

Buddhist “Ethology” in the Pāli Canon: Between Symbol and Observation

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1. Preliminary Remarks

THE origin of this paper can be traced back to two different interests—Buddhist thought and animal behaviour. Some years ago I discovered with great joy that my childhood fascination for animals can be a serious enterprise. Tempered with meticulous observation and careful interpretation, it can become the honourable science of animal behaviour or ethology. This, in turn, can and should be the foundation of any attempt to formulate a sound philosophical anthropology. Until about a year ago, however, I still could not find a place for my renewed interest in animal behaviour in relation to my main field of research, i.e. Buddhist studies. Once too often I felt guilty for betraying the study of the Noble Path and showing instead childish enthusiasm for anything concerning animal behaviour, from serious scientific studies to TV documentaries. The chance to find a connection between the two fields arose in 1998 when Professor Schmithausen kindly invited me to contribute to the panel on “The Value of Nature in Buddhism” to be held at the 12th conference of the International Association of Buddhist Studies in Lausanne. After some hesitation, I chose to write on animals in Pāli literature, without having, however, surveyed the topic sufficiently at that time. My fear in the initial stage of the project was that the study was not going to yield enough relevant results. Now I strongly feel that my choice has proved to be a very fruitful path for understanding some basic assumptions of Buddhist philosophy, and this goes far beyond a personal

interest in animal behaviour. A word of caution is, however, imperative: this study is far from being complete and, furthermore, I can hardly claim that I have attained sufficient expertise in Buddhist studies, let alone ethology. I hope, however, that this modest contribution will at least succeed in raising some questions not only concerning the place of animals in the *Tipiṭaka*¹ but also regarding the more fundamental problem of how Buddhism conceives and conveys reality.

Reading Pāli literature in quest of philosophical truths, which admittedly is the commonest approach, will somehow underplay the significance and role of the animals in the holy texts. Once the focus is changed to animals themselves, one realises how diverse and important their presence is. Portrayed as denizens of natural surroundings, gentle beings, ferocious creatures, objects of meditative friendliness and compassion, images of inner hopes, fears, and passions, characters of parables, fables, and allegories, animals are ubiquitous in the Canon. Without them, the sacred scriptures would look totally different, bereft of vitality and, in many case, of the very possibility of developing their peculiar doctrinal discourse.² We have to deal here with a unique blend of metaphorical and literal styles whose systematic investigation from a stylistic and semiotic perspective remains a strong desideratum both for Buddhism and aesthetics. This will reveal not only the

¹ The study focuses on the canonical and paracanonical texts of the Pāli *Tipiṭaka* with occasional references to the commentarial literature (the *Aṭṭhakathās* and *Ṭikās*) and Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga*. References to Pāli texts are based on the PTS editions, with the exception of the *Visuddhimagga*, for which I have also consulted Eugene Clark Warren, ed., Dharamananda Kosambi, revised, *Visuddhimagga of Buddhaghosācariya* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1989) (When necessary, I note pages in both the PTS ed. and Warren ed. of the *Visuddhimagga*). The system of abbreviations and reference follows *A Critical Pāli Dictionary* (hereafter CPD) (Copenhagen: Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters, begun in 1924) and Oskar von Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pāli Literature* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1997). Sn, Th, Thī, and Dh are quoted by verse number, which is often followed by the page number in parentheses. E.g. Dh 320 (p. 90) refers to verse 320 found on page 90. The references to the Taishō edition of the Chinese *Tripitaka* (abbreviated as T) follow the usual citation conventions.

² Animals actually play such a role in fables all over the world. In her *Encyclopedia of Fable* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 1999), Mary Ellen Snodgrass writes: "From early times, the comparison of humans to animals has been the life's blood of witty, comic, and disturbingly accurate morality tales known as fables . . ." (p. XIII). Comparison of human beings to animals are "the life's blood" not only of the Buddhist genre of fables, allegories, and parables but also of many passages of (supposedly) pure doctrinal discourse.

structure and typology of the sacred texts but also some fundamental assumptions governing Buddhist epistemology.³

My main concern here is, however, not such a theoretical exploration. I started with the intention to find and discuss passages in the *Tipitaka* dealing primarily with animal behaviour. As it soon became apparent, such instances are so limited that any “ethological” exploration ends up in examining not only animal behaviour proper but also Buddhist images and symbols of animals. It must be emphasised from the very beginning that there is not such a thing as “Buddhist ethology,” and observations concerning animal behaviour, simple or complex, are mainly employed as doctrinal metaphors. Despite their overwhelming presence, animals as animals are, avowedly, not *the* major concern in the Buddhist authors. It is mainly animals as symbols, or “zoemes” to use Lévi-Strauss’s terminology,⁴ that have attracted the attention of the Buddhist authors and redactors. In order to filter “ethological” observations from Buddhist texts, one has to examine also the image of particular animals.⁵ I have, nevertheless, made a distinction between the apparently deliberate usage of animals as characters in parables and fairy tales, mainly occurring in the *Jātaka* and similar collections of stories,⁶ and the zoemes spread throughout the Canon which seem to convey a

³ Attempts to explore Christian texts from a semiotic perspective have already been undertaken. Cf., for instance, Daniel Patte, ed., *Semiology and Parables: Exploration of the Possibilities Offered by Structuralism for Exegesis* (Pittsburgh: The Pickwick Press, 1976), which besides dealing with a number of theoretical models and problems concerning semiology in general and parables in particular, analyses Biblical parables like the Unjust Judge, the Prodigal Son, etc. A call for the usage of semiotic methods to analyse Buddhist literature has also been expressed by Linnart Mäll, “Buddhist Studies and Semiotics” (Paper presented at the 35th International Congress of Asian and African Studies, Budapest, 7–12 July 1997).

⁴ “Zoemes, animals given semantic functions.” Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Jealous Potter*, Bénédicte Chorier trans. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1988, 97). The usage of the term, however, does not mean that I adopt here (or elsewhere!) Lévi-Strauss’s methodology.

⁵ In my discussion of animal images as well as in many other philosophical assumptions underlying my views on animals, I have been strongly influenced by Mary Midgley, *Beast and Man: The Roots of Human Nature*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 1995) (cf. especially ch. 2).

⁶ This does not mean that fables and tales do not occur in other parts of the Canon. We find, for instance, in Vin II 161–2 the story of a partridge, a monkey and a bull-elephant, which undertook and observed the five precepts (*pañca sīla*). I shall discuss a different aspect of this tale in Section 2. Cf. James McDermott, “Animals and Humans in Early Buddhism”, *Indo-Iranian Journal* 32, 269–70.

genuine Buddhist conception (or misconception) regarding animals. In other words, I have started from the following working hypothesis: Buddhist authors or redactors were, I believe, aware of the fact that real animals, at least in our age, do not actually think, speak, and act like many of the *Jātaka* animal characters.⁷ In this respect they seem to share a view similar with our

⁷ Admittedly, we have to deal here with at least two delicate points:

First, it is well-known that much of the *Jātaka* literature is not purely Buddhist in origin. Lambert Schmithausen and Mudagamuwe Maithrimurthi (“Tier und Menschen im Buddhismus,” in Paul Münch and Rainer Waltz, *Tier und Menschen: Geschichte und Aktualität eines Prekären Verhältnisses* [Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1998], 214) describe them as “im Kern grossenteils vorbuddhistische.” Cf. von Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pāli Literature*, 56–8, Hajime Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism: A Survey with Bibliographical Notes* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1987; orig. publ. 1980), 46–8, etc. However, though much of the narrative substance of the *Jātaka* may be non-Buddhist in origin, its inclusion in the Canon of many schools proves that their moral conclusions were deemed compatible with the Buddhist doctrine. It is hard to ascertain whether the Buddhist authors or redactors considered all narrative elements of the stories to be absolutely authentic. Many other parts of the Canon, however, present a different view on animals. In these passages animals do not talk or behave like humans. Although not completely verifiable, it is nevertheless more likely to assume that the Buddhist redactors of the fables and fairy tales were aware that animals in these narratives did not behave in the same way as the true animals they were familiar with. The different behavioural paradigm of the fable animals must have been, first and foremost, a useful form of symbolism meant to transmit Buddhist doctrines.

Second, we may have deal here with a very old mythical stratum which invests animals with the possibility to speak like humans. This might raise some serious problems of compatibility with the interpretation above. André Bareau and Jaques May (“Chikushō 畜生,” in *Hōbōgirin*, 4th Fascicle, 310, 313) mention the Buddhist belief that at the beginning of the evolution-aeon (*vivarta-kalpa* 成劫) all animals spoke the sacred language, i.e. Sanskrit, and they have lost this capacity as a result of the gradual moral corruption of the living beings. Since the *Jātakas* deal with the Bodhisatta’s previous lives in the remote past, one could assume that the redactors may have had in mind a different epoch when animals could speak. Although this is a possible logical conclusion within the Buddhist doctrinal system, I am not aware of any interpretation like this overtly expressed in Pāli texts. The relevant texts, quoted by Bareau and May, are the *Mahāvibhāṣa*, the **Sarvāstivādinaya-vibhāṣa*, and the *Abhidharmayānuśāra-śāstra*. Despite numerous doctrinal similarities between the Sarvāstivādins and Theravādins, the two schools represent, nevertheless, different traditions. Even if it was believed that animals could talk like humans in earlier periods, the Buddhist authors and redactors presumably knew, however, that they cannot do it anymore nowadays.

For all these reasons, I assume that it is more appropriate to treat the animal behaviour in the Buddhist fables and fairy tales as a deliberate usage of symbolism and differentiate it from other passages where it appears to reflect true conceptions related to animals. We have, of course, border cases where the demarcation line is difficult to draw. Sometimes we have to

modern outlook on animals. Despite the extremely frequent occurrence of animals in the *Jātaka*,⁸ my reference to this genre will, therefore, be limited mainly to some cases which do not treat animals as human-behaving characters of fables or seem to reflect a realistic approach towards environment. The focus of my investigation will be on those conceptions and images, some of them problematic from a modern scientific viewpoint, some of them very appropriate observations, which appear to express genuine views on animal behaviour, views perhaps shared by large segments of the traditional Buddhist community.

Before embarking upon our exploration of animal behaviour and images in the Pāli Canon, we must clarify the basic early Buddhist⁹ attitudes towards animals. It is customary to start such a discussion with pointing out the paramount importance of friendliness (*mettā*) and compassion (*karuṇā*). From King Sivi¹⁰ to passages describing animals gathering round the ascetic

deal with different paradigms inside the same textual unit. The story of the partridge, monkey and elephant which observe the five precepts (Vin II 160–1) contains, on one hand, a symbolical component in which animals are made to behave exactly like humans and, on the other hand, a very accurate ecological observation that bird droppings may contain seeds which will eventually grow into trees (see Section 2 below). It is somehow arbitrary to split such texts, but we should not forget that “a text represents the result of the coexistence of many codes (or, at least, of many subcodes)” (Umberto Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics* [Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1976], 57). For the sake of analysis, I think we can isolate and treat separately different subcodes as long as we make clear our objectives and methodology. My criterion will be here modern ethological knowledge and Buddhist textual codes will be compared with this. We should not forget, however, that the text was and is a single unit and such divisions are basically theoretical attempts to understand this unique complexity.

⁸ A recent (though far from complete) study on animals in the *Jātaka* has been published by Christopher Key Chapple, “Animals and Environment in the Buddhist Birth Stories,” in Mary Evelyn Tucker and Duncan Ryūken Williams, eds., *Buddhism and Ecology* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions, 1997), 131–148.

⁹ I use here the term “early Buddhism” in a very wide sense starting with the origins and stretching into the first centuries of the Common Era. When applied to the Theravādin scriptural tradition, it begins with the earliest oral transmission and ends with the (more or less) final redaction of the canonical and para-canonical Pāli texts.

¹⁰ Ja, No. 499; for other occurrences in Buddhist literature, cf. Étienne Lamotte, trans., *Le traité de la grande vertu de sagesse*, Tome 1 (Louvain: Insitut Orientaliste Louvain-la-Neuve Lamotte, 1944), p. 255, n. 1; W.H.D. Rouse, trans., E.B. Cowell, ed., *The Jātaka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births*, vol. 4 (Oxford: PTS, 1995; orig. publ. 1895), p. 250, n. 1; Akanuma Chizen 赤沼智善, *Indo bukkyō koyū meishi jiten* 印度佛教固有名詞辭典 (Kyoto:

who pervades all quarters of the Universe with *mettā* (see below), friendliness and compassion, with their universal scope, played an undeniable role in fostering a lot more sympathy towards living beings than the traditional Western attitude. There is not such a thing as a single unitary Western view on animals, but its Christian core has aptly been described by Albin Michelin as: “If they [i.e. animals] speak, baptise them! If they don’t speak, cook them!”¹¹ We should not, however, over-emphasise the role of *mettā* and *karuṇā* at the expense of other equally important attitudes. No matter how impressive friendliness and non-violence may be, reality is more complex and a fair treatment of Buddhism should encompass all its facets. It is undeniable that *mettā/maitrī* is a central concept of Buddhist morality and spirituality, and its practice has had far-reaching consequences for the monastic and lay community all throughout Asia. But even when duly acknowledging the role played by friendliness and compassion, we should not forget that *mettā/maitrī*, as pointed out by Schmithausen, is not only a purely spiritual practice but also a method of self-protection.¹²

In “Tier und Menschen im Buddhismus,” the most detailed and remarkable study on animals and humans in Buddhism so far, Schmithausen and

Hōzōkan, 1931), s.v. Sivi. For more recent studies, which also contain complete bibliographical details, see Dieter Schlingloff, *Ajanta Paintings* (Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1987), 86–92, and Marion Meisig, *König Šibi und die Taube* (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 1995). I am indebted to Professor Schmithausen for these last two references.

¹¹ Quoted after Boris Cyrulnik, “Le baptême ou la casserole” (Le Nouvel Observateur 4–10 Juin 1998), 11. As all generalisations, however, this does not hold true for all aspects of the Western and Christian attitude towards nature in general and animals in particular, which is far from being a monolithic phenomenon. For detailed discussions, see Lynn White, “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis” (1967) in Louis P. Pojman, *Environmental Ethics: Readings in Theory and Application* (Sudbury: Jones and Bartlett Publishers, 1994), 8–14; Patrick Dobel, “The Judeo-Christian Stewardship toward Nature” (1977) in Pojman, *Environmental Ethics*, 20–23; Pojman, *ibid.*, 24; Paul Münch and Rainer Walz, eds., *Tier und Menschen: Geschichte und Aktualität eines prekären Verhältnisses*; and Arien Mack, ed., *Humans and Other Animals* (Ohio: Ohio State Univ. Press, 1999).

¹² Lambert Schmithausen, *Maitrī and Magic: Aspects of the Buddhist Attitude Toward the Dangerous in Nature* (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1997), 35–44. The ethical and spiritual implications of *mettā/maitrī* and the other three infinitudes (*appamāna/apramāna*) are also the subject of an excellent historico-philological investigation in Mudagamuwe Maithrimurthi, *Wohllollen, Mitleid, Freude und Gleichmut: Eine ideengeschichtliche Untersuchung der vier apramānas in der buddhistischen Ethik und Spiritualität von den Anfängen bis hin zum frühen Yogācāra* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1999).

Maithrimurthi distinguish a number of evaluations of the animal existence.¹³ First, we have a negative evaluation of the animal existence which is counted amongst the bad forms of re-incarnation (*duggati/durgati*).¹⁴ The survival of the fittest makes the animal world far more uncomfortable and full of affliction when compared to the human condition. “Monks, there is devouring one another there and feeding on the weak” (MN III 169).¹⁵ Animals are continuously threatened by hunger, thirst, cold, heat, etc. Many species of animals are considered to fall into promiscuity and incestuous relations (DN III 72; AN I 51; It 36).¹⁶ Compared to humans, they are in an inferior position because they cannot develop liberating insight and progress along the Buddhist Path.¹⁷ Second, we have a different attitude, usually associated with the less doctrinal and essentially popular literature represented by the *Jātaka*, which views animals with more sympathy, and presents their world as acceptable, especially when not intruded upon by human beings. Third, we have a group of texts chiefly related to the Buddhist

¹³ Schmithausen and Maithrimurthi, “Tier und Menschen im Buddhismus,” 179–224; esp. 208–16.

