

On Others' Emotions, and Ours

A Reflection on Narratives, Categories, and Heuristic Devices

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ABSTRACT

This article reflects on some epistemological and methodological tenets of cultural anthropology such as the informants' role in ethnographical research, the relation between collective phenomena and individuals, and that between case studies (individual level) and abstraction (generalization). These tenets will be addressed focusing on the lack of recognition of animals' individuality and agency in social relations, and on the related humans/animals opposition. With the topic of the emotional lives of animals as a starting point, the essay sets out to reflect on how the narratives we use to interpret and describe them inform our enquiry within an anthropocentric and essentialist view, consequently biasing our understanding of diversity.

Keywords: Emotions, humans, animals, individuals, interspecific relations, ethology, ethnography, anthropology, microhistory, informants, subjectivity.

1. INTRODUCTION

Studies by Mark Bekoff on animal emotions constitute significant stimuli not only for ethological research and the ethical reflections which should result from it, but also for cultural anthropology, which should assess the impact these contents have within the discipline (Bekoff and Goodall 2007; Bekoff and Pierce 2009). This also implies a more general reflection on the methods of observation of 'behavior' and 'diversity' more generally, and, furthermore, on the epistemologies which exert their influence and inform the development of knowledge about the 'others', be they human or nonhuman.

As a cultural anthropologist, I have been inspired by the writings of Bekoff (and other ethologists who share some of his core disciplinary assumptions) benefiting from a series of insights that I find to be extremely fruitful if translated to anthropological discourse.

This paper aims to provide an example of a (virtual) dialogue between disciplines (those regarding humans, and those regarding nonhumans) that for too long have been kept separate, lest the blurring of the boundaries between the disciplines (natural sciences on the one hand, humanities and social sciences on the other) and classificatory borders (human/animal, culture/nature) on which the traditional articulation of knowledge is based.

This contribution is also intended as building material to be used to construct a bridge between animality and humanity, in line with the development of new and different anthropological and ethological descriptions of behavioral phenomena. Echoing what Matteo Andreozzi writes in the *Editorial* (see volume 1 issue 1) regarding the need to go beyond anthropocentrism and to become involved in the network of natural relations which surround our lives, the focus of this essay will not be the alleged ‘essences’ of the various classificatory categories we use to talk about ‘us’ and ‘the others’, but the dimension of *relations*, the *context* of explanation of phenomena, the *connections* between events and between individuals, *agency*, and the wealth of *variability* internal to collective groups (whatever is defined in cultural, ethnic or phylogenetic terms). But first things first. Allow me to begin with emotions: ‘theirs’ and ‘ours’.

2. EMOTIONS

Bekoff’s research on the emotional lives of (other) animals, their intelligence and abilities strikes us as far as the richness and the variety of its examples are concerned. In his books he presents a series of case studies, repertoires and contexts related to the emotional life of some animal species, introducing us to the presence of joy, play, laughter, sense of humor, wonder at the sight of natural phenomena, grief and sadness, maternal love, falling in love, embarrassment, anger, aggression and revenge, empathy, equity, and fair game in other animals (see Bekoff and Goodall 2007; Bekoff and Pierce 2009). At the same time, Bekoff outlines the existence of a ‘wild justice’, a ‘moral’ behavior in many animal species (Bekoff and Pierce 2009). If these terms tend to jar, the reaction springs from our pre-assumptions, in that these very terms are strongly connected with our species, being considered attributes strictly limited to *Homo sapiens*.

In fact, it is a common postulate of both scientific and humanistic disciplines that these behavioral expressions, along with the skills that support them, are only human prerogatives.

Bekoff's decision to use the very terms referred to nonhuman animals proves positively challenging: in so doing he exerts pressure against the definitorial boundaries of the same terms, putting their descriptive efficacy to test, when applied outside the human domain. In this way, the exclusivity of certain social and emotional behavioral repertoires to humans has finally been overcome. I will address this topic in the following paragraphs.

As already mentioned, the issue of animal emotions proves interesting not only as far as its contents are concerned, but also, indirectly, as it raises a number of epistemological and methodological matters, not to mention ethical, which are fundamental in a broad sense. In fact, it contributes to destabilizing some of the cultural paradigms that underpin both scientific discourse and common sense, belonging to (and expression of) our tradition of thought. In particular, the reflection around the existence of emotional lives in nonhuman animals is a crowbar with which to undermine the mechanisms of our approach to animality, and lays bare the assumptions that affect our explanation, interpretation and description of it.

