Animal-Human Relations: Animist Intersubjectivity & the Mimetic Trinity

~ The need for Animism ~

“Sensing subjects expand beyond humans to include animals, plants, mountains, and landscapes...”
(Endres, 2013, p. 186)

To have a soul or not to have a soul... the former speaks to animism as well as to the sensing subject, and for the animist an animal is such a subject. The cultural ontology of this mentality, i.e., animism, is being considered in light of animal and human relations. Animism and animist intersubjectivity will be revealed as the way to dismiss animal objectification towards greater animal worth and respect. These relations will be examined through an animist intersubjective lens and through the examination of an ideal animist hunting context where the animal is Gift of spiritual exchange. As well, the notion of mimetic trinity, which will speak to representation that will encompass animist intersubjectivity, Girard’s mimetic theory, and Freudian thought, will further the conversation. The analysis of the trinity representations and their mimetic layering over time will reveal the current sentiment regarding animals. Ultimately, a severed animist intersubjectivity and our buried animism is viewed to foster the objectification of animal, and results in an overall objectification mentality that damages relations.

Animist Intersubjectivity and Eating our WAY to Empathy

Animist intersubjectivity. An ideal intersubjective relation is rooted in animistic ontology because all subjects are exactly this: subjects. The relational exchange is between sentient beings, not objects or things of hierarchical value or worth. Endres (2013) directly references intersubjectivity with animism by referring to the relational exchange “between all
sensing subjects” as *animist intersubjectivity* (p. 186). Intersubjectivity in this ontological realm aids to dismiss anthropocentrism since the animism itself takes us beyond the human as the sole being of sentient potential.

Intersubjective relations between beings are believed to encompass union and the mechanics of Robert Visher’s *Einfühlung* (Coelho & Figueiredo, 2003). Such mechanics are derivative of Vischer’s (1874) conceptualization of art sensation, where two souls unit as per the embrace of *Einfühlung* (i.e., empathy) that envelops one’s inner essence towards embracing one’s outer formation. This deep intersubjective process also speaks to Vischer’s *Anfühlung* – somewhat the inversion of *Einfühlung* in the sense that sensation of the other via *Anfühlung* stems from a sort of psychic clothing of the outer form as per our attention. This brings the attentive self towards that of which harvest’s the other’s soul, stimulating the *Einfühlung* process.

The connection establishes a rhythmic pulsation – a mimesis or imitation. The best imagery/analogy to exemplify this is to imagine yourself breathing – exhaling and inhaling – into a balloon (essentially an external representation of a lung: hence *Anfühlung/Einfühlung*). When the balloon in small/contracts, the soul is being infused and embraced and when the balloon expands, the empathic energy coats the exterior form from the inside out and then from the outside in. And then the balloon contracts and the *breathing* of feeling-into continues via a heartbeat-like pulsation of contraction and expansion.

A rhythmic imitation manifests, which speaks to our mimesis with the other, and intersubjective vibrations are established. The “[m]imesis is opening out oneself to others intersubjectively” (Severino & Morrison, 2012, p. 157) and unconsciously establishes pro-social
behaviour (van Baaren, Holland, Kawakami, & van Knippenberg, 2000) and a “we-centric space” (Gallese, 2009, p. 11). Ultimately, this experience should be conceptualized as a rooted flower on the verge of opening out. The reason being is to not dismiss mimesis’ connotation to, or its possible origin with rhythm: The flower’s stem is connected to the ground and Earth, and in respect to animism, an intersubjective experience needs to account for all beings involved. In this case, the intersubjective space is between two dancers and the dance floor, making the ancient Greeks’ reference to mimesis stemming from rhythm and dance logical (Lawyer, 1954; Fitton, 1973). And in the end (rather the beginning), the dance floor is the ground of the very alive Earth.

For Hegel, *Ground* is “unity of identity and difference” which pertains to both inward reflection, and reflection into the other (Hartnack, 1998, p. 50). Ground is very much a part of the rhythmic intersubjective exchange. The Earth is a living being and within an animistic ontology this is unquestionable. And furthermore, the notion of rhythmic vibrations pertaining to Earth (and to other realms) is what helps to form the cultural reality of animism – especially for the gifted Shaman of the animistic culture who more readily is in tune (Ingerman & Wesselman, 2010). Therefore, the intersubjective exchange, in an animistic sense, should realistically be viewed as a trinity – i.e., two dancers in empathic sync being charged by the vibrations of ground, where all three beings are in rhythmic unity.

