Studia Antiqua et Archaeologica 31(2): 279-298
DOI: 10.47743/saa-2025-31-2-5

When Humans Saw Themselves: Ancient Greeks' Perceptions of Non-Human Primates

Sebastián URIBE RODRÍGUEZ[1]

Abstract: *This paper examines the role of non-human primates in shaping emotional experiences in ancient Greek culture. Moving beyond descriptive accounts, it explores how the relationship between humans and non-human primates reflected and challenged contemporary notions of anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism. By analyzing literary and visual sources, the study reveals how emotions structured the perception and representation of these animals, while also redefining the boundaries between humanity and the natural world. Non-human primates thus emerge as a powerful lens through which to interrogate ancient conceptions of self, otherness, and nature. In doing so, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the emotional, philosophical, and cultural significance of human–animal relations in antiquity.*

Rezumat: *Acest articol examinează rolul primatelor non-umane în modelarea experiențelor emoționale în cultura Greciei antice. Depășind relatările pur descriptive, el explorează modul în care relația dintre oameni și primatele non-umane reflecta și contesta concepțiile contemporane despre antropocentrism și antropomorfism. Prin analizarea surselor literare și vizuale, studiul dezvăluie modul în care emoțiile structurau percepția și reprezentarea acestor animale, redefinind totodată granițele dintre umanitate și lumea naturală. Primatele non-umane apar astfel ca o lentilă puternică prin care pot fi investigate concepțiile antice despre sine, alteritate și natură. Procedând astfel, această cercetare contribuie la o înțelegere mai profundă a semnificației emoționale, filosofice și culturale a relațiilor dintre oameni și animale în Antichitate.*

Keywords: *Non-human primates; emotions; boundaries; anthropomorphism; anthropocentrism;*

The study of non-human animals[2] presents the challenge of classification from the perspective of human cognitive structures. Historical descriptions related to non-human animals are often formulated as positive or negative reflections of human nature that entails both detachment and closeness in terms of affective, moral, cognitive, and physical dimensions[3]. Hence, in the examination of both non-human primates and their respective descriptions, researchers delve into the exploration of the human beings with whom these animals share genetics, ecological dependence, and a natural environment.

Despite these challenges, significant contributions to the study of non-human primates in Ancient Greece have emerged. Keller[4], McDermott[5], and Montagu[6] analyzed non-human primates within the context of interconnectivity among various cultures in the ancient world. Their contributions were crucial in establishing the classification of non-human primates with modern taxonomy, and in delineating these animals in the context of imitation. In contrast, a

[1] Universidad Complutense de Madrid. seuribe@ucm.es; Orcid: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5170-8605.
[2] To avoid anachronisms, this article will consistently employ the term "non-human primates" to denote the entire order of mammals recognized by the ancient Greeks. However, whenever written sources appear as examples, the original terminology in ancient Greek will be address.
[3] STADEN 2013, 111-144.
[4] KELLER 1909.
[5] MCDERMOTT 1935; 1938.
[6] MONTAGU 1940.

sociocultural approach has been developed: Lazenby's research[7] suggests that primates were included in the category of household pets, while Lilja's perspective[8] shows how ancient Greeks viewed these animals as repugnant and aggressive beings. Furthermore, Connors[9] states that non-human primates symbolize the complex interplay between authenticity and falsehood in civic and political interactions, especially in Athens.

In an iconographical account, Greenlaw[10] and Wolfson[11] delve into how the representation of these animals in ancient Greece suggests they were often perceived as foolish and disagreeable beings. Vespa[12] has made substantial contemporary contributions to the study of non-human primate behavior and communication. Through his work, it becomes evident that the utilization of mimicry as a communicative medium was not an exclusively human conceptual trait but rather a consciously and willingly embraced characteristic among non-human primates in their interactions with ancient Greeks. Particularly, this is evident in his most relevant research on the topic to date whose central concept, the *geloion mimēma*[13] or comic imitation, captures the unsettling resemblance between humans and non-human primates, whose mimetic behavior provokes both amusement and unease.

Among the scientific literature cited above, it has not been yet explored the emotional dimension between the relationship of humans and non-human primates. While Vespa interprets laughter, repulsion, and unease as cultural effects of mimesis, this study extends his approach by treating emotions as analytical categories that reveal the moral and cognitive dimensions of human–animal relations, as laughter, repulsion, and shame were not mere byproducts of imitation, but culturally shaped emotions through which the Greeks negotiated their understanding of humanity. Therefore, the novelty of the present study is showing that the ancient Greeks' perceptions of non-human primates were defining the boundaries of human existence. This phenomenon arises from the fact that ancient Greek's attitude toward non-human primates tells us more about the Greeks than it does about the primates.

Non-human animals

Ancient Greeks expressed their relationships with animals in a dualistic characterization. On the one hand, some creatures were viewed as the embodiments of nature's magnificence, therefore they evoke admiration and awe. On the other hand, others were perceived as adversaries, threats, or even enemies that had to be conquered[14]. In ancient Greece, the relationships between humans and non-human animals were multifaceted and went beyond a simple dynamic of superiority or submission[15] and non-human animals played varied roles. They represented a source of symbolic prestige and entertainment in hunting expeditions and spectacles and were even perceived as the mediations between humans and gods, as they were believed to integrate a third significant entity, making them indispensable mediums for communicating with the divine. The entanglement of gods, humans, and animals even shows

[7] LAZENBY 1949.
[8] LILJA 1980.
[9] CONNORS 2004.
[10] GREENLAW 2001.
[11] WOLFSON 2018.
[12] VESPA 2017; 2019; VESPA, ZUCKER 2020.
[13] VESPA 2022.
[14] THOMMEN 2012, 45.
[15] LONSDALE 1979, 155; NEWMYER 2011; KALOF 2007.

the profound understanding and meaning of the ancient Greek religion[16], that went beyond omens and sacrificial instruments.

The ancient Greeks, additionally, assigned animals specific regional identities, which were determined by various attributes, including local geography and historical contexts. Consequently, they held the belief that animals exhibited similarities with the human inhabitants of the same territory and place of origin. That is how they adjusted the idea of "Hellenic animals" to those creatures related to Greek culture in opposition to "barbaric animals" for those who belonged and came from foreign cultures and territories[17]. Therefore, the discourse regarding nature, specifically directed at animals, delineated a characterization of the humans that perceived them. Among all animals, non-human primates for ancient Greeks reveal, overall, a compelling intersection of historical inquiry, cultural examination, and philosophical analysis. Therefore, the relationship with non-human primates was entangled with an integral way of culture and life.

Taking this into consideration, it is imperative to acknowledge two concepts that disentangled the way we approach the ancient sources about nature. On the one hand, the concept of anthropocentrism delineates the distinctive boundary humans establish between themselves and the rest of nature[18]. Anthropocentrism takes on multifaceted forms: it serves as a mindset enabling the exploitation of nature, an intentionally adopted ethical standpoint, and a tendency to emphasize human uniqueness[19]. On the other hand, the concept of anthropomorphism delves into the human tendency to interpret non-human phenomena, through a human lens, imbuing them with human-like qualities, and emphasizing the need for careful consideration when analyzing the behaviors and traits of non-human beings[20]. By taking into consideration the concepts of anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism, we underscore the tendency of human beings to assert themselves as the focal point of the natural world, as stated by Protagoras, the human is the measure of all things[21]. Consequently, through this analytical framework, it is possible to navigate the intricate dynamics of human and non-human animal interactions, thereby enriching our scholarly endeavors and fostering a deeper comprehension of the complexities inherent in the study of non-human phenomena in ancient Greece.