To keep to our theme – emotions – interiority has long been considered a uniquely human trait, and even when the existence of emotional lives in other animals has been supposed, enquiry has been brought to a standstill by the species difference. However, we should consider that even anthropological analysis of inner states of 'other' humans is problematic, since it is difficult to have access to them, and to attribute a value to their linguistic representation. This is magnified in the contexts in which we are faced with cultural categorizations and styles of behavior differing from ours (Pignato 1997). The role of language should also be considered, since linguistic fields and noetic fields do not overlap: as for emotions, it should be stressed that the moods and their names can be non isomorphic. Language, then, is not always a facilitator in the understanding of phenomena among humans, and this fact should remind us of the variety and strangeness of the languages spoken by other animal species. In both contexts, we face the challenge of being able to understand the 'other', with the relative risk of observing others as if they were us, in a way that is anthropomorphic (to animals) and ethnomorphic (to other cultures). But there is also the opposite and symmetrical risk: the inability to gather similarities, as they are hidden beneath idioms so different from ours, in both the anthropological and ethological sense.

Emotions, however, is not the only dimension claimed as exclusive to the human species. A series of skills and abilities is invoked as proof of the

existence of a qualitative separation between humans and nonhumans, the real matrix of all the dual oppositions pertaining to the subject, both at the level of scientific discourse, and the varied narratives we elaborate to describe our world. This dichotomous architecture is supported by cognitive operations such as reification and hypostasis (in the sense of attribution of ontological status to contents which are conventional) and trends such as essentialism and typologism: all these elements contribute to the perception of *categorical separations* – ‘humans/animals’ – as *natural* entities (stable and ‘necessary’), rather than *tools of description* of reality – which, as such, are contingent (Tonutti 2011).

3. PLURAL ANIMALS

Given the above mentioned binary opposition ‘humans/animals’, two distinct and opposite kinds of logic operate: while in order to identify a human being we seek to grasp his/her uniqueness (through a horizontal network of connections), with nonhumans we choose the opposite direction. We deny their uniqueness, putting aside the idiosyncrasies intrinsic to the category they are made to belong to and emphasize the features they share with other individuals of the same kind (in order to outline the features of the species). What follows from this definitional process is a vertical kind of knowledge which meets the needs of classification, and results in a form of taxonomy where proper names are not expected to be used, since each individual is merely regarded as ‘one’ of a class. By ‘class’ we mean the species, but also, more generally, other heterogeneous collective entities, such as ‘fauna’, and ‘animals’ (a category which improperly refers to all animals except humans).

Parallel to this classification process, a tendency exists which distances the observer from the ‘object’ of observation: as I will show, terminology makes this process explicit.

I – At the first stage of dissociation, the animal’s individuality is removed due to the emphasis we place on the collectivity he/she is made to belong to (‘cats’, ‘primates’, ‘pets’, ‘farm animals’, etc.).

II – At the second stage, the collective name can be replaced with a *general singular*: ‘the cat’, ‘the dog’, ‘the cow’, and also ‘the female’ and, more generally, ‘the animal’ (see Derrida 2006). General singulars presume the interchangeability of individual animals within the species, and, therefore, the irrelevance of animals’ individuality altogether. As an example of this tendency, we can mention animals exposed as specimens in zoos: except for some rare exceptions, all the displayed animals can be replaced

with any other member of their same species. The individual animal loses its ontology to become an abstraction of the species (Shapiro 1989, 189; Adorni 2012). Classificatory labels and other expressions, such as general singulars, are used to indicate collectivities, which we define on the basis of certain criteria and pre-assumptions and by selecting a uniform set of traits (including some features and excluding others). Obviously, there are ethical consequences to this process: as we have already said, the individual animal (with his/her specific characteristics, needs, voice, beating heart, relationships, emotions, biography ...) is removed from the collective imaginary, and we interpret, describe and treat animals in a way which is mediated by categories. But – we should ask ourselves – is it possible to empathize with a category?

III – A further level of abstraction consists in the transformation of categories into essences, which are thought of as objective, stable, immutable entities, as a natural mirror of reality.

