

# The Transpersonal Nature of Animals

Paul F. Cunningham

Rivier College

## Abstract

Transpersonal concepts are rarely brought to bear in discussions about the nature of nonhuman animals. The purpose of this article is to fill this gap in the literature by discussing the transpersonal nature of animals from the perspective of mystic and writer Jane Roberts. A transpersonal synthesis of science and spirit that considers the possibility that human and nonhuman consciousness arises from a common spiritual principle has the potential to produce a more complete understanding of the nature of life, mind, and consciousness.

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How widely are transpersonal phenomena distributed in nature? Are transpersonal characteristics and abilities unique elements of human personality, or are transpersonal attributes also found in nonhuman animals? If nonhuman animals possess a transpersonal nature, then how similar is it to that of humans? Is the transpersonal nature of human animals different in kind from the transpersonal nature of nonhuman animals, or only different in degree? Answers to these questions about the continuity of the transpersonal nature of human and nonhuman animals are vital for understanding the nature of life, mind, and consciousness.

Transpersonal scholars appear reluctant to answer these questions. For instance, although published articles have addressed the human use of animals as means to transpersonal ends (e.g., DeMares & Krycha, 1998; Dregson, 1980; Gallegos, 1983), none have attributed a transpersonal nature to animals themselves. Transpersonal concepts are rarely brought to bear in debates about the ethics of animal experimentation in biomedicine and behavioral science. The topic of “animals” is seldom listed in the index of transpersonal psychology books, even scholarly treatises devoted to a transpersonal view of the evolution of human consciousness (e.g., Wilber, 1981). Transpersonal theorists have developed their theories anthropocentrically, hardly giving any attention to animals in their theorizing.

The absence of discussion in transpersonal studies about a hypothesized transpersonal nature in animals is surprising given the dynamic assumptions about the sacred nature of life in the universe that underlie most spiritual psychologies (Tart, 1975/1992). The failure to consider the possible transpersonal nature of animals is unexpected in light of the significant role that animals have played in the evolution of human culture and civilization, including literature and art, religion and science, mythology and folklore, work systems and global economics, recreation and advertising, socialization and family structure, law and politics, medicine and environmental issues (Bryant, 1993; Plous, 1993). The lack of attention to controversies associated with the human use of animals in biomedical, behavioral, and wildlife research, cosmetic safety testing, education, the food industry, commerce, and religious practices is unanticipated in the light of the special connection between spirituality and ethics and transpersonal psychology’s vision of humankind’s necessary intellectual and moral evolution to a more aware and compassionate view of life (Randour, 1997; Walsh & Vaughn, 1993a, section 10).

Unless this reluctance to examine the nature of nonhuman animals from a transpersonal perspective can be overcome, there is the danger that a “speciest” transpersonal psychology will develop to impede progress in our understanding of those great forces within yet beyond nature that gave birth to human consciousness. Until transpersonal studies sees nature and nonhuman animals in a greater context, with greater motives, purposes and meanings than now assigned to them, then the study of the transpersonal nature of the *human* animal cannot be complete. A more open-minded and open-hearted approach that considers the possibility of latent and incipient transpersonal abilities and characteristics in nonhuman animals has the potential to produce a more complete understanding of the nature of life, mind, and consciousness.

Logically, there is no *a priori* reason for excluding animals from having a transpersonal nature. Just as there appears to be no clear morally relevant difference between human and nonhuman animals that would exclude animals from the moral domain (Rollin, 1985), there is no clear spiritually relevant difference between human and nonhuman animals that would exclude animals from the transpersonal

domain. If “all human beings (and all creatures and creation) partake of...spiritual reality” (Cortright, 1997, p. 9), then a discussion of the transpersonal nature of animals and its implications for human-animal interactions would seem to be a legitimate and valid endeavor.

