

Transpersonalization to “Petness”

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Abstract

According to Paul Shepard, to be human has always involved the process of totemic transpersonalization toward non-human animal “otherness.” For him, this process has aided and shaped our very own cognitive faculties, resulting in the structuring of human minds and societies. Pre-agricultural humans also adopted animals and held pets as companions, and later on, with the advent of agriculture, humans had a hand in shaping the evolution of tamable species (sheep, pigs, cows, etc). Questions are raised with respect to a perverted transpersonalization process toward humanized, tamed animals as opposed to the essential qualities of wild animals (totemic virtues).

Keywords: Transpersonal, *petness*, looped anthropocentrism, petishism, speciesism

A dog walked into a bar and asked for a beer. A man at the bar said, "I don't want to drink at the same bar with a dog." The dog and the man got into a fight and the man shot the dog in the foot. The dog yelped out of the bar and escaped down the street. A week later the same dog walked into the same bar; this time he was wearing a black hat, a black vest, black chaps, black boots, a black gun belt with a pair of black colt .45's, one on either side, and a black bandage around his sore foot. He goes up to the bar and says to the bar tender "I'm looking for the man that shot my paw." –Anonymous, bar joke

Introduction

The opening, “a dog walked into a bar” joke, is illustrative and descriptive of the present work in several respects. The story is also satisfying for its inherent sense of basic, Old West justice.

At first, the man discriminates against—a case of speciesism--a dog *who* drinks and also *drinks at* the same bar he occupies. Later, as the story metamorphosizes the dog into a familiar image of a “ruthless man,” a shooter, it brings about the complete *looped anthroponcentrism* we shall discuss here. It is difficult not to laugh precisely because the above narrative takes us through, perhaps phylogenetically, almost a full circle. The transpersonal phase *human* → *canid*, to the extent that humans once held, and still today in some circles, coyote-trickster to be an archetypal “teacher,” was omitted and only the *canid* → *human* –anthropocentric--transformation took place. This missing process, transpersonal-totemic, suggests a symptom of ecopsychological disconnection, where anthro-morphized pets are on their way to thoroughly replacing their wild brethren and ancient models of imitating wildness: its mores and fables (Shepard, 1996; Conesa-Sevilla, 2007; & Conesa-Sevilla, 2008).

A real example: In Jakarta, Indonesia, trained macaque monkeys are forced to wear rubber doll masks to beg for their human masters, resulting in a disturbing and cruel act and image (see Figures 1 and 2). As in the previous case, only then are we apt to acknowledge them, if albeit not as intrinsic beings. Figure 1 is particularly disturbing to this ecopsychologist. The photo is thoroughly grotesque and ghastly; a Harlow-horror image of emotionally detached mothers and neglected infants (Harlow and Zimmermann, 1959; & Harlow and Harlow, 1962). The struggle for survival, love, squalor, disconnection, and a dependency on artificial economies are all depicted in this animal-doll picture. We could judge the trainer’s actions to be cruel, an act of

economic necessity, not something we would do, however, the animal handler would also make the claim that he loves his monkey and his monkey him.

To complete this triad of examples, I know many colleagues who own pets and claim to “love nature,” who would be shocked and offended if one were to challenge their right to “walk their dogs” in wilderness areas. In general, the problem of people taking their dogs, increasingly, into parks and wilderness areas without giving a second thought to additional waste management, stress to local wildlife and flora, and to other hikers who fear them or fear leashes entangling their children’s legs, is real: a case of *pet-egocentrism*. *A mountain trail was never meant to carry an entourage. Only logging roads do that.* To anticipate a familiar protest, “people who ‘love’ pets are better people,” let me say that Adolph Hitler loved his dogs very much, so much so that he even killed one of them as he was about to commit suicide (Falco, 2010). Additionally, Michael Dwayne Vick, an American football player, and other pit-bull owners who fight them, also claim to love their animals--which goes to show that love is complicated and that different people love differently. Understanding these complex relationships rather than making a bland statement about human compassion or cruelty is an ecopsychological endeavor if these relationships are also a statement of our present relationship with nature. Neuroticism can be suspected if we treat other animals as humans. **Figure 1**



Figure 1: Female macaque monkey forced to beg for coins in Jakarta, Indonesia. (Photo credit: unknown)

Figure 2



Figure 2: Macaque monkey forced to dance and beg for coins in Jakarta, Indonesia.