I claim that this entire process is rooted in further basic assumptions:

- That single animals are interchangeable within the species, and that animals' individuality is irrelevant.
- That ontogenesis (biographical level) is less relevant than the phylogenesis in nonhuman animals.
- That it is possible, starting from field observation, to proceed with inference and abstraction, bridging the gap between the particularistic nature of context (and its minute observation), on the one hand, and the theorizing process, on the other.

For both ethology and anthropology these epistemological issues prove extremely relevant and highly problematic. The historical streams of anthropological theory – from earliest evolutionary perspectives, to historical particularism, moving through functionalism, structuralism and other guiding-theories, to recent hermeneutic and post-modern approaches – have differently addressed these focal issues. We will not dwell here on schools and theories, but only strive to single out the main points of contact between ethology and anthropology towards the resolution of these questions which revolve around 'individuality' and 'biographies'.

4. THE ISSUE OF REPRESENTATIVENESS

One of the most original and specific traits of anthropology is the constant attention to variability: a cognitive tension is requested of researchers, inviting them to seek in the corners, in shadowy areas, facing diversity, trying to

grasp nuances in the expression of cultural phenomena, mostly against the tendency to standardize and homogenize them. What springs forth from this approach is (or should be) a particularistic, contextual, local knowledge, far-removed from the ambitions of earlier anthropological schools, which were inclined to construct all-encompassing theories on cultures and even on the human race.

4.1. *Ogotemmeli*

A clear example of 'old' anthropology is the description that Marcel Griaule made of Dogon culture (Mali) in *Dieu d'eau*, the monograph which followed his field research in Mali in 1946, during which Griaule obtained information and descriptions of salient features of Dogon culture thanks to conversations he had had with an exceptional informant, the elderly Ogotemmeli (Griaule [1948] 1975). 'Ogotemmeli' has become a well-known name in anthropology, to the extent that it epitomizes 'the informant', the person who describes phenomena and traits of his/her own culture, making them understandable to the researcher. However, Ogotemmeli is not 'simply' an informant. According to Griaule, Ogotemmeli had understood the interest of ethnological studies of 'the Whites' and had waited fifteen years for the opportunity to reveal his knowledge to them. Undoubtedly, the elderly Dogon managed to systematize the Dogon world system and to make it intelligible to those who were looking at it from afar, both the researcher and those who were to read its ethnographic account. However, some key questions arise in this respect, raised by Ogotemmeli's 'overpersonality' (Tonutti 2007): what role did Ogotemmeli play in the process of cultural 'translation'? How much subjective, or, on the contrary, shared on the collective level, are Ogotemmeli's representation, description and systematization of Dogon cultural traits? To what extent can his description be considered 'true' and 'loyal' to a supposed shared heritage of collective knowledge? To a broader extent, we are brought to question the possibility for an informant/respondent (and his/her description of his/her own culture) to be considered in some way 'representative' of collective knowledge, and even the possibility for researchers to come to an 'objective' knowledge of cultural phenomena ¹.

¹ To this respect, I should mention the rhetorical and postmodern turn taken by human sciences, labeling anthropological knowledge as a form of subjective narratives, interpretations of interpretations, and even a form of 'literature'.

As I have already mentioned, old-style anthropology tended to consider informants like Ogotemmel as exceptional repositories of indigenous culture, and culture itself as a timeless essence, homogeneously and undifferentiatedly distributed within the group. Subsequently anthropology has recognized the subjective dimension of the informants' (and also researchers') contribution to the interpretation, description and systematization of local culture, and has become very cautious in progressing from detailed field research to possible forms of generalization.

However, if we analyze this process from the perspective angle of human-animal studies, we realize that particularization has only concerned human sciences, while it dramatically falls silent as soon as we cross the border between anthropology and ethology (and therefore we start to deal with animals' individuality, subjectivity, 'overpersonalities'). Beyond this border which separates humans (and anthropology) from nonhuman animals (and ethology), we no longer use personal names, nor think in terms of will, agency, biographies, cultures; what we are able to see is a mere undifferentiated mass of existences, driven by natural selection, phylogeny, genes, instincts and hormones. In this respect, great influence is exerted on our approach by biological determinism, which suggests replacing bodies with the species, and species with genes, real ultimate agents of animal behavior.