The aim of the present article is to fill the gap in the literature by describing the transpersonal nature of nonhuman animals from the perspective of mystic and writer Seth-Jane Roberts (Butts, 1997a, 1997b, 1998a, 1998b, 1999a, 1999b; 1999c; 2000; 2002; Roberts, 1966, 1970, 1972, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1979a, 1979b, 1981a, 1981b, 1986a, 1986b, 1986c, 1995, 1997). Jane Roberts’s trance-channeled *Seth Material* is chosen as a focal point to discuss the transpersonal nature of animals because it ostensibly originates from unconscious sources that are arguably transpersonal in nature (Hastings, 1991). It presents a perspective that has the weight of the transpersonal disciplines behind it as it considers the possibility that life, mind, and consciousness arise from a common spiritual principle that exists within all life forms and not in humans alone (Tart, 1975/1992). It is a perspective that can be experienced, understood and verified through an act of Being-cognition – a part of our natural way of knowing and feeling in which human intellect and intuition both have status (Maslow, 1971). Through its comparison with Western orthodox psychology’s current view of animals, the transpersonal perspective of Seth-Jane Roberts brings into experience in heightened form aspects of the issue that would not otherwise be clearly delineated.

To convey an appreciation of the nature of the psyche – its human and nonhuman expression – from the transpersonal vantage point of Seth-Jane Roberts, eight aspects of psychic life are examined: (a) consciousness, (b) relationship with nature, (c) emotions, (d) cognition, (e) free will, (f) self-consciousness, (g) imagination, and (h) dignity of a spiritual life. Each of these aspects of psychic life is a spiritual as well as a psychological attribute (Assagioli, 1968, 1973, 1991). Each aspect is a link between individual being and spiritual Reality, and a means by which the continuity in the transpersonal nature of human and nonhuman animals and the dignity of a spiritual life are revealed.

One way to begin discussion of the transpersonal nature of animals is by extending the logic of transpersonal concepts from human to nonhuman animals within the context of behavioral, physiological, and ethological evidence for the continuity of psychic life. (For an ample review, see Bekoff & Jamison, 1996; Boakes, 1984; Byrne & Whitten, 1988; Cheney & Seyfarth, 1990; Dawkins, 1995; Gould & Gould, 1994; Parker, Boccia, & Mitchell, 1994; Pearce, 1987; Rollin, 1989; Tomasello & Call, 1997; Vaclair, 1996). Behavioral data gives information about communication by animals such as bees, apes, dolphins, lions, and birds that appear to convey their preferences, desires, intents, and purposes to members of their own species (Barber, 1993; Hauser, 1999; Pepperberg, 2000; W. Roberts, 1998; Savage-Rumbaugh & Lewin, 1994; Skutch, 1996; Walker, 1983). For instance,

there is now evidence that animals form memories for serial lists, show a bowed serial-position curve, precisely keep track of intervals of time, have numerical competence, and form conceptual categories (p. 22)...Animals form *representations* about the environment and then *process information*. (W. Roberts, 1998, p. 17)

Physiological data supplies information that correlates brain activity with purposeful behavior (Allen & Bekoff, 1997; Moss & Shettleworth, 1996). Ethological data provides information about animals’ versatile adaptability in behavior when coping with novel and unpredictable challenges in simple but apparently rational ways as when, for example, seeking food, avoiding predators, and constructing tools (Griffin, 1992).

A full comprehension of the implications of the empirical data supporting the hypothesis of a continuity of psychic life in human and nonhuman animals cannot be complete if the relevance of transpersonal psychology for understanding the life, mind, and consciousness of nonhuman animals is ignored, denied, or overlooked by orthodox psychologists generally, and transpersonal psychologists in particular. According to Seth-Jane Roberts (1974),

You cannot appreciate your spirituality unless you appreciate your creaturehood. It is not a matter of rising above your [animal] nature, but of evolving from the full understanding of it. There is a difference....Your humanness did not emerge by refusing your animal heritage, but upon an extension of what it is. (p. 237)

Consciousness. Consciousness (i.e., the quality of action being aware) is an important concept in most definitions of transpersonal psychology (Lajoie & Shapiro, 1992; Walsh & Vaughn, 1993b). Historically, both psychology and religion have tended to grant consciousness to our own species while denying it in others. Psychologists are still reluctant to grant other creatures much subjective dimension or rich psychological activity for fear of being accused of “anthropomorphism” (Kennedy, 1992; Mitchell, Thompson, and Miles, 1997). From the transpersonal perspective of Seth-Jane Roberts, however, the consciousness that exists within animals is as valid and eternal as our own: “You are not separated from the animals and the rest of existence *by virtue of* possessing an eternal inner consciousness. Such a consciousness is present within all living beings, and in all forms (Roberts, 1972, p. 432).”