Terminology

Systematic catalogue of Greek and Roman materials demonstrates, references to non-human primates are extremely limited compared to other species. Greenlaw records few literary and archaeological attestations of non-human primates across the ancient Mediterranean world and fewer in the Greco-Roman context[22]. This scarcity contrasts sharply with the hundreds of references to animals such as lions, horses, or dogs, whose presence dominates both literature and iconography. Nonetheless, the rarity of references to primates does not imply insignificance; rather, their exceptionalism rendered them potent symbols of alterity, imitation, and moral distortion in Greek thought.

[16] KINDT 2021, 1-9.
[17] KOSTUCH 2017, 69;77.
[18] RENEHAN 1981, 246-247.
[19] KORHONEN, RUONAKOSKI 2017, 35.
[20] KORHONEN, RUONAKOSKI 2017, 36.
[21] DK 80b1. For animals and presocratic philosophers, see: ZATTA 2019, 9-10.
[22] GREENLAW 2001, 58-59.

In Antiquity, non-human primates appeared in the fourth millennium BCE through the Mesopotamian and Elam art[23] or millenniums after in Egypt, India[24], and even Crete[25]. Nonetheless, the species familiar to the ancient Greeks were native to the regions of Mauritania, Libya, and Ethiopia[26]. In understanding nature beyond their immediate surroundings, Greek geographers and historians knew, in fact, the foreign origin of the non-human primates. Therefore, all representations in art and literature refer to imported animals and, to some extent, exotic ones[27].

Since non-human primates were considered foreign animals, there is no evidence to suggest that the ancient Greeks utilized the adjective "exotic" in their nomenclature when naming them. To denote non-native species, the Greeks typically employed designations based on their place of origin; that is how, for example, to name the peacock, they used "ὄρνις Ἰνδικός", which means the bird from India[28]. When it comes to non-human primates, it should be established that neither the word for exotic nor the designation of the origin were formulas used to call the distinct species. Nevertheless, they possessed a multitude of words to describe non-human primates[29].

The term "Πίθηκος" was used in ancient Greek to designate the Macaca sylvanus, the Barbary macaque, which was the most common species found around the Mediterranean basin. This species held a privileged position in Greek zoological vocabulary due to its frequent appearance in early ethnographic and naturalistic accounts of Africa and Iberia[30]. The diffusion of the species into the Mediterranean world was likely facilitated by Phoenician trade networks that connected North Africa to the western enclaves of the Greek world[31]. Hence, the πίθηκος encapsulates both the zoological familiarity and the exotic distance through which Greeks conceptualized non-human primates. This is also evident in the compound term "κερκοπίθηκος", that combines "κέρκος", meaning "tail", and "πίθηκος", meaning "monkey", denoting an animal characterized by its long tail[32]. While philological and zoological efforts have attempted to identify the exact species referenced by this term, the evidence remains inconclusive. Pliny the Elder describes these animals as having black heads, donkey-like hair, and shrill voices, and locates their origin in Ethiopia[33].

Ancient Greeks also employ the term "Σάτυρος", that primarily denotes the mythological creature characterized by a human torso and the legs of a goat or horse, yet several classical sources also applied it to certain non-human primates[34]. Scholarly opinions diverge regarding which species the term describes: some interpret the reference as an allusion to chimpanzees[35] while others suggest orangutans[36] or gibbons[37]. This multiplicity of interpretations reflects the

[23] DUNHAM 1985, 234.
[24] LUTGENDORF 2007, 344-348
[25] PAREJA *et alII* 2019, 159-168.
[26] MCDERMOTT 1938, 3.
[27] GREENLAW 2001.
[28] BODSON 1998, 64-66; 75.
[29] URIBE 2023, 15.
[30] KITCHELL 2014, 171.
[31] GREENLAW 2001, 65.
[32] CONNORS 2004, 181; LIDDELL, SCOTT 1996, 943.
[33] Plin. *HN* 8.72.
[34] KITCHELL 2014. 165.
[35] JENNISON 1937, 121.
[36] RACKHAM, JONES 1967, 150-151.
[37] MCDERMOTT 1938, 77.

fluid intersection between myth and zoology in Greco-Roman thought, as a boundary figure of moral disorder and as an anthropomorphic primate that mirrored human excesses and desires. This also happens with the name "Σφίγξ". Though commonly associated with the mythological sphinx, it was also applied in antiquity to a long-tailed primate believed to originate from Ethiopia[38]. Some tentatively identified it as a species of Cercopithecus, though he acknowledged the difficulty of precise classification[39] , while others have proposed its identification with *Papio sphinx*[40] or *Cercopithecus diana*[41] .

It was also common the word "Κυνοκέφαλος", literally "dog-headed", that derives from the combination of "κύων" (dog) and "κεφαλή" (head)[42]. Scholars have proposed that this term may refer to the *Papio hamadryas* species, a baboon widely venerated in Egyptian religion[43]. Archaeological excavations in the northern Saqqara necropolis of Memphis have confirmed the presence of large numbers of Papio hamadryas specimens in the Baboon Catacombs, which functioned as cultic deposits linked to Thoth between 400 and 30 BCE[44]. This illustrates how Greek authors inherited and reinterpreted Egyptian representations of sacred animals.

The term "κῆβος", meaning "garden" in standard ancient Greek and "plot of land" in the Cypriot dialect, was also used metaphorically to refer to hairdressing[45]. In zoological contexts, both variants —"κῆβος" and "κῆπος"— designated a long-tailed species of monkey, possibly to *Cercopithecus pyrrhonotus*[46]. The semantic evolution of κῆβος, oscillating between meanings of cultivation, adornment, and animality reflects both linguistic creativity and the broader anthropocentric tendency to integrate animals into a human-centered semantic field.

Biological perspective

Despite the efforts of Aristotle, Pliny the Elder, or Galen, to describe and classify these animals, species of non-human primates, as we know them today, are different from the ones known by ancient Greeks, even if they refer to the same creatures. If one were to employ simile, the descriptions and relationships toward primates are such as trees in a diverse forest, given that the semantic realm surrounding non-human primates was manifold and diverse.

Aristotle, for example, noted that non-human primates exhibit a nature or constitution that lies intermediary between humans and quadrupeds. Specifically, he mentions monkeys (πίθηκοι), cebus (κῆβοι), and cynocephalus (κυνοκέφαλοι) as examples of this intermediary classification. The compelling evidence of an uncanny resemblance between humans and non-human primates is listed based on their shared physical characteristics and traits. These include the structure of their faces, with similar nostrils and ears, teeth that resemble those of humans, and hands with fingers and nails. Furthermore, the presence of certain behaviors and traits made non-human primates the boundary between humans and nature[47].

[38] KITCHELL 2014, 176.
[39] MCDERMOTT 1938, 68.
[40] PARREU 2001, 471; GARCÍA *et alii*. 2015, 376.
[41] DÍAZ-REGAÑÓN 1984, 25.
[42] LIDDELL, SCOTT 1996, 1011.
[43] MCDERMOTT 1938, 104.
[44] GOUDSMIT, BRANDON-JONES 2000, 111-112.
[45] CHANTRAINE 1999, 526-527.
[46] LIDDELL, SCOTT 1996, 946.
[47] He notes resemblances with humans in nostrils, ears, front teeth, molars, eyelashes, mammary nipples, hands, fingers, and even nails resembling humans, but he highlights a bestial nature in non-human primates. Pithecus (πίθηκοι), according to Aristotle, is characterized by hairiness on their upper bodies like quadrupeds, and a human-like lower body. In the case of cebus (κῆβος), Aristotle describes them as a primate (πίθηκος) with tails. Cynocephalus

This resemblance is portrayed with more specificity by Megasthenes. In the fourth century BCE, he stated that in the region of Praxike, which belongs to the native lands of the Indians, the non-human primates were the size of large dogs and had tails that measured five pekons in length. They had hair growing on their foreheads and beards hanging from their chests. While their faces were white, the rest of their bodies were black. They were benevolent by nature and lacked the malice (κακόηθες). This last characteristic, as he stated, was found in other non-human primates from elsewhere[48]. In his account, Strabo quotes Megasthenes and mentions that the non-human primates (κερκοπιθήκους) living in Prasis, a region in India, were larger than big dogs, have white faces, and black bodies, which was the opposite of any non-human primate elsewhere. Their tails were two pekons long. They were gentle and not inclined to be malicious[49]. Agatharchides of Cnidus, who lived in the second century BCE., pointed out that the cynocephalus (κυνοκέφαλος) had the deformed body of a man and the face of a dog. He also notes that this creature produced, through murmurs[50], a similar sound to humans. Concerning the cebus (κῆβος)[51], he writes that it had the face of a lion; the body of a panther; the size of a deer; and it is named according to its appearance[52].

