

## **Zoomorphism and anthropomorphism: fruitful fallacies?**

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### **Abstract**

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*Zoo- and anthropomorphism may both be scientific heresies but both may serve as a basis for thought (and real) experiments designed to explore our ability to assess quality of life as perceived by another sentient animal. Sentience, a major contributor to evolutionary fitness in a complex environment, implies 'feelings that matter'. Strength of motivation is a measure of how much they matter. Since humans and most domestic animals share the property of sentience, it follows that some aspects of feeling may be similar, and where we differ, the differences may be of degree rather than absolute. One of the assumed absolutes that I shall challenge is the concept that non-human animals live only in the present. I explore how domestic animals may experience the feelings of hunger, pain, fear and hope. Hunger is indisputably a primitive sensation. Pain and fear are primitive sensations with emotional overtones. The problem is to discover how they may affect quality of life. Acute pain and fear are positive signals for action to avoid harm. These actions and their consequences ('how well did I cope?') will be committed to memory and affect how an animal feels when they recur, or it fears they may recur. Hope (and its antithesis, despair) are considered by many philosophers (who do not own dogs) as emotions restricted to humans since only we can imagine the future. However, by application of zoomorphism we may classify hope with hunger as a primitive feeling of dissatisfaction with the status quo. Either may lead to action directed towards the goal of feeling better or encourage the belief that things will get better (food will arrive). Both are feelings of expectation for the future modulated in the light of past experience. With all these four emotions quality of life may be expressed in terms of how well the animal feels it can cope, both in the present and in the future. When it feels it cannot cope, then it will suffer.*

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