This unity as per the most idealistic exchange should encompass our anthropomorphism since an *Einfühlung* exchange helps to materialize it, and specifically, for Vischer, it is the animal that stimulates such a response. A form of anthropomorphism is moral anthropomorphism (Leitsberger, Benz-Schwarzbürg, and Grimm, 2016) because it is a phenomenon that
materializes moral worth for the anthropomorphized subject (Waytz, Cacioppo & Epley, 2010; Waytz, Epley & Cacioppo, 2010). An influx of moral worth should enliven the intersubjective experience, and even more so in an animistic context since it has a predisposition to the belief that the relation is a coexistence between two entities that share greater, reciprocal similarity. In this respect, or shall I say in an animism context, anthropomorphism becomes more of a fusion of morality where the projecting sentiment grasps a warmth pertaining to ideology of ‘we beat to the same rhythm, we walk the same ground – we are similar and you deserve respect.’ A moral pulsation becomes, and a vibrating moral code awakens.

![Mimesis Diagram]

*Figure 1.* Animist intersubjectivity: triangular relation between Being 1 [e.g., human], Being 2 [e.g., Animal], and Being 3 [Earth]. All are in rhythmic reflection and the two beings are grounded as per mimesis. Illustratively, the lines of mimesis are lines of reflection, and visually a portrayal of the grounding-essence.

**The ideal animist way & the Gift of spiritual exchange.** Figure 2 is a depiction of the preliminary stages of the perfect animal-human exchange towards consumption. It speaks to the notion of ‘The Gift’ (which will be discussed later) and references the importance of context.
– essentially of a special and mysterious intersubjective-like speaking between place/space, and two beings. The image may be conceptually inaccurate for I have no personal experience in respect to hunting, and I relied heavily on imagination in attempt to speak to this beautiful mystery. Nonetheless, Figure 2 is as follows:

“Space and perception generally represent, at the core of the subject, the fact of his birth, the perpetual contribution of his bodily being, a communication with the world more ancient than thought” (Merleau-Ponty, 1997, p. 296).

“[My personal existence] must be the resumption of a personal tradition. There is, therefore, another subject beneath me, for whom a world exists before I am here, and who marks out my place in it” (Merleau-Ponty, 1997, p. 296).

Figure 2. An ideal, hunting context in the animism system.
In the cultural system of animism, Shamanism is of great tradition (Winkelman, 2015; Ingerman & Wesselman, 2010). The Shaman, “a universal figure found in all world’s cultures” is gifted in respect to sensitivity of vibration which allows for communication with the lower, upper, and middle worlds (Ingerman & Wesselman, 2010, p. 31). Although these three worlds and their layering can have varying interpretation as per cultural specificity within the larger animistic system, Ingerman and Wesselman express that the three levels’ existence is readily agreed upon, and therefore they are represented in Figure 2. To begin the conversation in respect to contributing to the mysticallity and spirituality of the hunting idealism/Gift, we will visit each layer as per Ingerman and Wesselman’s insights:

**Upper World**
- Goddesses
- “compassionate angelic forces” (p. 31)
- Ancestors
- “compassionate angelic forces” (p. 31)
- Gods

**Middle World**
- Hidden reality
- Mythic beings
- Earth caretakers

**Lower World**
- Animal Spirits
- Mosaic of Nature
- Vegetable Spirits
- Humanlike spirits

Although this is solely one interpretation of the three Worlds, the overall point is to convey that animism ontology has depth, mystery, and there is something extremely special about its ‘materialization’ and history. This helps rationalize Merleau-Ponty’s (1997) conception of space as “a communication with the world more ancient than thought” and brings logic to his comment: “There is, therefore, another subject beneath me, for whom a world exists before I am here” (p, 296).
To return to the hunting context of intersubjective exchange, is to acknowledge that the Gift may be intangibly everywhere, infused in all spacial dimension. And in returning to a more tangible physicality, the Gift can be in the animal. This notion stems from the Indigenous belief that the animal will gift itself to the one in need of nourishment (Watson & Huntington, 2008; Nadasdy, 2007). The best way to fabricate an understanding of such an occurrence, that may seem unbelievable to many of the non-animism mode, is to share Nasdasdy’s (2007) narrative. His experience is derived from his ethnographic occurrence in the Yukon among the Kluane First Nation, and is as follows:

An Elder had passed away and Nasdasdy was preparing rabbit snares to provide food for the funeral. As he was further preparing the snares, a rabbit became caught in one of them beyond, but still within sight. Upon his approach, the rabbit, as described by Nasdasy as per the Kluane philosophy, decided not to Gift itself to him. The snare wire broke and the rabbit ran into the distance. However, the snare mechanism was still attached to the rabbit, which Nasdasdy knew would likely kill the rabbit in time, and he could do nothing. A week went by and a rabbit made a visit to his cabin. Scratching and jumping at the back wall, attempting to get in; it was the rabbit who escaped the snare, the mechanism still attached to its body. It appeared ill as per carrying the remnants of the snare. It stared at Nasdasy. Stood motionless looking at him. The wild rabbit allowed Nasdasdy to pick it up, and in that moment, in that place and space, it became a Gift of nourishment.

Increasing the intangibility of such experiences of the Gift is to fathom the potential distant communication between the animal and human prior to physical presence – i.e., a
As Orville, a Koyukon Hunter says in respect to the Moose:

“I could feel it way before I saw it... You just know it’s there. I just don’t know where it is”
&
“They’re here—I can feel them”

According to Freud (1946) and his sentiment on animism in general, telepathy is in a sense a cultural tool of the animistic way. Perhaps he is correct in his attempt to place linguistic description onto a spiritual phenomenon, such as the premeditative unification of the Gift to its receiver. Merleau-Ponty also references a sort of telepathy-like occurrence that speaks to unification, and in this case it references the human and animal’s (predetermined?) space of spiritual exchange. He states, “in order to arrive at a uniform space, the subject must leave his place, abandon his point of view on the world, and think himself into a sort of ubiquity” (p. 298). Whether this spatial occurrence is aided by the dual-being’s connection to the ground’s rhythm, or by compassionate ‘helpers’ in space; it is a mystery of animistic possibility. In the end towards the gift giving – within the place/space of exchange – the intersubjectivity is undoubetedly special. It includes a trinity of unification that encompasses two beings and the Earth, which speaks to its corresponding space and place. And within this sacrificial sphere, is there a calling and was there a calling to this point? Is there an other’s gaze from another time, present in the same spot, but within their reality and life essence? Welcome to the wonders of animism, where life is everywhere. Or more accurately, may it be: welcome to the wonders of life, where animism is a more sensitive eye.
Figure 3 represents the unique, one of a kind place and space of Earth that will forever speak to one’s food provenance: “a tribute to the lord of the soil and the land” (Freud, 1946, p. 173). As Reid and Rout (2016) highlight, in animist culture (and growing in Western thought), knowing food origin is extremely important to maintain the tradition of respectful relationships. The animist perspective maintains that “[f]ood is the product of a nexus of relationships from place” that possesses a unique life essence (p. 432). Ultimately, this respectful transformation of animal to food pertains to a point on the Earth that in unlike any other in the world: the point is an authentic piece of art – an individual being – that the Gift of nourishment is rhythmically-reflecting.
In this light, Vischer’s art sensation ideology and his statement about feeling and sensing the other is appropriate to help conjure the Gift receiver’s mentality within the Figure 3 context. And as well, Hegel speaks to Figure 3 in respect to the becoming self in an intersubjective sphere of spiritual exchange/growth. Hegel states:

The immediate being in which it stands in antithesis to its consciousness is itself the negative power which dissolves its distinctions. It is thus in truth the Self; and Spirit therefore passes on to know itself in the form of self. Pure Light disperses its unitary nature into infinity of forms, and offers up itself as a sacrifice to being-for-self, so that from substance the individual may take an enduring existence for itself. (Hegel, 1977, p. 420)

And for Vischer, he speaks in this context on behalf of the Gift receiver:

Thus I [Gift receiver] project my own life into the lifeless form, just as I quite justifiably do with another living person. Only ostensibly do I keep my own identity although the object remains distinct. I seem merely to attach myself to it as one hand clasps another, and yet I [Human] am mysteriously transplanted and magically transformed into the Other [Animal]. (Vischer, 1874, p. 104)

Human + Animal = Anthropomorphism (= Deity & Moral worth), and shall we not forget that the entire intersubjective relationship from elusive telepathic space, to sacrificial space, to lifeless form, is wrapped in *Einfühlung* and morally-infused anthropomorphism, hence, the moral trinity. And hence why sense of place is said to embody spirit and is manifested from our application of *morality* to its location (Tuan, 1979).