The striking resemblance to humans extends beyond external characteristics. Authors, such as Galen, have noted that if an individual lacks the chance to observe human remains or examine cadavers but desires to acquire knowledge of anatomy, they should consider dissecting non-human primates. Galen asserts that among all animals, the one bearing the closest similarity to humans is the πίθηκος, not only in terms of its external features but also in its internal components, including its muscles, arteries, veins, and nerves, as well as the shape of its bones[53].

On addition to the striking similarities in external appearance and internal organ structure between non-human primates and humans, it was also reported by ancient authors that this resemblance encompassed behavioral aspects. As Lissarrague stated for the ancient Greeks, the most remarkable trait of the non-human primates is its mimetic character[54]. In the context of broader animal descriptions and acknowledgments within Greek literature, it is noteworthy that some authors accorded a distinctive significance to creatures possessing the capacity for imitation. It is worth noticing that among viviparous animals (ζῳοτοκούντων), non-human primates bear the closest resemblance to humans[55]. This unique regard was not limited solely to non-human primates; rather, certain avian species were also portrayed as having the ability

(κυνοκέφαλοι), on the other hand, share a human-like form, but were larger and stronger, and notably, possessed canine faces. Additionally, they exhibit wild behavior and canine-like teeth, which are stronger than typical teeth (see Arist. *Hist. an.*, 502a.16- 502b.29).

[48] *FHG*. 11.1-9.

[49] Strab. 15.1.37. 15-19.

[50] Some other works have studied the perception of non-human primates (πίθηκος) and their low-pitching voice. Overall, these animals were described as creatures with weak voices and lacking vigor and strength. Therefore, some ancient writers associate non-human primates to weakness, quality associated with women and children (see VESPA 2017, 172).

[51] When referring to appearance, the word "ποικιλίαν" is used, which means “a variety of colors”. It should be remembered that κῆβος translates to "garden".

[52] Strab. 15.1.37. 15-19.

[53] Gal. *De anat. adm*. 2.219.8-15.

[54] LISSARRAGUE 1988, 459.

[55] Arist. *Hist. an*., 502b.29.

to mimic human voices[56]. It is worth noticing that some ancient authors, were intrigued by the abilities of animals like parrots, crows, mynahs or hyenas to imitate human behaviors.

Among the mimetic animals, non-human primates were special for ancient authors. While being criticized for their mimetic behaviors, they were also portrayed as remarkably proficient in activities such as dancing, faithfully replicating human gestures and movements, and displaying skill in playing table games[57]. The existence of numerous diminutive figurines portraying non-human primates, some of which depict these animals engaging in anthropomorphic activities like horse-riding, serves as substantial evidence that the imitative capacities of primates were perceived as enjoyable by observers[58]. In contrast, they noted the mimicry of human behavior in non-human primates, which occasionally elicited feelings of unease and vulnerability among certain ancient Greeks, rather than a universal aversion. This reflection is not just a recognition of a shared biological ancestry with other creatures but also a recognition of the emotional, psychological, and behavioral dimensions.

Unveiling Emotions

Those who described non-human primates did so by comparing them to other animals[59], regardless of their species. Among all these animals, the human being emerges as the central focus of the comparison that encompasses not only physical distinctions but also behavioral aspects. This uncanny resemblance generated a diverse array of emotions in ancient authors. Reactions such as repulsion, laughter, amusement, joy, and outright were common answers to the imitative behaviors exhibited by non-human primates. However, it is important to acknowledge, even if it might seem obvious, that non-human primates are not by nature comical, repulsive, or deceived, even if in ancient Greek lenses they appear to be so. Likewise, it is worth noting that these descriptions correspond to a historical configuration ascribed in a determined time and chronology[60].

Consequently, to understand the emotions involved between humans and non-human primates, it is important to notice that even if there exists an individual dimension of emotion, it is subject to cultural shaping[61]. The social aspect of emotion determines that emotions are indeed among the interaction between people in every aspect of their life[62]. On this account, emotions are subject of changes during time and subject of historical enquiry[63]. I will pursue this definition even further, as emotions also compel the interactions between humans and non-human animals in Antiquity.

Consequently, this section examines emotional responses a as constitutive elements of ancient Greek thought, showing how laughter, shame, and repulsion functioned as cultural

[56] KORHONEN, RUONAKOSKI 2017, 57.

[57] VESPA 2017, 162.

[58] For further reading, iconographic matters have been extensively addressed see VESPA 2022; GREENLAW 2001.

[59] Furthermore, it is important to notice that a relationship existed among non-human primates, satyrs, and gods. The satyr is closely related to the image of non-human primates. The similarity between the satyrs and humans is not only physical but also extends to their behavior and postures. In fact, the satyr was often depicted as a citizen, even a bourgeois satyr. It is also important to note the hyper-sexualization that was associated with satyrs, a characteristic absent in representations of non-human primates (see LISSARRAGUE 1988, 456; 468).

[60] This phenomenon could be traced in a *longue durée*. It is not exclusive to Greece, as for the Ancient Mesopotamians, one of the most important traits of the monkey was its resemblance to humans (see DUNHAM 1985, 264). It also lingers up to ancient Rome's perspective (see BEARD 2014, 160-171).

[61] REDDY 2001.

[62] CHANIOTIS 2012, 12-13.

[63] BODDICE 2018, 2.

mechanisms for defining the human condition. Emotions serve as a powerful force that shapes the dynamics of these inter-species relationships, highlighting the intricate connection between sentient beings across different cultures and societies. Therefore, it must be stated that the relationship between humans and non-human animals is influenced by the cultural environment of the society in question[64]. In doing so, humans often defined non-human animals through self-comparison, using them as mirrors of their own emotional and moral landscape.

Through this path, one should address to broaden its purview by positing that, among these emotions, non-human animals serve as vehicles for the expression of "otherness" within humans. At the heart of this argument lies the recognition that emotions, complex and multifaceted as they are, often find expression through avenues that extend beyond human interactions alone. When considering the intricate landscape of emotions, it becomes apparent that non-human animals play a profound role in expanding our understanding beyond the boundaries of societal constructs. As Thumiger has shown, "otherness", within non-human animal context, encompasses a spectrum of emotions, instincts, or experiences that individuals perceive as beyond their volitional grasp[65]. Therefore, non-human animals gave ancient Greeks one way, through which they recognize an otherness, to constitute their understanding of humanity[66].

Entanglements

Plutarch conceived non-human primates in a singular purpose: entertain. According to this author, non-human primates (πίθηκοι) were not able to guard the house as a dog, carry loads as a horse, or even plow the land as an ox, and the only practical utility of these animals was as instruments of laughter[67]. This idea could be understood as a normal consequence of the Greeks' perception of non-human primates as the funny distorted version of themselves. Simianesque creatures were depicted humorously, emphasizing mimicry of human behavior, and their hybrid appearance[68]. This concept persisted into the Roman Empire, as evidenced by authors like Aelian, who underscored the capacity of non-human primates (πίθηκοι) to acquire skills such as playing the flute and dancing. Aelian further attests that he personally witnessed a non-human primate (πίθηκος) proficiently handling the reins, skillfully wielding the whip and managing the chariot as a human being[69].