If nonhuman animals possess consciousness, then how similar is it to that of humans? Are the mechanics of consciousness in human animals different in kind from that of nonhuman animals, or only different in degree? According to Seth-Jane Roberts,

The mechanics of consciousness remain the same. They do not change for animals and men (Roberts, 1972, p. 365)... There is no such thing as cat consciousness, basically speaking, or a bird consciousness. In those terms, there are instead simply consciousnesses that choose to take certain focuses. ...If there is no consciousness ‘tailored’ to be a cat’s or a dog’s, then there is no *prepackaged*, predestined, particular consciousness that is meant to be human, either. ...The quality of identity is far more mysterious than you understand. (Roberts, 1981a, pp. 186-187)

On this view, although the mechanics of consciousness are the same for human and nonhuman animals, it is the different *focuses* that consciousnesses may *choose* to take that results in different qualities of conscious experience, different ways of perceiving reality, and different kinds of interior life among species (Roberts, 1977, 1979a). There are as many luxuriant and diverse focuses of consciousness as there are physical species. The varieties of consciousness are so different from ours that we can only approximately grasp the meaning inherent in some of them. Animals are not simply humans dressed up differently. Animals are poor models for humans for the same reason that humans are poor models for animals -- species variation in the focuses of consciousness.

From the transpersonal perspective of Seth-Jane Roberts, humans possess a kind of consciousness that is unique in the large number, range and variety of wants and desires – physical, moral, aesthetic, and intellectual. “Human consciousness normally experiences wide sweeps of rhythms, varying states of awareness, and its amazing flexibility is partially dependent upon its lack of rigidity, its own spontaneous inclinations, and its capacity for curiosity, wonder, discovery, and emotion” (Roberts, 1997, p. 287). Animal consciousness is a more selective, *focused*, present-oriented consciousness. Animals, both domestic and wild, are alert to everything in their environment, focus

their attention in very specific directions, react in a certain fashion, do not dwell upon the past, nor worry about the future in the way that humans do (Roberts, 1981a). Although nonhuman animals may possess a kind of consciousness that does not allow them as many freedoms as our own, at the same time, they are not hampered in its use by certain characteristics that often impede the practical potential of human consciousness.

Relationship with nature. According to Seth-Jane Roberts (1977a, 1979a), our species adopted a predominant line of consciousness in the course of evolution that found it necessary to isolate itself to some extent from its environment and from other creatures and to a certain degree was bent on dominating nature. This kind of consciousness was considered masculine in essence while the feminine principle became connected with the earth and all those elements of life over which the species hoped to gain control. Spirit and nature, male and female, human and nonhuman animals, reason and emotion, mind and body became divided in Western civilization so that we now encounter events in our lives largely in that context.

This "boundaried" consciousness (a la Wilber, 1979) creates a framework of highly limited, conflicting beliefs that serves to limit our comprehension and distort our perception of the physical environment, and foster feelings of insecurity, dissatisfaction, and self-condemnation, such that it often seems that we are working at cross-purposes with ourselves. The human reasoning mind becomes forced to operate by itself, psychologically isolated from the self's other faculties and divorced from other subjective portions of the personality (e.g. emotions, dreams, and intuitions) that are meant to bring the intellect additional information that it does not possess. We feel divorced from our own bodies and end up studying biological processes as if we somehow stand apart from them and as if the dynamics of human health and disease can be understood from a biological standpoint alone (Engel, 1977; Rosenzweig, Leiman, & Breedlove, 1999). We feel divorced from the events of nature and end up trying to control the behavior of organisms in a natural environment with which we have lost rapport (Mason, 1997; Sheldrake, 1990). Nature seems like an adversary that must be conquered, dominated, and controlled. We end up with a human world that, in the words of Ken Wilber (1997), has "gone slightly mad."

Animals, on the other hand, instinctively realize their relationship with the great forces of nature and do not separate themselves from nature as much as humans do.

Nature in all of its varieties is so richly *encountered* by the animals that it becomes their equivalent of your structures of culture and civilization. They respond to its rich nuances in ways impossible to describe, so that their 'civilizations' are built up through the interweavings of sense data that you cannot possibly perceive. They know, the animals, *in a way* that you cannot, that their private existences have a direct impact upon the nature of reality. (Roberts, 1981a, p. 162)

Because animals do not divorce themselves from nature, they are better able to understand its manifestations than humans do. For instance, animals know of weather conditions ahead of time and will migrate if necessary to seek conditions more auspicious (Grosvenor, 1972). They are aware of approaching natural disasters and when possible will leave such areas (Bardens, 1987).