(Photo credit: unknown)

All three examples presented above are different facets of a complex problem. Namely, in our denuding of the planet, *animals are becoming more like us than we like them.*² Kings and queens, Roman emperors and their courtesans, have been entertained by belittling beasts as court jesters or when bored, the animals were offered in sacrifice for further amusement (Tuan, 1984; & Grier, 2006). This much is not new, and these activities seem as abhorrent today as they must have been to others then, who believed that wealth, leisure, a sense of entitlement, and sedentary ways of life are often the ingredients of perversion. They are signs of decadence for sure. Moreover, in applying animal husbandry practices to scientific perseverance, foxes have been tamed and genotypically and phenotypically changed into agreeable and dependent pets (Belyaev, 1969). In now Belyaev's famous experiment, wilder silver fox kits were selected for

² This is a purposefully ambiguous pun to allude to the anthropocentric and unilateral transformation of other animals into human forms, and the repudiation of the process itself.

their eagerness to interact with humans. Any proximal “tame” behavior (approaching, not being too shy, not biting, licking, etc.) was locked distally with further breeding into foxes which behaved as friendly dogs. And as some dogs behave, phenotype went submissive to reflect their changed nature: floppy ears and curly wagging tails. Of course they became, equally, easier to handle, kill, and eventually skin, their friendly furry nature adorning human bodies—a sensuous fetishism of tenderness rendered supplier by expert tanners. If Belyaev and colleagues could accomplish this in a mere ten generations of selective breeding, it seems that there is no limit to what humans can do to or for other animals; even to itself.

Closer to the heart of this narrative, if pet owners “humanize” their pets to the point of insisting that the changed creature, a pampered moron, deserves the same rights as humans, what sort of “transpersonalization” is going on, if at all, in the pet owner? Can we then hypothesize that all “pampered morons,” human and human-like, are equal? If so, they might be right. If so, this is disturbing. If the dyad pet—pet-owner tends toward the moron-absurd, we have us a problem.

In short, this paper tracks the process of our “humanizing” and taming wild animals until they become mirrors of a “sort of humanity.” I refer to this process as transpersonalization to “petness,” or *looped anthropocentrism*. If this process of taming the wild and making it look and act like us is real, is there room for the once authentic transpersonalization into “otherness” that Paul Shepard wrote about? What are the consequences to human psychology of lacking wild-genuine transpersonal models? What are the consequences to human psychology when “petness,” and not wildness, substitutes ancient transpersonal practices and systems?

One tentative answer to some of these questions is found in the first image, Figure 1: *the macaque monkey is us at our very worst, while negating the very best they could be, as wild animals, on their own, intrinsically*. The first and second sections of this work focus on the real societal and environmental effects of pet ownership. The last section focuses on the problem of *looped anthropocentrism* as another aspect of ecopsychological alienation. For writers like Kathleen Szasz (1969), *homo neuroticus* has found in pet ownership a way to cope with self and societal alienation, thus her term *petishism* to describe this dysfunctional pet, owner-pet relationship. As with any fetish, a potentially rich human-animal with animal-other relationship

that could respect boundaries and incorporate the wilder nature of both has been dumbed down for mostly the convenience of the former.

Throughout this paper, I will revisit seminal literature which has only gained greater significance since their original publication because pet ownership, if seen as a byproduct of collective neurosis and greater consumer affluence, is more not less a problem today than it was then (1960's). Increasingly, as other countries enjoy greater economical affluence, so has pet ownership increased. Kathleen Szasz's 1968 seminal work, Petishism, Pets and their People in the Western World, introduced petishism as a psychological term that I will frequently draw from. I shall echo some of her robust and defensible arguments and observations in the context of ecopsychological alienation. As a cantilever to my main criticisms of the difficulty (impossibility even) of totemic transpersonalization in the context of humanized pets, I recognize the validity--different sets of arguments--that exalt pet ownership as psychologically and ethically necessary (Levinson, 1978; & Scully, 2002). Their arguments, in the context of healthy, meaningful, and deep connections with the natural world with animals as ambassadors of or mediating agents between the civilized and the wild, offer a line of questioning in a different direction, one that I am not pursuing here: I am dealing with petness as perverted tranpersonalization. One can disagree with Levinson in believing that one must complete the picture of normal—even ideal--child development with the presence of a shaggy dog in the living room. The same child can go exploring in the woods and derive more complex knowledge about nature without ever owning Rin Tin Tin. But this would be a different paper if I were to take that specific route.

