

# Deconstructing Anthropocentrism in Animal Literature

## 1 Introduction

- Franz Kafka's 'The Transformation' (1915)
- Peter Dickinson's *Eva* (1988)
- J. M. Coetzee's *The Lives of Animals* (1999)



- Objectives: These novels establish human subjectivity in an attempt to unsettle the foundations of human superiority in reason, rationality, and morality; they explore the interconnection between humans and animals; they promote the power of human imagination that gives animals agency and helps save them from human violence.

## 2 Kafka's 'The Transformation'



Fig. 1: Daily routines

Fig. 2: Transformation from a human to an insect

- By giving Gregor the physical attributes of an insect, Kafka allows the animal the ability and subjectivity to describe its experience of being treated cold-heartedly by humans.
- Gregor's metamorphosis serves as a metaphor for the invasion of animals into human space, which accordingly deconstructs human dominance over them.

## 3 Dickinson's *Eva*

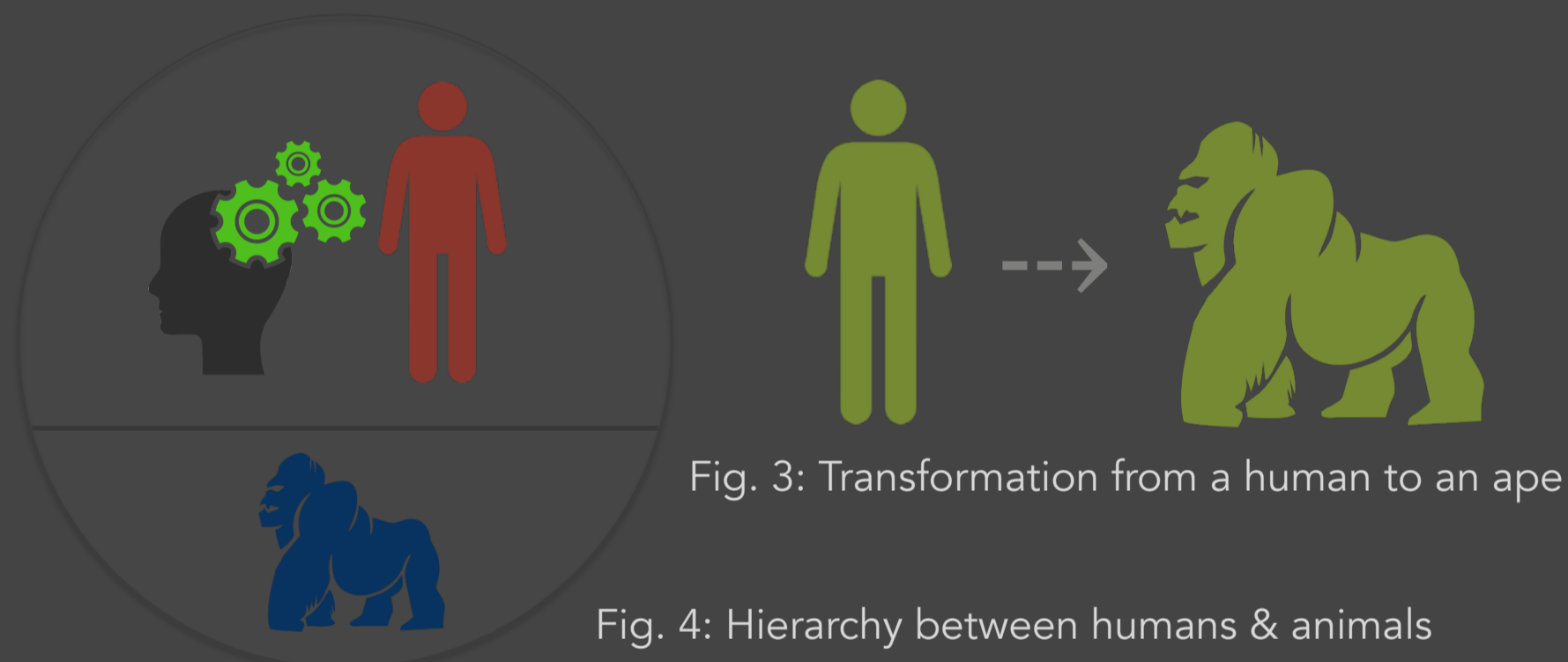


Fig. 3: Transformation from a human to an ape

Fig. 4: Hierarchy between humans & animals

- Through *Eva's* narrative, what it means to be a chimp and the brutal exploitation humans perform on chimpanzees are exposed to the human reader.
- Dickinson's creation of the hybrid of Kelly and *Eva's* consciousness allows Kelly to gain animal subjectivity, while *Eva's* choice to remain with animals shows the collapse of the border between humans and animals.

