Well-being. Please take a moment, or many, and consider our language – one of our strongest means of expression – in respect to the word: well-being. What does this word conjure, make you imagine, or allow you to envision? What internal manifestations and inner dialogue does such a word narrate to you? Please, think... ...WELL... ...BEING...

Do you see materiality, infrastructure, or built form whose inner structure depends on the welds of capital? Some may see riches, as per the conditioning to do so, or, some may see people – human-beings in a state of wellness. I see the latter because the word being establishes a sensation of life, of the living, of those whose life stories unfold as per their beating rhythms, movements, and desires. Being also gently imposes the conception of a state, not a capital State, of course, but an internal, mental and emotional state of consciousness where one wishes to be, to become, and to simply be well. A well being is the only way an entity can truly be, for as soon as we remove wellness, and ultimately health, away from a living being, the life-force regresses into notions of: to be sick, to be mentally ill, to desire to be someone else, and eventually warps into a state of ‘to want’. To want the prescribed externality, expectation, and societal convention that forcefully, yet passively, reminds one of the dominant and ‘only’ way to be if one wants to bathe in wellness: water is money...right?

In this light, well-being encapsulates the being with wellness, conjures mentalisations of people and their health. Wellbeing (not well-being whose hyphen illustrates a link of potential separation) is as important as water: H(health)2(to)O(all). It is a word within our language with great meaning and depth that paints its own positive neural picture upon its reflection - a portrait of people, the living, and a fluidity of healthy life!
The following exploration attempts to be dunked in conceptions of H(health)2(to)O(all) as the topic of wellbeing and notions of sustainability and rurality are considered in relation to empathy. An uncanny use of figures will infiltrate this work to further the conversation and expression. A conception of sustainability will be examined where sustainable sustenance is viewed as \textit{infinity} as per the relational quality that energises the operational togetherness/connectivity of empathy, anthropomorphism, and wellbeing. Sustainability is thus the unity and energetic intertwinement of these three entities and a psychic state of being. In terms of rurality, empathy’s roots and evolution are considered to lay in the rural environmental context. Empathic extension towards embodiment of the other is viewed as a means to negate neglect and to avoid the othering of (and by) rural dwellers towards dismissing ingroup vs. outgroup mentality.

Initially, the concept of empathy will be explained (predominately via metaphor and illustration) in relation to its increasingly phenomenological conception of embodiment. While the focus of this work pertains to empathy and its implications related to sustainability and rurality, it will include commentary in response to empathy as potentially negative. Immature empathy and empathy’s link to embodiment in respect to our impulse to consume (i.e., to literally eat) will offer some insight into why some are against empathy. Immaturity stemming from mimesis will also reveal that the average empathy may yet to be self-realised to a point of maturity that renders it only positive. Perhaps, this layered-within exploration will appear to be outside of the main focus of the paper, but one must understand, it is difficult to vouch for empathy without facilitating an understanding for when and why it may be negative. I choose not to be ignorant to empathy’s potential dualistic nature by neglecting its wholeness. But in
the end, I am 100% pro empathy despite its potential faults, because an empathic way of being is too valuable to dismiss nurturing its immaturity into human’s full potential.

_The Empathic System: Growth, Extension, and Embodiment_

Just in time for Christmas, Paul Bloom’s _Against Empathy_ found its way onto store shelves. A bold title catches your attention like Elf on a shelf, staring coal worried children down into gift worthy behaviour. Ultimately, a book review is for another time, but the main emphasis here is that academics like Bloom (2016) are concerned about empathy, particularly how it reaches some and not others. Bloom’s work: a stocking stuffer for some, and to be put in the sock drawer by others. Regardless, he is thanked for advancing discussion, much like Bubandt and Willerslev (2015) who argue that empathy is not always positive; it can be dark by corresponding with violence. They reference two scenarios; one is in Siberia where a Yukaghir hunter is described as dressing like a moose, mimicking its movement, possessing an imitative ability that actual draws a moose towards it end: the animal is shot. The argument is that mimesis helps to establish an empathy of deception (tactical empathy in their words) that fosters violence. Their second scenario recognises a man’s use of empathy to imitate, through a sense of mimesis, to advance his plans to pursue violence. I encourage one to explore these scenarios for themselves, but in the end, let the emphasis be that some concern is being directed towards empathy.

So, _against empathy_? No, Bloom is not even against it, he is more worried about the _misapplication of empathy_. I think the latter is the true title, but it was not eye-catching or controversial enough – perhaps, slightly misleading. Therefore, not against empathy, but let us
be for empathy’s growth, maturation, and evolution towards cultural revolution and reform. Allow me to anthropomorphise the concept of empathy, to view it as human to further this thought. Empathy, as of today, is predominantly good with possible outbursts of negativity (e.g., increased empathy for the ingroup versus the outgroup); therefore should we abandon it because it can act like a child? Should we dismiss it because it can be immature? No, it needs the opposite of neglect; it requires nurturance so it can mature into what it was intended to be: a beautiful substance that binds all together. Empathy as we know (i.e., I would say ‘average empathy’) is in a state of imperfection at risk of immaturity, but like every human, its potential is there if given the opportunity and environment to grow.