However, my arguments are about “petness,” and how the transformation of an animal into a pet transforms both human animals and their “objects” of affection into potentially dysfunctional co-enabling relationships. As Katherine Grier writes:

“Pet” has a complex history and obscure origins... The Oxford English Dictionary suggests that it may simply come from the root that gave us the French word “petit,” meaning “little.” First applied to people, “pet” was used by the early 1500s to describe “an indulged or spoiled child; any person indulged or treated as a favorite.” (2006: 6)

This origin of the word pet already establishes a thesis connecting a faulty or immature psychology and its projection onto an animal. If so, a mirroring of attitudes and behaviors might give rise to a dysfunctional dyad where pampering operates to and from two or more perceived unwell psychologies, one human, the one canine or feline, and then their complete obfuscation into a ghastly Indonesian monkey-with-a-human-face not knowing itself to be monkey or human.

With Grier (2006: 320) we must ask: “Is thinking of animals as pets the only way to construct better lives for animals in the world? Must we reject the richness of other historical relationships with animals?” Indeed, can human beings progress further in their ecopsychological becoming by tracking, hunting, keeping and eating sheep, or spear fishing? A little voice tells me, “yes.”

A Fatwa Against Pets

Last year, the Ayatollah Nasser Makarem Shirazi, speaking on behalf of the Iranian Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, issued a Fatwa against pets (*Telegraph*, August 26, 2010).

According to Ayatollah Shirazi, Islamic writings declare dogs to be unclean, a fact that most objective observers of animal behavior would agree with. One does not need to adhere to Islam to acknowledge that allowing a dog to lick one’s face might be as close as one gets to have soiled toilet paper caress one’s skin, and in some cases, mouths and tongues. There is no other, euphemistic way to put it. The fact that some people allow this is worrisome enough, to say the least, from a hygiene perspective. More to the point, this disgusting act is an important acknowledgement, a sign, that some humans truly perceive their *domesticated animals* as brethren, obliterating a fine line between human and “the others.” Furthermore, Ayatollah Shirazi was quoted as saying, “Many people in the West love their dogs more than their wives and children.” This observation, when in fact true, is a sign of psychological dysfunction.

Before some start Iran bashing, let’s be rationally detached and see if there is a serious point in these words. To be fair, it is true that this particular fatwa is part of a complex and orchestrated anti-west campaign. Generally speaking, he is part of an effort “to undermine ‘decadent’ Western culture.” However, setting political or ideological aims aside, to the extent that many countries perceive western powers to be the cause of environmental “decadence,” and rightly so, keeping a pet is a luxury associated with the very affluence that has brought the planet to the

brink. Let's examine his accusation from a western perspective. Back in 1969 Szasz estimated that:

...Americans spend 5 to 6 billion dollars a year on their pets and the British well over 100 million pounds, that there are 8 million dogs and cats in West Germany and 16.5 million in France, can be, and often is, ascribed to affluence and one of its side effects, leisure (xiii).

Today, these figures are even more staggering. Just in the United States, McWhinney reports that, "The APPMA ³ estimates that, in total, Americans spent \$43.2 billion on their pets in 2008." ⁴ In the same report, McWhinney goes on to write that:

More than half of all Americans are pet owners. With more than 72 million dogs and 81 million cats in the United States, some 37% of households include a dog and 32% have at least one cat, according to the *2007 U.S. Pet Ownership & Demographic Sourcebook*.

Pet ownership in the west increased with the rise of the middle class. The rise of an affluent middle class was/is equally associated with migrations from rural to urban centers, increases in population, the consumption of more and more resources, and the contamination of water and air sources. The pet industry is now a global, multi-billion dollar enterprise (Benning, 1976; and Grier, 2006). Imagine if these monies were spent on children's malnutrition, disease epidemics, and on teaching sustainable agricultural practices to every country, rich or poor. In view of these deficiencies, while assuming that at the same time humans ditch the wild spaces for their fancy pooches, is it ethical to keep pets? Once again, Benning, a western observer, listed an extended list of frivolities associated with what I term accessorizing pets, which I am now shortening. In 1976 he writes:

The selection is staggering. Some items seem sensible. Some even essential. Still others absolutely crazy and worthless. And many are not designed to be used by the pet at all; instead, they're solely for the amusement and pleasure of the pet owner:

³ The American Pet Product Association

⁴ James McWhinney (2008). The economics of pet ownership. *Investopedia*.

Pet sculpture, either typical of your breed, or specifically sculpted to look like your particular pet. An 8-inch long statuette will cost you at least \$75.

...*Kitten prayer pendant*, by mail order for \$3.50.