¹⁴ The idea of rebirth as an animal, considered a bad form of reincarnation, appears in some early *Upaniṣads* as well. Most notably, it is mentioned as “a third possibility” different from the two paths theory of the *Chāndogya-upaniṣad* and the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad*. See Lambert Schmithausen, “Man, animals and plants in the rebirth passages of the Early Upaniṣads,” *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka* 38 (1995), 141–162.

¹⁵ I. B. Horner, trans., *The Collection of the Middle Length Sayings* (Oxford: PTS, 1954–1959), vol. 3, 215.

¹⁶ Cf. Schmithausen and Maithrimurthi, “Tier und Menschen,” 211, n. 251. The misconception that incest is promiscuously widespread in the animal world has a long history in many cultures, and Buddhism seems to share it. The phenomenon happens, however, very seldom in reality. The basic ethological reason is that breeding of close relatives causes reduced biological fitness, scientifically known as inbreeding depression (Richard Maier, *Comparative Animal Behavior: An Evolutionary and Ecological Approach* [Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1998], 34). Different species have different strategies to avoid this extremely dangerous situation. Inbreeding tends to become more frequent with endangered species as well as domestic animals when their human breeders do not undertake efficient prevention measures. In both cases, however, inbreeding is not something natural. It happens simply because the number of choices an animal can make is extremely reduced and avoidance strategies cannot work efficiently. If we can speak of a “moral” aspect of such incestuous relations, the ultimate responsibility should rest with humans who encroach upon the natural behaviour and habitat of animals.

¹⁷ Let us note in this respect that the *Vinaya* (Vin V 222; Vin I 86) forbids the ordination of animals into the monastic order (cf. McDermott, “Animals and Humans in Early Buddhism,” 270).

ascetics. These scriptures stress *mettā* and the possibility to bring peaceful and harmonious relations with animals. Nature can even acquire soteric values.¹⁸ This ascetic trend also contains an aesthetic component: the recluse can enjoy the beauty of nature, animals included. “Aesthetic” should be construed here as a value closely associated with the spiritual cultivation of the meditating monk. Roughly speaking, the second and third groups of texts usually reflect a more positive attitude towards animals.

More will be said about the philosophical premises of the Buddhist views on reality and animals in the final section of this paper.

2. Animals and (Proto-)Environmental Concerns

It is debatable whether we can speak about Buddhist environmental ethics in the modern sense of the word.¹⁹ Are animals seen as part of a complex ecosystem? There are Buddhist texts which speak of complex relations between living beings, and this can be said to anticipate dimly our understanding of an ecosystem. Trying to see here too much, however, will prove nothing but a highly developed ability of interpreting ancient texts in terms of modern concerns and rhetoric. This may satisfy the requirements of a

¹⁸ This type of literature and the soteric aspects of Nature have been explored in detail by Lambert Schmithausen, “Soteric Aspects of Nature in Buddhism” (Lecture delivered at Otani University, Kyoto, 2 March 1999).

¹⁹ A lot has been written on the subject. Among individual contributions, suffice it to mention here Lambert Schmithausen’s contributions which offer the most objective treatment of the subject and a full coverage of the traditional (mainly Indian) and modern sources: *Buddhism and Nature* (Tokyo: The International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 1991); “Buddhism and Environmental Ethics: Some Reflections” in *Studies in Buddhology, Philosophy & Buddhist Scriptural Language Presented by Leading Scholars Worldwide* (Thailand: Dahmmakaya Foundation, 1994); “Man, Animals and Plants in the Rebirth Passages of the Early Upaniṣads” (1995, see above); “Buddhism and Ecological Responsibility,” in Lawrence Surendra, Klaus Schindler, and Prasanna Ramaswamy, eds., *The Stories They Tell: A Dialogue among Philosophers, Scientists, and Environmentalists* (Madras: Earthworm Books, 1996); “The Early Buddhist Tradition and Ecological Ethics,” *The Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 4 (1997), 1–74; *Maitrī and Magic* (1997, see above); “Tier und Menschen in Buddhismus” (1998, see above); “Buddhism and Nature Ethics: Some Remarks” (Lecture delivered at the Symposium “Nature Understanding and Buddhism” organised by Waseda University and Tōhō Gakkai, Tokyo, 30 January 1999); and “Soteric Aspects of Nature in Buddhism” (1999, see above). Useful studies are also found in the collections edited by Martine Batchelor and Kerry Brown, eds., *Buddhism and Ecology* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1994) as well as by Tucker and Williams, eds., *Buddhism and Ecology* (1997, see above), the latter also containing an extensive bibliography on Buddhism and ecology.

Green activist or an Eco-Buddhist in search of orthodox origins for his interests, but it will hardly qualify one as a prudent historian. While I may quite often agree with many of the concrete actions of environment-caring activists, Buddhists or not, my viewpoint here is that of philological and historical studies. Though complete objectivity remains a utopian requirement, I shall try to be as fair as possible and see what the texts have to say. This does not mean a lack of personal stance but rather a clear distinction between the message of the texts and my own views.

As we shall see below, Buddhist scriptures quite often employ animals, made to impersonate a whole range of human virtues and vices, in order to draw moral conclusions. Such texts, however, tend to appear “ecological” to the modern reader who lives in a different epistemic paradigm as well as in a substantially changed environment whose massive destruction understandably requires new perspectives. Of course, we could use the term “environment” in a very broad sense and speak of a “proto-environmentalist concern.” This is basically how I use the word here. I frankly acknowledge, however, that the terminology belongs more to the modern environmentalist rhetoric than to the traditional Buddhist outlook.

Usually, the Pāli Canon treats animals in isolation or in very simple, obvious relations with other animals. We have, nevertheless, some passages where animals are depicted in more complex relations with the environment. We also find some “proto-scientific” insights into concepts like the habitat. Let us discuss a few examples here.

The *Vyaggha-jātaka* (*Jātaka* No. 272, Ja II 356–8) tells us the following story. The Bodhisatta was a tree-spirit living in forest where a lion and a tiger left the remains of their prey on the spot filling the forest with a decaying smell. Despite the Bodhisatta’s wise advice, another tree-spirit, who could not stand the stench any longer, drove away the lion and the tiger. Then humans, no longer afraid of the ferocious beasts, came in and cut down all the wood for cultivation. Especially to the modern reader, the story sounds very familiar. It is true that it contains accurate observations concerning the role of predators in keeping the integrity and balance of the ecosystem. The Buddhist authors of the tale, however, regard it first and foremost as a moral lesson: though we might not realise it, a friend’s life might increase our own peace and we should accept it exactly as it is.²⁰

In the *Vinaya* (Vin II 161–2) we read the tale of a partridge, monkey, and

²⁰ The Buddha identifies the characters as follows: Kokālika was the foolish tree-spirit,

a bull-elephant who want to know which is the eldest of them. Each tells its earliest memory concerning a large banyan tree growing near the place where they live. It turns out that the partridge is the eldest, because it remembers that a long time ago it ate the fruit of another banyan and then relieved itself in the open space where the banyan tree now grows. From this, the partridge adds, the present banyan tree has grown out. It is a very accurate observation concerning the fact that bird droppings can contain fruit seed and play an important role in the ecosystem.

We find another interesting “proto-ecological” insight in the simile of the six animals which are caught by a man and tied together with the same rope (SN IV 198–200). If that man were to let them go away,

... those six animals of diverse range and diverse pasturage would struggle to be off, each one to his own range and pasture. The snake would struggle, thinking: I’ll enter the anthill. The crocodile: I’ll enter the water. The bird: I’ll mount into the air. The dog: I’ll enter the village. The jackal would think: I’ll go the charnel-field. The monkey would think: I’ll be off to the forest.²¹

Well, to start with, the “experiment,” if it was ever carried out at all, might be *slightly* controversial from the viewpoint of modern scientific ethics. I can hardly imagine the monkey, for instance, being in a mood to appreciate the thrilling experience of being tied next to a crocodile and a snake. But this is just a matter of detail! The point here is that the text mentions the concept of “range” (*visaya*) or what we would today call a habitat, i.e. “a place where a species can be found,”²² with the “pasturage” (*gocara*)²³ or foraging place as its main component. The Pāli text, however, is not concerned here with ecological details. The description above serves

Sāriputta the lion, Moggallāna the tiger, and he himself was the wise spirit. The story is also discussed by Chapple, “Animals and Environment in the Buddhist Birth Stories” (pp. 141–42), who stresses too much, I believe, its environmentalist moral. Chapple (*ibid.*, pp. 140–1) also gives two other examples of *Jātaka* “environmental tales” (my term), but these are, to my mind, even less concerned with such problems. A large dose of modern rhetoric-hermeneutical effort would be needed to make them acquire truly environmentalist conclusions.

²¹ F.L. Woodward, trans., *The Book of the Kindred Sayings* (London: PTS, 1927), part 4, p. 131.

²² Eugene P. Odum, *Ecology: A Bridge between Science and Society* (Sunderland: Sinauer Associates, Inc. Publishers, 1997), 55.

as simile for the six senses and their objects.

The Buddhist “ecological” sense is not, however, infallible. The *Vinaya* forbids monks to wear sandals decorated with lion-skins, tiger-skins, panther-skins, black deer-skins, otter-skins, cat-skins, squirrel-skins, and owl-skins (Vin I 186). It equally prohibits the use of hides of lions, tigers, panthers, and cows for couches (Vin I 192–3). The main reason for these interdictions appear to be the fear that monks would be judged by lay followers as enjoying the pleasures of senses like householders. Whatever their motivation might be, these rules are bound to play a salutary effect on the life of these animals and, in the long run, on the conservation of these species. There are, nevertheless, passages which show an utter lack of consideration for animal life. The *Sihanāda-vagga* in the *Navaka-nipāta* finds nothing objectionable about a generous gift given by the Buddha in a former life which contains, among many other precious items, eighty-four thousand chariots spread with lion-skins, tiger-skins, and leopard-skins (AN IV 393). Among the rich possessions of King Mahāsudassana we find eighty-four thousand chariots with coverings of hides of lions, tigers, and leopards (DN II 187). Believe it or not, this is found in a passage immediately following a detailed description of the King’s practice of the four *jhānas* and the four *brahma-vihāras*. Of course, we are long before the age of the Washington Convention and the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources) *Red List of Threatened Animals*, but I, for one, feel that such a non-critical inclusion of a hyperbolic number of animal skins amongst acceptable gifts and possessions may indirectly condone indiscriminate hunting.

We should also include in this section on animals and environment the magnificent descriptions of jungles teeming with wild life (e.g., Ap I 15–17; Ja V 416). They seem to be mainly associated with the ascetic literature as well as texts of popular origin. Such passages usually present a positive image of nature and animals. Future studies exactly identifying the species described and giving accurate statistical data might prove an important tool not only for Buddhist scholars but also for biologists. Such texts undoubted-

²³ *Gocara* is used not only for cattle pasture but also for the food and foraging area of other animals, including predators like the lion (cf. T.W Rhys Davids and William Stede, eds., *The Pali Text Society’s Pali-English Dictionary* (London: Pali Text Society, 1986; orig. publ. 1921–1925) (hereafter, *PTS Dictionary*), s.v. *gocara*).

ly contain precious information on many extinct or endangered species in South Asia.²⁴

3. Conceptions and Misconceptions Concerning Animal Behaviour

This section will focus on the behaviour and image of five representative and frequently featured animals in the Pāli Canon²⁵: the elephant, deer, monkey, lion, and jackal. Before doing this, a few words on zoological accuracy are needed. The precise identification of animals in ancient texts is not always an easy matter. We can be more or less sure that the large number of words naming the “elephant” (see below) in the Pāli language refer to the *Elephas maximus*, but things become more complicated with animals like the “deer” or the “monkey.” Of course, for general purposes, these terms should be appropriate enough, but if we are keen to be scientifically accurate, we will discover that we have few clues as to the exact species mentioned in our Pāli texts. Commentarial literature may be more detailed but, as far as my limited experience of working with it allows me to conclude, neither the *Aṭṭhakathās* nor the *Ṭīkā*s contain sufficient information needed for a zoologically acceptable identification. The traditional Pāli lexicon *Abhidhānappadīpikā*²⁶ is helpful in that it gives many synonyms and words

²⁴ It is interesting to note here that in the *Shi er yu jing* 十二遊經, a short Śrāvakayāna sutra preserved only in Chinese translation, we are told the exact number of species in Jambudvīpa: “6400 species of fishes, 4500 species of birds, and 2400 species of beasts [i.e. ? mammals]” (T4.147b15–17) (Bureau and May, “Chikushō,” 312). I have no figures for fish and mammals, but the present number of bird species in South Asia is estimated between 2000 (Francis Robinson, ed., *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives* [Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1989], 26) and 1300 (Richard Grimmet, Carol Inskipp, and Tom Inskipp, *A Guide to the Birds of India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and the Maldives* [Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1999]). It is hard to know how the figures given in the above sutra had been arrived at. Are they arbitrary or symbolic? Do they rely on any observation and counting? The latter possibility is quite debatable, especially when we think that the modern definition of species and the remotely corresponding traditional understanding of the term are often quite different. If we accept, however, the figure as, at least, vaguely reliable, it would prove that the number of bird species on the Indian sub-continent has been drastically reduced during the past two thousand years.

²⁵ For a statistical list of animals occurring in the *Jātaka* tales, see Chapple, “Animals and Environment in the Buddhist Birth Stories,” 145–6.

²⁶ *Abhidhānappadīpikā and Ekakkharakosa* [Pali Dictionary] (With Sanskrit Hindi Translation), Swami Dwarikadas Shastri, ed. (Varanasi: Bauddhabharati, 1981). Wilhelm

believed to represent sub-categories of animal names in the *Tiṭṭaka*, but the exact interpretation of each of them is problematic and this eventually does not take us much further. With this in mind, let us survey the images and patterns of behaviour of the animals I have chosen.

3.1. The Elephant

What is variously called in Pāli *kuñjara*, *nāga*, *gaja*, *mātaṅga*, *vāraṇa*, *hatthin*, *hatthi-nāga* represents in all probability one species: the Asiatic or Indian elephant (*Elephas maximus*). Its various patterns of behaviour as well as the existence of tamed elephants for more than three thousand years in India²⁷ have led to ambivalent images in the Buddhist Canon. On the whole, Pāli texts, at least, seem to present a rather favourable image of the elephant, especially the tamed one. Ch. 23 of the *Dhammapada* (Dhp 320–333, pp. 90–93), actually entitled “The Elephant” (*Nāgavagga*), encapsulates the basic images of the animal in the *Tiṭṭaka*. The tamed elephant, especially the one enduring arrows in battle, is a symbol of the man who can control his passions (Dhp 320–323, p. 90), while the furious elephant in rut²⁸ is com-

Geiger, *Pāli Literature and Language*, B. Ghosh, trans. (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1996; Orig. publ. in German, 1916), 56, places the date of this lexicon, traditionally ascribed to Moggallāna, towards the end of the 12th century.

²⁷ The large scale use of elephants in warfare, with dramatic effects for the socio-political history of India, starts around 500 BCE (Hermann Kulke and Dietmar Rothermund, *A History of India* [London and New York: Routledge, 1990], 10). It seems, however, that the elephant was used for military purposes as early as 1100 BCE (R. Sukumar, *The Asian Elephant: Ecology and Management* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989], quoted in Ronald M. Nowak, *Walker’s Mammals of the World*, 6th ed. [Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins Univ. Press, 1999], 998). It is debatable whether we can use the word “domestication” in the elephant’s case. Nowak, the world-wide known authority on mammals, uses it (*Walker’s Mammals of the World*, 997), but authors of the entry on the “elephant” in *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th ed. (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1994) make it clear why they are reluctant to employ the term: “Because an elephant must be at least 20 years old to do complex tasks, the species has never been truly domesticated; rather, young adults are captured wild and trained with the help of tame individuals.” (vol. 4, p. 442).