![Figure 1. Empathic Maturation: the growth of empathy towards greater fulfillment, spirituality, and human cohesion.](image)

Slightly unconventional, but allow the following illustrations (Figure 2, 3, 4, 5, 6) to express Figure 1. In metaphorical terms, the visualisation of a pebble/stone/boulder being dropped into water is utilised to help convey and capture the varying degrees of empathy as per our maturity and individuation. I am attempting to thread together a portrait of empathy to help capture its wholeness and nature – both positive and negative. Preceding the metaphorical illustrations of Figures 3-6, Figure 2 will initially provide increased explanation in relation to mature and immature empathy, and the embodiment of the other:
**EMPATHIC SYSTEM MECHANICS**

- **MIMESIS** (projection of self)
  - Appraisal: ‘No, too different!’ The source of induction does not satisfy one’s mimesis – i.e., a level of (superficial and cultural) imitation/reflection is not imagined. Embodiment is not achieved and empathy is not established for ‘B’. Othering, ingroup vs. outgroup mentality, and dehumanisation is now at risk. ‘B’ fails to conform to expected social representation, and the other is not (externally) a symbol of the dominant place based context. This immaturity persuades empathy for the ingroup and not to others.

  - Appraisal: ‘Yes, we are similar!’ The source of induction satisfies one’s mimesis: the other is a better reflection of the projector, either superficially, culturally, via sharing actions, or by being a symbol that adheres to the social representation of the place’s context. Embodiment occurs towards empathy where the other is initially embraced by means of, essentially, I reflecting ‘I’.

- **ANTHROPOMORPHISM** (projection of humanness)
  - A projection of humanness displays greater maturity as one eliminates the appraisal mechanism of self needing to reflect other since sharing humanness is the sole mode of reflectance needed. Empathetic extension is more effective and inclusive as per increased notions of humanisation, rendering the projector in an increased WE state for they know they are human too. Difference is to be uniquely human.

- **TRANSCENDENCE** (projection of being)
  - “The very notion of transcendence means to reach beyond oneself, to participate with and belong to larger communities, to be embedded in more complex webs of meaning” (Rifkin, 2009, p. 20).
  - “[T]he extension of empathy to broader and more inclusive domains of reality and the expansion of human consciousness, is the transcendent process by which we explore the mystery of existence and discover new realms of meaning” (Rifkin, 2009, p. 40).

*Figure 2. Mature vs. immature empathy and the embodiment of the other.*
Figure 3. Average Empathy: The projector, as per a strong sense of ‘I’ (a pebble) projects the self towards the other: the source of empathetic induction. A psychic embodiment occurs (the pebble enters the water) where the energy (waves) of empathy help to foster the extended connection towards a stronger/denser sense of ‘WE’. Possibly, the embodiment, via its unconscious fusion of both subjects, manifests a return projection that expresses both individuals, i.e., a projection of humanness. The process grounds itself in wellbeing, perpetuating greater individuation.
Figure 4. Immature Empathy: Embodiment of the other is impossible/unwanted because (the water is frozen over and) the coldness of narcissism, dehumanisation, and strong ingroup mentality prevents further extension. The overtly sense of ‘I’ sits in lone coldness where empathic energies reverberate back onto the self or engulf only those who reflect the self: the ingroup. One must be willing to ‘break the ice’ with the other to reach higher individuation towards cleansing/washing away immaturities.
Figure 5. Mature Empathy: As per the successful repetition of ‘average empathy’, where the reoccurring empathic waves prevent immature narcissism (ice formation), a sense of ‘WE’ is internalised and symbolised by the heavier, more energy packed stone. Through greater conscious awareness, one projects a sense of humanness, humanising the other while extending empathy further via a larger ‘wake’. The Embodiment of shared humanness appropriates a sense of being, perhaps opening one up to our shared collective unconscious.
Figure 6. Beyond Empathy: Through repeated mature empathic experience, the human learns how to be, to be in a constant state of being. Embodiment extends beyond... towards a deep wave of far reaching empathy, or for some, transcendence. Spirit converges with the soul of other beings (or all beings?). The unconscious returns to its righteous symbol of the Cosmos, where a higher consciousness helps describe the likes of shamanism, the mystic journey, or peering into/visiting other realms.
It may be called empathy for a reason as in *em*: aime/love and *path*: a journey. As per the visual bombardment, empathy towards becoming an empath is a journey to love, a journey of embodiment, and a journey in respect to a (psychic) growth that takes hold of the empathic system mechanics and translates them out of immaturity towards something bigger. Mimesis is the element of increased immaturity, the fork in the path, the element of appraisal that may steer empathy towards negative darkness. It is only natural that mimesis comes first as children grasp mimesis via sensation of mimicry before their increased development. Some people’s empathy, therefore, we could say, may still be a child.