...*Coat of arms*, plus a history of your breed, is available by mail order for \$6.95 to \$11.95 (80-81).

His list is longer. I selected items that could show that pets are being humanized according to human aesthetic, religious, or filial standards. His list of the costs of dog funeral services is revealing of the psychologies who projected so much on an alien intelligence. If funerals are for the living, then a more generous interpretation is that a complex human psychology seeking meaning and closure must do both through rituals. In this sense, Egyptian cat mummies, giving burial to slaughtered horses during a Mongol king's funeral, or Aztec coyotes accompanying their god-king all share similar afterlife proclivities. In all cases, affluence can afford perversion.

A contemporary example of the earlier historical progression occurring in western countries is seen in the rise of China as a political and economic global powerhouse. With the advent of communism, Chairman Mao banned pet ownership for similar cultural reasons: its association with a decadent West. Recently, and for the same practical reasons that led to a one-child only policy, the Chinese government has instituted a one-dog ownership policy (*The Independent*, June 19, 2009). An overpopulated China whose grain crops may fail at the moment of this writing, understands that their large numbers of citizens and pets are unsustainable. The question is: why don't we? Why is that in the West, we don't see as clearly as they do that there are limits to our fancy? Needs must always come before wants—the superfluous.

Part of the answer is that a pernicious sense of entitlement in western countries and perceived moral superiority with respect to “the rest of the world” often leads to an individual right to “own something.” Pets are no exception. An almost archetypical American family decision is, not if or when, but what type of pooch “we’ll get Joey.” The first American family, the Obama's, went through a very public decision making process rejecting this and that other breed to finally select

a relatively rare Portuguese Water Dog they named ‘Bo.’⁵ I am making a distinction between the desperate-automatic need to own a pet and pretend it is a member of one’s family, and the opportunity to understand our own animal nature through observing and interacting with another animal. It is not clear to me that the latter figures prominently with pet owners when they end up with a cat, a dog, a fish, or some exotic reptile in the homes.

The Ayatollah Shirazi and Chairman Mao Tse-tung both had a point, and in a fundamental ecopsychological sense, whether we agree with these messengers on other matters, force us to consider our relationship to an “other” that has been bred for our amusement. Very rarely, if at all, do we fear a Chihuahua like we must fear “father bear,” when we encounter him in his own territory. Very little do we learn about animal behavior and complex, natural relationships from owning a Chihuahua, except that his ancestors were bred for food by the Aztecs. Encountering a wolf or a coyote in the wild are rare experiences that must be earned by effortful walking and tracking. Also, coyote and wolf populations are self-sustaining, if we let them be, having a negligible impact on the environment. Coyote or wolf, if given a chance, would eat Chihuahuas.

How Much Does a Pooch Poop?

Quite a lot, as it turns out. According to the American Pet Association’s website, it has been estimated that 4.4 billion tons of dog waste is generated every year in the United States alone. The combined environmental impact of dog (and cat) waste, their food production, and health care is nothing to wag our tails about. The math is not cumbersome or farfetched if one has an iota of imagination. Add cat waste and litter, and additional types of waste associated with other pets and it is clear that an important issue needs addressing. All these issues--nature alienated neurotic human animals, humanized pets, and their combined impact on diminishing resources--are related and can be studied from an ecopsychological perspective. From this perspective of environmental challenges, dealing with human and other animal waste is a real problem. One question is whether this rising level of waste is sustainable.

The issue of “waste” in the case of having to dispose of an animal’s body whose life has expired hit home recently. Our faithful and gentle dog Becky, a black Labrador-Collie mix, died of old

⁵ With an added syllable, ‘Bobo,’ means stupid in Spanish.

age during a brutally cold northern Wisconsin winter. Because we owned twenty-acres in the country, and Becky was an outdoor dog, I was adamant that her remains stayed where she once ran free in woods and prairie. We obtained permission and instructions from our vet on how to prepare her body. From the day she was euthanized to a couple of days after when the family had “petted” her lifeless old shaggy mane, her body stiffened more, and more than a foot of snow fell.

My wife and I had to drag her frozen body across two acres of forest and deep snow on our snowshoes. Many times along the way, we stopped and rearranged her body so she could slide more easily. Other times, I had to lift her heavy body over snow banks, her bundle-body weighing heavier and heavier on my emotions, the usual regrets of “I should have done more for her.” That short and burdensome journey across heavy snow seems to be, even now when I write these words, an exercise in redemption. By the time we placed her inside a shelter our son had built, we were both exhausted and in tears. It is one thing to let your vet dispose of your “pet” behind closed doors in a crematorium, and another to mechanically have to wrestle the tangible and carnal essence of a friendly companion. A year and half after the fact, this memory is still strongly felt.