While, on the one hand, essentialist and anthropocentric declinations of anthropological theories confine animals to the role of objects in human actions and thoughts (depicting animals as machines, resources, metaphors, heuristic devices, etc.), on the other anthropological particularistic approach can be extremely fruitful if applied beyond its disciplinary boundary, namely to the observation of animals' cultures and to interspecific relations.

Ethology, in turn, has greatly contributed to the understanding of animal behavior in objecting behaviorism (which read behavior in terms of mere stimulus-response), but, at the same time, has originated an approach where phylogeny obscures ontogeny. In contrast with this trend towards generalization and abstraction, ethological case-studies that feature individual animals (in line with anthropological particularistic approach) teach us to recognize the relevance of individual and biographical dimension in the understanding of nonhuman culture and interspecific relations. I will introduce Imo as an example.

4.2. *Imo*

Imo is a name as famous in animal studies as Ogotemmel is in anthropology. Imo is a *Macaca fuscata* monkey from the Koshima Island in Japan,

who in 1953 prompted a series of innovations in feeding practices (such as washing sweet potatoes in salted water and washing-harvesting wheat grains in water, see Matsuzawa 2003) which led to a cultural revolution transmitted within the group, and subsequently handed down from generation to generation until the present day. Imo's experiments and discoveries sprung from her curiosity, lively intelligence, uncommon personality and even her genius (ontogenetic and biographical level). From these innovations, shared cultural practices originated which ended up shaping a regional tradition worth ethnographic, as well as ethological, interest.

What we are dealing with, in considering Ogotemmel's and Imo's contributions to their culture, is two peculiar 'excesses' of personality: they are two unique individuals (but all individuals are unique), who not only take an active part in maintaining their culture, but even develop significant innovations. However, what are we dealing with here? Individuals and biographies, or communities (like ethnic groups) and species? And: what abstractions can we draw from this knowledge? What generalizations can we glean from Ogotemmel's and Imo's experiences?

The background question is whether the individual can represent the category he/she belongs to or not. Or, from a different perspective: what role should be credited in research to individual experiences (in anthropology, history and ethology) in order to understand the phenomena within a wider framework of reference.

I will introduce the case of microhistory here to support the reflection on individual experience and generalizations.

5. RECOGNIZING BIOGRAPHIES, GIVING VOICE TO THE MUTES

5.1. *Microhistory*

The historiographical subfield known as 'microhistory' was formed in Italy in the Seventies and Eighties of the twentieth century, mainly around the journal *Quaderni Storici* (published by Il Mulino) and the book series *Microstorie* (published by Einaudi). In brief, what characterized microhistory (and then gave foundation to a new paradigm in historiography) was: due to the influence exerted by anthropology, the rejection of broad guiding-theories such as Marxism, structuralism, functionalism; particular attention paid to singular cases and individuals (especially when they imply variability, constitute anomalies, etc.); comparison of these findings with

other similar phenomena, albeit belonging to contexts which are distant in terms of space or time; the refusal of core postmodernist tenets, namely relativism and the 'rhetorical turn'.

I want to focus on individual data as approached by microhistory, in order to assess what we can translate from this discipline to the study of the individuality of both humans and animals and their interspecific relations.

First of all, as I have already mentioned, microhistory is primarily interested in anomalies, as opposed to seeking homogeneity within the contexts and serialism (i.e. what is in some way 'measurable')². The term coined by Edoardo Grendi, "exceptional normal" (Grendi 1977, 512), gives us an idea of the microhistorians' distrust of representative samples, and, vice versa, their quest for micro cases and individual perspectives. The *micro* level of historical investigation, then, is rich in insights to be translated to the *macro* level of analysis, related to collective and social phenomena. Social phenomena, in fact, are generated by the interaction between visions, tensions, negotiations and other factors that belong first and foremost to the individual level.

Stressing the importance of individuals in observation of social contexts also means denouncing the non-neutrality of the categories we use to think of, speak about, describe and analyze our 'objects' of enquiry, be they humans, animals, species, races, social classes, etc.³. These categories constitute 'entifications': by microhistorians, they are no longer referred to as heuristic devices external to the context of observation, but as contingent and contextual cultural products which inform research in its development and influence the very cultural construction of the 'object' of research. Researchers should put these categories of analysis to test thanks to the variability which pertains to every context of observation, and then move gradually from the micro to the macro level of research, making connections in the process between micro-cases with broader phenomena.