Bubandt and Willerslev (2015) appraised empathy as potentially violent, and in their eyes, this is due to mimesis. Severino and Morrison (2012) also share a similar sentiment where they feel mimesis, despite its predominately good nature, can fuel unconscious imitation of violence. My visual exploration renders mimesis as the culprit of an immature empathy, where a projection of self facilitates an appraisal of the other based on their imitation/reflectance of the projector. Therefore, against empathy – no; against immature empathy – yes, but more specifically, we should be against mimesis’ inability to mature into a greater sense of anthropomorphism which fosters the humanisation of externalities, including people! Just because the majorities’ empathetic journey is in disruption from fatigue, stress, confusion, and societal immaturity does not mean the journey should stop. It means how do we initiate the inner drive to continue one on their (em)path, instead of leading one into the thicket to trample new life.
Empathy: Sustainability and Rurality

Any model of sustainability should not, and cannot be implemented without intense empathetic mentalisation. The embodiment of the other, of the poor, of the indigenous, of the homeless, of the prostitute, of the isolated rural child... has to exist through our empathy to properly inform policy, infrastructure, and (in respect to some present notions of sustainability) permanent, everlasting development. If the other is not imagined in past, present, and future context, how can their wellbeing be considered and nurtured? It cannot. And the inability to foster wellbeing is anti human psychic growth, and ultimately, anti-sustainability and anti-sustainable development.

Without our mature empathy’s ability to allow us to ‘live’ in the others’ situation, contextual environment, and essentially to experience their way of life (be it privileged or damaged, chosen, or grasped without perceived choice), decisions regarding policy, physical land manipulation, and capital development that shape one’s ability or inability to be, are no more than expressions of ignorance, ego, greed, dismissal, and eyes wide shut. Essentially, what does all this exactly mean? It means that our notions of sustainable development must embrace and correspond to the gathering of intelligence as stimulus to our empathetic imagination – all in effort to conjure, with vividness, the others’ narrative. Without feminine energy as derived through empathy, it is Mr. Machismo Sustainability who becomes the villain in the story where, for example, rural livelihood is slayed by order and victory of King Economics who objectifies land into a utilitarian means to an end.

Sustainability, as per its dominant ruler ‘King Economics’ has fortified the popular notion that economic development shall dominate the modern empire of thought/action pertaining to
sustainable growth. Ultimately, a balance between economic, social and environmental systems is desired but this continues to fail our reality. Abeydeera, Kearins and Tregidga (2016) advocate that these three dimensions must operate in inclusiveness rather than through trade-offs, where the growth of one dimension diminishes another. The ruler, ‘King Economics’ has to tire towards a shift in sustainable thought where the drive to fuel the economy will be situated in achieving wellbeing, which partly means to avoid excessiveness. Abeydeera, Kearins and Tregidga inspire such a dethroning as they begin linking Buddhist thought to sustainability. They understand that preventing excessive consumption is necessary, along with our need to recognise interconnection, and that “the Buddhist principle of compassion adds the value of empathy to the notion of sustainability (p. 58).

Figure 7 and 8 is a conception of sustainability that consciously chose to avoid its main focus as pertaining to ‘economic’, ‘social’, and ‘environment’. It is felt that these important dimensions would receive the proper balanced attention upon nurturing the psychic components of empathy and anthropomorphism, alongside the pursuit of wellbeing. Please examine the illustration of Figure 7 and 8, which will proceed with increased explanation.
Figure 7. The ‘atomic structure’ of sustainability, or the psychic mentality needed to foster and pursue a sustainable outcome. Ideally, this approaches a value system, granting humanness, wellness and love to all, while embracing cultural and individual difference/uniqueness. (Figure 7 is potentially an idealistic depiction of feminine energy.)

Figure 8. Sustainability: the pursuit of forever relationships and connection between all beings, where human inner drive (or a value system) corresponds to empathy, anthropomorphism, and ultimate wellbeing for all. (Figure 8 is potentially an idealistic depiction of a sustainable way of being: i.e., a projection of femininity as per [mature] masculine energy.)
Fromm (2013) has contrasted the idea of living as per a mode of having versus being, where the former corresponds to the sense of self wrapped in materiality. Ehrenfeld, inspired by Fromm’s sense of human authenticity, i.e., being, expresses a beautiful notion of sustainability that embraces our internality via the necessity to be in a state of being. As well, his sustainability embraces the ideology that “humans and other life will flourish on Earth forever” (Ehrenfeld & Hoffman, 2013, p. 7). The mentality and strength of the word forever should not be interpreted as dismissing our Earthly impermanence, but it is important to instil a morality to all decisions. The notion of infinity should emphasise the immensity to all actions, both micro and macro. In essence, infinity makes reference to time, essentially that time is somewhat irrelevant, and in terms of sustainability it speaks to us that time cannot be restricted, or predicted in reference to establishing a sustainable (or relational) outcome.