## 4 Coetzee's *The Lives of Animals*



Fig. 5: Animals having no place in the artistic realm

- Costello persuades readers to defy the human-animal divide and human superiority in reason by appealing to ethos.
- Costello's advocacy of the acts of 'sympathetic imagination' disturbs the long-established concept of human reason, and devises a way for humanity to rethink their brutality against animals.

## 5 Conclusion

## 6 References

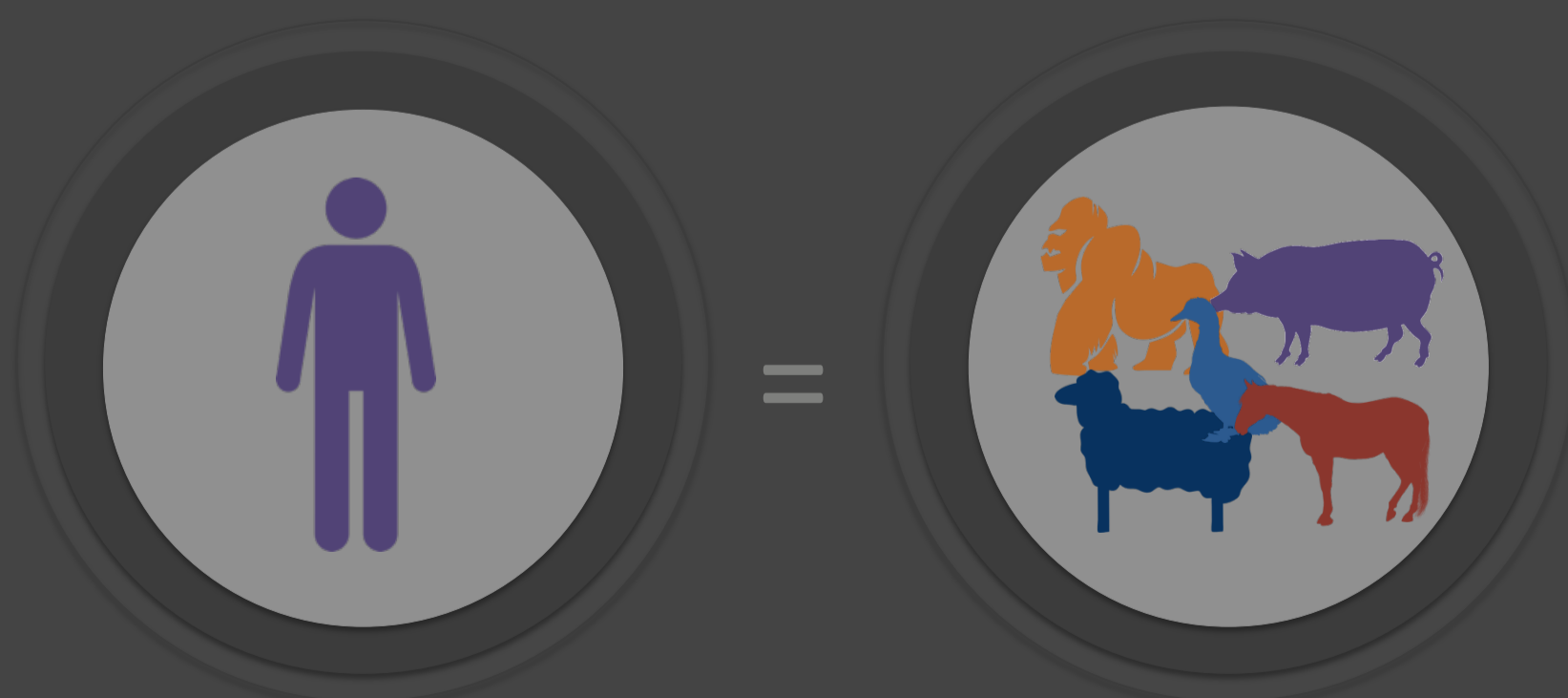


Fig. 6: Equal importance of humans and non-human animals in the natural world

- Bridge the human-animal gap and emphasise the interconnectedness between humans and animals.
- Reveal the impacts of anthropocentrism on man-animal relations.



- Coetzee, J. M., *The Lives of Animals* (London: Profile Books, 2000)
- Kafka, Franz, 'The Transformation', in *The Transformation and Other Stories*, trans. and ed. by Malcolm Pasley (London: Penguin Books, 1992), pp. 76-126
- Dickinson, Peter, *Eva* (London: Macmillan Children's Books: 2001)