²⁸ *Hatthippabhinna* (in verse 326) is translated by F. Max Müller, *The Dhammapada: A Collection of Verses* (Sacred Books of the East, vol. 10; Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1988; orig. publ., 1881), 79, as “furious elephant.” Radhakrishnan (in Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan and Charles A. Moore, eds., *A Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy* [Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1957], 317) translates “elephant in rut.” Nakamura Hajime 中村 元 (trans., *Buddha no*

pared to the mind which wanders as it pleases (Dhp 324–326, p. 91). On the other hand, the latter half of the chapter makes the elephant the symbol of solitude (Dhp 329, p. 92) and of a care-free (*appossukka*) state (Dhp 330, p. 93).²⁹

Ethologically, the observation concerning the tamed elephant as opposed to the furious elephant³⁰ in rut is correct, although the image of the latter used as symbol of the uncontrolled mind is obviously anthropocentric. Could elephants read such texts, they would probably find them not exactly flattering. (Note that this remark is equally based on human ideals: in order to achieve their “overall efficiency in satisfying fitness requirements”³¹ elephants do not need to bother themselves with reading.) Similar images are found in other texts as well. The *Sagāthavagga* compares a monk who has attained perfect calm to a tamed elephant (SN I 141). The *Theragāthā* uses the image of the elephant in battle as a model of mindfulness (Th 31, p. 6;

shinri no kotoba, Kankyō no kotoba ブツダの真理のことば、感興のことば [Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1978], 56) understands it in a similar way: 発情期に狂う象 “a mad elephant in rut.” Tsuji Naoshirō 辻直四郎 (in *Nanden daizōkyō* 南傳大藏經, the Japanese translation of the Pāli *Tiṭṭhaka*, published in 70 volumes between 1936–1941 under the supervision of Takakusu Junjirō [Tokyo: Taishō shinshū daizōkyō kankōkai] [hereafter, *Nanden*], vol. 23, p. 68) translates as [. . . 発情して苦汁を] 流せる象 “the elephant flowing [with bitter juice in rut . . .].” The *PTS Dictionary* gives a “furious elephant” s.v. *hatthin*, but explains it as “an elephant in rut, mad, furious” s.v. *pabhinna*. This is also the understanding of the *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā* (IV 24) which glosses *hatthipabhinna* as *mattahatthi* (ibid.). It appears the most likely meaning, which also makes good sense from an ethological viewpoint.

²⁹ *Appossukka* is usually translated here as “with few wishes” (Max Müller, *The Dhammapada*, 80; Radhakrishnan, *A Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy*, 317; Nakamura, *Budda no shinri no kotoba, Kankyō no kotoba*, 56; Tsuji, *Nanden*, vol. 23, 68). Nakamura understands it as an exhortation for the monk to be with few desires. The other translators interpret it as directly qualifying the elephant. To me, an elephant “with few desires” sounds too “ascetic.” *CPD* translates *appossukka* (s.v.) as “careless, unconcerned, living at ease, inactive.” The commentary glosses the term here as *nirālaya* (cf. *CPD*; *PTS Dictionary*, s.v. *appossukka*). This, too, can be taken as meaning either “without an abode” or “without attachment.” Both meanings fit in our context, but I think that it refers here to the care-free or unconcerned dignity which large bull elephants living in solitude could easily evoke.

³⁰ The furious elephant, especially in rut, could be a real danger. About 100 to 150 people are killed annually in India by elephants. Many of these recent conflicts, however, appear to be related to the crop raiding of elephants which are increasingly deprived by humans of their natural habitat (Nowak, *Walker’s Mammals of the World*, 998).

³¹ This quotation refers to the optimality theory which is the one of the best theoretical models of the evolutionary theory (cf. Maier, *Comparative Animal Behavior*, 14–5).

244, p. 31). Monk Vijitasena, born in a family of elephant-trainers, likens restraining the mind to keeping back elephants at the firm small gate (*āṇidvāre*).³² He threatens his wandering mind that he will turn it back under control like the trainer who firmly wields his hook and makes the untamed elephant turn against its will (Th 355–7, pp. 39–40). In the *Therīgāthā* the view of a tamed elephant obeying the driver’s orders with docility becomes for nun Dantikā a powerful hint and motivation for training her own mind (Thī 48–50, p. 128).

It seems that a number of Buddhist authors and redactors were quite familiar with elephant taming. MN III 132–3 gives a detailed account of the way elephants are caught and tamed. Interesting to note here that the elephant tamer addresses the wild elephant he has caught “with such words as are gentle, pleasing to the ear, affectionate, going to the heart, urbane . . . ,” and this makes the elephant “bend his mind to learning.”³³ This may seem somehow far-fetched, but we should not forget that elephants are usually docile when treated well.³⁴ MN I 178 gives interesting details concerning elephant tracking. Such fragments represent very important documents for the history of the tamed elephant in India. Let us note again, however, that the main concern of the Buddhist authors lies in exploring the metaphorical potential of the accounts as literary devices for expounding doctrinal points. For instance, the MN III 132–3 fragment, quoted above, uses the account of elephant taming in order to describe how a Buddhist monk is disciplined by the Tathāgata.

The mad elephant, whether in heat or not,³⁵ is usually associated with

³² *PTS Dictionary* (s.v. *āṇi*) describes *āṇidvāra* as “a sort of brush made of four or five small pieces of flexible wood.” I wonder whether this description fits in all occurrences. *CPD* (s.v. *āṇi-dvāra*) translates the term as “a peg-like, i.e. little or low door” and quotes the Th Commentary: *pākārarabaddhassa nagarassa khuddaka-dvāraṃ*, which, at least in our context, is more suitable. Though I have no philological proof, I would rather imagine from the context a small solid door, not necessarily low, which is attached like a peg to a firm wall or fence. Even if broken, it would not easily allow the entrance into the town of many enemies or large animals. Let us also note here that the *PTS Dictionary* also explains *āṇi* as “bolt,” “stop (at a door)” as well as “secured by a peg, of a door.” The whole compound could mean, therefore, a “door with a firm stop” or “a firmly bolted door.” I have followed, however, the Th Commentary for whose compiler(s) *āṇidvāra* must have been a daily reality virtually unchanged from the time when Th itself had been composed.

³³ Horner, trans., *The Collection of the Middle Length Sayings*, vol. 3, pp. 178–9.

³⁴ Nowak, *Walker’s Mammals of the World*, 997.

³⁵ Ap I 17 says that the elephant in rut has three marks, but it gives no further details.

threatening images. Māra turns himself into a dreadful elephant to frighten the Buddha (obviously with no success!) (SN I 103–4). Devadatta tries to kill the Lord by letting loose the fierce elephant Nālāgiri, a man-slayer (*manussaghātaka*), which is subdued by the Buddha with thoughts of friendliness (*mettena cittena*) (Vin II 194–5). On the other hand, we also have instances when the destructive strength of the animal is used as an image of shattering Māra’s armies as the elephant shakes off a reed hut (SN I 156–7; Th 256, p. 31; 1147, p. 104).

The solitary elephant equally represents a correct ethological observation. The elephant is a gregarious animal and females always live in herds. Bulls, on the other hand, usually form all-male groups of about seven individuals but sometimes may live alone.³⁶ This latter case seems to have offered the Buddhists authors a model of majestic solitude. The image, apparently old and associated with ascetic literature, is found in a number of texts (SN I 16; Sn 53, p. 9 [commented upon in the *Cullaniddesa*, pp. 63–4]; Ap I 10; Vin I 352–3).

Besides these images we also find other interesting references concerning the behaviour of the animal. MN I 229 speaks about a full-grown elephant which plunges into a tank and plays at the game called “merry washing” (*sāṇadhovika*).³⁷ The *Papañcasūdanī* (*Majjhimanikāyāṭṭhakathā*, part 2, p. 272) describes *sāṇadhovika* as a game consisting of giving blows to handfuls of hemp with planks followed by washing, drinking, and eating. Most likely it was a form of having fun while doing the laundry. The DN *Commentary* is probably right to refer to it as a game of the low class people (*caṇḍāla*).³⁸ The *Papañcasūdanī* goes on telling that the king’s elephant (*rañño nāgo*) having seen this game plunges into deep water and sprinkles water on all parts of his body. Thus the elephant “played sprinkling [water]” (*kipanto kīlittha*).³⁹ This probably describes the way an elephant bathes,⁴⁰

³⁶ Nowak, *Walker’s Mammals of the World*, 996.

³⁷ Horner’s translation (*The Collection of the Middle Length Sayings*, vol. 1, p. 282).

³⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 282, n. 1.

³⁹ Horner, *The Collection of the Middle Length Sayings*, vol. 1, p. 282, n. 1, gives a partial translation of the *Commentary*, but she leaves out the verb *kīlittha*, which is very important in that it reflects the author’s (or/and old Singhalese commenators’) view of the elephant as being itself engaged in a game.

⁴⁰ Bathing and wallowing is very important for elephants (cf. Nowak, *Walker’s Mammals of the World*, 999) as for all animals whose body hair covering is scant. It has hygienic functions and is instrumental in lowering the excessive heat as well as protecting the skin.

but it is not excluded that it also refers to a form of play. Recent research shows that, despite our earlier preconceptions, many adult animals do actually engage in playing.⁴¹

Vin II 201 and SN II 269 describe an interesting aspect of the elephant’s foraging behaviour. Bull elephants plunge into a pool, tug out lotus fibres and stalks with their trunks, wash them carefully and eat them without mud.⁴² I am not aware of any ethological report concerning such a complex process of foraging, but, on the whole, it seems very plausible. Elephants do eat roots, and the trunk is used like a hand to pull up long grasses and insert them into the mouth.⁴³

There are, however, instances of debatable “ethological” observations, actually challenged by the post-canonical tradition itself. SN III 85 says that when hearing the lion’s roar, the royal elephants, “tethered with stout leathern bonds, burst and render those bonds asunder, voiding excrements and run to and fro for fear.”⁴⁴ The *Sāratthappakāsinī* (vol. 2, p. 285), Buddhaghosa’s *Commentary*, however, contradicts the passage declaring that “lions which are similar [in nature and power] (*sama-sīha*),⁴⁵ elephants

⁴¹ Juvenile play has long been known to perform a paramount role in helping young animals to learn and practise foraging patterns as well as social behaviours. Ethologists have postulated a series of theories concerning why many adult animals keep their playfulness all throughout their lives in spite of the fact that it could often be costly in terms of energy invested and relatively unprofitable as far as the acquirement of new adaptive gains goes. It seems that no perfectly plausible theory has been found yet (see Sarah L. Hall, “Object play by adult animals,” in Mark Beckoff and John A. Byers, eds., *Animal Play: Evolutionary, Comparative, and Ecological Perspectives* [Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998], esp. 47–48; also 56–57).

⁴² The passage goes on describing that young elephants imitate this adult behaviour, but they do not wash the lotus fibres and stalks well and eat them with mud. This results in their death. I cannot understand exactly why this happens. Could it be because eating (that certain type of) mud is harmful to elephants? The text is more concerned with drawing the conclusion that Devadatta, like the young elephants, will die trying to imitate the Buddha. The lotus roots as a favourite food for elephants also occurs in Cp 84.

⁴³ Nowak, *Walker’s Mammals of the World*, 996.

⁴⁴ F. L. Woodward, trans., *The Book of the Kindred Sayings*, Part 3 (London: PTS, 1925), 70–71.

⁴⁵ Woodward (*The Book of the Kindred Sayings*, Part 3, pp. 70–71, n. 1) translates “lions of like nature,” which aptly reflects Buddhaghosa’s ambivalence. Does *sama* refer here to lions belonging to the same species? Or does it mean male lions of equal power? The *Commentary* seems to encompass both shades of meaning, but it is more likely that it refers to a male lion. It says, “the so-called ‘similar lion’ is not frightened because it thinks ‘I am

of good breed (*hatthājānīya*), thoroughbred horses (*assājānīya*), bulls of good breed (*usabhājānīya*), and men of noble breed [i.e. *arahants*] whose minds are free from contaminations (*purisājānīya khīṇāsava*)⁴⁶ do not fear the lion's roar. It then adds that elephants, horses, and bulls "are not frightened because of the strength of their belief in the eternity of the self" (*hatthājānīyādayo attano sakkāyadiṭṭhibalavatāya na bhāyanti*).⁴⁷ Though rather free, Woodward's translation "because they trust in self and mighty

similar by birth, species, family, courage, and nature' (*sama-sīho nāma "jati-gotta-kula-sūra-bhāvehi samāno 'mhi" ti na bhāyati*)." The lion thus "thinking" is more likely to be a male. It is usual male lions which roar and have the "courage" to fight each other. In ethological terms, provided that Buddhaghosa was keen on this aspect here, the scene is very plausible: the lion's roar has basically a territorial function (see subsection on the lion) and a male lion, confident in its power, would not be frightened by the roar of another male.

⁴⁶ An English equivalent of *āsava/āsrava* able to give account of the whole semantic sphere and historic evolution of the term is admittedly quite difficult. Lambert Schmithausen ("An Attempt to Estimate the Distance in Time between Aśoka and the Buddha in Terms of Doctrinal History" in Heinz Bechert, ed., *The Dating of the Historical Buddha/Die Datierung des historischen Buddha*, Part 2 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992], 123–129) who develops many of Enomoto Fumio's findings, gives a brief but very illuminating account of the history of the concept. His conclusion can be summed up as follows: in Jainism *ās(r)avas* "came to refer, primarily, to karma, or to the influx of karmic substance. In Buddhism, on the other hand, the *ās(r)avas* are, to be sure, occasionally understood as, or at least as including, karma, but the predominant tendency is to take them as unwholesome mental attitudes or states (i.e., to put it in later terminology, as *kleśas*)" (p. 127). I am indebted to Professor Schmithausen who kindly drew my attention to this study and the complicated semantic fate of the term, but the responsibility to translate *āsava/āsrava* as "contamination" lies with me. The English term (cf. Lesley Brown, ed., *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993], s.v. "contaminate" and "contamination") implies the action of becoming or making impure by contact (cf. the etymon *con + tangere*, i.e. "to touch with") which seems to me to convey both the nuances of "influx" and the resulting "polluted state." Furthermore, if more linguistic speculation is allowed, since a contaminated object defiles other things which come in contact with it, "contamination" may also be indirectly linked to the metaphor of "outflow," with which *āsava/āsrava* also appears associated (cf. Schmithausen, *ibid.*, 124). Finally, as the word "contamination" is bound to suggest unpleasant connotations, it can be said to evoke such nuances as "trouble" or "affliction." Cf. *CPD* (s.v. *āsava*) which contains a long entry with its different meanings and connotations as well as its various translations into modern Western languages.

⁴⁷ I am grateful to Professor Schmithausen who suggests that *balavatāya* should be interpreted here as the ablative of the abstract *balavatā*. He also reminded me that the conception of animals having a belief in or view of self is not uncommon in Buddhism. "In other passages of the *Yogācārabhūmi*, we meet with the idea of an innate, spontaneous view of Self (*sahajā satkāyadr̥ṣṭih*), considered to occur even in animals and to be morally neutral (*avyākṛta*), in contrast to the speculative (*pari- or vi-kalpita*) one which is unwholesome

power”⁴⁸ conveys the purport of the *Commentary*. The belief in the eternity of the soul is admittedly a purely human error, but Buddhaghosa most likely uses it with the general sense of self-trust and confidence in one’s power. Lions are very strong cats which prey on herbivores as large as giraffes,⁴⁹ but as far as I know, it is very unlikely that they would attack a mature elephant. Elizabeth Thomas, speaking about the situation in East Africa and Kalahari, stresses that elephants are the only animals to which the lion pays due “respect.” She mentions two incidents of aggressive confrontation between the two species. In the first one a lion attacked an elephant almost in self-defence and was killed by the latter. In the second case a young elephant, aged 16 or 17, was frightened away by the roar of a male lion.⁵⁰ The *Commentary* is, I believe, right in its description of elephants as very confident in their power and usually not frightened by the lion’s roar. On the other hand, I do not deny completely the possibility of a situation like the one depicted in the *sutta*. Especially if we consider the fact that the royal elephant in question was seriously handicapped by the “stout bonds,” the frightening roar of a lion could plausibly make the animal extremely nervous. Generally speaking, I would, nevertheless, favour the interpretation of the *Commentary* and regard the *sutta* description as a metaphorical image. We shall see that Buddhist scriptures tend to exaggerate the strength of the “king of beasts” for doctrinal purposes. In the text quoted above, as in many other *suttas*, the lion’s roar is compared to the Tathāgata’s proclamation of the Dhamma which frightens the *devas*. Actually, this is not the only

(*akuśala*) (Lambert Schmithausen, *Ālayavijñāna: On the Origin and the Early Development of a Central Concept of Yogācāra Philosophy* [Tokyo: The International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 1987], 148; see also note 928 which lists relevant passages from the *Yogācārabhūmi*, *Abhidharmakośa*, *Nyāyanusāra*). Is this conception a mere scholastic product? Or does it rely on the observation that animals, at least some of them, have the rudiments of self-awareness? It is hard to reach a definitive conclusion. Let also us note here that there seems to be strong evidence that chimpanzees and orangutans have self-recognition, but the existence of consciousness in animals remains debatable (cf. Maier, *Comparative Animal Behavior*, 115–117).