I agree fully with Ehrenfeld, as I to believe that sustainability will only prevail through a sense of internal being that for me (as per Figure 7) values a state of empathy energised with humanisation and wellbeing. As well, I feel that sustainability is a psychic mentality – metaphorically, the atomic structure – that will birth life decisions, goals, actions and relations, and even physical infrastructure/landscape manipulation and development.

The ‘atomic structure’ of sustainability (Figure 7) is composed of three entities that arguably may exist independent of each other, but this structure’s life force manifests itself from co-existence. The fusion of empathy and anthropomorphism fosters a greater maturity towards considering others’ humanity (as previously illustrated). Uniting this fusion with connotations and awareness of the multiple dimensions of wellbeing may inspire a beautiful
mind – or perhaps a divine sensation of femininity – that desire others’ relations and overall health.

Anthropomorphism is extremely important, for it promotes humanisation, moral worth, and helps lift lines of division, dehumanisation, and appraisal between people and non-human life. Anthropomorphism is a powerful tool of perception that blurs boundaries between humans and animals towards accepting our own animality. This is vitally important since an aspect of dehumanisation is to render the other as animal. But, imagine if such a depiction – to be viewed as animal – was not conjured as negative... imagine if animals were loved, respected and treated with morality to the point where seeing a human’s animality, or human-animal similarity, was complementary, healthy and positive.

Costello and Hodson (2010) examined immigrants, who are unfortunate targets of greater dehumanisation, and more specifically, animalistic dehumanisation. They established that greater immigrant humanisation stems from the acceptance of human-animal similarity. As well, rendering animals with humanness (I would express this as a sense of anthropomorphic mentality) compared to seeing humans as similar to animals and divided from animals, resulted in increased immigrant humanisation – even among highly prejudice individuals! The human animal divide increases outgroup prejudice, and such a divide between humans and animals is not even acknowledged by laypeople as a problematic source of dehumanisation (Costello & Hodson, 2014). As a beautiful suggestion, Costella and Hodson (2014) propose reinvigorating a sense of human-animal connection and semblance through engaging children within the education system. This sounds promising if teachers were given increased time, support, and proper resources to take-on an extra task of such extreme importance.
To diffuse the growing pressure placed on those within the education system, perhaps dismissing the popular Christian notion of dominion over animals and livestock may be a valuable start. Ideally, animals need to be a source and stimulus of our anthropomorphism to reinstate the desired idea of a two-for-one combo: as per the presence of animal, allow its being to stimulate our anthropomorphism and diminishes the human-animal divide; all towards producing greater sensations of humanisation directed at the other. Ultimately, this is more like a three-for-one since increased humanisation and empathy can also be a product of our anthropomorphism stemming from the animal exposure. Essentially, shall we choose dominion over animal to prosper capital, or relation/respect of animal to prosper socialisation and wellbeing: I choose the latter (at the expense of fast-food...).

Allow Figure 9 to reiterate the coldness of narcissism, and the ice barrier that prevents empathetic extension.

### NARCISSISM

Embodiment of the other and empathic extension can be inhibited by narcissism, resulting in increased loneliness and difficulties in giving and receiving care. As per the illustration, I am not suggesting that a literal ‘force field’ is established, however, it is the sad reality that a narcissistic state can fortify ‘walls’ and ‘barriers’, promoting both the neglect of the ill and of the non-ill who are in need of emotional support. Potentially, as per the one’s radiation of energy, an intangible divide may be present.

E.g., “I am better, I am great, I am the best” or “I am sad, I am worthless, I am incapable” – all encompass mental illness, where the overactive ‘I’ state – narcissism – inhibits empathy’s process.

*Figure 9. Narcissism: a barrier to embodiment and empathic extension.*
The warmth of anthropomorphism melts barriers, especially between in and outgroups, and may help to ease self-appraisal mechanisms between those that are different. Leading us towards mature empathy and diminishing narcissism and prejudice; anthropomorphism may prove to be a major factor is respect to sustainability in a social, mental and overall wellbeing sense. It may also prove valuable if we wish to avoid the expression of Figure 9 – and to wish this is an understatement since all mental illness expresses degrees of narcissism.

Anthropomorphism has already proved to be worthy in aiding to sustain relations between people and their materiality, for it is used as a manipulative consumerist tactic to lure one into loving the object, and therefore helps to fuel the capital machine. If empathy for a flawed system is strengthened via our extension of humanness onto objects, it is time that our humanised (empathic) extension is directed at people to help mend distorted human socialisation as expressed in the generalised depiction of Figure 10.