Emotions. Western orthodox psychology has denied the existence of emotions in animals ever since Descartes declared that only humans are dignified by emotional feelings. From the standpoint of Seth-Jane Roberts (1997), however, "*all* aspects of life experience not only sensations *but emotional feelings*.... Even the smallest of creatures shares with you the emotional experience of life's triumphs

and vulnerabilities" (p. 206). Each species is endowed with emotional feelings that are as valid and significant as our own. The world of affect may be invisible, yet it activates all living systems.

The emotion of love, for instance, is a biological as well as a spiritual characteristic and is not the prerogative of one species alone. Traditionally, any instances of love among nonhuman animals are assigned to "blind" instinct so that one female will do as well as another. Even animals, however, understand without words or language the importance of their sexual behavior and individuality matters. We take it for granted that individual differences do not apply in species different from our own, yet from the transpersonal perspective of Seth-Jane Roberts (1979b):

Animals, as any [companion animal] owner knows, have their own personalities and characteristics, and individual ways of perceiving the reality available to them....Their consciousness can be immeasurably quickened by contact with friendly humans, and emotional involvement with life is strongly developed. (Roberts, 1972, p. 365)

On this view, love and cooperation, loyalty and tenderness are basic needs that are biologically pertinent and show themselves in many ways (see for example, Masson & McCarthy, 1995). In the wild, for instance, many animals protect and provide for wounded and disabled members. Even in animal groups, individuals are not only concerned with personal survival but with the survival of family members. "The wisdom that comes with age is indeed appreciated even in the animal kingdom" (Roberts, 1997, p. 162).

Cognition. We like to think of ourselves as the reasoning animal and automatically assume that only reasoning species are capable of understanding life's values. We know that animals display curiosity, but do they reason? Can they understand cause and effect? According to Seth-Jane Roberts (1977),

Animals do reason. They do not reason in the same areas as you do. In those areas in which they do reason, they understand cause and effect quite well. Their reasoning is applied, however, to levels of activity to which your own reasoning is not applied. Therefore, animal reasoning is often not apparent to you. Animals are curious. Their curiosity is applied to areas in which you seldom apply your own. ( p. 61)

Unfortunately, we have become so specialized in our use of the reasoning mind and so prejudiced in its favor, that it seems there is only one narrow kind of rationality – human rationality. Our tendency as a species has been to examine all other kinds of consciousness using the human reasoning mind as the only yardstick by which to judge intelligent life and to see the value of life only as that life conforms to our own standards. Why is this so?

Man is so highly verbal that he finds it difficult to understand that other species work with idea-complexes...of a different kind, in which of course thought as *you* consider it is not involved. But an equivalent exists; using an analogy, it is as if ideas were built up not through sentence structure reinforced by inner images, but by 'mental' patterns structured through touch and scent – in other words, thinking, but within a framework entirely different and alien to you. (Roberts, 1974, p. 278)

Animal reasoning is thinking that exists within the self-regulating, precise, safe, and yet limiting framework of instinct (Tinbergen, 1951). Human thinking, on the other hand, is largely structured through verbal patterns. It no longer "blindly" follows instinctual impulses in this regard but extrudes

from outside of that framework. On this view, human reasoning mind is a psychological system that is simply one of innumerable methods of organizing data available to consciousness.

Free will. The difference between human and nonhuman thinking has important implications for understanding the nature of free will (volition) in animals. Biological psychology tends to reduce human thinking and volition to erratic activity of generalized neurological brain processes (Damasio, 1994; Kalet, 1998; Rosenweig, Leiman, & Breedlove, 1999). From the framework of Seth-Jane Roberts (1981a), free will is neither an illusory epiphenomenon of neural firings, nor the exclusive property of humans alone.