In general terms, artists portrayed the non-human primates imitating activities often associated with high-class individuals, particularly those related to symposia. It should be taken into consideration that entertaining is related with how some non-human primates, mostly Barbary apes and Ethiopian monkeys, were kept by some individuals of higher status as companion animals[70]. Due to its simian physique, the non-human primates inevitably distort these practices and fall short of adequately reflecting the aristocratic idea[71].

[64] BODSON 1998, 312.
[65] THUMIGER 2014, 91.
[66] KINDT 2017, 218.
[67] Plut. *Mor*. 64.E.7-10.
[68] WOLFSON 2018, 175.
[69] Ael. *NA*, 5, 26, 1-9.
[70] LAZENBY 1949; MCDERMOTT 1938, 109; 131-135; 247.
[71] STEINER 2016, 126; KITCHELL 2014, 119.

The laughter provoked by non-human primates in ancient Greece is a fascinating subject of historical study, as it shed light on the social lives of the ancient Greeks[72]. Laughter, which governs key aspects of human linguistic behavior, is profoundly rooted in culture and history[73], being at once a natural and a cultural phenomenon[74]. It constitutes a cultural phenomenon with inherent variability manifesting across distinct societies and historical epochs. Attitudes towards laughter, the practices associated with it, the subjects that provoke laughter, and the diverse manifestations of this expression are not uniform across diverse societies and temporal contexts. Instead, these aspects exhibit fluidity following prevailing cultural norms. Moreover, laughter is intrinsically intertwined with the social fabric, governed by established codes, rituals, and actors[75]. It is also important to notice how laughter exhibits a complex structure and web of associations with principles of friendships-enmity, honor-shame, and freedom-subservience. These principles lay in the prevailing modes of expression within the Greek culture[76]. As pointed out by Halliwell, the phenomenon of laughter and the underlying forces it represented or conveyed constituted a recurring motif in Greek moral philosophy[77].

Non-human primates provide valuable insights into the cultural and emotional fabric of ancient Greece[78]. Laughter, in the ancient Greek context, was not merely a superficial expression of amusement but held a deeper meaning. It symbolized the release of pent-up emotions, a momentary escape from the rigors of daily life, and a celebration of the lighter aspects of existence. Non-human primates highlight the cultural significance of laughter and with it the deep, intricate connections with life itself. This paper aligns with Borowski's assertion that humor stems from the recognition of actions deemed amusing, such as appearances, behaviors, events, and so forth, and arising from the perception of words, phrases, and language that are amusing, including jokes or witty expressions[79]. On that account, the laughter produced among the relationship with non-human primates was mixed with other feelings that allow us to understand the boundaries with the natural world.

The earliest documented mentions of non-human primates in ancient Greek texts occur within comedic literary texts, specifically those authored by Semonides[80]. It is indeed noteworthy that these first references found within comedic literary sources express a complex blend of emotions that join laughter with repulsiveness. Semonides of Amorgos, in the so-called Fragment 7, expounds ten distinct categories of women, differentiated by their origin or lineage through diverse animals, and accompanied by corresponding moral

[72] Bakhtin, in his examination of the Middle Ages, posits that the realm of comedy lies its intrinsic significance in the context of temporal shifts and the evolving social and historical landscape, that lies in the significant presence of the popular element, enabling us to comprehend and elucidate not just the perspectives of certain educated writers from ancient Greece but also those of other societal segments concerning these animals (see BAKHTIN 2003, 66). Regarding the applicability of Bakhtin's ideas to laughter in Greece, see HALLIWELL 2008, 20.

[73] ALEXIOU, CAIRNS 2017, 4.

[74] BEARD 2014, 42-48.

[75] LE GOFF 1989, 2.

[76] HALLIWELL 2008, 6.

[77] HALLIWELL 1991, 280.

[78] Despite acknowledging the emotional impact that non-human primates evoke in humans, it is noteworthy to highlight that historical documentation from Antiquity attests to the recognition of animals experiencing emotions (see KALOF 2007, 166-170).

[79] BOROWSKI 2015, 88.

[80] Archilochus too mentions to non-human primates in Fragments 185 through 187. Unfortunately, due to the absence of complete works and a larger written context, the interpretation of these two fragments' perceptions of non-human primates remains challenging.

evaluations. Of particular significance, is the text's classification of the least desirable woman, according to its own criteria, as one originating from non-human primates. Semonides asserts that Zeus bestowed upon humanity the non-human primate as the utmost malevolent creation, deeming their countenances as abhorrent. Such a woman, in the eyes of the populace, becomes an object of ridicule to all men. Characterized by a truncated neck, cumbersome mobility fraught with discomfort, a deficiency of well-defined buttocks, and an emaciated physique, the man who embraces such an affliction is deemed wretched[81].

Through Comedy, whether Old, Middle, or New, the non-human primates frequently appear as a subject of jest or satire[82]. It is worth noting, however, that references to non-human primates are more abundant in what is termed Old Comedy[83]. The initial source under consideration is located within the context of the "Assemblywomen", when men find themselves subject to a peculiar rule under women's governance: they must prioritize sleeping with an elderly woman before a younger one. The comical environment is generated through the description of the elderly woman as bearing resemblance to a non-human primate (πίθηκος) that serves to underscore her unappealing appearance in a sexual encounter[84]. A similar physical appearance motif is portrayed throughout the play "Acharnians" when Aristophanes in the voice of Dikaiopolis mocks Cleisthenes for feigning eunuch status. To portray this comical gesture, he compares him with a non-human primate (πίθηκος and πίθᾶκος)[85].

In addition, we encounter not just the physical mockery of the uncanny resemblance between humans and non-human primates, but also the satire of their behavior. In "The Birds", Pisthetaerus is warned not to make a deal like a πίθηκος, a term that encompasses both ugliness and behavior. He is depicted as undersized and unattractive, and his refusal to adhere to an agreement resonates with the concept of deception, as an unfavorable pact can lead to duplicity[86]. In "The Knights", the focus shifts to authenticity in politics, with Cleon accusing a meat seller of eating like a non-human primate (κυνοκέφαλος) or a savage dog[87]. In the same play, once again Cleon accused the same meat seller of deceiving, by using non-human primates' tricks (πιθηκισμός). Therefore, the non-human primates symbolize the vices of imitation and deceit prevalent in communal living[88]. The same motif is present also in "Peace". Along this play, it is depicted that Hierocles invokes the unfortunate mortals who without bearing the gods in mind, being humans, form agreements like fierce non-human primates (πίθηκοι), posing these animals as a synonym of imitation and deceit, rendering them untrustworthy[89], idea also present in "The Wasps"[90], where Cleon was accused of acting like a non-human primate (πιθηκίζω)[91].

