

Summary:

The aim of this work is to analyze the influence of prejudices — understood as attitudes — on the interpretation of research on the cognitive processes of non-human animals, with particular emphasis on theory of mind. I am interested in whether, and if so, to what extent, researcher's prejudices affect their assessment of non-human animal's ability to use theory of mind. Theory of mind, that is, the competence to read, predict, and evaluate the beliefs of other individuals, constitutes — in the approach adopted and substantiated in this dissertation — a manifestation of the so-called mind-reading, meaning the ability to access others' mental states. One of the theses that play an important role in my analysis is the claim that anthropocentric assumptions, adopted by many researchers, significantly distort the assessment of the mental abilities of non-human animals by, among other things, denying them the competence to create a theory of mind. The main research problem of the work concerns the question of to what extent the adopted interpretative frameworks, based on anthropocentric assumptions, distort the assessment of the mental capabilities of non-human animals?

The dissertation discusses two main interpretative perspectives functioning in the indicated problem area: mentalistic, which assumes the possibility of constructing explanations of non-human animal behavior by referring to mind-reading; and behavioral, postulating limiting explanations to simpler mechanisms, the ability of the so-called clever behavior reading, where an animal not having the ability to read other individual's mental states can efficiently or cleverly predict other people's behavior (hence the term clever behavior reading). The research method used to achieve these goals is primarily conceptual analysis. It contains a complex analysis of the epistemic and methodological consequences of adopting specific interpretative frameworks. Additionally, I also reconstruct the hidden assumptions influencing the assessment of non-human animal's mental capabilities, which I present and discuss in detail using meta-analytical methods.

The paper is situated in the interdisciplinary context of philosophy of mind, epistemology and cognitive psychology. It addresses a socially and scientifically important topic, revealing that interpretations of the results of experiments involving non-human animals are shaped by prejudices, that can lead to epistemic and moral injustice. The approach used is analytical and critical, but it does not aim to resolve the empirical question of whether non-human animals are capable of forming a theory of mind. Rather, it shows how theoretical assumptions resulting from prejudices shape both research practices and interpretative frameworks used in empirical sciences and in the construction of theoretical models in

philosophy of mind. Thus, it draws attention to the epistemological, ethical, and methodological challenges associated with studying the mind-reading capacities of others.

The conclusions drawn from this multidimensional and multilayered analysis indicate that biases — both explicit and implicit — influence the design of experiments, the selection of data, and the interpretation of results. They also emphasize the need for reflection on the language of science, theoretical frameworks, and cognitive categories used in research on non-human animals. The use of the concept of epistemic injustice opens a discussion on the responsible relationship between humans and other animals, which must be based on honest narratives about the cognitive abilities of non-human animals. The author recommends further research on the influence of affect on the interpretation of results and the development of more methodologically neutral approaches to the study of non-human minds.