Man has free will within the framework of his existence, *and...all other species do also within the frameworks of their existences.* The chicken cannot read a book. It cannot *choose* to read. The plant cannot choose to walk down the street. The chicken and the plant can choose to live or die, however – rather important issues in the existence of any entity. They can choose to like or dislike their environment, and to change it according to their individual circumstances. (p. 262)

Animal behavior patterns are more limited than humans', in a way freer and more automatically expressed, but narrower in that the events an animal encounters in his world are not as extensive as our own. Human behavior patterns require a finer discrimination because we are directly faced with a far more complex social and cultural environment than other animals, dealing particularly with symbols and concepts reflected in one's religious sentiments and philosophical beliefs, political frameworks and economic realities that cannot be isolated from the psychological and biological status of the individual.

Self-consciousness. Do animals possess self-consciousness (i.e., the quality of action being aware of itself)? Do nonhuman animals have an awareness of "self"? Do animals recognize that it is they themselves who act when they are acting? Or is a human-type intellect required for self-consciousness? From the transpersonal perspective of Seth-Jane Roberts,

With animals, there are varying degrees of division between the self who acts and the action involved (Roberts, 1974, p. 174)... Animals have varying degrees of self-consciousness, as indeed people do. The consciousness within them is as valid and eternal as your own, however. (Roberts, 1972, p. 364)

One does not necessarily need a *human* intellect, in other words, in order to be aware of one's identity. Phenomenologically, people's experience of their own intellect does not ordinarily contain their identity (Valle & Halling, 1989). Logically, a sense of identity need not inevitably be coupled with the intellect exclusively. If animals do not reflect upon the nature of their own identities as humans do, it is because animals intuitively comprehend that nature in a way that human self-consciousness does not.

Imagination. The existence of imagination can be inferred from observations of learning and memory in animals. Pavlov's dogs, for instance, demonstrated that animals could learn through classical conditioning to anticipate events such as being fed. Thorndike's cats demonstrated problem-solving ability. Tolman's rats showed the capacity to acquire cognitive maps and knowledge of the location of reinforcers in a maze. Skinner's rats revealed an ability to repeat actions that bring desired results and to avoid actions that bring punishment. Cook and Mineka (1990) found that through modeling, monkeys could develop a fear of snakes from watching a video of monkeys behaving fearfully in the presence of artificial snakes.

Is such learning and memory possible without imagination? Can animals imagine an event that has never happened to them, or is their imagination limited to the products of past experience? How do the imaginative abilities of human and nonhuman animals differ in this regard? According to Seth-Jane Roberts (1981a),

It is fashionable to believe that animals do not possess imagination, but this is a quite erroneous belief. They anticipate mating, for example, before its time. They *all* learn through experience, and despite all of your concepts, learning is impossible without imagination at any level. In your terms, the imagination of animals is limited. Theirs is *not* merely confined to the elements of previous experience, however. They can imagine events that never happened to them. Man's abilities in this respect *are* far more complicated, for in his imagination he deals with probabilities. In any given period of time...he can anticipate or perform an infinitely vaster number of events – each one remaining probable until he activates it. (pp. 48-49)

Because we can conceive of probable events and manipulate them in our imagination, humans inevitably show a wider variety and range of biological and behavioral reactions than nonhuman animals do to the same stimuli. From the transpersonal perspective of Seth-Jane Roberts,

The animals do have imagination, regardless of your current thought. Yet man is so gifted that he directs his experience and forms his civilization largely through the use of his imaginative abilities. You do not understand this point clearly at all, but your social organization, your governments – these are based upon imaginative principles. The basis of your most intimate experience, the framework behind all of your organized structures, rests upon a reality that is not considered valid by the very institutions that are formed through its auspices. (Roberts, 1981a, p. 141)

The existence of imagination in animals can also be inferred from observations of animals' dream and play activity. The link between rapid eye movement (REM) sleep and dreaming in humans, coupled with the observation that nearly all birds and mammals display REM sleep (Campbell & Tobler, 1984; Siegel, 1995), raises the question of whether animal dream states and dreaming consciousness is the same as ours. From the transpersonal perspective of Seth-Jane Roberts (1981a),

It is the nature of your dreams that makes you so different from other species.... The creativity of the species is also the result of your particular kind of dream specialization....Animals, *as a rule* are less physically-oriented in their dreaming states. They do dream of physical reality, but much more briefly than you. Otherwise, they immerse themselves in dreams in *different kinds* of dreaming consciousness. (p. 270)