⁴⁸ Woodward, *The Book of the Kindred Sayings*, part 3, p. 70–71, n. 1.

⁴⁹ *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 7, p. 382.

⁵⁰ Elizabeth M. Thomas, *The Tribe of Tiger* (1993); quoted after Japanese translation: *Nekotachi no kakusareta seikatsu* 猫たちの隠された生活, H. Kimura, trans. (Tokyo: Sōshisha, 1996), 213–6. It may be interesting to note here that the tiger, the largest of the *Felidae* family, also avoids attacking elephants as well as healthy large mammals, although there have been exceptional cases of tigers reported to have attacked elephants and adult buffaloes (*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 11, p. 767).

instance when a Buddhist text describes an elephant frightened or attacked by a lion. SN II 279 asserts that the elephant fears the lion, and AN III 121–2 mentions that the lion always strikes its blow with utmost care no matter if it attacks an elephant, a buffalo, an ox, a leopard, etc. These descriptions are also actually employed as similes for the Tathāgata’s unsurpassed virtues, and they seem to me to represent literary devices, biased as they may be, rather than real observations.

3.2. The Deer

The usual Pāli words denoting what is commonly translated as “deer” are *miga*, *maga*, and *roruva*.⁵¹ *Miga* and *maga* raise some delicate philological problems. According to the *PTS Dictionary* (s.v. *miga*), *miga* means “wild animal” when characterised by another attribute and “deer, antelope, gazelle” when uncharacterised. *Maga* is described by both the *PTS Dictionary* and Mizuno⁵² as a lexical variant of *miga*. Geiger considers that both *miga* and *maga* are derived from *mṛga* but understands *maga* as “animal” and *miga* as “gazelle,” though he adds in a footnote (n.2) that the latter can also be found with the general meaning of “animal.”⁵³ The most detailed discussion of the two terms is found in a study by Hermann Berger who also derives both terms from *mṛga*.⁵⁴ He traces the cause of the differentiation between *maga* meaning “animal” and *miga* signifying “gazelle” to the influence of the feminine ending *-ī*. The German scholar believes that this semantic differentiation resulted from the fact that “*mṛga* in the sense of ‘animal’ could never form a fem[inine], while in the case of its meaning of ‘gazelle,’ the (well attested) fem[inine] *migī* < *mṛgī* influenced the masc[uline]” (p. 42). When used as independent words, the *miga*-*maga* distinction is very clear, but it tends to blur in compounds. While *migavisāna* “gazelle’s horn” or *migadhenu* “female gazelle” are obviously related to the gazelle, compounds like *migavā* “hunting” or *migadayā* “game park”⁵⁵ are

⁵¹ *Roruva* is translated by the *PTS Dictionary* as “a sort of hart.” Mizuno Kōgen 水野弘元, *Pāriḡo jiten* 八一語辞典, 2nd ed. (Tokyo: Shunjū-sha, 1988), s.v. *roruva*, renders it as 鹿の一種, 鹿 or “a sort of deer, deer.”

⁵² Mizuno Kōgen, *Pāriḡo jiten*, s.v. *maga*.

⁵³ Wilhelm Geiger, *Pāli Literature and Language*, 67.

⁵⁴ Hermann Berger, *Zwei Probleme der mittelindischen Lautlehre* (München: Kitzinger, 1955), 40–42. I am indebted to Professor Schmithausen who has drawn my attention to this study.

⁵⁵ The German equivalent given by Berger is “Wildpark,” which translates both as “game

difficult to interpret as referring to animals in general or deer in particular. Furthermore, a compound like *migarājā* “king of beasts” (see below) undoubtedly refers to animals in general.⁵⁶

In one of the earliest traditional glosses of the term, the *Cullaniddesa* explains *miga* as consisting of two species: *dve migā: eṇi-migo ca sarabhamigo ca* (p. 227, *Explanatory Matter*, No. 509). *Eṇi* is understood by the *PTS Dictionary* (s.v. *miga*), as denoting an “antelope,” and *sarabha* as designating a “red deer.”⁵⁷ *CPD* translates *eṇī* (s.v.) and *eṇī-miga* (s.v.) as “the black antelope.” “Antelope” may be a convenient word for a number species covered by *miga*, but it is doubtful whether it is appropriate for the whole range of them. Strictly speaking, “the term antelope has no precise zoological definition,”⁵⁸ being a general word for a large number of herbivores belonging to the family *Bovidae*. The *Abhidhānappadīpikā* lists the following words under the *miga* entry:

The yak, the spotted-deer,⁵⁹ the *kuraṅga*-deer⁶⁰ are *miga* species;
The *rūrū*-deer,⁶¹ the *raṅku*-deer,⁶² the *ninka*-deer,⁶³ the red deer,

park” and “deer park.” Berger says, however, that the available data does not allow to determine whether the denizens of such parks were deer only or other animals as well (p. 42).

⁵⁶ In Shastri’s glossary of the Pāli terms in the *Abhidhānappadīpikā* both words are given the Sanskrit equivalent of *mṛga*. *Maga* is translated into Hindi as *hariṇ* or “a deer, an antelope” (p. 78, s.v. *maga*). *Miga* is rendered as (1) *hariṇ*, and (2) *siṃh ādi caupāye* or “quadrupeds including the lion, and so on” (p. 82, s.v. *miga*). (For the Hindi equivalents, I have relied upon R.S. McGregor, ed., *The Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993]).

⁵⁷ S.v. *eṇi* the translation is “a kind of antelope,” and s.v. *sarabha* it is “a sort of deer,” with the addition of the Pāli gloss *rohitā sarabhamigā*.

⁵⁸ *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 1, p. 441.

⁵⁹ The *PTS Dictionary* translates it as “spotted antelope.”

⁶⁰ The *PTS Dictionary* renders the term as “a kind of antelope.”

⁶¹ The *PTS Dictionary* gives the word as *ruru*, which it translates as “a sort of deer, a stag.” The term also occurs in Ja VI 277. E.B. Cowell and W.H.D. Rouse, trans., *The Jātāka or Stories of the Buddha’s Former Births* (Oxford: PTS, 1995; orig. publ. 1895), vol. 6, p. 135, translate it as “rurus.” *Nanden*, vol. 38, p. 450, similarly employs a phonetic transcription ㄣ鹿 or “*ruru*-deer.”

⁶² As far as I know, the term is not attested in Pāli. We find it, however, in Sanskrit, and Monier-Williams translates it as “a species of deer or antelope.” (*A Sanskrit-English Dictionary* [Tokyo: Meicho Fukyukai Co., Ltd., 1986; orig. publ. 1899]). On the Sanskrit sources and Moggallāna’s Sanskrit re-constructions in the *Abhidhānappadīpikā*, see Geiger, *Pāli Literature and Language*, 56.

⁶³ *Ninka* also occurs at Ja VI 277. Cowell and Rouse, trans., *The Jātāka or Stories of the*

and so on are included in the [word] *miga*.
camaro pasado ceva kuraṅgo migamātukā
rūrū raṅku ca niṅko ca sarabhādi migantarā// 619 || (Shastri ed.,
 p. 111)

We must add to this terminological wealth the word *kadalīmiga* translated by the *CPD* as “the *kadalī* deer; a kind of deer (or antelope?)” and by the *PTS Dictionary* as “a kind of deer, antelope.”⁶⁴

As with many other traditional animal names in classical writings a precise identification is very difficult. Zoologically, we are hampered by the lack of accurate descriptions as well as by the sad reality that some of these species may have become extinct. Linguistically, we have to acknowledge the fact that many of these terms could cover several species often stretching over different families. What we usually call “deer” represents the family *Cervidae* which contains 17 genera and 41 species.⁶⁵ The most likely candidates from the *Cervidae* covered by the term *miga* are the muntjacs or barking deer (*Muntiacus muntjak*), the chital or spotted deer (*Axis axis*), the hog deer (*Axis porcinus*), the chambal (*Cervus unicolor*), and the barasingha (*Cervus duvaucelli*), the last two representing Indian species of red deer. The gazelle, on the other hand, belongs to the family *Bovidae* and forms a genus in itself, i.e. *Gazella*, which has 3 subgenera and 16 species.⁶⁶ Within this genus the *Gazella bennettii* is spread in Pakistan and India⁶⁷ and it could have been covered by one or more of the Pāli words listed above. It seems safe to suppose that *miga* was a generic term which encompassed species

Buddha's Former Births, vol. 6, p. 135, translate it as “nirṅkas.” *Nanden*, vol. 38, p. 450, renders it as ニンカ鹿 or “ninka-deer.”

⁶⁴ Cowell and Rouse (in *The Jātāka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births*, vol. 6, p. 135) translate it as “spotted *kadalī*-deer.” “Spotted” apparently stands for *bahucitrā*. *Nanden*, vol. 38, p. 450, also makes use of a phonetic transcription カダリー鹿 or “*kadarī*-deer,” but it understands *bahucitrā* as 数多美はしき or “manifold beautiful.” I tend to believe that Cowell's and Rouse's interpretation is better, but I must confess that I have not checked other occurrences of the term in the Canon as well as the view of the commentarial tradition on this passage.

⁶⁵ Nowak, *Walker's Mammals of the World*, 1091ff.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 1199.

⁶⁷ As many other species of gazelles, *Gazella bennettii* has been adversely affected by excessive hunting, grazing, and agriculture development. There remain only 10,000 individuals of this species in India, Pakistan, and southern Iran living in protected areas (Nowak, *Walker's Mammals of the World*, 1201).

from both the *Cervidae* and *Bovidae*, the latter most probably represented by the gazelle. It is not excluded that in some cases, if the *Abhidhānappadīpikā* definition is correct, *miga* could have also included the yak. As for the English translation, I can only say that both “deer” and “gazelle” appear equally appropriate from a linguistic and zoological point of view. For simplicity’s sake, I shall use here only “deer.”

The gentle character of the deer makes it a positive image, mainly associated with the ascetic. Ud 19 says that the recluse dwells in the forest free of fear and anxiety, “with the heart as that of a deer” (*migabhūtena cetasā*).⁶⁸ We find the same image at MN I 450 and Vin II 184. Horner translates *migabhūtena cetasā* in these passages as “[unconcerned, unruffled . . .] with the mind become as a wild creature’s.”⁶⁹ The *Papañcasūdanī Majjhimanikāyāṭṭhakathā* (part 3, p. 167) glosses *migabhūtena cetasā viharanti* as “abiding in a state of no expectation” (*apaccāsimsanapakkhe thitā hutvā viharanti*).⁷⁰ Buddhaghosa then adds the following story. A wounded deer will go to a place inhabited by human beings in order to obtain medicine (*bhesajja*) or ointment (*vanatela*). It will then return to forest and lie down until its wound is cured. The feeling of comfort when it stands up completely recovered is the state of no [further] expectation. The story, if based on real observation, describes a touching page in the otherwise overwhelmingly cruel history of the relationship between humans and animals. It is not totally impossible that *miga* refers here to animals in general, but I hardly see how a predator, for instance, would go to a village and obtain medicine. I rather believe that Buddhaghosa describes the scene with a gentle deer in mind used to (non-violent!) human contacts and able to approach

⁶⁸ Peter Masfield, trans., *The Udāna* (Oxford: PTS, 1994), 31. *Nanden*, vol. 23, p. 115 understands the phrase in the same way: “with a mind like a deer” 鹿の如き心を以て.

⁶⁹ I.B. Horner, trans., *The Book of Discipline* (Oxford: PTS, 1938–1966), part 5, pp. 258–259, and *The Collection of the Middle Length Sayings*, vol. 2, p. 122 respectively. The *PTS Dictionary* (s.v. *miga*), citing this occurrence, translates it as “(having become) like a wild animal.” Berger, *Zwei Probleme der mittelindischen Lautlehre*, 40–41, also discusses this compound and renders it into German as *friedlich* (“peaceful,” “placid”) or *mild* (“mild, gentle”). He adds that it clearly must refer to a gazelle. Berger also mentions Neumann’s German translation of the MN in which *migabhūtena cetasā* is rendered as *mild geworden im Gemüte* (“having become gentle in mind or disposition”). “Somehow free but apt,” comments Berger, adding that the *PTS Dictionary*’s rendering is not correct (p. 41, n. 77). Both *Nanden*. vol. 4, p. 283 (Vin) and vol. 10, p. 259 (MN) understand the compound as “deer’s mind.” As I explain later in my paper, I also believe that the translation of “deer’s mind” is more appropriate than “animal’s mind.”

humans without frightening them. We should not, however, place unconditional trust in the works of the great commentator. He may have made up the story for literary purposes, or he may simply be wrong as far as the original meaning of the text is concerned. I believe, however, that *migabhūtena cetasā* makes more ethological sense when we think of a gentle deer than animals in general, which would be vague and not necessarily evoking images of peace and calm.

Sn 39 (p. 7) (repeated in Ap I 8) exhorts the recluse to be independent like a deer which is not tethered and can go wherever it wishes in the forest for pasture. Describing his ascetic practices before Awakening, the Buddha says that he avoided all human presence “as a deer in the forest . . . having seen a man, flees from grove to grove, from thicket to thicket, from low ground to low ground, from high ground to high ground” (MN I 79).⁷¹ MN I 173–5 compares the recluses and brahmins addicted to the sense-pleasures with a deer caught in a heap of snares. In sharp contrast are those aloof from these temptations, intent on the practice the nine successive states of attainment (*nava anupubbavīhārasamāpattiya*). They are said to be like a deer out of the trapper’s reach roaming over the forest confidently. In the *Sagāthavagga* the homeless monks are likened to the untrapped deer wandering in freedom (SN I 199), and those who practise contemplation will surely attain peace (*sothim gamissanti*)⁷² like a deer in marshy lands (*kaccha*) free of mosquito (SN I 52).

This is the most frequent but not the only type of image and behaviour associated with the deer. The cautious character of the animal occasionally acquires negative nuances. At SN I 210 the recluse annoyed by the gossip of the world is compared with a deer which fears even the wind in the forest.⁷³

The *Commentary* to Th 109 (p. 16) (*Paramthadīpanī*, vol. 1, pp. 229–231) describes a doe which gives birth to a fawn, and in its strong

⁷⁰ CPD translates *apaccāsimsana* as “wishing nothing in return.”

⁷¹ I. B. Horner, trans., *The Collection of the Middle Length Sayings*, vol. 1, p. 106.

⁷² M. A. Rhys Davids translates “they surely shall in safety go their ways.” (*The Book of the Kindred Sayings* [London: PTS, 1917], Part 1, p. 73). I consider *sothim* the direct object of the verb and interpret it like Nakamura Hajime (*Budda kamigami to no taiwa: Sanyutta Nikāya* ブッダ 神々との対話: サンユッタ・ニカーヤ I [Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1986], vol. 1, p. 121: . . . 人々は、平安におもむくであろう).

⁷³ On the peculiar nature of this *sutta*, cf. Nakamura Hajime, 1986, vol. 2, 392. *Budda akuma to no taiwa: Sanyutta Nikāya* ブッダ 悪魔との対話: サンユッタ・ニカーヤ II (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1986), vol. 2, p. 392.

maternal love never goes away far from the young. Unable to eat and drink, the doe eventually becomes famished. This short story may impress a lay ignorant man like me, but for Thera Saṅgharakkhita, who supposedly uttered the verse here, it carried a different meaning. The doe looking after the fawn at the expense of its own hunger strongly evoked him the image of the human suffering caused by attachment. This stimulated him to cultivate insight and attain arahantship (*vipassanaṃ vaḍḍhetvā arahattaṃ pāpuni*).

