats figure prominently in another series: *ktoś ma kota* (lit. 'someone has a cat') 'that person is stupid'; *ktoś drze koty z kimś* (lit. 'someone tears cats with someone else') 'they are in conflict'; *ktoś popędził komuś kota* (lit. 'someone chased someone else's cat') 'they forced the other person to leave a place' or 'they scared/upset the other person'; *ktoś żyje na kocią łapę* (lit. 'they live on the cat's paw') 'they live together in an informal relationship, without being married'. Consider also: *ktoś podłożył komuś świnię* (lit. 'somebody put a pig to someone') 'they secretly did something to hurt the other person or spoil their reputation'; *ktoś zrobił kogoś w konia* (lit. 'someone made someone else into a horse') 'they cheated and/or ridiculed them, taking advantage of their naivety or ignorance'; *ktoś jeździ na kimś jak na tysej kobyle* (lit. 'someone is riding someone else like a bald mare') 'they treat the other person disrespectfully or exploit them'; *ktoś chodzi jak błędna owca* (lit. 'someone walks around like a blank sheep') 'they walk around aimlessly, without orientation in time and space, as if they were

unconscious'; *ktoś patrzy na kogoś lub na coś jak cielę na malowane wrota* (lit. 'someone looks at someone else or at something like a calf at painted gates') 'they look at the person or the thing in mindless astonishment'; *ktoś patrzy wilkiem* (lit. 'someone looks at someone else/something with wolf's eyes') 'they treat the other person or the object with distrust or hostility'; *ktoś patrzy baraním wzrokiem* (lit. 'someone looks at something with ram's eyes') 'they look at it as if they didn't understand anything'; *ktoś dostaje małpiego rozumu* (lit. 'somebody gets monkey's reason') 'they behave stupidly, unpredictably, insanely'; *ktoś śpiewa baraním głosem* (lit. 'somebody sings with a ram's voice') 'they sing out of tune' or 'they are crying'; *ktoś pokazał lwi pazur* (lit. 'someone showed a lion's claw') 'they showed their real talent or personality'; *stoń w składzie porcelany* 'bull (lit. elephant) in a china shop'; *samotny wilk* 'a lone wolf; a fighter or a terrorist acting alone'; *zajęcze serce* (lit. 'hare's heart') 'a cowardly person'; *krecia robota* (lit. 'mole's work') 'secretive, insidious, and destructive action'.

The belief that animals do not contribute anything valuable to life also transpires through plant names: mushrooms referred to as *psie* 'dog-ADJ' or *psiaki* 'young dogs' are worthless to humans, as is the plant called *szczawik zajęczy* (lit. 'hare's sorrel') 'common wood sorrel' (*Oxalis acetosella*). *Wawrzynek wilczetyko* (lit. 'wolf's phloem daphne') 'spurge laurel' (*Daphne mezereum*) and *wilcza jagoda* (lit. 'wolfberry') 'deadly nightshade' (*Atropa belladonna*) pose a threat to humans, hence their names contain the defining element *wilczy* 'lupine, wolfish'.

A characteristic feature of the Polish lexical system are words referring to human reality and parallel items referring to the reality of the animal world.¹² There are separate words for human and animal body parts:

Humans	Animals	Meaning
<i>głowa</i>	<i>łeb</i>	'head'
<i>usta</i>	<i>pysk, ryj, morda</i>	'mouth' – 'snout/muzzle'
<i>oczy</i>	<i>ślepia</i>	'eyes'
<i>język</i>	<i>ozór</i>	'tongue'
<i>ręka, noga</i>	<i>łapa</i>	'hand', 'leg' – 'paw'
<i>nogi</i>	<i>kopyta</i>	'legs' – 'hooves'
<i>plecy</i>	<i>grzbiet</i>	'back'

¹² The poet Wisława Szymborska capitalised on this in her poem *Widziane z góry* (*Seen from above*), whose fragment appears in the title of this study (translated by Stanisław Barańczak and Clare Cavanagh). Reference to it has been deferred until now, for the reader to have a chance, without being overwhelmed by the authority of the Nobel Prize winner, to ponder over these words, the opposition they introduce, and the motivation for them.