Undoubtedly, this triangle, is a strange creation – perhaps intuitively contradictive – for it is a place of spiritual exchange (i.e., death) and moral worth? Yes, I initially had problems with this (most likely because I have been bombarded with a non-animistic culturally ontology), but upon embracing the animism – a deeply respectful way of mind – death becomes capable of coexisting with morality. It has to, or it is wrong, and it does because that is the true animist mind’s way within the *ideal* hunting context. Charged with such a deep reciprocal and
contextual respect, the animistic intersubjective-self incapable of a moral worth influx upon receiving the Gift has lost the way, and has laced up a pair of modernity’s anti-rhythmic footwear, impeding the incoming vibration. In queue: the dance of objectification.

**Mimetic Trinity, Objectification, & the Current State of Human-Animal Relations**

Girard’s mimetic theory meets animist intersubjectivity. The intersubjective experience as stemming from animism manifests into a triangulation of spiritual exchange. In the end, it is a sphere of sacrifice, containing a triangular relationship between three beings. Girard’s mimetic theory speaks to this triangulation, sacrifice, desire, and other elements like violence and rivalry. His mimetic triangle consists of 1) a human model, 2) the object of the model’s desire, and 3) the desiring other. This fosters desire for an object based on imitation, essentially on two people who desire the same object. Or more specifically, the imitation stems from “a desire linked to a belief about another desire” (Livingston, 1994, p. 292). Ultimately, we have two people wanting the same thing and a sense of hierarchy can pursue, alongside competition and violence.

Violence for him [Girard] is the inescapable destiny of humanity, and the discovery of sacrificial violence *comes like a gift*: it is the one way out that saves humanity from being carried away by reciprocal violence and from being extinguished. (Hagedorn, 2015, p. 115)

Girard feels that as per the competitive mimetic triangle, violence can arise and thus we will search for one to sacrifice – a “thoroughly arbitrary” scapegoat (Collins, 1985, p. 17) – to reaffirm peace (“at least temporary peace”; Hagedorn, 2015, p.115).

The Gift, a sacrifice, a triangular exchange – although ending in competitive desire and violence – speaks to the spiritual exchange of animist intersubjectivity, or at least to its structure. What is extremely interesting is that Girard describes his triangle and the imitation as
an *ontological sickness* because one’s motivation to copy can be fuelled by the idea of the other as “a more perfect Being” (Livingston, 1994, p. 296). Girard references the ontological sickness in respect to the individual, but as Figure 4 will help depict, the ontological sickness also stems from a broken animist intersubjectivity, and from animism being thrown into a pool of repression towards the new modern way.

![Figure 4](image)

*Figure 4. Competitive Place & Space: Animist Intersubjective relation is severed by shared desire for object.*

Figure 4 is a representation of Girard’s mimetic conceptualization that speaks to a *broken* animist intersubjective exchange, and a very warped animism. Essentially, Earth is replaced with the object of desire and furthermore, what is transpiring here is a troubling
displacement: A redirection of the morally charged anthropomorphic and empathic sentiment that should be binding the intersubjectivity between beings, but instead, it enlivens and fosters want relations with the object! For Reid and Rout (2016) this occurrence – i.e., the fact that outside of the animism ontology anthropomorphism still imbues the object – speaks to our innate animism. Animistic intentions are still here and branding and the market use this as a means of greater magnetism: the object is now worthy! And the trickery and unauthenticated ploy is a mockery of our enlivened way of animism and greater truth.

For now the truth is more like his triangle, and as Girard proclaims the mimesis (or imitation) is still there since the two beings are mirroring the same desire, and I would say sharing a rhythm of want. And ultimately, where does the competitive rivalry and violence come from? The anthropomorphism, i.e., the humanization of the other is being neglected, and instead projected into/onto the object of mutual desire. The subjects (more like objects because they are failing to humanize each other) are now at high risk of the anthropomorphic inversion: dehumanization, which lends itself provocatively to violent stimulation. The severed animist intersubjective embrace builds a trinity of objects wanting objects. And indeed, our innate animism tries to rejoice itself for at least all are the same; all are objectified within a dominant cultural ontology where object is dead, spiritless, and a light mal lit.