3.3. The Monkey

The most frequently used Pāli words to refer to the monkey are *kapi*, *makkaṭa*, *semhāra*, and *sākhāmiga*. It is not clear whether all these terms are variant lexemes denoting the same species or they refer to different kinds of monkeys. None of the dictionaries I have consulted has been of any help, and I am not aware of any relevant traditional commentary which could shed light on the question.⁷⁴ The *Abhidhānappadīpikā* gives the following list of synonyms: *plavaṅgama*, *makkaṭa*, *vānara*, *sākhāmiga*, *kapi*, *valīmukha*, *plavaṅga*.⁷⁵ Judging from the geographical distribution of primates in India, the most likely candidates are the hanuman langur (*Semnopithecus entellus*) and the rhesus monkey (*Macaca mulatta*), but one or more species of brow-ridged langurs or leaf monkeys (genus *Trachyopithecus*) may also be covered by the Pāli words listed above.

The monkey is the classical symbol of mind agitation in Buddhist literature. The association between the monkey and this typically human affliction is more conspicuous than in the elephant’s case. At Th 1111 (p. 99) the simile is very clearly stated: “the unsteady mind is like a monkey” (*cittaṃ*

⁷⁴ Dictionaries are also silent on the differences between the Sanskrit and Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit equivalents *kapi* and *markaṭa*. CPD translates *kapi* (s.v.) simply as “a monkey.”

⁷⁵ Shastri ed., *Abhidhānappadīpikā*, p. 110, verses 613–614. *Plavaṅgama*, *valīmukha*, and *plavaṅga* are attested only in Sanskrit. Incidentally, the Hindi translations offered by Shastri in the *Abhidhānappadīpikā* and *Ekkharakosa* are equally vague as far as zoological accuracy is concerned. *Kapi* is translated as *bandar*, and *makkaṭa* is rendered as *bānar*. According to McGregor, *The Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary*, s.v., both Hindi words mean “monkey,” *bānar* being directly derived from the Sanskrit *vānara* and *bandar* being connected to the Sanskrit *vanar-*, *vānara-*. The form *bandara* is found as early as the 16th century in the allegorical epic *Padmāvata* written by the Sufi poet Malik Muhammad Jāyāsī in Earli Awadhi or Eastern Hindi (cf. Ramesh Mathur, *Padmāvata: An Etymological Study* (Calcutta-Delhi: Simant Publications India, 1974), 127, where *bandara* is also derived from *vānara* and translated as “monkey”).

calam makkaṭasannibham). Though wearing robe, a monk of unsteady mind is like a monkey in a lion's hide (Th 1080, p. 96). The recluses and brahmins who keep on going from one teacher and doctrine to another (admittedly, another form of agitation) are compared to monkeys which travel by grabbing one branch after another (Sn 791, p. 155; commented upon in the *Mahāniddeśa*, pp. 91–2).⁷⁶ The mind is depicted as a monkey locked in a little hut. Prowling “round and round from door to door he [i.e. the monkey] hies, rattling with blows again, again” (Th 125–6, p. 18).⁷⁷ All animals, including *Homo sapiens*, when confined in an unfamiliar place, are bound to be stressed and signal their unresolved motivational conflicts by various displays.⁷⁸ The problem here is not one of mere observation. The passages use these unbiased observations to build a biased association of the monkey with the unsteady human mind. I have not been able to find anything that would scientifically prove that primates are particularly agitated animals, though the fight for supremacy and aggressiveness of the chimpanzee dimly remind of its more “advanced” relative, i.e. the *Homo sapiens*. It is perhaps the highly social life of the monkeys requiring complex intra-group activities as well as the great amount of primate curiosity and playfulness,⁷⁹ behaviours usually linked with intelligence, that paradoxically make them the most suit-

⁷⁶ Except for a few species living on the ground, most primates prefer arboreal locomotion. Our passage, which uses *kapi* here, apparently points to an arboreal monkey, but this does not help us much in determining what species it actually refers to. The “candidates” listed in the main text, though containing species adapted to a wide variety of habitats and with some populations of Hanuman langur spending most time on the ground (Nowak, *Walker's Mammals of the World*, 600), have all good arboreal capability (*ibid.*, 582, 600, 602).

⁷⁷ Rhys Davids trans., *The Psalms of the Brethren* (Oxford: PTS, 1913), 112.

⁷⁸ Cf. Aubrey Manning and Marian Stamp Dawkins, *An Introduction to Animal Behaviour*, 5th ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998), 244–6. The hut confinement is, strictly speaking, a disruption of normal behaviour. Incidentally, the stress it could generate could have serious effect on the animal welfare (*ibid.*, 246–254). We might be relieved to know that it is very unlikely that Buddhist ascetics were carrying such experiments to corroborate their literary productions. Monks and nuns (when they care about observing the *Vinaya!*) are not permitted to keep animals (cf. McDermott, “Animals and Humans in Early Buddhism,” 277).

⁷⁹ For primate ethology, see Russell L. Ciochon and Richard A. Nisbett, eds., *The Primate Anthology: Essays on Primate Behaviour, Ecology, and Conservation from Natural History* (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1998); Richard Byrne, *The Thinking Ape: Evolutionary Origins of Intelligence* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1995); and Maxeen Biben, “Squirrel monkey play fighting: making the case for a cognitive training function for play,” in Bekoff and Byers, *Animal Play*, 161–182.

able candidates for impersonating the “jigging” mind of their human cousins.

3.4. The Lion

The lion (*Panthera leo*),⁸⁰ “a solar symbol of overpowering brightness”⁸¹ inspiring human respect in all cultures and ages, is a pan-Buddhist zoeme standing for the highest qualities, most often linked with the Lord himself. The *Tipiṭaka* authors show considerable familiarity with the lion. This should come as no surprise: unlike modern India, the lion in ancient times was not a rare curiosity confined to national parks.⁸² The “king of beasts” was found in historical times from the Balkan and Arabian peninsulas to central India and almost all throughout Africa.⁸³ The lion in our texts undoubtedly refers to the Asian subspecies of lion (*Panthera leo persica*).

Basically, its accurate identification seems to pose no special problems, but the Pāli commentarial literature confronts us with a puzzling classification. In the *Sārattappakāsini* (vol. 2, p. 283), Buddhaghosa lists four types of lions: the grass-lion (*tiṇa-sīha*), the black-lion (*kāla-sīha*), the yellow-lion (*paṇḍu-sīha*), and the maned-lion (*kesara-sīha*).⁸⁴ The last two types may simply refer to the female lion and male lion respectively. Buddhaghosa does not state it clearly and seems more preoccupied with the description of the outward appearance, which is very detailed especially for

⁸⁰ Depending on the classification, the lion is treated as a genus of its own in which case it is called *Leo leo* (*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* 1994, vol. 7, p. 383). I have adopted here Nowak’s classification which considers it a subgenus of *Panthera* (*Walker’s Mammals of the World*, 821). The modern lion in India is considered a subspecies whose scientific name is *Panthera leo persica*.

⁸¹ Jean Chevalier and Alain Gheerbrant, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, J. Buchanan-Brown trans. (London: Penguin Books, 1996; orig. publ. in French 1982), 611.

⁸² By 1940 the lion had been eliminated in Asia with the exception of the Gir forest in Gujarat where its population has recently reached about 250 individuals after vigorous conservation efforts (Nowak, *Walker’s Mammals of the World*, 834).

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 821.

⁸⁴ The *Ṭikā* (*Samyuttanikāye Khandhavaggaṭikā, Sīhasuttavaṇṇanā*, quoted according to the *Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana* CD-ROM, Version 1.1 [Dhammagiri: Vipassana Research Institute]) states that there are four kinds of lions according to characteristics of colour, features, etc. (*vaṇṇavisesādisiddhena visesena cattāro sīhā*). It then says that the *Commentary*, after having indicated these categories from the viewpoint of colour and food, explains the various types of lions. (*te idāni nāmato vaṇṇato āhārato dassetvā iddhādhīppetasiham nānappakarato vibhāvetum*).

the “maned-lion.” The exact identification of the first two categories remains a mystery for me. Let us first quote the *Commentary* itself: “And amongst these [four types], the grass-lion is a grass-eater similar to a dove-coloured cow. The black-lion is a grass-eater similar to a black-coloured cow” (*Tesu tiṇa-sīho kapota-vaṇṇa-gāvī-sadiso tiṇa-bhakkho ca hoti. Kāḷa-sīho kāḷa-gāvī-sadiso tiṇa-bhakkho yeva*). These two types are contrasted with the “yellow-lion” which is defined as “a meat-eater similar to a cow of the colour of yellow leaves” (*pañḍu-sīho pañḍu-palāsa-vaṇṇa-gāvī-sadiso māmsa-bhakkho*). No matter how startling it may be for us, Buddhaghosa does appear to mean that he has in mind two kinds of literally “grass-eating” lions. The *Ṭīkā* does not seem to be surprised at all, and explains the *tiṇa-sīho* as follows: “The ‘grass-lion’ [means] a grass-eating lion, [expressed] by the omission of the next word after the first word, like in [the case of the compound] ‘vegetable[-eating]-king.’” (*tinabhakkho sīho “tiṇa-sīho” purimapade uttarapadalopena yathā “sākapatthivo” ti*). The *Sub-Commentary* refers here to the *sākapārthiva* sub-class of *karmadhāraya* compounds which is well-known in Indian grammar.⁸⁵ “Vegetable-king” (*sākapārthiva*) is construed as a “king who eats or enjoys vegetables” (*sāka-bhojī pārthivaḥ*). Such compounds can be understood only if we suppose that a word following the first one has been omitted. This is exactly what the *Ṭīkā* is saying. As to the zoological reality behind the compound, I am at a complete loss. As any cat-owner could tell, felines do sometimes engage in what appears to be grass eating. To be more precise, they do not eat it in the sense cows do, but rather chew at long grasses apparently taking some juice from them. Zoologists still puzzle over this “strange” behaviour of the cats, but some plausible hypotheses are available. The most likely one is that cats need to obtain folic acid which is indispensable for the production of haemoglobin and is otherwise unavailable from their meat diet.⁸⁶ I doubt, however, that Buddhaghosa or his predecessors, otherwise admirably fine observers of the lion, simply confused the occasional behaviour of the feline with a major habit worth mentioning as a fundamental characteristic. This becomes even more dubious when we consider the fact that he ascribes it only to two categories and not to all lions, let alone the puzzling colours of these two classes. It is more plausible that we have to deal here with two mythological classes lumped together with two categories of real animals.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Cf. Patañjali’s *Mahābhāṣya* on Pāṇini’s *Aṣṭadhyāyī* II.1.69, *Vārttika* 8.

⁸⁶ Desmond Morris, *Illustrated Catwatching* (London: Ebury Press, 1995), 67.

⁸⁷ In a personal communication Mr Peter Skilling informed me that the grass-eating lion is

Unfortunately, I have not been able to find any textual evidence to support my hypothesis.

The lion (*sīha*) and the lion’s roar (*sīhanāda*)⁸⁸ are the standard similes for the Buddha and his Dharma preaching. At SN III 84–6 and AN II 33–34 the roar of the lion, king of beasts (*migarājan*),⁸⁹ plunges all animals into

amongst the “seven Hiamalayan animals” (Thai, *satv himaphan*; Pāli, **satta himavantā*), including real animals as well as *kinnaras*, *garulas*, etc., which are well represented in the Thai art. Ven. Ñāṇuttara, former lecturer at the National Buddhist University of Burma, confirmed me that we also find in Burma the belief in the existence of grass-eating lions as a very special and rare kind of the animal. I have not been able to find any reference, textual, mythological or artistic, to grass-eating lions in traditional and modern South Asia. On the other hand, Dr Mudagamuwe Maithrimurthi tells me that the modern Sinhalese have a proverb to the effect that a lion would never fall so low as to eat grass. Generalisations are dangerous, especially when made without sufficient data, but if this can be taken to reflect the general mentality, then *tiṇa-sīha* plays no (or no more?) role in the popular beliefs of modern Sri Lanka.

Dr Sue Hamilton pointed out to me that another possibility is to regard *bhakkho* as a scribal corruption. This is certainly one of the alternatives which textual criticism must always bear in mind, but I could not figure out what the original may have been, especially as it should also fit with *māmsa*. If we have here a text corruption, then it should have occurred very early. It was probably there at Buddhaghosa’s time and may thus go back to the old Sinhalese commentaries. At any rate, the *Sub-Commentary*, quoted above, takes the word *bhakkho* for granted and glosses it accordingly.

I should like to thank again Dr Hamilton, Mr Skilling, Ven. Ñāṇuttara, and Dr Maithrimurthi for their kind help which has alleviated my initial puzzlement.

⁸⁸ Let us note here that apart from its basic meaning of “lion’s roar,” the Sanskrit equivalent *simhanāda* is also used in Hindu works like the *Mahābhārata*, etc. with the sense of “war-cry” or “confident assertion” (Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, s.v. *simha*). Cf. also Otto Böthlink and Rudolph Roth, *Sanskrit-Wörterbuch* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1990; orig. publ. 1855–1875), s.v. *simhanāda*: *Schlachtgeschrei, ein zum Kampferausforderndes Geschrei, Ausruf des gesteigerten Selbstvertrauens*.

⁸⁹ The *Sāratthappakāsinī* (vol. 2, p. 283) explains the compound as the “king of the multitude of animals” (“*miga-rājā*” *ti miga-gaṇassa rājā*). *Migarājā* is the most widely used expression to refer to the lion’s “kingship,” but we also find compounds like *migādhibhū* (Sn 684, p. 133) and, very rarely, *miginda*. The authors of the *PTS Dictionary* (s.v. *miga*) and Berger, *Zwei Probleme der mittelindischen Lautlehre*, 41, quote only one occurrence in the *Saddhammopāyana*, a late work belonging to the epistolary genre. Berger considers that *miginda* must be a late term patterned on *migarājā* and *migādhibhū*. We actually find *miginda* also employed in the *Abhidhānappadīpikā* (p. 110, ver. 611), which, as already mentioned, is a late compilation. On the other hand, the Sanskrit counterpart *mrgendra* appears to be very frequent in Hindu sources (cf. Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, s.v. *mrga*), some of them relatively early. In the *Bhagavad Gītā* X 30, for instance, Krishna says of himself: “and of the beasts I am the king of beasts.” (*mrgānām ca mrgendro ‘ham*), which is one

great fear.⁹⁰ Even so, all *devas* become frightened when the Tathāgata expounds the doctrine of impermanence. It 123 declares the Buddha to be the supreme lion (*eso so bhagavā buddho esa sīho anuttaro*). Māra asks the Lord why he roars like a lion full of confidence before his audience (SN I 110). Two discourses in the *Majjhima Nikāya*, i.e. the *Cūḷasīhanāda-sutta* and the *Mahāsīhanāda-sutta* (MN I, *suttas* no. 11 and 12 respectively), centre upon the symbolism of the lion's roar. Though a less heroic image, at SN I 16 the Buddha is likened to a solitary lion.⁹¹

The symbolism is not restricted to the Buddha only. The most frequent candidates to the right of "lionhood" are, however, the adepts who have attained or are approaching the *summum bonum* of the Buddhist Path. Having reached *arahantship*, Thera Bhāradvāja utters these verses:

Tis thus th'enlightened lift their triumph-song,
Like lions roaring in the hill-ravine. (Th 177, p. 23)⁹²

Actually, the introductory verses of the *Theragāthā* compare all psalms of the holy men with the lion's roar (Th, p. 1). At Ap I 12 the recluse is exhorted to be like the lion which is not startled by any sound, and subdues all beasts with its enormous strength. In Mil 400–1 the physical characteristics and habits of the lion become a source of comparisons for the ideal virtues of the ascetic striving on the Path (*yogin yogāvācara*).

of his divine self-manifestations (*ātmavibhūti*). Śāṅkara comments on this: "and of the beasts the king of beasts, [i.e.] the lion or the tiger, I am." (*mṛgānām ca mṛgendrah sīmo vyāghro vā aham*) (*Works of Śāṅkarācārya in Original Sanskrit*, vol. II: *Bhagavadgītā with Śāṅkarabhāṣya* [Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981; orig. publ. 1929], 156). It is then very likely that *mīginda* was a translation of the Sanskrit *mṛgendra* and it started to be employed in late Pāli texts on a very limited scale. It is interesting to note that the *Saddhammopāyana* might be related to the Abhayagirivihāra literature (see von Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pāli Literature*, 202–3; S. Dietz, *Die buddhistsische Briefliteratur Indiens* [Wiesbaden: Asiatische Forschungen Band 84, 1984], 31–37). It is also important to remember that the *Abhidhānappadīpikā* often employs Sanskritisations which are not usually attested in the Pāli Canon.