![Diagram](image_url)

*Figure 10.* Monkey see/feel, monkey do: the (re)distribution of dehumanisation fuelled by mimesis. The perception or reality of being othered or neglected becomes mirrored, generalised, and reflected upon others. A re-direction of stress from being dehumanised, and in vs. outgroup mentality, destroys a macro sense of wellbeing.
Figure 10 is a generalisation, since it is ignorant to imagine all urbanites, or all rural dwellers buying into a neglectful/othering mentality. This shared transmittance of dehumanising the other – even if done extremely passively – began long ago and is unfortunately a part of human history. As McNeill (1978) highlights, rural agriculturalists were constantly producing more food as per the fear and outcome of being raided, and to sustain the urban population. This work was all done without getting anything in return. In ancient China, peasant farmers were also having their humanness neglected where they were forced to produce more food due to constant raiding. In this light (more so, in this darkness), it is not surprising how McNeill describes agriculture: “permanent enslavement to an unending rhythm of work” (p. 58).

We can see how long ago, division between rural (or agriculturalists) and the other/outsider began to develop in an unfriendly manner. Interestingly, as Rifkin (2009) expresses urbanity as more diverse, and therefore more open to the other, McNeill reminds us that urban centers were also, long ago, more open to migrants to help maintain population stability due to disease outbreaks. Rifkin also acknowledges village life, which is “traditionally more closed and xenophobic” where “tight-knit communities are far more likely to view strangers as alien and other” (p. 42). Village mentality, while not mutually exclusive to rurality, does anchor itself more readily in the rural regime. This overall conceptualisation begins shedding light of the increased reality of Figure 10, and the sad truth that this illustration fathoms the actuality of many.

Ultimately, we cannot deny that rurality, especially in the form of northern Indigenous communities, is being neglected to varying degrees. When 1 out of 5 northern communities’
water is essentially poisoned, the First Nation Peoples have been othered, and their sense of
wellbeing neglected. Ultimately, neglectful perceptions begin fabricating one’s rural reality, and
consequently the urban center/system that houses a greater sense of power due to
government presence, higher order policy, and wealth, is at risk of being neglected because, as
per the other: ‘it failed me/us and is broken.’

Figure 10 is a system of mimesis, where the act of othering and being othered is
imitated and mirrored with immaturity, or via anger and stress. To recall, the notion of an
increased immature empathy embraced mimesis, which rendered the embodiment of the other
extremely difficult and unlikely due to difference, fostering potential ingroup/narcissistic
thought. An empathic extension and embodiment of the other requires a stimulation of
anthropomorphism to activate our mature empathy – to ensure a projection of humanness that
will more likely erase lines of dehumanisation and negative appraisal mechanism. The fact that
many others live in other places, already predisposes an empathetic appraisal to difference,
which further highlights our need to ensure human individuation towards a more mature,
anthropomorphic way of being
Figure 11. Embodiment of the Other. One’s empathetic processes must extend beyond mimesis to ensure ‘doors’ are open to difference since the source of empathetic induction is not a (superficial/external) reflection of the inductee.

If we wish to describe empathy as “the thread that weaves an increasingly differentiated and individualized population into an integrated social tapestry (Rifkin, 2009, p. 37), than the embodiment of the other, of the ‘outgroup’, and of the different to self, will pose to be one of the challenges corresponding to our growth. In reference to Figure 11, the skeleton keys to the three doors of embodying the other towards empathic extension are Anthropomorphism, Narratives & Imagination, and Soul Work. Humanisation is the master key. The present notion of sustainability that seeks relations of wellbeing underpinned by its ‘atomic structure’, understands that the embodiment of the other requires human individuation, and essentially, the gathering of intelligence on the self and on the other. Through more of an external
stimulus, narratives of the other need to infiltrate internal social representations – especially if one is in a position to dictate decisions for the other, for e.g., a government body/agency. As highlighted, anthropomorphism is necessary to direct us towards greater empathetic maturity, and has been shown as a means to negate immigrant prejudice and dehumanisation. Soul work will allow the self to inward project one’s own humanness towards a self-realisation of uniqueness. Accepting self as unique is the precursor to embracing other’s difference as uniqueness, and uniqueness as being human.

*Figure 12.* Sustainability towards a social tapestry. The threads of infinity/desired forever relations extend an embrace, helping to better depict oneness. Place B, (i.e., Rurality – see Figure. 10) has been wrapped in the greatest amount of warmth, visually identifying a case for who may need the most nurturing aid to achieve unity – to weave Earth’s blanket of togetherness.

Figure 12 is a tangible depiction of the intangible psychic ideal of sustainability. A way of being – a mental state – that directs all action through a sieve of desired macro wellbeing, sifting out our unity. Naturally, upon such a psychic (and ultimately sustainable) shift or development, we would all merely be people or beings of Earth – Earthlings – residing in places of special uniqueness where our presubscribed sense of rural, for example, would slowly
dissipate. This is because the freedom of not being labelled/distinguished/moulded by societal notions of urban and rural would allow a place, regardless of density, to become a truer reflection of the people. The operations of mimesis would prevail: the becoming of people will reflect/imitate the becoming of place, and vice versa.

