WHEN AM I HUMAN ENOUGH TO DESERVE HUMANITY?

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To design better for non-human animals, we need to stop thinking in extractive ways and allow for the complexity of the natural world to exist along side our own understanding of the world. The problem is a systemic problem and therefore the solution needs to start with understanding how our language, our rules and our thought exclude and other, non-human animals as well as humans (i.e. marginalised groups).

My posters are a reflection of my research, in which I unpack the complex interplay of systemic and structural problems that have led us to our current human centered egoistic approach. In this work I want to put the questions and thoughts regarding our own human ego at the centre of the problem so as to, in turn criticise it and give space for discussion and reflection on it.

MADE WITH: Spray paint, water color paper, sketch paper stencils

WHEN AM I "HUMAN" ENOUGH

¿TO DESERVE HUMANITY?

AS LONG AS IT'S HUMAN

THEIR PROXIMITY
TO "HUMANESS" DETERMINES
THEIR
PRIVELEDGE
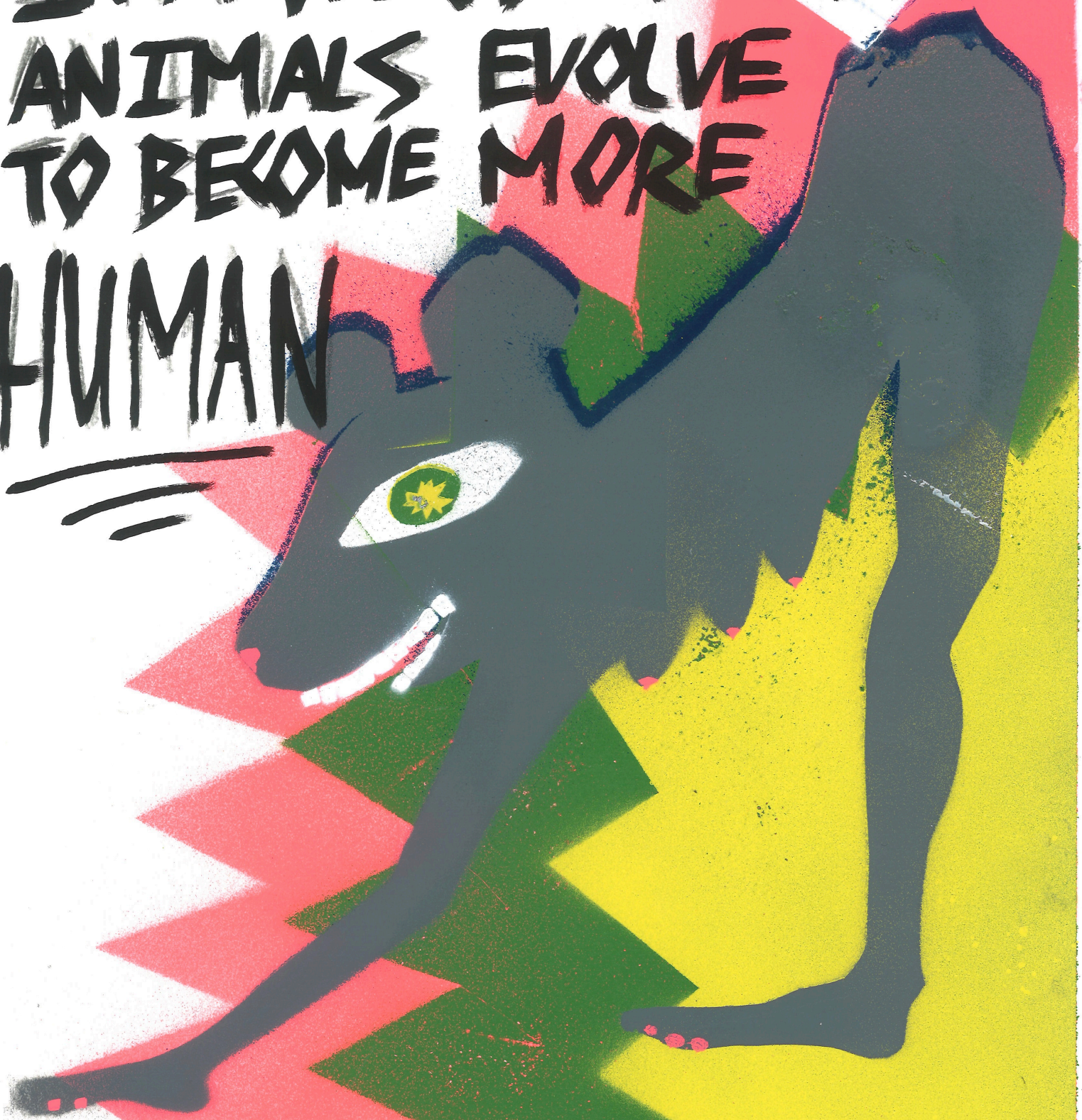AND
QUALITY OF LIFE

IT IS A-OKAY

IN A WORLD WHERE ANIMALS EVOLVE TO BECOME MORE HUMAN

TO SURVIVE

THE HUMAN EGO IS NOT REAL
IT'S NOT TANGIBLE, IT'S
MADE UP, HUMANS ARE
MADE UP, MADE UP BY
MOLECULES. LIFE, ALIVE
IS MADE UP.

Points of my research leading up to my end project:

My main objective, something that became clear during the course of my bachelor Nanobiology, is that everything is connected. When learning about the cell mechanism on such a small scale it became clear that any action inside a cell, any function fundamental to any life to exist, was an interplay of parts, each as important as the next. These cellular pathways are like an orchestra of molecules arranged into DNA, proteins, and full fletched cellular networks. From this I have seen over and over that everything even at this small scale is connected. Now learning about the complex interplay between oppressive systems that make up the current social and political climate, I again see this idea of connection come back. This term is nothing new, the way we interact with our environment and non-human animals is a direct reflection and also directly linked to how we interact within our own social networks.