[81] Semon. 7.71-79.
[82] MCDERMOTT 1935, 170.
[83] LILJA 1980, 31.
[84] Ar. *Eccl*. 1071-1075.
[85] Ar. *Ach*. 118-122; 906-7.
[86] Ar. *Av*. 438-443.
[87] Ar. *Eq*. 415-420.
[88] Ar. *Eq*. 887.
[89] Ar. *Pea*. 1062-1066.
[90] Ar. *Vesp*. 1286-1290.
[91] To grasp this reference, it is crucial to consider Aristophanes' use of the verb πιθηκίζω, which can be translated as "*affen spielen*" in German (see FRISK 1960, 534). It could also be translated as "*faire le singe*" in French (see CHANTRAINE 1999, 900). However, this act of imitating a monkey gains clarity within the context of the proverb "the trellis deceived the vine" (ἐξηπάτησεν ἡ χάραξ τὴν ἄμπελον). In this proverb, the deception is reversed, signifying that the deceiver, in

Likewise, we encounter a political satire of authenticity expressed though non-human primates in the comedy "The Frogs"[92]. Throughout the plot, Dionysus and Xanthias switch roles to avoid being associated with Heracles. As Aeacus failed to corroborate the authenticity of Dionysus or Xanthias, the political situation of Athens at that time was refer by the chorus, that states that Cleigenes was a non-human primate (πίθηκος), a troublemaker, the most useless bather who rules through deceit[93]. It not only serves as a commentary on Cleigenes' cunning demeanor and his physical attributes, but it is also depicting him as a counterfeiter. Subsequently, the other reference is given within the dialogues involving Euripides and Aeschylus. Aeschylus accuses Euripides of presenting people differently than they are. He then points out that their polis -Athens-, was in a terrible situation due to the influence of bad poets like Euripides, and that had become infested with demagogic non-human primates (δημοπιθήκων) who deceived the people[94]. In this context, the allusion to non-human primates serves as a metaphor for the political vice of imitation, encompassing deception and cunning tactics.

Within the realm of Middle Comedy, intriguing references to non-human primates emerge conveying the cultural and social nuances of ancient Greek society in relationship with beauty. The first reference, attributed to Crobilus and documented by Athenaeus, revolves around the notion of using dried fruit, specifically chickpeas, as a symbol of a non-human primates' (πίθηκος) fortune[95]. In a parallel thread, the second reference, preserved in the Comicorum Atticorum fragmenta, is attributed to the poet Eubulus, who in the third century BCE introduced a thought-provoking perspective on beauty. The comical scene becomes present when he asserts that true beauty lies humans behaving like humans, not in resembling unattractive and duplicitous creatures like a goose engaged in futile wing-flapping, yawning, or worst of all resembling a non-human primate (πίθηκος)[96]. Furthermore, Menander in "The Necklace" compares the appearance of Crobila to that of a non-human primate (πίθηκος), where he underscores the concept of ugliness among those already deemed unattractive in a high-class woman[97]. In this context, the reference to a non-human primate serves as a poignant metaphor for physical appearance, deepening our understanding of how ancient Greeks perceived beauty and social standing[98].

On the other hand, primates also prompt an inquiry into the other aspect of laughter: those who do not laugh, as the culture of laughter is necessarily entangled with those who do not laugh[99]. In the 2nd century AD, the Athenian scholar Athenaeus recounted a tale about a 6th-century BC Syrian, named Anacharsis, who was noted for his lack of laughter. Athenaeus narrates that during a symposium, Anacharsis, the Scythian, remained unamused despite the presence of jesters. However, upon the introduction of a monkey (πίθηκος), he finally laughed.

this case, the vine, ends up deceived. Concerning the animal in question, acting like a non-human primate mimics an entity that already imitates, ultimately leading to deception.

[92] The Frogs deserve to be described as a political comedy (see MACÍA 2007, 209).

[93] Ar. *Ran.* 706-715.

[94] Ar. *Ran.* 1083-1085.

[95] Ath. 2, 44. 1-4. Chickpeas, a staple in Greek cuisine, were not only consumed as part of meals but were also served post-meal. Nevertheless, the exact meaning of this fragment remains without a solid conclusion (see MASTELLARI 2018, 152-153).

[96] MEINEKE, *FCG* Cha.1.1.

[97] *CAF* 402.7-9.

[98] "Ὄνος ἐν πιθήκοις" may indeed be nothing more than a witty expression coined by Menandre. This expression pertains to the notion of ugliness among those who are already unattractive (see TRINQUIER 2017, 5).

[99] BEARD 2014, 174.

At that moment, he remarked that the monkey is inherently amusing by nature, whereas humans laugh out of habit[100].

Some authors pointed out that non-human primates were funny for ancient Greeks because their imitation of humans was not perfect and it gave a sense of superiority[101], and others defend the idea that the resemblance of the non-human primates to humans is not a true resemblance, but a facsimile tainted with ridicule[102]. In addition to these studies, there arises the idea that non-human primates, delineated as an enigmatic and imperfect mirror of humanity, have elicited profound reflections among the ancient Greeks. In Greek sources, the μίμησις[103] attributed to non-human primates is a matter of authenticity. The challenge at hand pertains to the distinction between one's authentic identity and the external perception of it being highlighted as its boundary.

However, is important to acknowledge that the recurring mimicry among non-human primates toward humans encompassed social conduct standards and the borderline of good behavior. In Aesop's fables this motif serves as a powerful portrayal of undesirable behavior. This mimicry[104], often driven by envy or thoughtlessness, is consistently depicted as a detrimental attribute. Aesop used in his fables portray these animals as being gullible, deceitful, ugly, and skilled in dance. In "The Fox and the Monkey (πίθηκος)", the fox's cunning contrasts with the non-human primate´s (πίθηκος) gullibility, serving as a cautionary tale about impulsive actions and their consequences. This narrative teaches us that thoughtless behavior, incarnated as a non- human primate, often leads to misfortune and ridicule[105]. In "A Fox and a Monkey Dispute About Good Lineage", the non-human primate (πίθηκος) emerges as a liar proud of their falsehood[106], and in "A Monkey and Some Sailors" Aesop illustrates the consequences of thoughtless imitation, as the non-human primate's (πίθηκος) mimicry leads to entrapment[107]. The non-human primate (πίθηκος) in "The Monkey's Offspring" the πίθηκος becomes a symbol of poor decision-making, exploring the influence of destiny[108]. "A Monkey and a Camel" displays the πίθηκος unique ability to captivate through dance. Here, envy leads the camel to imitate, with disastrous results[109].

5.2 Boundaries

As it was exposed earlier, the entanglement of laughter, amusement, and rejection were emotions that could not be separated from one another in the relationship between humans and non-human primates. However, we should, additionally, consider the consequences of those feelings in establishment of boundaries between humans and the rest of nature. Within

[100] Athen. *Deip*.14.2.5-8.
[101] MCDERMOTT 1938, 109.
[102] TRINQUIER 2017, 4; MASTELLARI, 2018, 153.
[103] In the context of comedy, Aristotle specifically viewed it as μίμησις, or imitation, of the wretched. It should be noted that this imitation does not encompass all forms of negativity but rather focusses on a particular aspect: the propensity to evoke shame. For Aristotle, humor arises from benign flaws and non-harmful instances of shame or ugliness, as opposed to those with a detrimental impact (see Arist. *Poet*. 1449a.32-37).
[104] In the second century BCE, Hermogenes of Tarsus, the Greek rhetorician, asserted the importance of exemplifying animal characteristics as faithfully as possible in fables, and pointed that to make a credible the imitation human actions, non-human primates (πίθηκοι) should be used (see Hermog. *Prog.* 1.11-18).
[105] Aes., Fab. 38.
[106] Aes., Fab. 39.
[107] Aes., Fab. 304.
[108] Aes., Fab. 307.
[109] Aes., Fab. 306.

the context of ancient times non-human primates were consistently employed as metaphors to discuss others and it always had a negative connotation[110] and any comparison with them was avoided. Nonetheless, there exists a noteworthy instance in which one individual autonomously chooses not only to be recognized as one but also to be reborn as a non-human primate (πίθηκος). This narrative is conveyed to us by Plato in his renowned work The Republic (Πολιτεία). Plato portrayed a group of mythological characters from the Iliad who, after death, had the privilege of selecting a mortal body in which they would experience a new life. Through this intricate process, they were able to ascertain the model their soul would ultimately embody. Among these mythological characters was Thersites, a figure known for his buffoonery, who chose to take on the form of a non-human primate (πίθηκος)[111].