Imagine ‘Rural Toronto’ where the idealistic, stereotypical conception of rurality, which we continue to hold on to, finds its way into places of greater density as per aesthetic transformation. Such a shift would coincide with cultural reform where rural action, in the form of farming, may translate into the pursuit of micro, ‘backyard’, or community agriculture. Ultimately, without the present notion of sustainability, divides between people and places will continue where all sense of becoming, of both person and place, will lack the interconnecting energies of human uniqueness. As a result, stagnant and divided growth – a bunch of patches not quilted together – resulting in empathy for ‘my square’ and not yours.

**Empathy: Context and Consumption**

McNeill brings to our attention human evolution and our shift from coming down from the trees towards open grasslands and the savannas. Our habitat of forest encompasses a greater notion of “I”, for the forest symbolically corresponds to womb (Neumann, 1974) and the state of being in the womb: unconsciousness (Jung, 2003). I sense that our pre-human selves would have been ‘swinging’ via imitation, and therefore an ancient conception of mimesis doused in self-survival narcissism would have been in operation. I feel at the very most, this would have been the far reaching extent of any notion of empathy – unconscious imitation through projections of self, with a preoccupation of camouflage. Interestingly, such
camouflage is related to our mimesis and empathy because “[c]amouflage always involves a process of ‘becoming the other’ and seeing the self in the other (Leach, 2006, p. 244).

As per our growth into the openness, McNeill highlights our increased tool use and our developed cooperation towards successful hunting. Evolving further, the agrarian context is established alongside our conscious development as per humans’ ability to orientate future goals, while learning “to control (sublimate) impulsive discharges of the body” (Lauzon, 1998, p. 135). Figure 13, provides a sense of evolutionary progression and emphasis as per our changing contexts:

Figure 13. Changing contexts and human progression/emphasis (and a depiction of empathy)

In a very uncanny fashion, Figure 13 helps express empathy and reveals empathy’s true nature: it is a way of life. Ultimately, empathy requires an unconscious attentiveness to external subtleties, alongside conscious awareness to extend via self/human projections that encompass
both “I” and “WE”. As well, one needs the impulsivity to embody the other, but the control to allow the other’s narrative, actions, and cues to take over. Figure 13, while being a strange representation of empathy, also introduces anthropomorphism, i.e., the attribution of humanness to a non-human agent, and a means of manifesting empathy with the subject of induction. Our anthropomorphic tendencies are intertwined with human-animal interaction and our agrarian livelihoods forced animal proximity, rearing, and relations. Therefore, we can assume that anthropomorphic perception encompassed agrarian life more than when we, for example, preoccupied the forest. As well, anthropomorphism, via its connotation with our social cognition reveals its association with a mind adaptive to forms of greater consciousness, which approaches agrarian livelihood.

Anthropomorphism also helps to define a hunting scenario that was previously introduced, referencing Bubandt and Willerslev (2015) who believe empathy can correspond to violence. The scenario, to reiterate, was in Siberia where a Yukaghir hunter dresses like a moose, mimics the animal, becomes one with the prey, and kills the animal. Bubandt and Willerslev state that empathy from mimesis encompasses violence, but they also reveal that the moose is intimately loved by the hunter. Despite the violence of killing the animal for nourishment, the animal is deeply respected, and again, the animal is loved. The sacrifice is essentially, in a strange conceptualisation, wrapped in love.

Personally, I found this narrative to be unbelievably rich, and upon its means of stimulating my imagination, I instinctually felt that this fusion of love/hunting was, at one point in human history, the human norm. Presently, I feel that hunting is more of a video game, where technology modifies the outcome, where ‘game’ is more of an object. And, I question if...
the component of love is (or can be) present, for this may add undesired femininity to ‘a men’s sport’. Without trying to sound stereotypical (or ignorant), I do wonder if a deep loving respect for the animal of prey is increasingly more associated with indigenous culture, like the Yukaghir hunters of Siberia.

Ultimately, this narrative is going to be used to help generalise a conception of human as hunter. This indigenous hunting narrative will help illustrate how humans’ basic impulse to hunt/sacrifice/consume was and is rooted in empathy, and may have been the seed of our empathetic growth. Please allow Figure 14 to symbolise the generalisation of the human hunt as per the Yukaghir narrative. The helix is representative of the fusion/intimate interaction of the two entities.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 14.** A generalised, idealistic hunting experience as fathomed from the Yukaghir way.

