A WITTGENSTEINIAN CONCEPTION OF ANIMAL MINDS

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Summary
There is a recent popular reconstruction of Wittgenstein’s thinking about animal minds, according to which animals and humans share a set of expressive abilities, prior to, and independent of, the onset of linguistic-cum-conceptual abilities; a reconstruction that in turn entails a duality of expression and linguistic-cum-conceptual abilities, in adult humans. This paper contends that the reconstruction is implausible and at odds with Wittgenstein’s thinking, regarding both the developing minds of children and the minds of non-linguistic animals. Instead, it argues that Wittgenstein’s thinking is shaped by an anthropological outlook, according to which linguistic abilities signal the existence of a distinctive human form of life, within which animals do not belong, but into which children are progressively introduced. As a result, there is neither a shared set of expressive abilities in animals, children and adult humans; nor a duality of expression and linguistic-cum-conceptual abilities in humans.

1. Introduction
As part of his discussion of the nature of language, meaning and mind, Wittgenstein pays recurrent attention to the mental lives of non-human animals (hereafter, animals). To elaborate a little, as a casual look at Philosophical investigations shows, Wittgenstein is willing to attribute particular, though not just any, mental states and abilities to some animals. On the positive side, he ascribes pain to flies (PI §284), fear and beliefs to dogs (PI §650; II 148), intentions to cats and other beasts (PI §647), and a whole gamut of emotional responses to animals generally (PI II 148). On the negative side, he fails to credit animals with certain mental states (e.g., hope, PI II 148), or specific contents (e.g., those including future temporal parameters, PI §650) and abilities (e.g., pretence, PI §250; II 194). Furthermore, as some key passages make clear, the refusal to attribute...
certain mental states to animals is directly linked to their lack of linguistic abilities (*PI II* 148).

Admittedly, when added together, these remarks amount to a very small part of Wittgenstein’s corpus, but their recurrence in connection with central aspects of his work awards them a significance that should not be underestimated. It is for this reason that some contemporary commentators have read these remarks in connection with topics that occupy centre stage among Wittgenstein’s concerns, such as the Cartesian problem of other minds (Dupré 1990/2002, Jamieson 1998), the private language argument (DeGrazia 1994), the relationship between thought and language (Glock 1999, 2000, 2006), or the link between expression and the mental (Finkelstein 2003, 2011). Undoubtedly, these connections are pertinent and important, but some uncertainty remains (or so it will be argued below) as to whether these authors have glossed the significance attached by Wittgenstein to his reflections on animals in a wholly adequate manner.

In this respect, it is worth noticing a shortcoming of these contemporary accounts—namely, their failure to appreciate the link between animals and children in Wittgenstein’s work. To return to one of the examples already mentioned, in *Philosophical investigations* the refusal to attribute to animals the ability to pretend goes hand in hand with the denial of the same ability to children (*PI* §§ 249f.; II 194). Moreover, far from being a one-off occasion, Wittgenstein returns to the link between the mental lives of children and animals elsewhere in his corpus, expressly in both volumes of the *Last writings on the philosophy of psychology* (*LW1* §§ 859–76, §§ 938–47; *LW2* 41f.). Therefore, an adequate account of the role of Wittgenstein’s reflections about animals within his broader philosophical picture ought to pay adequate attention to the relation between animals and children. So, to anticipate one of the main points to be made in this paper, it will be argued that Wittgenstein’s remarks on animals and children alike form an integral part of his adoption of an anthropological outlook in philosophy; the underlying thought being that this interpretative stand makes better sense of Wittgenstein’s thinking in this area, than other accounts currently on offer.

With this in mind, the paper is structured as follows. Sections two and three present a popular reconstruction of Wittgenstein’s thinking about animal minds, according to which animals and humans share a set of expressive abilities, prior to, and independent of, the onset of linguistic-cum-conceptual abilities. This idea fits the innocent enough view that ani-