It is crucial to juxtapose this reference to Plato with the depiction presented in the Iliad by Homer, for it was indeed Homer who offered the first documented portrayal of the mythological character of Thersites. While Plato was familiar with Homer's texts, what is important to note is how Homer described Thersites, as it allows us to visualize the connection once again between physical appearance and behavior. Homer in the Iliad portrays Thersites as the most despicable figure to arrive in Troy and describes him as physically afflicted, with a lame leg, hunched and hunched shoulders, a pointed and sparse head. Is portrayed as a figure who was engaged in unbridled and futile verbal combat, delivering disparaging and disorderly tirades against the basileus to elicit amusement from the Argives[112]. In this sense, Thersites embodied not only physical ugliness but also repulsive behavior.

In the realm of Greek thought, ugliness is a form of "shame(fulness)" that can paradoxically become both a target for mockery and a badge of bizarre and ludicrous behavior[113]. Thersites, regarding his choice of becoming a non-human primate amidst the possibility of assuming any animal form, is subsequently characterized as laughable. This serves to highlight the convergence of physical appearance and behavior, as laughter and ugliness often dance in harmony. This case is distinctive due to the human's desire to emulate a non-human primate, rendering it a subject of amusement. The act of assuming the characteristics of this particular animal inherently raises inquiries regarding the virtue of the individual making such a choice. This anthropomorphic projection, however, is not neutral — it is value-laden, shaped by the ideals of καλοκαγαθία and by the moral hierarchies that define Greek civic life. The non-human primate's imperfect imitation of the human exposes the fragility of these hierarchies, turning animal behavior into a commentary on human virtue and corruption.

This motif is interconnected with the broader context of the corruption of the city-state, as expounded upon in Plato's Republic where citizens are entrapped in the imitation of reality and fail to perceive it in its authentic form. According to Plato's conception in this work, all forms of imitation are detrimental to the city-state, including that of poets, who never approach the truth or virtue, and lead people to believe in a distorted image of reality[114]. The association between poetry and the soul is predicated on the idea that, through imitations

[110] For Ancient Greeks, characterizing an individual as a non-human primate functioned, to a certain degree, as a derogatory expression, as it metaphorically underscored specific unfavorable attributes. It evolved into a metaphor signifying fraudulent, inauthentic, and imitative conduct, thereby establishing an association with deceit (see GARCÍA 1972, 453).

[111] Pl. *Resp*. 10,620 c.2-3.

[112] Hom. *Il*. 2.212-19.

[113] Halliwell 2008, 72.

[114] Pl. *Resp. 2, 377d-e.*

aimed at pleasing the audience, poetry conveys a misleading representation of reality, not solely in terms of physical appearance but also in the choice to adopt habits.

Throughout the narrative of the Republic, the quest is the pursuit of justice or virtue to lead a virtuous life within the polis. Thersites, who choose to assume the role of a non-human primate, is a metaphor that resonates with the famous passage of the Allegory of the Cave, which elucidates the text's epistemological stance. Here, the idea is posited that knowledge, or even a distorted perception of reality, can generate a false version of reality itself. The notion of mimesis plays a pivotal role in this motif, as the inhabitants of the cave can only perceive reality through the shadows of objects. They lack awareness that what they are experiencing and the entirety of the reality they have constructed and apprehended are confined to these imitations. This demarcation between the sensible world, that is, what is perceived through the senses, and the intelligible world, which represents authentic reality, carries significant implications not only in ontological terms but also in ethical and epistemological dimensions.

It is crucial to recognize the diverse and multifaceted nature of perceptions regarding non-human animals[115]. However, when it comes to non-human primates, ethical and aesthetic considerations are intricately intertwined, even though is worth mentioning that this combination of ethical and aesthetic elements is not exclusive to the relationship with non-human primates[116]. Within the framework of perceiving these creatures, it is worth contemplating the idea that when humans emulate non-human primates or face accusations of exhibiting non-human primate-like behavior, they find themselves subject not only to censure regarding their physical appearance and conduct but also to the attribution of moral corruption.

A concept that encapsulates these intricate interconnections is καλοκαγαθία. This term is comprised of three constituent words: "καλός", -signifying beautiful-, "καὶ", -which translates to "and"-, and the adjective "ἀγαθός", -denoting good-. However, surpassing its mere linguistic composition, this concept conveys more than just physical aesthetics; it inherently carries profound ethical connotations. In addition to aesthetics, καλοκαγαθία encompasses a dimension of virtue and perfection. Even if the historical origins of this concept trace back to the fifth century BCE, employed in reverence of Zeus, in a broader context, it is intricately linked with male representatives of the aristocracy, subsequently extending its association to the citizenry[117]. Furthermore, the καλοκαγαθία amalgamates the notion of excellence, particularly about the quality of one's actions. Ultimately, this term alludes to an individual who embodies perfection in both moral and physical dimensions.

We can take this idea of boundaries even further to encompasses another dimension: the relationship with the deities. Heraclitus that exposes another example of how non-human primates defined the boundaries of what could be considered as human. Heraclitus mentions that the wisest of humans looks like a non-human primate (πίθηκος) to the gods, both in wisdom and beauty[118]. As from the human perspective, non-human primates represent a rather rudimentary approximation -a poorly executed emulation, and an ineffectual imitation of humanity-, for the gods, the human beings represent the same characteristics. The perspective

[115] NEWMYER 2011.
[116] Plat. *Ti.*
[117] WEILER 2002, 11.
[118] DK 83.

worth addressing is the relationship between non-human primates and humans as an analogy between human beings and gods[119].

On anthropomorphism and the projection of human attributes onto divine and animal realms, see Xenophanes of Colophon, who, in the sixth century BCE, argued that if animals possessed hands and could create artworks as humans do, they would fashion their gods in their own image—oxen resembling oxen, turtles resembling turtles, and so on[120]. Considering Xenophanes' insight into the anthropomorphism inherent in religious thought, one may extend the same logic to animals: if gods reflect humans, might humans define themselves in response to animals? Within this continuum, both gods and non-human primates operate as mirrors of human existence—each embodying, in different registers, the anthropomorphic tendencies of those who imagine them.

In this context, human beings found themselves positioned between two distinct thresholds: one occupied by non-human primates and the other by gods. Remarkably, these entities are not viewed as opposing forces, but rather as defining parameters that shape the essence of the human condition[121]. We should take into consideration another passage from Heraclitus. He stated that the most beautiful of non-human primates (πίθηκος) is ugly in the eyes of humanity[122]. The motif of human imitation of the divinity has its equivalence in the imitation of non-human primates to humans. This proposition implies that, in comparison to the virtue of gods, humans are inferior, and in comparison, to humans, non-human primates ultimately represent one of the most fitting images of non-virtue. This dynamic framework accentuates the nuanced interplay between humans, gods, and non-human primates, delineating the complex boundaries of human existence.

In the context of this ethical discourse, it is imperative to underscore that likening an individual to a non-human primate was regarded as a severe insult. It was employed to convey the edge of unattractiveness or even intellectual deficiency and extended to categorizing individuals within broader social strata, including those identified as deceivers, flatterers, and sycophants[123]. Ancient Greek culture employed animals as powerful metaphors for insult[124], with the term "dog" being particularly noteworthy due to its potential Indo-European origins and prevalent usage. This usage persisted even in esteemed literary works such as Homeric poems, where the dog symbolized shamelessness and audacity[125]. On a non-human primate account, the term "κυνοκέφαλος", referring to an individual as a dog-headed creature, carried negative connotations related to those associated with dogs. Additionally, the insult of labelling someone a "κέρκωψ" was laden with accusations of theft and dishonesty, vividly depicted through the imagery of a non-human primate.