Human and nonhuman animals also engage in imaginative play activity (Bekoff & Byers, 1998; Fagen, 1981). What motivates play activity? What function does play serve in the development of individual and social animal behavior? According to Seth-Jane Roberts (1977),

Children play naturally, and so do animals. For that matter, insects, birds, fish, and all kinds of life play. Even ants and honeybees play. Their sociability is not just a matter of constant work within a hive or an ant mound. This playful activity is, in fact, the basis for their organized behavior, and they 'play' at adult behavior before they assume their own duties. Creatures play because the activity is joyful, and spontaneous and beneficial, because it activates all portions of the organism – and again, in play youngsters imitate adult patterns of operations that lead finally to their own mature activity. (p. 172)



Human and nonhuman animals learn, dream, and play. All of these activities are impossible without imagination. Humans, however, are a species that specializes in the use of imagination. The applied use of the imagination is one of the most distinguishing marks of our species.

The dignity of a spiritual life. Abraham Maslow (1971, chap. 23) recognized the existence of a powerful drive within the human species when he talked about self-actualization and Being-values. The most basic need of all, far more important than what humanistic psychology calls the satisfaction of basic needs, is the need to fulfill spiritual and emotional Being-values. If men or women do not find these Being-values in their everyday life, then metapathology results. The so-called basic drives toward food and shelter will not sustain such individuals, for they will have neither the energy to seek it nor trust their desire to do so.

From the transpersonal perspective of Seth-Jane Roberts (1981a), the impulse toward self-actualization and the fulfillment of Being-values do not pertain to the human species alone (as, for example, in Frankl, 2000) but exist within all species.

Each being experiences life as if it were at life's center. This applies to a spider in a closet as well as to any man or woman. This principle applies to each atom as well. Each manifestation of consciousness comes into being feeling secure at life's center – *experiencing life through itself*, aware of life through its own nature. It comes into being with an inner impetus toward value fulfillment... It is given the impetus toward growth and action, and filled with the desire to impress its world. (p. 256)

On this view, every animal, from the lowly cockroach to the most sublime human being, is understood to be a unique manifestation of consciousness, endowed with inner ideals and values that seek fulfillment, and that comes into existence with an inner impetus to fulfill and actualize its "self."

Each creature, and each plant, or natural entity, has its own sense of value fulfillment, seeking the greatest possible fulfillment and extension of its own innate abilities. This sense of value fulfillment... benefits not only the individual, but also its species and all other species. (Roberts, 1997, pp. 174-175)

This is the dignity of a spiritual life that is revealed through an act of Being-cognition to characterize all physical creaturehood (see Kowalski, 1991; Randour, 2000).

The dignity of a spiritual life, moreover, demands that a certain quality of experience be maintained. It is not simply survival that is important, but survival of life *with meaning* that energizes and directs our behavior (Frankl, 1985/1946). Survival, in other words, is a means, not the goal of life. According to Seth-Jane Roberts (1981a),

Survival, of course, is important, but it is *not the prime purpose* of a species, in that it is a necessary means by which that species can attain its main goals. Of course [a species] must survive to do so, but it will, however, purposefully avoid survival if the conditions are not practically favorable to maintain the *quality* of life or existence that is considered basic. (p. 53)

Each species is not only concerned with physical survival, in other words, but also with the quality of its life and experience, with fulfilling those particular qualities that are characteristic of it, and with intensifying those qualities in order to actualize its own interior system of *value fulfillment*.

The term 'value fulfillment' is very difficult to explain, but it is very important. Obviously it deals with the development of values—not moral values, however, but values for which you really have no adequate words. Quite simply, these values have to do with increasing the *quality* of whatever life the being feels at its center. The quality of that life is not simply to be handed down or experienced, for example, but is to be creatively added to, multiplied a way that has nothing to do with quantity....and if the *quality* of their lives disintegrates beyond a certain point, the species dwindles. We are not speaking of survival of the fittest, but the survival *of life with meaning*. Life is meaning for animals. The two are indistinguishable. (Roberts, 1981a, p. 256)

On this view, the quality of life that makes survival “worthwhile” is important above all (Roberts, 1997, p. 285). If physical or environmental conditions are vastly lacking to support the value fulfillment of animals, so distorting the nature of life as to almost make a mockery of it--as in the genetic engineering of animals with deformed limbs or missing heads, or without thymus glands to have little bodily resistance to disease--such that survival would bring about vast suffering, or the animals cannot use their full abilities, or relationships with their own species are no longer in balance, or they are shunted aside unwanted and unloved, then the desire to live decreases (Roberts 1981a, pp. 34-35; Rollin, 1989, 1995).