⁹⁰ The *Sāratthappakāsinī* (vol. 2, p. 283), which we have discussed above, actually comments on SN III 84–6. After explaining the four types of lion, Buddhaghosa concludes that the lion in the *sutta* is the "maned-lion" (*kesara-sīha*).

⁹¹ The basis of a pride is a group of related females and their young. One adult male lion (occasionally two or three males) lives together with the pride until it is driven off by a challenger or a coalition of other male lions (Nowak, *Walker's Mammals of the World*, 832–833). Male lions can also lead a solitary life.

⁹² Rhys Davids trans., *The Psalms of the Brethren*, 137.

Occasionally, we find the lion’s image associated even with lay followers. In the *Vimānavatthu* pious women are told that if they are obedient to their husbands, and kill their anger and greed like a lion killing and devouring little animals, they will surely enjoy rebirth in Heaven (Vv 28).

We also come across fairly minute observations concerning the lion’s behaviour. SN III 84, AN II 33, and DN III 23 give an accurate description of the lion’s hunting habits. In the evening the lion comes out of its lair, rouses itself, surveys the four quarters, roars thrice, and then goes out for prey (*gocarāya*).⁹³ Although its activity can occur at any time of the day, the lion tends to be a crepuscular or nocturnal animal.⁹⁴ Its roar appears to be an awesome sound which can be heard by people up to 9 km away. It is usually given after sunset as well as after a kill and eating, and it seems to perform mainly a territorial function.⁹⁵ Buddhaghosa, commenting upon the SN III 84, gives many interesting details about the above habits of the lion. I shall discuss here only two of them. Speaking about the lion’s lair (*āsaya*), the *Commentary* says that the animal comes out of it for four reasons: in order to be able to see when it gets too dark; in order to void excrements; in order to hunt when hungry; and in order to mate (*Sāratthappakāsini*, vol. 2, p. 283). Buddhaghosa also gives a detailed description of the way the lion rouses itself after awakening (*vijambhati*).⁹⁶ Firmly standing on its hind legs, it stretches its front legs by raising its back and lowering the front part of the body—a scene which, I am sure, any cat-lover will easily recognise. After rubbing its nose with thunder-like sounds (*asani-saddam karonto viya nāsā-putāni poṭhetvā*), the lion shakes the dust off its body and rouses itself (*vijambhati*) running to and fro like a young calf (*taruṇa-vacchako viya aparāparam javati*). And thus its body looks like a firebrand reeling in the dark (*pan’ assa sarīram andha-kāre paribbhamantaṃ alātaṃ viya khāyati*) (*Sāratthappakāsini*, vol. 2, p. 284)⁹⁷—a beautiful image evocative of times

⁹³ Cf. note 23 above. For a traditional commentary on the lion’s prey, see *Sāratthappakāsini* (vol. 2, pp. 284–5).

⁹⁴ Nowak, *Walker’s Mammals of the World*, 832.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 833. *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1994, vol. 7, p. 383) adds that the lion also utters its roar before getting up at dawn.

⁹⁶ According to the *PTS Dictionary*, *vijambhati* means “to rouse oneself, to display activity, often applied to the awakening of a lion.” It also lists the word *vijambhikā* which is rendered as “yawning.” Mizuno, *Pārigo jiten*, s.v., construes *vijambhati* only as “to yawn.” Buddhaghosa’s gloss of this word here makes it clear that, at least in this passage, we have to deal with more than the simple act of yawning.

⁹⁷ I should like to thank Dr Sue Hamilton who has kindly answered some of my questions

gone by when scenes like this could be witnessed in most parts of the Indian sub-continent.

The ascetic subduing the lion, the tiger, or the elephant by his cultivation of friendliness (*mettabhāvanā*) (see, for instance, Ap I 19, 365; Th 1113, p. 99) is a very interesting aspect of the relationship between humans and wild animals. The modern accounts of forest monks in South and Southeast Asia strongly suggest that we have to deal here with more than just a literary idealisation of this Buddhist practice. In a very well-documented study on the wandering ascetics in the forests of Thailand during the first half of the 20th century, Kamala Tiyavanich reports many cases of *thudong* (Pāli, *dhutānga*) monks who encountered tigers and elephants in the wilderness.⁹⁸ Not only that they survived but despite their (quite understandable!) fear, counterbalanced by diligent practice of meditation and/or chanting, tigers did not display any kind of aggressive behaviour. Unfortunately, scientists have not yet discovered a “*metta*-metre” which would allow an objective measurement of friendliness-emanations, and this makes it awfully difficult to verify the traditional explanation that *metta* has a protective function. For the time being, we must content ourselves with a more humdrum explanation. I have no specific ethological data on the subject, but I venture to surmise that a series of closely related factors are essential in this type of human-predator encounters. First, even when utterly scared, the ascetic peacefully practising his meditation displays no aggressive behaviour against predators. Thus he does not trigger a self-defence mechanism in the animals, which would usually result in the death of the human. Second, the basic survival rule of the *thudong* monks is not to react in any way against strange noises in the forest.⁹⁹ Not reacting in any way also means that they did not run away. The decision not to move when finding yourself face to face with a predator is paradoxically (but by no means absolutely!) safer than turning your back and fleeing away. In most predators, hunting instincts appear to be strongly aroused especially when the prey runs away.¹⁰⁰ I believe that even Olympic

concerning the wording of the English translation.

⁹⁸ Kamala Tiyavanich, *Forest Recollections: Wandering Monks in Twentieth-century Thailand* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1997), 79–96. I am grateful to Mr Peter Skilling who has kindly brought this book to my attention.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 102.

¹⁰⁰ I remember having seen (and recorded) a TV documentary on cheetahs broadcast by the NHK (Japanese National) TV Channel which was quite relevant in this respect.

champions would hesitate to give it a try if they literally had to face a tiger or lion. The latter, for instance, is reported to be able to leap up to 12 metres and run for a short distance at 50–60 km/hr.¹⁰¹ Third, despite the existence of man-eating tigers and lions,¹⁰² man has “never really constituted the main diet component for any species.”¹⁰³ Seen from the lion’s or tiger’s “perspective,” humans are not the staple prey but rather an occasional “snack.” Even in the latter case, it appears that human encroachment upon the predators’ natural habitat is the most important factor which eventually causes the appearance of man-eaters.¹⁰⁴ A non-aggressive, non-running human, like the meditating ascetic, must be a puzzling living being. If not attacked by the human, it makes more sense for a healthy tiger or lion with an average hunting success to leave the large ape alone and mind its regular business. It is hard, if not impossible, to verify whether more mysterious forces are at work here, but it seems that the *metta*-based attitude could be

(Unfortunately, I cannot trace it among my video tapes for more reference details . . .) One scene shows a cheetah chasing a very young gazelle. When almost caught, the latter displays a strange behaviour: it stops and turns round facing its predator. The cheetah is equally puzzled but does not kill (or cannot kill!?) its prey which is now standing right in front of it. They look at each other for a few seconds and then the young gazelle makes the unfortunate decision to start running again. This time the cheetah has no hesitation: it catches and kills its prey immediately.

¹⁰¹ Nowak, *Walker’s Mammals of the World*, 832. The “feats” a tiger can perform are no less surprising. Tigers are reported to be able to leap up to 10 metres (*ibid.*, 825). Like all other cats, they can run very fast but only for short distances. Even a cheetah, the feline best adapted for chasing the prey, can continue its chase for no more than about 500 metres (*ibid.*, 835). Compared to the speed of big cats, humans have still a long way to go until they could compete with any chance of success. Even a short-distance runner able to cover 100 metres in 10 seconds has a speed of . . . 36 km/hr.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 827 and 834 respectively.

¹⁰³ Desmond Morris, *The Naked Ape: A Zoologist’s Study of the Human Animal* (London: Vintage, 1994), 152.

¹⁰⁴ Between 1969 and 1971 tigers were reported to have killed 129 persons in the Sudarbans mangrove forest, at the mouth of the Ganges River. However, only 1% of the tigers actually appeared to seek out human beings for prey (Nowak, *Walker’s Mammals of the World*, 827). According to *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* (vol. 11, p. 767), “an old or disabled tiger or a tigress with cubs may find human beings an easier prey and become a man-eater.” This clearly shows that humans (ascetics or not) are not the main biological prey for a healthy tiger. From a purely ethological viewpoint, most of the healthy tigers which lived in jungles teeming with wild life, as the Thai forests in the first half of this century presumably used to be, must have found the strange human ape roaming about its territory at the bottom of their “menu.”

an efficient protective behaviour ethologically explicable. I must, however, admit that the basic requirement of scientific honesty obliges me to make an important addition. The monks for whom the ethological “rule” hypothesised here did not work obviously did not survive to tell us the other side of the story . . .¹⁰⁵

3.5. The Jackal

At the opposite pole of the positive symbolism of the lion stands the jackal.¹⁰⁶ In many ways, their antithetical relation reminds us of the traditional Western and, to a certain extent, African view of the noble king of beasts contrasted with the “abject and silly” hyena.¹⁰⁷ The usual image of the

¹⁰⁵ Occasionally *thudong* monks would come across a heap of bones, an alms bowl, and scattered monastic robes. It is impossible to know for sure whether these unlucky ascetics died of natural causes or as the result of an attack by a wild animal (Tiyavanich, *Forest Recollections*, 95).

¹⁰⁶ The Hindu tradition also has a negative image of the jackal which is seen as a symbol of greed and cruelty. Anubis, the funerary god of Egypt, was usually depicted with a jackal head, though it seems more likely that the “jackals” in Ancient Egypt actually represent “roving dogs” (Chevalier and Gheerbrant, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 548). Humankind seems to share an exaggerated contempt for the scavenging and a strong tendency to see it associated with some animals more often than it actually happens. As explained in the text of the paper, the jackal does not eat only carrion. It is an equally good hunter. Hyena is, believe it or not, a better hunter than the lion, and recent research shows that the king of beasts scavenges more often on hyena kills than the other way round (Stephan E. Glickman, “The Spotted Hyena from Aristotle to the Lion King: Reputation is Everything” in Mack, *Humans and Other Animals*, 93).

To borrow Glickman’s words, “from a biologist’s perspective, scavenging is an extremely honorable, essential profession” (*ibid.*, p. 93). Though the extent of scavenging vs hunting as well as the nature of scavenging (primary or marginal) remains a matter of debate in the scientific community, there is little doubt that *Homo habilis* (the earliest *Homo*) and the “Early Humans” (the best known of which are *Homo erectus* and the Neanderthals) did engage in scavenging for millions of years (Steven Mithen, *The Prehistory of the Mind: A Search for the Origins of Art, Religion, and Science* [London: Phoenix, 1998], esp. 112–114, 141; and n. 15, pp. 276–277, for the debate mentioned above; cf. also Roger Lewin, *Human Evolution: An Illustrated Introduction*, 4th ed. [Massachusetts: Blackwell Science, 1999], 149–154). The despise of scavenging must be a recent evolutionary development, which was further exacerbated by the biologically comfortable position of a (relatively) constant supply of food brought about by the agricultural revolution.

¹⁰⁷ These unflattering attributes come from the English translation of Leo Africanus’ *History and Description of Africa*, originally written in Arabic by the middle of the 16th century (quoted after Glickman, “The Spotted Hyena from Aristotle to the Lion King,” 105).

hyena (*taraccha*, which must be the striped hyena or *Hyaena hyaena*) in the *Tipiṭaka* seems to be that of a wild dangerous animal. It is most often listed together with lions, tigers, leopards, and bears, and has no strong connotations of the disgusting and shrewd creature we are familiar with (Vin I 220; Vin III 58, 151; AN III 101; Ap I 17, 271; Ja V 406, 416; Ja VI 277, 562; Vism 645).

The jackal, on the other hand, fills in the role of “the vilest of beasts” (*migādhamā*, Ja VI452). There are quite a few Pāli words denoting this animal: *sigāla* (v.l. *singāla*), *kotthu* (v.l. *koṭṭhu*), *jambuka*, *bheraṇḍaka*, and *sivā*.¹⁰⁸ Most likely, they all refer to the golden jackal (*Canis aureus*), which is the only jackal species living in Asia.¹⁰⁹ From a purely biological standpoint, there is nothing which would entitle humans to bash the jackal. As with many other carnivores, relations between people and the golden jackal are controversial. In Bangladesh, for instance, the golden jackal plays an important role in scavenging animal carrion around human habitats and in preventing the increase of rodents and hares. But it also raids crops of corn, sugar cane, and water melons. It may be involved in the spread of rabies, and in 1979 jackals were reported to have killed two young children.¹¹⁰ It is hard to say whether such negative (speaking from an anthropocentric per-

¹⁰⁸ The *Abhidhānappadīpikā* (p. 110, ver. 615) lists all these synonyms but has *bheraṇḍa* instead of *bheraṇḍaka*, which is the form usually employed in the Pāli Canon (see Ja V 270; AN I 187,188). *Bheraṇḍa* appears to be borrowed from the Sanskrit *bheraṇḍa* or *bheruṇḍa*. The form *bheruṇḍaka* is attested in Buddhist Sanskrit texts. We find it, for instance, in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* (K. Kern and Nanjio Bunyiu, ed. [Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1970; orig. publ. 1908–1912], p. 85, ver. 60). Kumārajīva translates it as 野干 (T9.14a27), which is usually defined in Classical Chinese as “a sort of fox,” but appears in Buddhist translations as the standard rendering of “jackal.” The *Fan yi ming yi ji* 翻譯名義集 (T54.1089a) gives the term as the Chinese translation of the *xi-qie-luo* (Late Mediaeval pronunciation /**sit-khia-la*/) 悉伽羅, which is a phonetic transcription of the Sanskrit *śrgāla/srgāla*. Things are more complicated with the *Mahāvīyutpatti* (Sakaki Ryōsaburo 榊亮三郎, ed. [Kyoto: Kyoto Teikoku Daigaku, 1916], p. 319), which translates *śrgāla/srgāla* into Tibetan as *lce spyang* or *ce-spyang* (“jackal” or “fox”) and into Chinese as 野干 (“jackal”). *Bheruṇḍaka*, on the other hand, is rendered into Tibetan as *spyang* (“wolf”) or *ce spyang* (“jackal” or “fox”) and into Chinese as 狼 (“wolf”). It is difficult to know the actual situation with certainty, but it appears to me unlikely that the Tibetan and Chinese translators had first-hand knowledge of the Indian species they were supposed to render into their own languages. If we are to judge from the Tibetan equivalents, however, then it would seem that *bheruṇḍaka* was used in a rather loose way to refer to both “jackal” and “wolf.”

¹⁰⁹ Nowak, *Walker’s Mammals of the World*, 656.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 659.

spective) aspects of the human-jackal relation played a part in the Buddhist attitude towards animal.¹¹¹ My feeling is that the texts which we shall discuss below do not seem to reflect them directly. It is more likely that we have to deal here with a folk-image based on the fact that *Canis aureus* is a smaller predator, and it can easily lend itself for an antithetical role to the lion. Though there is no doubt that it scavenges, the jackal is also a very able hunter.¹¹² It is true that jackals may follow lions or other big cats in order to scavenge food, but when they hunt in packs they are able to bring down even antelopes and sheep.¹¹³ And quite unseemly for “a vile animal,” jackals form monogamous stable pairs.¹¹⁴ It is hard to know whether the Buddhist authors and redactors were actually aware of the full range of behavioural patterns of the jackal. Despite some rare objective descriptions, the texts seem more intent to make full use of the folk-image. Let us now look at some examples of “jackal-bashing.”