The object is dead and if animal is object it is surely dead because the triangle’s base, roots, and grounding, all stem from the animist intersubjective way towards eating, which references the animal as the entity that is sacrificed. And if we buy into Girard’s theory completely we require an arbitrary scapegoat to avoid humans’ natural tendency to be violent. The scapegoat is to be the sacrifice, and therefore the animal becomes the sacrifice to maintain
peace? No, because from the beginning, the animal is the gift of sacrifice – there is no deviation from the animism in this respect. The deviation pertains to the reality of the scapegoat. The deviation pertains to the destruction of the animism code of conduct where the animal shall not be over hunted, exploited, even talked about negatively, or disrespected (Watson & Huntington, 2008). The scapegoat is, and has become, the belief that the animal is not a sentient being worthy of respect and a life equal to our own. Animal objectification, therefore, becomes carved into the Figure 4 system, and what is happening at the bottom of Figure 4 is its means of sustenance and a twisting and pulling of the animistic-way that maintains the intersubjective breaking point. The bottom of Figure 4 is referencing:

1) World of objects: so many objects to desire and want!
2) Massive population: so much demand for those objects!
3) Cultural anthropomorphism: the cultural media, branding, advertisement purposely portrays the animal as object/non sentient being (Leitsberger, Benz-Schwarzburg, & Grimm, 2016).

The triangle, sadly with three object vertices is being maintained through its own means of fruition: i.e. mimesis. A world of objects and object emphasis is mirroring a broken intersubjective system of objects and object desire. Figure 4 is a true social problem and in animistic spirit, Figure 4 is therefore a social problem in respect to human-animal relations.

Mimetic layering of triangulation. To further establish the burying and layering-over of the animistic system as correlated to the objectification of life, and specifically animal objectification, the three world systems will be examined. For Freud (1946), these three systems are animism, religion, and scientific, and their mimetic evolution (or rather mirrored metamorphosis) will be considered based on their respected trinity. The following, Table 1, illustrates our layers of triangulation and can be used as reference upon description. It is
important to emphasize that these *triangles* are not being replaced by the next representation. It is a layering effect where each triangle does not disappear, but translucently covers the other – changing our way. Figure 5 provides a rendering of this and it will help to capture the essence of Table 1 as a whole.

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*Figure 5.* (A visual reference to Table 1). The layers of mind speaking to our current status of human-animal relation: Please continue to Table 1 and its proceeding explanations.
Table 1. Mimetic Layering of the Three World/Mind System Trinity: Animism, Religion, & Scientific

Note: ‘breaks’ in triangles = non intersubjective relation, ‘D’ = dehumanization, ‘O’ = objectification

a) Animism: Ideal Hunting Intersubjectivity

* in reference to Figure 1, 2, 3

1. ‘Human’ Person  
   - ‘predator’

2. ‘Animal’ Person  
   - ‘prey’, sacrificed

3. Mother Earth (symbol of Women/Mother)

b) Freud’s ‘Animistic Totemism’

1. Primal Father  
   - Power  
   - envied/fearred  
   - symbol of Totemic animal

2. Son  
   - no power  
   (sacrificed animal considered kin)

3. Women/Mother

   Love-Hate & Envy

   O?

   Patriarchy

c) Religion: Christianity

* in reference to Figure 4

1. Father

2. Son  
   - sacrificed

3. Holy Spirit/Ghost

d) Scientific (Modernity)

* in reference to Figure 4

1. Human ‘Model’  
   - Power

2. Human  
   - Less power

3. Object: to want

1. Super-humanization/God:  
   Human men = power & model  
   (predator-esque)

2. Objectification:  
   Animal = powerless-prey & object of sacrifice

3. Object/objectification:  
   Idea that Earth/Women = object

3. Object/objectification:  
   Idea that Earth/Women = object

manifested from:

- Hate
- Envy
- Competition
- Objectification
- Hierarchy
- Patriarchy
- Desire

Animistic Spiritual Exchange

1. Mourned Father = (Totemic animal)  
   God

2. Son(s)  
   - image of God  
   - sacrifices desire/relational

   3. Women/Mother?  
   - [Invisible?]

1. Primal Father  
   - Power

2. Son  
   - sacrificed

3. Holy Spirit/Ghost

1. Mother Earth (symbol of Women/Mother)
Table 1 begins with the animist intersubjectivity that has been described as per a hunting context. Its triangular formation has been illustrated and discussed. Freud’s (1946) notions proceed as he believes that the origin of religion stems from animism, specifically totemism. On this point, there is nothing to disagree with as logic itself would state that religion(s) would have amounted from some culture, and animism being the most prevalent and shared at one point in humanity is that culture. Essentially, the reason why Freud is brought into the conversation is because his trinity of relations (Primal father, son, women/mother) that initiates his theory speaks to the trinity of animist intersubjectivity on a level of symbolic representation. But let’s be clear, Freud’s triangle is a new lens, skewing the light of the true animist way below. His triangle is not animist culture; it is a beginning of something new... and something lost.

In animist culture, Freud is correct in saying that the sacrificed animal is considered kin – “of the same blood” (p. 176; and I am sure Freud would be happy that the next term includes *papa*). Animism can also encapsulate *whakapapa*, where each being – even one’s food – is looked at as kin, as a part of the cosmic family tree (Reid & Rout, 2016). And to reveal this kinship further, we travel to the Himalayas of India, where sacrificial goats are treated, raised, and loved like children because they are truly considered kin (Govindrajan, 2015). In this respect, Freud references son in relation to the sacrificed animal. The Son, also, is gift to be owned by primal father (lost man of machismo, patriarchy-dominion), and this is where the triangulation of love-hate-envy, rivalry, fear, and the Oedipus complex begins.

Freud refers to the tension between father and son as per sharing the same desire for the same women/mother. This is an argument beyond this paper, but it is reasonable to believe
that our innate desire to be connected with Mother Earth further charges our natural desire to connect with one’s Mother, but not in an Oedipus way. Directly underneath of Freud’s triangulation and the specific vertex referencing Mother, is the intersubjectivity of Mother Earth stemming from the animist system. Although slightly less clear, the desire for Mother Earth is still present like fog on water and a rising vapour. Therefore, yes, the son will naturally want to maintain a relationship with his mother, similarly like the one to Mother Earth.

Beyond the controversial Oedipus complex lies more substance to Freud’s narrative. The realism and likelihood of the son-father rivalry is the power the father seems to possess: he removes the son’s/sons’ agency, and his/their ability to have intersubjective relations with the Mother and other women. Essentially, the father (while not really a father), or the model of envious power, is stimulating the son’s implicit objectification of women/Mother because communication is forced to be severed; space rendered distant. The women become on object of desire, and are further objectified by the patriarch who dismisses a Mother’s ability to see her children. In the end, as Freud proclaims, a band of brothers’ revolt and kill the father to take the position of powerful leader. Upon the father’s death, the sons are faced with similar tensions in respect to who is the powerful one now? Returning to a similar sentiment of the past, they sense the murder of the one they wanted to mirror was wrong – Father is now mourned and worshipped like a God. The sons punish themselves by withdrawing from all women relations and become godly themselves.

In reference to the last triangle in Freud’s narrative, the ties to Mother and women are lost - intersubjectivity destroyed. Freud speaks to this and states: “In this evolution I am at a loss to indicate the place of the great maternal deities who perhaps everywhere preceded the
paternal deities” (p. 192). Neumann (1979) was bothered by the lack of consideration for the Mother-Goddess in this narrative and reminds us that Freud always overlooked the place of the “earth mother” (p. 245). Without Mother, patriarchy is born, and whether it stems from a theoretical triangular base as rendered by Freud is a mystery, but it may be plausible.

The Christian Religious system follows (as Freud was leaning towards) and the Christian Trinity provides a new mimetic layer, quite fitting to Freud’s below. As well, it is quite fitting because “Western culture (religion, society, and morals) is mainly formed by this father image” and “the battle of the Western consciousness is fought in the spirit of the Old Testament war against Mother-Goddess (Neumann, 1979, p. 244). Mother-Goddess and Mother-Earth is also left out of the scientific trinity of modernity which is referenced by use of Figure 4. It speaks to Girard’s mimetic theory, broken intersubjectivity, and object(s) of desire that manifest our material/industrial/mechanistic and scientific beginnings rooted in modernity. The powerful ‘model’ and the less powerful imitator demonstrate a mimetic continuation of the hierarchical imbalance of Freud’s primal father and want-to-be son. And, to recall, Girard’s imitator is drawn to the model because it is felt that they possess a greater way of being, much like the envious son, desiring the ill-Father’s way.