The intertwinement of human and animal helps manifest an anthropomorphic connotation. An idealistic hunting experience should therefore instil such mentalities as both life-forces merge, both psychically and physically: i.e., the literal embodiment of the other via eating. In a sense, it becomes flesh of my flesh, and this notion is well perceived. Christian’s drink the blood of Christ as symbolically represented by red wine, and eat his body as a bread metaphor. Cannibalism... no... maybe, but it is the institution that, in my mind, understands (at least unconsciously) that consumption is linked to embodiment, which is linked to two

**EMPATHY:**
- Mimesis (to camouflage, assimilate & imitate)
- Anthropomorphism
- Oneness
- Self/external awareness
- LOVE (of Animal)
becoming one, which is associated to extreme intimacy and our deep empathy. In the Church context, therefore, the people become one with Christ, through cannibalistic metaphor that speaks to the unconscious, and the Church as physical representation of lord is empathised and perhaps loved. In the end, eating has always been life... and may also be linked to empathy through embodiment via consumption.

As Willerslev (2004) states in respect to the Yukaghir, “An elderly Yukaghir hunter told me that animals, trees, and rivers are ‘people like us’...” (p. 633), and this helps to further denote general anthropomorphic mentalisation within the hunting context. Furthermore, Willerslev expresses the sense of embodiment and oneness that exists:

While Yukaghirs are quite clear in their minds about which body belongs to any given person, they do regard it as possible for someone to take on the body of a being from another species. The process of body transformation implies changes in the person, which must inevitably entail the assumption of an altogether alien perspective comprising a radically unfamiliar linguistic, social, and moral code. Taking on the body of another species can, therefore, only be done for short periods of time and is risky. It is possible that temporarily belonging to an alien species’ body can result in the loss of one’s own original species identity. When this happens, a true metamorphosis occurs. A transformed individual thus becomes an ‘Other’ and his memories of past experiences are lost. (2004, p. 634)

The Yukaghir hunter experiences embodiment of the other, i.e., of the animal, which is the mechanics of empathic extension, and in this context it facilitates oneness and love of the
animal. As well, the embodiment experience is conveyed with power where impulse control seems a necessity to not become too immersed and lost; self awareness is therefore important.

Overall, the Yukaghir hunt, through embodiment of the other, anthropomorphism, mimesis, oneness, self and other/external awareness, and arguably most importantly – love – begins to approach the notion of how an idealistic sense of hunting fosters empathy.

Figure 14, depicting the idealistic hunting experience will now undertake an evolutionary metamorphosis to examine our sense of embodiment through our impulse to sacrifice another to eat. By no means will this exploration establish that to foster empathy requires us to kill animals. Actually, I feel that for the mass majority and due to our massive population, our hunting context is forever gone and this empathetic hunting impulse (empathetic because of the appropriate wild context!) needs to be redirected as it once was in the emergence of agrarian mentalities.

Allow Figure 15, an illustrative time expansion of the Yukaghir ‘ideal’ hunt, to explore our consumption through embodiment, and our potential archaic stimulation of empathy. This evolutionary depicting figure metaphorically positions a changing environmental context with our individuation and therefore human degrees of maturity as symbolised by child growing into mature adult. This is not to say that cultures who chose their own path by residing in the womb of the forest, for e.g., are less individualised, or that, as you will see, the central positioning of the Yukaghir ‘ideal’ hunt means they are less individualised. Figure 15 is a generalisation, and in all honesty, those who deviate from generalisation, in my mind, are beyond the norm in respect to self-actualisation, maturity, and individuation.
Figure 15. Embodiment of the other: An evolutionary look at our consumption impulse.
Figure 15 can be described as strange, for it brings forth a potential relationship, or weird association between empathy, sacrifice, eating, and most importantly, empathy’s evolution as per human intimacy with animal and plant. These associations may help reveal why empathy via our mimesis is presently discussed within the literature as being attributed to human violence. Ultimately, since mimesis may have its roots in the process of killing and eating of the other – i.e., undeniably a violent act – it may still be increasingly vulnerable to violence today based on its archaic way of being. As mimesis helped explain an increasingly immature empathy, it also helps explain an increasingly archaic form of hunting that is dominated by imitating the external environment by means of camouflage.

To sacrifice plant or animal life was a means to our human evolution and survival. The embodiment of the other to obtain their energy and actuate energy transfer was/is necessary. It is extremely sustainable, logical, and biologically adaptive to think that human hunting, animal life-taking, or gathering, resulted in empathy to strengthen our relation to our food to avoid its exploitation and extinction, which would have resulted in the death of our species. To sacrifice life for our wellbeing through consumption is a part of humanity, a part of our evolution, and a part of becoming. To sacrifice, in my mind, is one of human’s greatest impulses and as Lauzon (1998) highlighted, our growth towards agrarian livelihood fostered greater impulse control. The rhythms of agriculture manifested a controlled means of sacrifice by submitting to the nurturing of life and life cycles, and sacrificing the crop or animal when appropriate. Essentially, exploitation of the other by over-sacrificial action would be the downfall of human life and thus was avoided. Humanity developed impulse control, but most importantly, still maintained an outlet for channelling our sacrificial energy towards allowing
empathy to flourish. A love of plant and animal: an understatement, because without these beings, the human is dead.