This point is further shown in the point made by @ayandastood (Instagram handle)[1] who says:"
"Every form of oppression on earth has involved dehumanizing that group of people, whether that is in Palestine, Rwanda, Congo, Sudan, South Africa, the USA and slavery, the holocaust and Jewish people. Every single form of this, the language has been: equate these people to animals and that will justify their oppression. But there's a subtle assumption in that, a premise, where essentially you'd have to believe that animals are worthy of oppression to believe that all you have to do is dehumanize someone or a group of people in order to justify their oppression but actually if we chose to believe that animals are in and of themselves worthy of love worthy of protection, worthy of being celebrated as divine beings like sentient loving beings then we would not feel like dehumanization was a vehicle to justify white supremacy and oppresion"

So, with these insights I want to directly criticise the Symbioscene as presented to us[2] in this project term for its shallow and reductive ideology by creating connections between the problems of our views and treatment of non-human animals and our treatment of marginalised groups in society, and for this term the objective is to visualise these connections. The linked text is shallow in the way it describes the current climate problem as an alone standing problem, one that should be solved by e.g. Bioplastic cups. It does not take in account all the other systemic issues that have led to the climate crisis and how any solution should start from there. Instead it actually plays into harmful behaviour like consumerism to try and 'fix' the climate, even describing to create a 'new layer' on the polluted layer (layers as in strata). As if, if we just create enough bio inspired things we will be able to cover up and fix the problem, pretend like it was never there. It is also hypocritical in the idea that it is suppose to be an opposing idea from Anthropocene yet does not show the self-awareness that the idea in and of itself is inherently from a human perspective. Thus, allowing people who practise it to completely forgo any responsibility that inherently comes with the positions humans hold over nature.

It starts with the observation of lab animals their treatment being linked to their level of "complexity", this definition of complexity then coming from an human centred idea, the idea that human beings are most complex. Thus, the sentence can become for the case of lab animals: " their proximity to 'humanness' determines their privilege and quality of life". To make the previously named connection I then parallel this sentence with a sentence applying to marginalised groups directly linking it to white supremacy: " their proximity to whiteness determines their privilege and quality of life". And this parallel will center this project.
The latter comes also from personal experience as I have experienced racism like name calling as a Chinese Dutch person. It has always been sad to me that my appearance not being white makes it so these people who yell racist names are less empathetic towards me. As if relating to another human being is linked to how close that human is to being white. This parallel also led me to my central question which is "when am I "human" enough to deserve humanity?" leaving the "I" and the "human" purposefully open so as to apply to both paralleling cases.

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[1] @Ayandastood. Posted 14 Jan 2024. https://www.instagram.com/reel/C2F35nUuHA8/?igsh=OW1qYjd0M2YyNHN4

[2] G. Albrecht. Glenn Albrecht's Future Vision.

My critique on this way of considering animals i.e. their proximity to us humans, is that which is also expressed in the book "when animals speak" by Eva Meijer, which is that we need to consider how our thinking and the basis in which we criticise or compartmentalise the world is biased and exclusive to humans. That we can not and should not reduce animals to what is familiar to us and that this reductive nature should not be the basis on which we start a conversation or start to try and listen to these non-human animals. This directly parallels my opinion: I don't think we should all become more white in order to be more accepted, be respected or deserve decency. When people talk about a 'basis' to understand and care for eachother how often do they reflect on how this basis is founded in white surprimacy? (examples: code switching, white beauty standards, the treatment of people of color in Ukraine and the genocide in Palestine) This to me seems so fundamental that it feels odd to write out, but it is still not the case, especially not in the Netherlands.

For the visualisation there are two things that ties together my critique and my desire for change; I will apply a method that is similar to what @joris.lechene (instagram handle)[3] described in his reel. In which, in order to prevent the seemingly inevitable stagnation of a discussion around social change, the problem can be presented in an uncomfortable manner, uncomfortable for the group that is unaware of the impact of white supremacy and colonialism as part of the problem in the case described by the reel. Discomfort, like a constant needle in consciousness can hopefully make the discussions that need to happen, happen, to get to self-awareness and thereby actual systemic and structural change, continue to occur.

To visually show this critique I turn to the psychological phenomena ' the uncanny Valley' coined by Masahiro Mori.[4] Mori speaks of how even though we might expect more likability and relatability towards robots as they start to resemble humans more closely, there comes a moment in this development where the human-likeness instills discomfort in us people instead. It is a moment when this robot looks familiar enough to be recognised as human but feels just not right.

Thus, in this same way I wanted to use the uncanny valley as a metaphor. To make up this imaginary event in which animals evolve to become more human-like and grow into this uncanny valley. How the uncanny valley is created by humans trying to make something more human, imagining that that would be better. To push the idea that white supremacy and everything connected to it, as a basis or foundation of human connection will come off as fake, uncomfortable for all parties and that we should not want it. In this case I am paralleling white supremacy to human supremacy and exceptionalism. It also gives an insight into how humans are flawed in their definitions of what is better.

The idea of the posters and the visual elements are direct references from the theory class discussions.

[3] @joris.lechene and @pal_action. Posted 10 March 2024. https://www.instagram.com/reel/C4WLpAmopX7/?igsh=MXQ0M2hodzE3bm51ZA==

[4] M. Mori, translated by: K. F. MacDorman, N. Kageki. 12 Jun 2012.

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