Also activities performed by people and animals are referred to with different terms: *jeść* ‘eat’ – *żreć* ‘feed/devour’; *umrzeć* – *zdechnąć*, *paść* ‘die’. These terms, neutral when concerning animals, regularly acquire negative connotations if used with reference to humans.¹³ The same applies to other “animal” words: *sfora* ‘pack’, *trzoda* ‘flock, herd, sounder’, *stado* ‘herd’; *szczekać* ‘bark’, *rżeć* ‘neigh’, *kwiczeć* ‘squeal’; *nora* ‘burrow’, i.e. ‘a poor, miserable apartment or a suspicious, dirty place’, *chlew* ‘pigsty’, i.e. ‘a very dirty room’, etc. Such a regularity can hardly be a coincidence. Zdzisław Kempf (1985, 1989), the first Polish linguist to address this problem in a systematic manner, interprets this process of pejoration in terms of human aristocratism, arrogance, pride of their own worth and disrespect (or even contempt) for everything that falls outside the human domain. The existence of a parallel series of lexical items their negative connotations derive from the human attitude of superiority over the rest of the world.¹⁴

By analysing the language we use, we can understand ourselves and the rules governing our thinking and action, since our worldview involves not only declared or accepted beliefs, but also (or mainly?) unconsciously entertained images and expectations, modelled largely through language. The Polish language, by means of what Adam Schaff calls “social glasses”, affects the way we perceive animals, strengthens and consolidates the belief that we differ from animals in fundamental ways, being better and wiser than they are. The reasons for this conviction are not contemplated, nor is its actual validity. Without even trying to establish what, if anything, entitles us to favour humans over animals, we deny them many rights that we grant to ourselves.

A conference organised in 2014 by the Institute of Literary Research gathered animal studies specialists with the aim of addressing the following question: “Animals and Their People. The Fall of the Anthropocentric Paradigm?”. The answer to that question continues to be negative. The paradigm that frames our position in this respect has existed for centuries: it reflects valuations characteristic of our culture, although language has

¹³ As a reviewer of this article aptly noticed, this also explains why people avoid using the word *zdechnąć* ‘die’ in reference to the death of their favourite animal: a beloved dog, cat, or horse. When the verb is used in reference to people, the “inferiority” of their death is intensified: *Obyś zdechtł jak pies!* ‘May you die like a dog!’, *Niech zdycha pod płotem!* ‘Let him/her die under the fence!’.

¹⁴ However, this is not a universal feature and many languages do not distinguish between human and animal body parts. An example is Basque (cf. Frank forthcoming), which also does not have indigenous words for ‘person’ or ‘people’ (only borrowings from Spanish). The Basque linguistic worldview contains a strong notion of a unity of human and animal worlds. [editor’s note]

contributed to its perpetuation in significant ways. The Judeo-Christian tradition is based on the concept of the Great Chain of Being,¹⁵ formulated already in antiquity, which in its extended version embraces five levels of existence. God occupies the top of the hierarchy, people are the crown of creation, whereas animals occupy a lower position. As argued by Tomasz P. Krzeszowski (1989, 1990), the hierarchical ordering of beings constitutes the axiological world order. This way of thinking found its way into the Polish language, only to be assimilated – as a form of feedback – by subsequent generations of language users. People’s conviction of their own superiority over animals is further strengthened by the Biblical command given to man “to replenish the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (Genesis 1: 28, KJV).¹⁶

Translated by Rafał Augustyn

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¹⁵ Cf. Lovejoy (1936) for an extremely interesting account of the sources, development, and significance of this concept in Western philosophy.

¹⁶ This was the theme of the 2017 conference “Poland has not died yet. The village”, organised by the then Polish Minister of Environment Jan Szyszko and Rev. Tadeusz Rydzik, director of the *Radio Maryja* station. It was attended by politicians, scientists, priests, and employees of State Forests, and was devoted to the contribution of the Church and the practice of hunting to the development of the Polish village. One of the participants, in a paper titled “A philosophical analysis of the ideological basis of the animisation of human and the humanisation of animals and trees” accused ecologists of equating people with animals, which can apparently lead to a total destruction of humanity. However, a radically different stance is taken by Pope Francis in his encyclical *Laudato Si’* (Francis 2015), which says: “Although it is true that we Christians have at times incorrectly interpreted the Scriptures, nowadays we must forcefully reject the notion that our being created in God’s image and given dominion over the earth justifies absolute domination over other creatures” (section 67).

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