Onward, towards Modernity and the industrialisation/mechanisation of agriculture; the human exposure to sacrifice perished. Sacrifice morphed into slaughter and plant and animal life connection and intimacy is taken away from the masses. But wait, our impulse to sacrifice, as per being taken away, is manufactured into existence via Modernity’s “terrors: substitute sacrifices, homicide and genocide, exploitation, massive slavery and violent exploitation, hedonistic overindulgence and widely exaggerated substitute gratifications (i.e. consumerism)” (Lauzon, 1998, p. 137). These substitute sacrifices are rooted in exploitation, dehumanisation, and objectification of the other, fostering psychological tension, divide, and empathy’s destruction. The obliteration of love highlights the drive and human impulse to wrap oneself in sacrifice even if evil, and reveals our need for the archaic sense of sacrifice that fosters empathy.

An archaic sense of sacrifice towards empathy: to kill animal and/or to kill plant... with love. With population levels too high, mass engagement in the option to sacrifice animal that would end in empathy is lost. How can the masses participate in hunting in the appropriate contextual (wild) environment that would foster mimesis, oneness with animal and land, and/or participate in the rearing/nurturing/killing of the animal in an agrarian context; all ending in love and increased empathy. It is not realistic, and self killing animal is not even a desired action of the mass (modern) majority, or an action one could, or would be able to pursue even if we could house our farm friends in our backyards. But what is increasingly realistic, is to satisfy humans’ instinct and sacrifice impulse through the taking of plant life. If
humans need (archaic) sacrifice, let’s divert such energy away from its contorted form of slaughter of animal, Earth, and dehumanisation of people, towards the ripping, uprooting, snapping, tearing, gnawing... of the nurtured plant life. The sacrifice and the embodiment of plant may be enough to satisfy our deep impulsive roots pertaining to consumption where the end result is a full stomach, and an empathetically full mind.

If the environment cannot support animal sacrifice that fosters love and empathy, it may be time to be inspired by the old world Indigenous Peoples of the Americas who in some regions supplemented their diets with beans because “hunting was no longer possible because human population had become too dense” (McNeill, 1976, p. 211). Growing legumes, for example, towards archaic sacrifice and our empathy, rather than demolishing forests to house methane producing beef slaughter sounds logical. We would have thought that this would have been the choice considering such thinking already existed and pertained to the old world. Obviously, the new is ugly and our state of macro empathy metaphorically or perhaps literally resting on the ethics and morality of the mass sentiment regarding the embodiment of the other. The animal, fellow human and being: to embody by dominion or to embody with love – our choice will direct our future impulses towards human social starvation, or towards our much needed salvation.

Conclusion

“[A] more mature empathy emerges with the awareness of death, one’s own and that of others” (Rifkin, 2009, p. 162). The literal embodiment of the other through sacrifice and consumption holds humans to the touch of death. Even if the death pertains to plant life, it is felt that our deep archaic selves do not discriminate between whether the life force flows blood
or chlorophyll. As per population density, if we wish to take advantage of the empathy that stems from a notion of embodying the other in respect to our eating, our sacrificial impulse may need to be directed at plant life. The embodiment of the other as per consumption also offers us a potential seed of our empathetic growth. Unfortunately, this renders our empathy amongst the violence of the hunt and the sacrifice of the other towards energy transmission. It potentially helps explain why mimesis – arguably an increasingly immature component of empathy – is still at risk of being preoccupied in violence outside of an idealistic hunting scenario. The birth of mimesis may coincide with our drive to eat the other, which meant camouflaging, assimilation, and imitating externality via projecting self into the outer. All this in effort to help secure our meal, and empathy may have been the final outcome to foster love over exploitation to ensure sustaining forever nourishment and wellbeing.

The present illustrative displays, also attempted to make sense of empathy and the embodiment of the other as it pertained to our individuation. Mimesis as per the projection of self did correspond to an increasingly immature empathy where empathic extension would only proceed upon the appraisal of the other as a greater reflection of self. Our mature empathy approached enhanced anthropomorphic mentalisation, as projections of humanness dismissed lines of division where one would be embodied much easier due to sharing the other’s humanness. Anthropomorphism was thus viewed as vital in respect to dismantling ingroup vs. outgroup mentality and prejudice. Beyond empathy reveals how the empathic mechanics, upon further maturation and development, may foster transcendence and greater spiritual sensation. Empathy’s growth is therefore viewed to correspond to our journey of greater individuation, and ultimately the pursuit of self love mirroring love of the other.
The concept of sustainability was touched upon where its application requires a certain psychic state and way of being that encompasses its ‘atomic structure’. Approached as infinity, sustainability is viewed as the relational quality that energises a sense of oneness through the unity of empathy, anthropomorphism, and wellbeing. By attributing sustainability to an empathetic way of being that considers others’ humanness, the hope is that notion of rurality can avoid neglect, and instead, be embraced with warmth. Ultimately, the embodiment of the other is a way of life, a way of being, and the journey towards a true sustainability: an empathic mind pursuing unity and wellbeing.
References