It is worth remembering the Cercopes (Κέρκωπες) were two siblings known for ambushing strangers. On one occasion, they pilfered weapons from Heracles while he slumbered. Upon

[119] CONNORS 2004, 184.
[120] Diehl, *Anth. Lyr. Graec.* 13.1–4.
[121] Various civilizations, including the Indian and Egyptian cultures held these creatures in reverence as divine figures. This perspective resonates with Mackowiak's notion of the divine connection between non-human primates and the Greeks, intertwined with bygone religious beliefs (see MACKOWIAK 2013a, 217; 220).
[122] DK 82.
[123] MASTELLARI 2018, 153.
[124] Although the association with the dog encompassed a wide range of behaviors, the vocative "κύον" was used to address individuals accused of cowardice, treachery, or vulgarity, thus marking the term as a pejorative expression (see FRANCO 2014, 7-16).
[125] GARCÍA 1972, 453.

discovering the theft, Heracles bound them to a staff which he then hoisted upon his shoulder. Over time, they managed to ingratiate themselves with Heracles through their jests. It should be noted that variations exist within the myth; at times, it is recounted that there were not two but four siblings, with Heracles purportedly dispatching the additional two prior to their release[126]. However, irrespective of these narrative discrepancies, it is pivotal to underscore that, according to the myth, the Cercopes, after their liberation by Heracles, persisted in their antics, prompting Zeus, weary of their behavior, to transmute them into monkeys and dispatch them to the Pithecusae[127] Islands, now recognized as Ischia and Procida. Their transformation into primates reflects the moral and emotional boundaries that the Greeks projected onto these animals: trickery and ridicule became narrative tools through which human vice was externalized and displaced into the animal realm. They literally embody the fragile line separating the human from the animal, shaped by the interplay of humor, transgression, and punishment.

Certainly, this intricate web of insults not only exemplifies the richness of ancient linguistic expressions but also highlights the nuanced societal perceptions of deceit, shamelessness, and primitiveness. Given these considerations, when individuals engage in a non-human primate demeanor or find themselves compared to them, the implications extend beyond surface-level notions of physical unattractiveness and inappropriate behavior. Such associations also carry connotations that cast a shadow on the realm of moral character, depicting those humans as flawed individuals, a stark departure from the cherished ideal of καλοκαγαθία. This perspective underscores the implications and potential ramifications inherent in such comparisons. Non-human primates, by embodying qualities contrary to both moral and physical excellence, serve as a contrasting archetype to the holistic aspiration epitomized in the Greek worldview, one that intricately interweaves philosophy, ethics, and emotional dimensions.

This multifaceted interaction between humans and non-human animals also manifests itself in the symbolic language used to name—or not to name—them. As Cristina Franco has shown, ancient Greek sources attest to dogs bearing individual names —a sign of familiarity and emotional attachment—, but no such evidence exists for non-human primates. Although the absence of evidence does not necessarily entail evidence of absence, this silence is nonetheless significant. The lack of proper names for primates may suggest that, within Greek culture, these animals occupied a space of emotional distance, being perceived as simultaneously close in form yet foreign in essence. Unlike dogs, whose naming reflected companionship and loyalty, non-human primates embodied a troubling likeness that precluded intimacy. Their namelessness thus becomes a cultural marker of affective

[126] CONNORS 2004, 186-187.

[127] The etymology of Pithekoussai remains somewhat obscure; it may connote an association with monkeys (πίθηκος) or represent a Hellenic adaptation of a local appellation. Additionally, as posited by Pliny the Elder, it could be linked to an etymological relation with the term "πίθοι", equivalent to the Latin "figlinis doliorum", denoting ceramic jars (see Plin. *NH*, 3.82.4-5). The myth may be intertwined with the pursuit of wealth, particularly through metal exchange (see CONNORS 2004, 185-187). It is pertinent to recall that Greeks label profit-seekers as Cercopes universally. Within this realm of geography, it is also mentioned that Athens housed the Cercopes market, where stolen goods were traded. A good example of this is the clothes-stealer (λωποδύτης) that sold the stolen goods in the Cercopes market in Athens (see HUNTER 2007, 8). Hence, individuals behaving like Cercopes were viewed not only as inauthentic but also reprehensible. Branding someone a Cercope implies labeling them a thief and a liar, alongside evoking the image of a monkey (see MUÑOZ 2008, 43). Furthermore, there is a connotation to the term Cercope (Κέρκωψ), signifying "arse-faced" (see LUCAS DE DIOS 2002, 325).

separation: the Greeks could laugh at them, fear them, or be fascinated by them, but they did not belong within the sphere of familiar affection.

Conclusions

Within this reasoning, non-human primates, while sharing certain physical and behavioral attributes with humans, were not merely perceived as distant, exotic animals but rather as living reflections of human beings. When non-human primates question the boundaries of identity and exemplify the enduring fascination with the blurred lines between humans and the natural world, they generated repulsion as they were portrayed as treacherous, ugly, and even morally reprehensible beings. Thus, emotions act as interpretive bridges between cultural imagination and textual representation: they encode how the Greeks felt their humanity threatened, reflected, or caricatured in the figure of the non-human primates. These portrayals capture a sense of deceit felt by ancient authors when confronted with the unsettling notion of perceiving their own identity as a mere shadow in an external entity. This experience of deception evoked profound discomfort among these individuals, highlighting their unease in recognizing their own existence being mirrored.

In both modern and ancient frameworks, a critical approach to sources is indispensable as it is crucial to acknowledge that we are dealing with the perspectives of human beings in comprehending and delineating an "otherness". While this point might seem self-evident to some, reflections sometimes provide greater insight into the individual articulating them rather than the subject matter they elucidate. The dual inclinations towards anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism significantly influence our conceptualizations of the relationships with non-human animals. This phenomenon manifests when human characteristics are indiscriminately attributed to non-human species. Both tendencies can coexist concurrently. Anthropocentrism delineates the human-animal boundary and employs accusations of anthropomorphism for its enforcement, constituting more of a moral rather than a scientific construct[128].

In Greek thought it was key the question of defining human in relationship with nature[129]. Notably, the involvement of nature facilitates an exploration of the confluence around the complex relationship between non-human primates and ancient Greek culture, as the mimetic attributes ascribed to non-human primates elucidate the ancient Greeks' reaction to the phenomenon of feeling imitated by non-human animals. Consequently, non-human primates brought to ancient Greeks a tapestry of emotions that entangles rejection, laughter, shame, and amusement.

Emotions remain, to a certain extent, a social construct, straddling the realms of culture and nature. Consequently, as a dynamic reality subject to transformations and it could be understood from a historical perspective[130]. On a general account, non-human primates were perceived as distorted shadows of humanity, raising questions about imitation, authenticity, and the nature of human beings, but, on the other hand, they caused laughter, joy, and amusement.

In this sense, the study demonstrates that emotions were not secondary to imitation but central to the ancient Greek process of defining humanity. Descriptions of non-human animal act as a mirror of the human beings that portrayed them. Therefore, the discourse toward non-

[128] RUSSELL 2011, 1-5.
[129] BODSON 1998, 313.
[130] ARBELOA *et alii* 2023, 4.

human animals reflects the observer's background. They reveal to us our own attitudes, biases, and values through reflection, allowing us to gain insight into ourselves[131]. Non-human primates exhibit a remarkable capacity for delineating a comparative framework between human and animal essences. They can potentially trigger for ancient Greeks various degrees of emotional responses, ranging from comical laughter to repulsiveness[132]. The ethical attributes conveyed through the portrayal of non-human primates serve as a significant lens through which to comprehend the ancient Greeks' reaction to the phenomenon of being imitated by animals lacking human traits. These representations symbolize the sense of deception experienced among ancient authors when confronted with the idea of being mimicked. In the context presented, it becomes evident that mimesis did not inherently bear a negative connotation. However, it became laden with negativity, as ancient Greeks reflected their apprehension about encountering mirrors of their own image and behavior.