One of the consequences of partaking of a dog’s company for so many years, and after her death, is the question of whether I would like to experience the same joys, frustrations, and pain again. The answer is ‘No’. In a complex relationship an entire spectrum of emotions and mental states are experienced. I have decided not to “own” another dog. For one, I feel that I understand the canine mind as much as I will ever be able to enter their mostly olfactory and submissive world. She and other dogs we have kept as companions have already put me in touch with the very worst and the very best in me, making me less than human at times and, yes, more human. I understand these lessons very well. The other reasons are practical: Do I want to contribute to additional deforestation of tropical forests to raise cattle for dog food? How much would another companion poop, through the course of a typical dog life of thirteen years? Could I spend the same amount of money required to ensure a high quality of life for another companion when that money could be better spent?

How Much Does a Pooch Poop? Fido poops a lot. Poop management sometimes becomes a central preoccupation, a fecal obsession, for dog owners who live within city limits and in apartments. All sorts of hide-the-poop games are conjured up and tried to the annoyance and irritation of others. All manners of pleading, asking, shouting to one's dogs that they must "do it" here but not over there by the neighbor's flowers, are the ingredients of added anxiety for both parties. This game of fecal dominance may even produce additional cases of anal retentive and expulsive/explosive canids and humans. Is the pooch poop worth all the aggravation? Can our stretched out planet hold on to, process, and dispose of so much poop?

Transpersonalization to "Petness"

To reiterate, it is a central thesis of this presentation that the phenomenon of "petness" starts out as a diminution or a perversion of the intrinsic qualities of an animal while enhancing, emphasizing, and even projecting human characteristics, and in so doing ending up with a "moron" animal--petishism. Another aspect of this thesis is to address whether this process is substituting, in a radical and more frequent way, ancient forms of identification with wild animals that respected and honored animals for their intrinsic qualities, for the ecologically real lessons that they have taught and continue to teach us (Shepard, 1996).

Additionally, one must wonder if by diminishing the intrinsic qualities of an animal while projecting our own tamed inadequacies onto them (e.g. an urban and sedentary life style, disconnection with real nature, or our neuroses) we are not creating and enabling dysfunctionality that further blinds us to the real environmental and ecological crises we must face. Even when the simplistic argument is made that "pets are pets" and we should not worry beyond that fact, there is the issue of what is occurring in human psychology when we believe we have the right to "own" a living organism for our amusement and start projecting our own sedentary insufficiencies onto them: *looped anthropocentrism*.

Worse, owning a pet perpetuates an already intolerable circle of over consumption conveniently cloaked and sanctified as the "right expenditure" of guilt dollars for the welfare of our animal companions. Once again, Grier addresses this concern when she writes:

By the late nineteenth century, however, pet animals themselves had two new roles to play. Some were now a unique kind of merchandise, produced in quantity for the pet trade. Pets were also vicarious consumers, through the owners who purchased a new array of products and supplies created and sold by small businesses and, in the twentieth century, a handful of corporations that saw profit in serving pets (2006: 229-230).

That is, when animals cease to be animals and instead become pets who are also “vicarious consumers” through us, we accelerate further the depletion of natural resources which are vital for natural ecosystems to endure or for actual human beings in need. It is another case of ruthless, ignorant, or uncaring capitalism seeking new customers and not worrying about the consequences of their commerce. The dual potential for becoming truly human animal and/or animal-the-other do not figure prominently in “a bottom line.”

Although the present-day degree of consumption is unprecedented and so are the environmental/ecological consequences of overconsumption, crossing the line of dehumanizing humans into a sort of entertaining animal or edifying an animal to an exotic or necessary pet may be old human habit which shows, again and again, in the corrupting ethos of “civilization.”

Tuan (1984), writing about a description of Montezuma’s zoo as seen by Hernando Cortez, observes:

[Cortez and Diaz del Castillo noted]...On the first floor of the same building [zoo] were house lions, tigers, wolves, foxes, and cats of every species. Both the birds of prey and the mammalian carnivores were fed poultry and, according to Diaz also the flesh of human sacrificial victims. In another house lived human dwarves, hunchbacks, and other forms of deformed men and women, each in a separate room. Like the other animals, the human exhibits also had their guardians (77-78).