In the *Sagāthavagga* (SN I 66) we are told that in spite of its howl, the jackal is a wretched (*chava*) beast never equal to the lion. We must be reminded, by the way, that howling is a very normal crepuscular behaviour of the genus *Canis*.¹¹⁵ It usually serves to communicate between the pack members and also has a territorial function.¹¹⁶ DN III 23–26 contains the parable of an old jackal which tries to imitate the lion’s roar only to achieve ridiculous effects. The following verses present the jackal mainly as a scavenger able to hunt only frogs and mice. All the three stanzas in this passage end with the same rhetorical question: “Now what is a wretched jackal[’s howl] compared with a lion’s roar?” (*ke ca chava sigāle, ke pana sīhanāde*).¹¹⁷ The simile is used, of course, to compare the Lord with the lion

¹¹¹ We must, however, add that words like *bheraṇḍa*, or *bheraṇḍaka* (cf. *bherava*, i.e. “frightful” or “terror”) do betray clear feelings of fear for the jackal. Professor Schmitahausen has kindly drawn my attention to Wackernagel and Debrunner, *Altindische Grammatik* II 2, p. 550 (suffix-*ṇḍa*) where *bheruṇḍa* is given as *grauenerregend* or “terrible, atrocious, gruesome.”

¹¹² Nowak, *Walker’s Mammals of the World*, 658.

¹¹³ *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 6, p. 454.

¹¹⁴ Nowak, *Walker’s Mammals of the World*, 658–9.

¹¹⁵ *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 6, p. 454. *Britannica* describes, however, the howl of the jackal “more dismaying to human ears than that of the hyena” (*ibid.*).

¹¹⁶ The function of howling in wolves, with which jackals have extremely close biological affinities, is to bring packs together and mark the territory (Nowak, *Walker’s Mammals of the World*, 667).

¹¹⁷ Geiger (*Pāli Literature and Language*, 149, section 111) discusses this occurrence and

and a naked (*acela*) ascetic with the old jackal. A similar image is found at AN I 187–8 and the *Mahāniddeśa* (p. 177), commenting upon the *Pasūrasutta*, says that an old jackal could never keep up with the king of beasts.

Ja VI 452 calls the jackal “the vilest of beasts” (*migādhamā*), repeating the attribute twice, for no specific reason other than their foraging habits: at night time jackals supposedly mistake the flowers of the Judas trees¹¹⁸ with lumps of meat and at dawn are disappointed to discover flowers instead. I doubt the truthfulness of the interpretation given here to this type of behaviour, if based on any real observation at all. It is hard to believe that an animal with an enormously acute sense of smell could make such a mistake.¹¹⁹ I have no data to substantiate my conjecture, but it is not impossible to see here a real foraging activity. Since the jackal’s diet includes fruit,¹²⁰ the Judas tree flowers or, more likely, fruit may form part of their food. Whatever this behaviour may be, it is sure that it has nothing in it which would justify the epithet “the vilest of beasts.”

The jackal is also a regular name in the list of animals scavenging corpses in the charnel field (MN I 58; SN V 370; AN III 324; Sn 201, p. 34). We also find it present in Hell devouring the evil-doers (Sn 675, p. 131). At SN IV 177–9 we read how a jackal fails to eat a tortoise which withdraws its limbs into the shell. The observation, with all its minute details, is very accurate, but the unflattering point (for the animal!) is that the jackal is likened to Māra who unceasingly tries to catch the eyes, tongue, or mind of the monks. The ideal recluse must be like the tortoise withdrawing its limbs and carefully watching over its faculties.

considers that *ke* for *ko* (sg.nom.masc.) is a “Māgadesque” form.

¹¹⁸ The flowers of the Judas tree likened to lumps of meat seem to be a fairly common image (cf. SN IV 193; Ja II 265).

¹¹⁹ I have no data on *Canis aureus* but canids are known to have an acute sense of smell (Nowak, *Walker’s Mammals of the World*, 635). The dog, which belongs to the same genus with the jackal, is, of course, famous for its excellent odour detection capability. Authorities estimate it to be between one hundred and one hundred million (!) times better than that of humans (Desmond Morris, *Dog Watching* [New York: Three Rivers Press, 1986], 73). Coyotes, another species of genus *Canis*, seem to have also very well-developed taste-sensitive qualities and excellent learning capabilities. Maier (*Comparative Animal Behavior*, 80) reports that “in some parts of the western United States, where coyotes sometimes prey on lambs, a carcass of a sheep laced with a poison may be left out in the area visited by coyotes. After a small bite, the coyotes tend to avoid lambs and concentrate on their natural prey.”

¹²⁰ Nowak, *Walker’s Mammals of the World*, 658.

I shall conclude with two passages presenting a rather different image of the jackal. At MN I 334 a jackal (*kotthu*) intent on catching fish is described as if deeply absorbed in meditation. The text uses a series of verbs arranged according to the Waxing Syllable Principle: *jhāyati pajjhāyati nijjhāyati apajjhāyati*.¹²¹ The jackal, alongside some other animals depicted in a similar way, serves as an image of monks absorbed in contemplation. But even here it is not clear whether the simile is absolutely innocent. It is Māra who employs these similes in order to convince brahmins and householders that monks meditating in such a way will be reborn in Hell after death. His plan does not succeed, however, because the monks follow the Lord's advice to practise the four *brahmavihāras*. The *Mahānidessa* (pp. 149–50),¹²² commenting upon the *Tissametteyya-sutta*, contains a similar fragment, but this time the image serves to describe the way a poor and simple-minded man tries to ponder over a matter. Again, this can hardly be considered a positive image.

4. Buddhist Spirituality and Animal Observation

What did animals actually mean to Buddhist monks? Obviously, no simple and definitive answer is possible but a careful reading of the Canon makes it

¹²¹ See Mark Allon, *Style and Function: A Study of the Dominant Stylistic Features of the Prose Portions of Pāli Canonical Sutta Texts and Mnemonic Function* (Tokyo: The International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 1997), 191ff. I am grateful to Dr Allon who confirmed to me that even rather irregular sequences of waxing syllables, like the one quoted here, i.e. 3+4+4+5 pattern, can be considered instances of the Waxing Syllable Principle. Though given different or slightly different names, the principle has been identified and discussed by a number of Indologists like G. von Simson, J. Gonda, H. Smith, O. von Hinüber, etc. A brief history of the research is found in Allon, *Style and Function*, 191–193. For the more general problem of synonyms in Pāli literature and Indian grammar, see M. G. Dhadhphale, *Synonymic Collocations in the Tipiṭaka: A Study* (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1980).

¹²² The *PTS* text gives the sequence as *jhāyati pajjhāyati nijjhāyati avajjhāyati* but notes that the Phayre Ms and the Sinhalese Ms read the last verb as *apajjhāyati*. I am again indebted to Dr Allon who pointed out to me, referring to the *CPD*, that the spelling *avajjhāyati* is typical of the Commentaries. *CPD* restricts its usage of the term “commentaries” to the *aṭṭhakathā* class (cf. vol. I, p. XVIII). It is true that the *Nidessa* is essentially a commentary in spite of the fact that it is included in the *Khuddakanikāya*, but a very old one having nothing to do with the later commentarial genre. In a personal communication Professor Schmithausen suggested that *avajjhāyati* may have crept in here as an attempt to adapt the text spelling to the jargon of the later commentaries.

possible for us, one hopes, to formulate a plausible hypothesis. For the dogmatic author, animals were, first of all, a reminder of the basic Buddhist *Weltanschauung* which regards animal existence as a bad form of reincarnation. Though starting from a similar philosophical perspective, the wandering ascetic had to face real animals daily and, ideally, he had to do it with a *metta*-filled mind. The Buddhist preacher was subject to both his Buddhist doctrinal position and folk-images of animals shared with his lay followers. This is obviously a simplification of a much more complex psychological and social situation. To start with, I do not imply that we always have to deal with a clear-cut division of monastic roles or mentality. One single individual could have performed more than one role and/or shared a complex philosophical outlook on animals covering all or some of the views outlined here. Whatever the human reality behind our texts might be, the *Tipiṭaka*, and the Buddhist literature in general, confronts us with a wealth of nuances in its attitudes towards animals: from sympathy and correct observation to despise and unfair treatment.

But whatever his perspective may have been, the Buddhist author was not a Lorenz or a Tinbergen interested to understand animals in their own terms. Could we blame Buddhist authors, living in a totally different epistemic and axiological context, for not adopting our modern scientific and philosophical paradigms? I believe that most readers will cautiously say “no.” You may be surprised to find out that in spite of the harsh tone of many of my remarks above, I agree that such a blame would be far-fetched. On the other hand, we do have the right to hold views and have feelings towards other people’s attitudes, whether contemporary or classic. The fact that our own views and feelings are in-formed by the paradigms of our time is not so relevant in this respect. After all, the authors of classical writings were as much in-formed by the conventions of their age as we are, and they have no right to impose their own philosophy on us either. If a dialogue across cultures and ages is to be allowed, we cannot avoid the risk of carrying with us our own paradigms. Prudence is necessary but complete silence or feigned “objectivity” would be hypocritical. To the extent I am allowed to voice my feelings concerning Buddhist texts, I shall simply say that I am disappointed with the instances of unfair treatment given to animals. It is true that this attitude is not universal and we also find moving passages of friendliness and sympathy towards animals. It is equally true that literary conventions rather than genuine views on animals might have been at work in many cases. Yet, as a “romantic” reader hoping to find *metta* and *paññā* to be all-

pervading virtues throughout the Canon, I cannot help feeling that the texts do contain quite a few instances in which animals could have been treated in a fairer way.

The problem, however, is not merely one of a clash between two epistemic and axiological paradigms. The way animals are treated by Buddhist authors creates a problem of consistency within the Buddhist philosophical framework itself. For a spiritual path which sets as one of its basic goals “to know [the essence of phenomena] as it is in reality” (*yathābhūtam pajānāti* at DN I 83–4, 162; SN IV 188, 192; SN V 304–5; *yathābhūtam jānāti passati* at Paṭiś II 62–3), “mis-observation” and misconception concerning animal behaviour is a potentially serious problem. To be sure, the insight into the essence of reality is not concerned with contingent aspects. When our texts speak of *yathābhūtam* they usually, but not exclusively, refer to the fundamental Buddhist truths or essence of reality. SN IV 194–5 uses the phrase *yathābhūtam vacanam*, or “word of truth,” as a simile for Nibbāna (*yathābhūtam vacanam ti kho bhikkhu nibbānassetam adhivacanam*, p. 195). At DN I 83–4 *yathābhūtam* modifies the verb *pajānāti* (“to know,” “to understand”)¹²³ in relation to the four Noble Truths (“*idaṃ dukkhaṃ*” *ti yathābhūtam pajānāti*, . . .) as well as to the contaminations and their cessation (“*ayaṃ āsava-niroddho*” *ti yathābhūtam pajānāti*, . . .). The occurrence at DN I 162 refers to the Buddha’s supernatural knowledge of the states whence people practising asceticism have come as well as of their destinations after death (*tapassināṃ āgatiṃ ca gatiṃ ca cutiṃ ca uppattiṃ ca yathābhūtam pajānāmi*). SN IV 188 declares that the knowledge of the arising and destruction of the states of suffering (*dukkhadhammā*) as they really are (*yathābhūtam*) is identical with the true understanding and the abandonment of sensual pleasures (*kāmā*). At Paṭiś II 62–3 the phrase “knowing and seeing as it is in reality” (*yathābhūtam jānāti passati*) is used with reference to the sign (*nimitta*) and occurrence (*pavatta*) of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anattā*).

It is clear that *yathābhūtam* tends to be used in relation to the basic Buddhist truths or what Buddhism believes to pertain to the essence of reality. We do find, nevertheless, instances in which the term is construed as if referring to a correct knowledge of the concrete aspects of the inner and outer worlds. Chapter Two of the *Anuruddhasamyutta* (SN V 303–6)

¹²³ The epistemic mode implied here is not one of daily understanding or mere intellectual knowledge. The preceding sentence makes it clear that it is an act of knowing presupposing a mind which is calm, pure, and so on (*samāhite citte parisuddhe . . .*).

describes Anuraddha’s spiritual powers obtained through the intense cultivation and development of the four applications of mindfulness (*catunnam satipaṭṭhānānam bhāvītattā bahulīkattatā*). Amongst his numerous achievements, we find the correct knowledge of the people (or beings) of diverse and variegated dispositions (*anekadhātum nānādhātum lokam yathābhūtam pajānāmi*, SN V 304),¹²⁴ the various inclinations of the beings (*sattānam nānādhimuttikam yathābhūtam pajānāmi*, SN V 305),¹²⁵ and the different degrees of development of the faculties of other beings and persons (*parasattānam parapuggalānam indriyaparopariyattim*)¹²⁶ *yathābhūtam pajānāmi*, SN V 305).¹²⁷ One would expect that such an extraordinary

¹²⁴ I am grateful to Professor Schmithausen who pointed out to me that *aneka-dhātum . . . lokam* should be understood here as “people of diverse dispositions.” One of the *CPD* equivalent of *aneka-dhātu* (s.v.) is “with many natural conditions (or dispositions).” The *CPD* quotes here the commentarial explanation: *anekajjhāyasaya*. Let us also note that *anekadhātu nānādhātu . . . loka* appears to be a stock phrase. As to *loka*, its semantic sphere is very broad encompassing not only the material and immaterial universe but also the people and living beings inhabiting it (cf. *PTS Dictionary*, s.v. *loka*). To be sure, the exact sense of *dhātu* here is hard to determine. One of its most frequent meanings in Buddhist texts is that of “realm” (cf. *kāmadhātu*, *rūpadhātu*, *arūpadhātu*), but the text is very emphatic concerning the great variety of *dhātu*. Closer to this sense is *dhātu* construed as a constituent system of the Universe (cf. *dasa-sahassi-lokadhātu*), but our passage does not make it clear whether such a world view is implied here. F. L. Woodward (trans., *The Book of the Kindred Sayings* [London: *PTS*, 1930], part 5, p. 270) translates the sentence: “I know the world as it really is, in its divers shapes and forms,” which is not completely incorrect but rather too general. I think, therefore, that a translation like “people (or beings) of diverse and variegated dispositions,” as suggested by Professor Schmithausen in agreement with one of the lines of interpretation given by the *CPD*, is closer to the original meaning of the text.

¹²⁵ The Sinhalese Mss used by Leon Feer read here *nānādhimitikatam*. Whatever reading we adopt, the basic meaning would not change. To be sure, the term *adhimutti*, *adhimutta*, etc. are not easy to translate but in our context *nānādhimiti(ka)tam* most probably means “of different dispositions or inclinations” or, as Woodward (*The Book of the Kindred Saying*, part 5, p. 270) translates, “divers characters.” See also *PTS Dictionary*, s.v. *nānādhimitikatā* rendered as “diversity of dispositions.”

¹²⁶ *CPD* considers *indriya-paropariyatti* (s.v.) as a wrong reading for or corruption of *indriyaparopariyatta* (s.v.), rendered as “the higher or lower states, the degrees of development, of the faculties.” *Indriya-paropariyatta* is the abstract form of *indriya-paropariya* (s.v.) which is described as a hyperpalism for Eastern Prakrit-v-(cf. *paro* ‘*varam*’). The *PTS Dictionary* translates *indriyaparopariyattim* as “what goes on in the minds and intentions of others.” Woodward (*The Book of the Kindred Saying*, part 5, p. 270) renders the whole phrase as “as the nature of the minds of other beings, other persons.”

¹²⁷ We must add, however, that the same passages equally contains more “orthodox” occurrences of *yathābhūtam* in reference to cause (*thāna*), spiritual practice (*paṭipadā*), and *jhāna*.

knowledge of external realities and internal processes would encompass a better understanding of the behaviour of animals. As we have seen above, this is not always the case.