By 'micro' contexts I intend the cases where marginalized people have been left behind by History, and out of all official records: the poor, the exploited, and other crowded categories composed by anonymous individuals who have left no written word. To these, historians and anthropologists try to give voice (and a name, and an address).

² This attitude is aligned with the attention I have just dedicated to Imo's case (with respect to her species) and Ogotemmel's (with respect to the alleged homogeneity of Dogon culture).

³ Charles Darwin remarked that nature had produced only individuals, and not species, which is a category resulting from the human process of abstraction (Darwin 1859).

An emblematic example of this can be seen in the historian Carlo Ginzburg's study of archival records of the Inquisition trials which took place in Friuli (Northeastern Italy) in the Sixteenth century. From this heterogeneous and neglected corpus of documents the *benandanti* (a sort of shamans practicing agrarian cults, see Ginzburg 1966) and the (heretic) miller-philosopher Menocchio emerged (Ginzburg 1976): their experiences, biographies, imaginary repertoires can be detected in traces from the records of the trials, mostly when they conflict with mainstream culture and orthodox religion. As a result of the perusal and particularistic work of this kind of archival research, voices from the past emerge, voices which we do not know and can only understand and decode with difficulty. However partial and indirect our approach to them may be, due to the temporal and cultural distance which separates us from them, clearly this is something we can and should do, in an attempt to bridge our cultural contexts.

5.2. *Anthropology and gender*

Similarly to microhistory, anthropology has reflected on its 'mutes' as well. Women, for example, have experienced this status in many anthropological studies carried out by men, and have been relegated to a silent and invisible role in ethnographic accounts. As a reaction to this tendency, gender studies developed as a specific current aimed at filling the gap by finally focusing on women.

To return to our central theme, the individuality of animals, we can draw a parallel between the anonymity of subjects on which microhistory and anthropology mostly focus and those of animals, where being anonymous is almost always the rule: nonhumans are not mutes, nor unable to communicate due to the diversity of communicative and behavioral codes with respect to ours, but are rendered speechless due to our lack of attention as far as their biographical, ontogenetic dimension is concerned. I claim that this, in turn, has to do with the fact that we fail (ethically and scientifically at the same time) to recognize the importance of animals' individuality, be they someone we meet either directly, through relations, or indirectly, in our discourses on 'us' and 'them'. As Shirley Ardener once stated about women rendered mute by men's anthropological accounts, "the 'mutedness' of one group may be regarded as the inverse of the 'deafness' of the dominant group, as the 'invisibility' of the former's achievements is an expression of the 'blindness' of the latter. Words which continually fall upon deaf ears may, of course, in the end become unspoken, or even unthought" (Ardener 1975, 20).

Nonhumans are unseen, unheard, and are not even thought of in terms of 'persons' and 'individuals'. In most, albeit not in all, daily practices, as well as in the narratives that justify them, animals are mainly reserved two roles: they are pure physicality – in that they are thought of as meat, working bodies, organs to be dissected, etc. – or are used as mere symbolic objects in our semiotic processes. In both cases, the individual animal – with his/her own agency, and as real referent in our discourses – disappears.

It is in this overview that I consider microhistories and anthropological revisions of paradigms inspirational to our reflection: their decision and effort to use new heuristic tools to try and give voice to the mute beings bear significant similarities to our attempt to try to understand what other animals communicate and experience in their own way. Both actions aim at placing our attention on the huge chasm of silence generated by inequalities, be they due to historical events (the losers), gender differences (women), class (the poor), beliefs (heretics), and also species (those who are not *Homo sapiens*). In a hypothetical scale of inequality, nonhumans are the most 'unequal', quintessential of all the features we have mentioned.

However, the curtain of indifference which has long regarded the plight of animals and status has been breached, also thanks to the prodding of human-animal studies. This breach constitutes a starting point from which to set out in order to investigate and acknowledge the diversity of nonhumans, predisposing ourselves towards the recognition of similarities as well as the differences between humans and nonhumans. This does not necessarily mean pursuing the identification at all costs, driven by sentimentality. It means taking the cognitive effort of being willing to listen, to see, to acknowledge those who represent our object of enquiry as subjects. This attempt also implies being open to the experience of 'estrangement', in the sense suggested by Carlo Ginzburg: "[...] to understand less, to be naive, to be surprised", an outlook employed to counteract the impoverishment of knowledge deriving from preconceived notions imposed onto reality (Ginzburg 1996, 16).