My guess, and this is only a guess, is that *we could quantify human suffering and misery on the basis of what it takes to keep pets in the western world alone. My guess is that we could quantify how many thousands of people go hungry, are malnourished, or die each year in order to support our pets and pet food industries—our deficient psychologies.* To add to this sad guess—*statistiquing*, and to the extent that it takes a lot of water to keep the animals and grow the corn

that our pets will eat, there might be equal numbers of people who die each year because water was diverted to the divertimento of keeping pets. My hunch includes the presumption that human servants in third world countries are perceived as justifiable casualties, as “dwarves, hunchbacks, and other deformed men and women.” If ‘Bo’ comes first, then the Egyptian youth who cannot feed his family comes second or does not even come to mind when playing frisbee on manicured lawns, equally hard to justify and/or maintain.

To use better words than I can muster or guess:

...parent-child relationship between humans and their pets seems to be a generally accepted phenomenon in the Western countries. Modern veterinary hospitals in America, in England, and several European countries have a “recovery room for the “parents” of the pets brought in for treatment...The parents are offered coffee, tea, or tranquilizers and given first aid should they faint...We should probably gain a great deal of information about the deepest layers of the human soul if psychoanalysts, veterinarians, and dog trainers—who also call themselves dog psychologists—pooled their experiences (Szasz, 1969: 127).

Conclusion

Psychologically speaking, it is difficult to square a vision—the necessity--of animals interacting in complex—overt and subtle--ways and at many levels of human noetics, across individual and societal spheres, with the *singularization*—a caricature—of a pet forced to behave like a human moron, a way of denying by repetition and mirroring, that we have not reached our human potential. To borrow from Abraham Maslow’s motivation model, it is as if we truncate our abilities for self-actualization by becoming clowns. Even our ideas of love and belongingness, or self-esteem, are precariously balanced on an unnatural relationship with a fabricated animal: the pet.

When the family portrait depicts both a human adult and her favorite terrier wearing clown suits, rather than a woman risking life and limb with her hunting dog about to face “father bear,” this snapshot is very telling of how far we have traveled in alienating ourselves from nature, toward

the absurd and neurotic. Not so long ago our relationships, without having to risk our lives in order to kill “father bear,” were much richer. In the words of Scully:

Animals in the pagan religions were less than extras in the drama; they were props, objects of fantasy, superstitious symbols, figures of myth, the embodiments of departed souls or divinities in disguise (2002: 92).

In pursuing “petness” we are distracted from our potential to engage a richer and more demanding elaboration of humanity as we engage and learn from complex ecosystems populated by a diversity of beings who defy the singular and caricatured label and role “pet.”

Whether applied to a non-human animal or the human animal, the description, “an indulged or spoiled child; any person indulged or treated as a favorite,” is offensive and demeaning. Petishism is, by any other name, another sign that things have gone badly for humans and other animals alike. Again, in the wiser words of Szasz, “We seem to say animals are also human, but what we really say, although we may not realize it, is that we, too, are animals and that by living in close intimacy with them, we hope to relearn some of the things we have in common with them and have been made to forget (1969: 241).”

Epilogue

There is much to learn from Kathleen Szasz’s seminal book. There is also irony in real life that one cannot do justice to with bar jokes. I leave the reader with an extended quote that could not fit into a standard footnote. This text amplifies the sense of ecopsychological disconnection that pet ownership implies; the results of human neuroticism having an impact on a dog’s mental health:

One of the places a parent can take his dog child in need of psychotherapy is the Canine Behavior Institute in Beverly Hills, ⁶ specializing in the analysis of dogs suffering from

⁶ I have researched this center for additional information but it either no longer exists or it is part of a new group that does not trace its history to the CBI.

mental traumata, depression, or suicidal neurosis. “It is not the dog’s duty to understand man, but man’s duty to understand the dog,” say the dog analysts. The pet owner is required to participate in the six obligatory sessions—which will cost him something like \$250 and, if successful, establish between owner and dog the same type of relationship that exists, or should ideally exist, between parent and child. One of the clients of this illustrious establishment is California’s Governor, Ronald Reagan (1969: 129).

If a dog is treated like a human child in order to supplant a real and basic need for human companionship, it is very likely that a dog’s genetic makeup, no matter how effective inbreeding is to make them appear stupid, goofy, and docile, will eventually “rebel” (react) against the neuroticism of its masters. So too humans rebel (or should), wander into insanity even, from time to time, when governments attempt to make them into brainless, agreeable, and conforming pets.

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