Therefore, what happens to all these trinity layers, representing various times, cultural rifts and shifts, intersubjective breaks, women (goddess/Earth) dismissal and daughter nowhere to be found? By looking through the triangular glass layers it paints a picture of society and it speaks to animal-human relations of today. To imagine the current mind-state pertaining to the animal, perhaps not your mind, but minds in general, re-visit Figure 5 and peer down from above. From a top-down viewpoint, section e) of Table 1 is born. Difference in subjective
experience when feeling-into Figure 5 is expected, but generally it should manifests the following statement about our current, buried-animistic sentiment regarding animal-human relations:

*The human and animal (intersubjective) relation is broken through the lingering dehumanization stemming from below and from the rise of patriarchy. The powerful-male model of society is super-humanized: “more worthy than others” (Fiske, 2013, p. 59), and the animal is a powerless object of sacrifice to serve as gift to ‘God’ – i.e., narcissistic man himself. Animal objectification is reinforced because the animal holds relation to Mother Earth, and she is an object in and of herself.*

The analysis of the layering of the mimetic trinity pertaining to current animal affairs and perception is sad, and undoubtedly so considering the concepts of its manifestation listed in section e), such as hierarchy, hate, desire, and competition.

Yet at the same time it is hopeful for it speaks to our innate animism, despite its heavy distortion, revealing it is still there. As well, it speaks to our deepest triangle – a) animism – through the notion of super-humanization. Fiske (2013) brings this concept to our attention through a very fitting example, i.e., one of sacrifice. She found that in a fictitious circumstance pertaining to the sacrifice of one individual to save five, members of the outgroup – those more dehumanized – were increasingly accepted as a sacrifice for the sake of the others. Fiske contends that there is a ranking of humanness and essentially moral worth, where some are appraised with super-humanization by being viewed as more worthy than the human of less humanness.
Arguably, this scenario speaks to our animistic depths because a human and not the animal is being anthropomorphized – i.e., infused with moral worth. The neural mechanism of anthropomorphism may not show prejudice when it comes to form, (be it animal, human or object) for it breathes from our innate selves; it can be viewed as animistic tool of morality stimulated by worth. Therefore, despite a dim animal-human relational outlook (or reality) provided by the layered trinity, it does reveal that the light of animism is still there and is flickering from below.

Conclusion

We could try to clean the panes (/pains) to allow animism to filter through with more illumination, to foster greater human-animal relations, and maybe relations in general. But how to change deeply embedded cultural way is a major challenge. Alternatively, in reference to Figure 5, as an individual – as a start – we try to change our inner culture by adopting a bottom-up mentality and perspective. Changing one’s viewpoint does not remove the other dominating triangular schemata, but the idea is to filter it/reflect it through the animistic lens towards greater reciprocal, relational output.

Animism as a cultural ontology has been demonstrated to dismiss animal objectification: animal is Gift of spiritual exchange and sentient being of moral worth. The animist intersubjective experience is one of mystical/spiritual vibration grounded in and amongst Mother Earth. A moral trinity that can be expressed through (and stems from) the ideal animist hunt is the outcome of a non-broken or distorted animism. In such context, animal as Gift fosters an infusion of *Einfühlung* that helps build the intersubjectivity and overall moral ontology as a whole. Upon the severing of animist intersubjectivity, Girard’s mimetic notion
develops further where objects’ desire and objectification dominates toward competitive violence. Ultimately, losing sight of animism, burying it amongst the other triangulating imitations seems to have instilled a cultural top-down viewpoint of patriarchy, Mother Earth and her symbolic affiliates as object, and animal objectification. In the end, it may seem lost, but it is not: Animism, even among the layers of Trinity and Freudian vertices, is the layer of greatest depth – and can prevail through its innate nature. It offers insight into fostering greater relations with animal, and in animistic fashion, this means greater relations with all beings, helping to shape social value and worth for all.

...If we feel we have lost the way, it is because the way is animism...