6. FOCUSING ON INTERSPECIFIC RELATIONS

Such cognitive tension towards the understanding of the skills of nonhumans, their behaviors, cultures, emotions, biographies can lend itself to an ideal context of application in the relational dimension with humans. I therefore advocate the development of an interspecific declination of ethnography: by statute it should delegitimize the use of frozen hypostasis (for

instance the separation of humans from nonhuman animals) which bias the understanding of relations, and acknowledge the role of subjects and social actors that nonhuman animals play in them. Interspecific relations taking place horizontally at the level of biographical connections between two or more individuals reclaim a central role in ethnographical observation. Elements gathered at the level of small scale investigation (single case studies) can then be made objects of comparison and broader reflections and even generalizations. But how should researchers best predispose themselves in order to be able to efficiently observe interspecific relationships? What tools can they rely on to better bridge the gap that separates themselves as observers from 'the observed'? What role do detached analysis, participant observation, intuition and ethnographic sensitivity play in this respect? Furthermore, how should their efficiency and appropriateness be evaluated?

What is paramount in anthropology is the attempt to reach an *emic* understanding of native culture, trying to look at the cultural reality experienced by the informants through their eyes. Rationality, sensitivity, perception, and even empathy constitute possible channels that can lead the researcher to deepen his/her understanding of cultural phenomena.

A contribution I find extremely significant in this respect is the one from the anthropologist Unni Wikan, who has written about the importance of 'resonances' both in fieldwork for researchers, and in our daily life, as people (Wikan 1992). By the word 'resonance' (a concept which resembles empathy or sympathy) she means an effort made by both interlocutors, who need to be moved by "a willingness to *engage* with another world, life, or idea; an ability to *use* one's experience [...] to try to grasp, or convey, meanings that reside neither in words, 'facts', nor texts but are evoked in the meeting of one experiencing subject with another [...]" (Wikan 1992, 463). Wikan also warns us against the interpretative turn, whose ante-position of words, concepts, text to real life can be counterproductive (Wikan 1992, 464-5)⁴. In fact, in addressing the question of understanding each other despite the existing cultural differences, Wikan advocates the focus on *people*, rather than *discourse*, thus shifting the emphasis from anthropological representation of phenomena to individuals and the contexts they live in.

Without doubt Wikan's pragmatic view and methodological suggestion head toward an ethnographic experience which is far from being 'falsifiable', *à la* Popper. It also triggers the risk of anthropomorphizing animals, as well as 'ethnomorphizing' other cultures, due to the researcher's effort

⁴ Under this respect, Wikan's warning seems to me echoing that of Ginzburg.

to hone into their reality. However, if used in a critical manner I claim that these heuristic devices constitute a risk worth taking, in order to overcome the impasse generated by old epistemological and methodological paradigms.

7. CONCLUSION

To complete the reflection on the categories and boundaries on which our discourse around animals is based, I wish to stress that, being heuristic devices, they can be misleading when interpreting reality and subsequently acting on it. The categories and boundaries we use to address animality are far from being neutral and natural: they are cultural constructs, influenced as such by the our ideological framework as well as by practical and utilitarian aspects. At the same time, they influence our discourse on animals, humans, 'others', and inform our relations with them.

From this point of view, objecting the entification (and 'sacralization') of the categories and disciplinary boundaries which sustain the separation between humans and animals (and their relative domains) means providing a completely different 'narrative', where the emphasis is put on the similarities, rather than differences between humans and nonhumans, on relations and connections, rather than divisions and boundaries.

This epistemological perspective should pave the way towards stimulating moral considerations regarding those individuals (humans and nonhumans) which have been cast out from the sphere of our ethical concern as a consequence of categorization. I agree with Marc Bekoff when he claims that scientific knowledge should re-appropriate moral reflection and passionate observation. His studies brilliantly prove the efficiency of such an approach, which bridges the diversity of the species, grounding scientific enquiry upon the recognition of the individuality and biographies of animals.

In such a scientific and passionate pursuit of knowledge and understanding of 'others', the fieldworker's life experience is intertwined with those he/she meets, and knowledge is always constructed *with* the individuals the researcher encounters.

The nature of this kind of knowledge stems from collaboration, rather than from mere detached observation.

Starting from single individuals, with their own, peculiar, unique way of being in this world.

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