But maybe I am requiring too much. Animal behaviour was perhaps such a trifling particular detail that it was not even worth including under the heading of “diverse forms of the world” or “various dispositions of the beings.” After all, Buddhist philosophers seem to have their own understanding of what an individual characteristic means. The *Visuddhimagga*, for instance, has the following definition. To understand the specific characteristics (*paccatalakkaṇa*) of form (*rūpa*) means to see it as having the attribute of being vexed (*ruppana*).¹²⁸ To understand its general characteristics (*sāmaññalakkhaṇa*) is to view it as impermanent (*anicca*), causing suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anattā*) (Vism 606–7/Warren ed., 520). Understanding animals in their own terms appears to have no relevance here. If anything, they are mere cases of the specific characteristic of “vexation” or instantiations of the more general paradigm of impermanence, suffering, and non-self. The validity of such an epistemological model needs an examination in itself going much beyond the scope of our present discussion. Even if we, however, accept the model as correct and even if *yathābhūtam* referred mainly (or only) to the supreme truths of Buddhism, we would still have to face two closely related problems. The first one concerns the degree of validity. A person having attained the highest form of truth *cum* the most profound spiritual tranquillity would supposedly look at reality in a neutral and calm way. Then though “impermanent” and “vexing,” animals would require a closer attention and a fairer treatment when a statement is made about their behaviour. The second problem regards the lack of logical consistency of Buddhist authors in applying their general epistemological model. If both a lion and jackal are similar instances of “impermanence” and “vexation,” then lavishly praising the former and despising the latter as “the vilest of beasts” is a problem not only of fairness and neutral observation but also one of coherence within its own doctrinal system. Closely related to these problems, we have another aspect. We all

¹²⁸ *Ruppana* “molestation,” “vexation,” “trouble” comes from *ruppati* which means “to be vexed,” etc. and has nothing to do etymologically with *rūpa* (cf. *PTS Dictionary*, s.v.). Buddhist thinkers and commentators do, nonetheless, frequently use *ruppana/ruppati* for explaining *rūpa*. It is hard to decide whether this is a case of a mere folk etymology (to be more precise, a pre-modern learned etymology) or a paranomasia deliberately used for doctrinal purposes.

know how emphatic Buddhism is on renouncing all attachment to the self and denouncing arrogance (*māna*) as one of the fundamental yokes (*saṃyojana*) to the cycle of rebirths. Yet in a large number of texts the Tathāgata does not lose a single occasion to praise his own qualities and utter his Dharmic roar at the expense of the “wretched” jackal-like ascetics. Buddhist apologists will, most probably, say that this is a skilful means (*upāya*), but, as an admirer of the basic Buddhist stance of condemning arrogance, I cannot stop thinking that this means is not only unskilful but also unnecessarily unfair to many animals.

Since the basic goal of historical and anthropological studies is to attain a balanced and truthful picture of events, over-emphasising the lack of objectivity and consistency would be counter-productive. As Kahil Gibran said in *Sand and Foam*, “an exaggeration is a truth that has lost its temper.” I must repeat here that not *all* Buddhist descriptions of animals are unfair or incorrect. Furthermore, we must be reminded again that it is very likely that in many cases the usage of animal images, biased as they are, was first and foremost a literary device serving doctrinal purposes. Animals (fortunately!) do not read *suttas* or listen to sermons. They have no way to know that they “star” an incredible number of similes, parables, allegories, etc., which are meant to present purely human subjects in a veiled and/or palatable fashion. And all these forms of expression can be said to stem from the extreme fondness of the human ape for symbolism. It is hard to decide when this use for symbolic purposes becomes a matter of abuse. I know that it is difficult to corroborate such an “impressionistic” evaluation, but it seems to me that even a religion like Buddhism, potentially (and often actually) so friendly towards all living beings, has tended to abuse the image of animals. And this may have led to the proliferation not only of a biased way of looking at (and maybe even acting towards) animals but also of an arrogant perception of man’s special status in the Universe.¹²⁹ Last but not least, I

¹²⁹ I cannot help being reminded here of the dedication written by Ernest P. Walker (1891–1969) at the beginning of his classic encyclopaedia which bears his name: “To the Mammals, great and small, who contribute so much to the welfare and happiness of man, another mammal, but receive so little in return, except blame, abuse, and extermination” (Nowak, *The Walker’s Mammals of the World*). This could be said about all other animals. In this respect, Buddhism can take pride in the fact that, at least doctrinally, it has never condoned the extermination of any living being. But on the other hand, it should be ashamed of the fact that there are quite a few instances in which, for whatever reason that may be, animals appear to be abused.

should add, much to the consolation of the spiritually-minded readers, the fact that those texts which appear to belong to the earliest strata of Buddhism¹³⁰ and to the ascetic genre of Buddhist literature are less prone to make “mis-observations” and abuse animal images. But this, too, is not an absolute rule. Even the *Sagāthavagga*, which seems to contain very early texts,¹³¹ has passages speaking about the “wretched” jackal which can never be compared to the lion (cf. SN I 66, discussed above).

The recent popularity of environmental ethics has generated a strong interest to revisit traditional outlooks on nature and animals. This is a laudable effort in itself, but the modern reader is faced with an increasing number of apologetic studies and essays on the Buddhist attitude towards nature, some of them, written by eminent scholars.¹³² As I have pointed out above, Buddhism contains some remarkable attitudes, and I have no intention to deny them. In the West the moral dilemma concerning animal rights has centred upon the basic criterion which we should choose in this case: rationality or sentience. Immanuel Kant, whose views are representative of the mainstream Western rationality-centred stance, argues that animals are not rational and self-conscious and therefore “directly we have no duties towards animals, rather our duties towards animals are indirect duties towards humanity” (. . . *so haben wir gegen Thiere unmittelbahr keine*

¹³⁰ A very delicate problem indeed! I consider that, despite the prudence which one should always bear in mind in historical matters, Nakamura’s (*Indian Buddhism*, especially p. 27, quoting Ui Hakuju) and von Hinüber’s (*A Handbook of Pāli Literature*) basic dating principles are a reliable starting point. On the principle positions and methodology of dating the Buddhist Canon, see also Lambert Schmithausen, “Earliest Buddhism. Preface” (in David Seyfort Ruegg and Lambert Schmithausen, eds., *Earliest Buddhism and Madhyamaka* [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990], 1–3); “An Attempt to Estimate the Distance in Time between Aśoka and the Buddha in Terms of Doctrinal History,” 110–113. I agree with Schmithausen that “though fraught with difficulties and pitfalls” (“An Attempt to Estimate the Distance in Time between Aśoka and the Buddha in Terms of Doctrinal History,” 112), the attempt to establish the stratification of the Canon is not impossible and could be achieved by the conjoined efforts of generations of scholars (pp. 112–113).

¹³¹ Cf. Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism*, 27 and von Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pāli Literature*, 38.

¹³² In spite of their generally useful coverage of the subject, essays like those written, for instance, by Nakamura Hajime (*Bukkyō dōbutsu sansaku 仏教動物散策* [Tokyo: Tōsho shen-sho, 1988], 1–2, 9–30) and Lily de Silva (“The Hills Wherein My Soul Delights: Exploring the Stories and Teachings” in Batchelor and Brown, *Buddhism and Ecology*, 23–5) tend to be partial and over-emphatic in their praise of the positive Buddhist attitude towards animals.

Pflichten, /sondern die Pflichten gegen die Thiere sind indirecte Pflichten gegen die Menschheit).¹³³ The latter criterion is adopted by Utilitarians who, following Jeremy Bentham, consider that rationality is irrelevant in this case. What matters is sentience, i.e. the common susceptibility of animals and man to pain and suffering.

Seen from this perspective, Buddhism appears as a case in between, coming somewhat closer, *mutatis mutandis*, to Utilitarian conclusions. Animals are usually seen as inferior and lacking wisdom (*paññā*), the cognitive faculty which makes the ultimate cessation of suffering possible. Mil 32 says that “sheep, goats, oxen, buffaloes, camels, and asses have intelligence (*manasikāra*) but no wisdom (*paññā*).”¹³⁴ Obviously, we have to deal here with utterly different epistemic paradigms, but we could say that in terms of

¹³³ *Vorlesungen über Moralphilosophie. Moral Mrongovius* (in *Kant's gesammelte Schriften* [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1979] vol. XXVII. 2,2, p. 1572). This text represents the notes of Kant's lectures in the winter semester of 1782–1783 taken by Christoph Coelestin Mrongovius. This is one of the three Mss which were edited in 1924 by P. Menzer under the title of *Eine Vorlesung Kants über Ethik* and translated into English as *Lectures on Ethics* (originally translated by Louis Infield in 1930, with many subsequent editions). See also the recent translation *Lectures on Ethics*, Peter Heath and J.B. Schneewind, eds., Peter Heath, trans. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

In the *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* (Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals) (in *Kant's Werke* [Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1911; orig. publ. 1785], vol. IV, p. 428), Kant declares that animals have “only a relative value, as means, and are therefore called things” (*nur einen relativen Werth, als mittel, und heißen daher Sachen*). This is contrasted with humans or rational beings (*vernünftige Wesen*), called persons (*Personen*) and considered ends in themselves (*Zwecke an sich*), therefore absolute values.

¹³⁴ T.W. Rhys Davids renders *manasikāra* as “reasoning” and *paññā* as “wisdom” (*The Questions of King Milinda*, in *Sacred Books of the East* [Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1997; orig. publ. 1890], vol. 35, p. 51), a translation also adopted by McDermott (“Animals and Humans in Early Buddhism,” p. 278, n. 13). I understand here *manasikāra* as intelligence in its broad sense of “global capacity to think rationally, act purposefully, and deal effectively with the environment” (Don H. Hockenbury and Sandra E. Hockenbury, *Psychology*, 2nd ed. [New York: Worth Publishers, 2000], 283). These abilities, mainly thinking rationally, with reference to animals must not necessarily be understood as functioning along identical lines and at the same level as in the case of humans. It is, nevertheless, beyond doubt that many animals are not only able to form object concepts and even abstract concepts but they also have great language-learning capacities and quantitative ability (Maier, *Comparative Animal Behavior*, 100–109). More and more evidence also appears to support the hypothesis that apes, mainly chimpanzees, have intentionality and planning, self-recognition, and perhaps rudiments of the theory of mind (*ibid.*, 114–116). For further details on *manasikāra*, see Appendix.

hierarchy of values the Buddhist *paññā/prajñā* and the modern idea of reason, whether theoretical or practical, are supreme cognitive states. As proven in so many passages, Buddhism does not consider, however, that the animal lack of wisdom is a criterion which fundamentally decides human duties towards animals. The fact that we share with them sentience, many faculties which could roughly be defined as intelligence, and, last but not least, the same cycle of rebirths are sufficient to guarantee them the right to live their lives and receive spiritual friendliness. It is a pity that this friendliness has not developed fully into a deeper understanding of animals “as they are in reality.” And any account of the Buddhist attitude towards animals which ignores these uncomfortable shortcomings will do no justice to Buddhism and animals alike. Incompleteness is just another way of hiding the truth and perpetuating old misconceptions about reality.

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Appendix: Intelligence (yoniso manasikāra) of Animals

The passage in the *Milindapañha* (Mil 32) quoted above actually qualifies *manasikāra* as *yoniso manasikāra*, i.e. “systematic attention,” “thorough

attention” or “careful attention,” which it presents as different from wisdom (*paññā*). The term *yoniso manasikāra/yoniso manaskāra* itself raises difficult problems concerning its exact interpretation. Let us note that its Chinese translation is 如理作意 or “attention according to the principle(s)” and the Tibetan equivalent is *tshul bzhin (du) yid la byed pa* or “attention according to the proper method,” “orderly attention.” Its antonym is *ayoniso manasikāra/ayoniso manaskāra* (Tib. *tshul bzhin ma yin pa yid la byed pa*; Ch. 不如理作意), i.e. “distracted or disorderly attention.” Buddhist literature usually refers to it as a positive state of concentration conducting to high spiritual attainments. At It 9 it is defined as an act which leads to the elimination of the unwholesome and cultivation of the wholesome (*yoniso bhikkhave bhikkhu manasi karonto akusalam pajahati kusalam bhāvetīti*). The text continues with a *gāthā* which declares *yoniso manasikāra* to be of great help (*bahūpakāro*, var. lec. *bahukāro*) to the practising monks, unequalled by other practices indeed, in obtaining the *summum bonum* of the Path (*uttamathassa pattiya*), which is no other than the cessation of the suffering (*khayam dukkhassa*) (It 10). At Paṭis II 189 *yoniso manasikāra* appears as one of the four conditions (*cattāro dhammā*), which when intensely practised, will lead to the realisation of the four fruits of the Path. The same four conditions are said to lead to the attainment of wisdom (*paññāpaṭilābha*). This implies that “careful attention” is a very important state, but it is only one of the steps/practices which aim at the paramount spiritual value represented by *paññā*. We also find *yoniso manaskāra* in the Northern tradition as well. The *Yogācārabhūmi*, for instance, dedicates a whole section to it.¹³⁵ The eight things in which careful attention associated with coarse observation and subtle examination is manifested (*yoniso manaskāraprayuktānām vitarkavicārāṇām vastūni*; *tshul bzhin yid la byed pa dang ldan pa'i rtog pa dang dpyod pa rnams kyi dngod po*; 如理作意相應尋伺事) include wholesome acts of the alms-giver, of the virtuous man, of the spiritual practioner, etc.¹³⁶ Although the term is closely connected with spiritual cultivation, its semantic sphere appears to be broad enough to allow its association with intelligent acts which could even include, as the authors our Mil fragment imply, animal cognition.

¹³⁵ Vidhushekara Bhattacharya, ed., *The Yogācārabhūmi of Ācārya Asaṅga* (Calcutta: Univ. of Calcutta, 1957), 114–117; *Sde dge Tibetan Tripiṭaka, Bstan Hgyur, Sems Tsam*, Vol. 5 (Tokyo: Sekai seiten kankō kyōkai, 1980) Tshi 58b–60b; T30.302c–303b.

¹³⁶ Bhattacharya ed., p. 114; Tshi 59a; T30.303a1–5.

The *Milindaṭīkā* (p. 10) comments upon the *yoniso manasikāra* as “[the realisation of this] is impermanent, [this is] suffering” by means of [proper] methods, ways having the characteristic of recollection, and with attention to the supporting basis” (*yoniso manasika[ā]reṇā ti aniccaṃ dukkhaṃ ti upāyena pathena sāraṇalakkhaṇena ārammaṇapaṭipādakamanasikārena*). Thus the *Milindaṭīkā* seems to suggest that even animals have the capacity to perceive impermanence and suffering following some well-established cognitive patterns, but they are unable of attaining wisdom in the Buddhist sense of the word, i.e. liberating insight into the essence of reality which secures freedom from *dukkha*.

The *Milindapañhā Aṭṭhakathā*, a modern traditional sub-commentary, has a whole story to explain its point that “not only human beings but also animals have careful attention” (*na kevalañcesa manussabhūtānaṃ yeva yonisomanasikāro atthi*).¹³⁷ It narrates how Buddharakkhita, a young parrot (*suṅgavapota*) kept in a nunnery, is taught by the superior sister (*mahātherī*) to repeat the word *aṭṭhi* or “stone of a fruit,” presumably a delicacy which he would greatly appreciate. One day the parrot is grabbed by a predatory bird and has a narrow escape due to the efforts of the novices and sisters who throw clods of mud at the raptor. Asked by the superior sister what he thought (*cintesi*) when in the claws of the raptorial bird, Buddharakkhita, who in our story is able to converse with humans, says that he only reflected upon the fact that “a heap of stones/bones, having seized another heap of stones/bones, is going away. At any moment it is bound to strew all over” (*aṭṭhipuñjo va aṭṭhipuñjaṃ gahetvā gacchati/katarasmim pi thāne vipakirissati*).¹³⁸ As far as I can understand, Buddharakkhita’s answer is based on a pun: *aṭṭhi* means both “stone of a fruit” and “bone” The superior sister’s initial intention was to supply the parrot with a lexical item whose mechanical repetition would bring Buddharakkhita some occasional snacks. The parrot is, however, far more intelligent and not only that he understands the homonym *aṭṭhi* “bone” but in a moment of serious crisis he is also able to engage in a reflection which echoes the Buddhist refrain of universal impermanence. At any rate, the *mahātherī* is rejoiced to hear this and pre-

¹³⁷ Thaton Mingun Zetawun Sayadaw, alias U. Narada Mahāthera, *Milindapañhā-Aṭṭhakathā*, transcribed and edited by Madhav M. Deshpande (Tokyo: The International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 1999), p. 85. I am grateful to Professor Schmithausen for drawing my attention to this passage.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 85.

dicts that in a future life Buddharakkhita will attain the condition necessary for the end of his existence (*bhavakkhayassa te paccayo bhavissati*). Interesting as it may be, and even knowing the amazing achievements of Alex the parrot,¹³⁹ the story cannot be taken at face-value by the modern reader, and was probably meant to be a parable even in the original Theravāda milieu. The message remains, however, the same: though not sufficiently developed to reach spiritual Awakening, animals are intelligent creatures and a fair amount of cognitive capacities, largely overlapping with those of the human beings, must be recognized.

¹³⁹ Cf. Maier, *Comparative Animal Behavior*, 107–108; Hockenbury and Hockenbury, *Psychology*, 282–283.