According to Seth-Jane Roberts, even in the face of such adversity, however, there always remains an exquisite optimism at the heart of life that is not learned but is inbred and innate and that acts as a creative, rejuvenating, compensatory force that maintains and supports life. This sense of optimism is an inborn physical and psychological faith that triggers the proper bodily responses required for health and growth. It leads all forms of life to express their abilities. It is an inner predisposition meant to motivate all of nature’s species in the proper directions, engendering a sense of safety, assurance, and a feeling of promise that needs will be satisfied, abilities actualized, and desires fulfilled. This fine optimism is an intrinsic value of being that is “instinctoid” in nature (i.e., biologically necessary to avoid illness and achieve growth) (Maslow, 1971, p. 316) and is evident in those conditions of the body and mind that promote feelings of physical health and psychological vitality, peace and joy.

## Conclusion

The basic conclusion of this article is that all animals -- human and nonhuman -- can be appropriately described as having transpersonal natures. When animal behavior is viewed from the perspective of the trance-channeled writings of Seth-Jane Roberts, transpersonal phenomena are revealed to be widely distributed throughout nature. Transpersonal characteristics and abilities are not unique elements of human personality, but are incipient and latent in nonhuman animals. The transpersonal nature of nonhuman animals is similar in kind to the transpersonal nature of human animals, creatively manifesting itself in different qualities of conscious experience, different ways of perceiving reality, and different kinds of interior life among species.

Several important practical consequences result from an acknowledgement, recognition, and acceptance of the transpersonal nature of animals. By far, the most important consequence is for the animal research establishment. Acknowledgement of the transpersonal nature of animals requires a different way of relating to animals that goes beyond egotistical assumptions and anthropocentric reasoning of a psychology that tends to impose human goals and values upon other life forms. Recognition of animals' transpersonal natures calls attention to possibilities of human-animal relationships beyond instrumental and utilitarian approaches that assume the highest value of animals is epitomized in their service to human beings. Most importantly, acceptance of the transpersonal nature of animals supports an alternate, more expansive framework for the synthesis of behavioral science and transpersonal spirit whereby each individual being is viewed as

A vital, conscious portion of the universe [that], simply by *being*, fits into the universe and into universal purposes in a way no one else can. Each being is an *individualized segment* of the universe; a beloved individual, formed with infinite care and love, uniquely gifted with a life like no other. (Roberts, 1997, pp. 147-148)

Unless the animal research establishment achieves an identification with animals and a greater appreciation of the transpersonal nature of animals, it will continue to think that it has to kill life in order to discover what made it live. Until it recognizes that the sacredness of life cannot be sacrificed for humanity's benefit or else the quality of life itself suffers as a result, it will continue to lose any true conception of the great sacredness of all consciousness and of humanity's relationship within it. The field of psychology will forever escape opening up into any great vision of the meaning of life as a consequence.

Certainly the acknowledgement of animals as possessors of living consciousness and the recognition that the overall consciousness of animals has its own purposes and intents will require some unique understanding, intellectually and emotionally, on the part of the animal research establishment. It will require an openness to seriously question several widely held assumptions and unexamined implications that underlie animal research and the declared benefits of animal use. It will have to change its methods of dealing with problems and achieving goals in light of the new knowledge and different values that transpersonal psychology can bring. Such a change is not only feasible but also necessary. From the transpersonal perspective of Seth-Jane Roberts

Historically speaking, mankind chose a certain line of development. In it his consciousness specialized, focusing upon sharp particulars of experience. But inherent always, psychologically and biologically, there has been the possibility of a change in that pattern, an alteration that would effectively lift the race into another kind of weather. Such a development would, however, necessitate first of all a broadening of concepts about the self, and a greater understanding of human potential. Human consciousness is now at a stage where such a development is not only feasible, but necessary if the race is to achieve its greatest fulfillment. (Roberts, 1977, p. 22)

A first step in this direction is to rediscover the spirituality of our biological heritage and to acknowledge the transpersonal nature of animals.

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