References

ALEXIOU, M., CAIRNS, D. 2017. *Greek Laughter and Tears. Antiquity and After*, Edinburgh. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3366/edinburgh/9781474403795.001.0001.

ARBELOA, B.P., DOMÉNECH, C.F., GORDÓN, Z.A., MESEGUER, G.D., SERRANO, A.C. (eds.). 2023. *Ab imo pectore. Estudios sobre las emociones en la Antigüedad*, Oxford. DOI: https://doi.org/10.32028/9781803276823.

BAKHTIN, M. 2003. *Cultura popular en la Edad Media y en el Renacimiento: el contexto de François Rabelais*, Madrid.

BEARD, M. 2014. *Laughter in Ancient Rome. On Joking, Tickling and Cracking up*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London.

BODDICE, R. 2018. *The History of Emotions*, Manchester.

BODSON, L. 1998. Ancient Greek Views on the Exotic Animal, *Arctos: Acta Philologica Fennica* 32, 61-85. DOI: https://doi.org/10.71390/arctos.86027.

BOROWSKI, Y. 2015. Laughter in Ancient Greek Drama of the Classical Period. Tragedy and Satyr Play, Ph.D. thesis, University of Lodz.

CHANIOTIS, A. 2012. *Unveiling Emotions in the Greek World,* Stuttgart. DOI: https://doi.org/10.25162/9783515104999.

CHANTRAINE, P. 1999. *Dictionnaire Étymologique de la Langue Greque. Histoire des Mots*, Paris.

CONNORS, C. 2004. Monkey Business: Imitation, Authenticity, and Identity from Pithekoussai to Plautus, *Classical Antiquity* 23(2), 179-207. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1525/ca.2004.23.2.179.

DÍAZ-REGAÑÓN, J. M. (ed.). 1984. *Claudio Eliano. Historia de los Animales. Libros IX-XVII*, Madrid.

DUNHAM, S. 1985. The monkey in the Middle, *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und Vorderasiatische Archäologie* 75(2), 234-264, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1515/zava.1985.75.2.234.

FRANCO, C. 2014. *Shameless. The Canine and the Feminine in Ancient Greece*, Oakland. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520957428.

FRISK, H.V. 1960. *Grieschisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Heidelberg.

GARCÍA, C. '1972. Sobre 'πιθηκίζω: hacer el mono', *Emerita* 40(2), 453-460.

[131] KITCHELL 2020, 471.

[132] MACKOWIAK 2013, 27.

GARCÍA, J.L., GARCÍA-BELLIDO, M., TORALLAS TOVAR, S. (eds.). 2015. *Estrabón. Geografía. Libros XV-XVII*, Madrid.

GREENLAW, C. 2001. *The Representation of Monkeys in the Art and Through of Mediterranean Cultures*, Oxford.

GOUDSMIT, J., BRANDON-JONES, D. 2000. Evidence from the Baboon Catacomb in North Saqqara for a West Mediterranean Monkey Trade Route to Ptolemaic Alexandria, *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 86(1), 111-119, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/030751330008600115.

HALLIWELL, S. 1991. The uses of laughter in Greek culture, *The Classical Quarterly* 41(2), 279-296, DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0009838800004468.

HALLIWELL, S. 2008. *Greek laughter: A Study of Cultural Psychology from Homer to Early Christianity*, Cambridge.

HUNTER, V. 2007. Did the Athenians have a word for crime?, *Dike* 10, 5-18.

JENNISON. G. 1937. *Animals for Show and Pleasure in Ancient Rome*, Manchester.

KALOF, L. (ed.). 2007. A Cultural History of Animals in Antiquity: Vol. I, Oxford.

KELLER, O. 1909. *Die Antike Tierwelt*, Hildesheim.

KINDT, J. 2017. Review Article Capturing the Ancient Animal: Human/Animal Studies and the Classics, *The Journal of Hellenistic Studies* 137, 213 – 225.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/S0075426917000167.

KINDT, J. 2021. *Animals in Ancient Greek Religion*, London and New York.

KITCHELL, K.F. 2014. *Animals in the Ancient World from A to Z*, London and New York.

KITCHELL, K.F. 2020. Talking Birds and Sobbing Hyenas: Imitative Human Speech in Ancient Animals. In: H. Schmalzgruber (ed.), *Speaking Animals in Ancient Literature*, 447-476. Heidelberg.

KORHONEN, T., RUONAKOSKI, E. 2017. *Human and Animal in Ancient Greece: Empathy and Encounter in Classical Literature*, London and New York.

KOSTUCH, L. 2017. Do animals have a homeland? Ancient Greeks on the cultural identity of animals, *Humanimalia* 9(1), 69-87.

LAZENBY, F.D. 1949. Greek and Roman Household Pets, *The Classical Journal* 44(4), 245-252.

LE GOFF, J. 1989. Rire au Moyen Age, *Les Cahiers du Centre de Recherches Historiques* 3, 1-10, DOI: https://doi.org/10.4000/ccrh.2918.

LIDDELL, H.G., SCOTT, R. 1996. *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford.

LILJA, S. 1980. The ape in ancient comedy, *Arctos: Acta Philologica Fennica* 14, 31-38.

LISSARRAGUE, F. 1988. L'homme, le singe et le satyre. In: B. Cassin, J.L. Labarrière (eds.) *L'animal dans l'antiquité*, 455-472. Paris.

LONSDALE, S. 1979. Attitude towards Animals in Ancient Greece, *Grece & Rome* 26(2), 146-159.

LUCAS DE DIOS, J. M. (ed.). 2002. *Esquines. Discursos, testimonios y cartas*, Madrid.

LUTGENDORF, P. 2007. *Hanuman's Tale: the Messages of a Divine Monkey*, Oxford.

MACÍA, L. (ed.). 2007. *Aristófanes. Comedias III: Lisístrata, Las Tesmoforias, Las Ranas, La Asamblea de las Mujeres, Pluto*, Madrid.

MACKOWIAK, K. 2013a. Des usages du singe en Béotie: l'animalité entre discours et function, *Ktèma* 38, 217-240. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3406/ktema.2013.1410.

MACKOWIAK, K. 2013b. Le singe mirroir de l´homme? Enjeux dúne confrontation en Grèce ancienne, *Revue de l´histoire de religions* 1, 5-36, DOI: https://doi.org/10.4000/rhr.8058.

MASTELLARI, V. 2018. *Commento a cinque poeti comici di IV sec. a.C.*, Freiburg.

MCDERMOTT, W. C. 1935. The ape in Greek literature, *TAPA*, 66, 165-176.

MCDERMOTT, W. C. 1938. *Ape in Antiquity*, Oxford.

MONTAGU, A. 1940. Knowledge of the Ape in Antiquity, *Isis* 32(1), 87-102.

MUÑOZ, V. 2008. Insultos e Invectiva entre Demóstenes y Esquines, *Minerva* 21, 33-49.

NEWMYER, S. 2011. *Animals in Greek and Roman Thought. A Sourcebook*, New York.

PAREJA, M.N., MCKINNEY, T., MAYHIEW, J.A., SETCHELL, J.M., NASH, S.D., HEATON, R. 2019. A new Identification of the Monkeys depicted in a Bronze Age Wall Painting from Akrotiri, Thera, *Primates* 61, 159-168. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/s10329-019-00778-1.

PARREU, F. (ed.). 2001. *Diodoro de Sicilia. Biblioteca Histórica. Libros I-III*, Madrid.

RACKHAM, H., JONES, W. (eds.). 1967. *Pliny, Natural History, vol. III*, Boston and London.

REDDY, W. 2001. *Navigation of Feeling. A Framework for the History of Emotions*, Cambridge. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511512001.

RENEHAN, R. 1981. The Greek Anthropocentric View of Man, *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 85, 239-259. DOI: https://doi.org/10.2307/311176.

RUSSELL, N. 2011. *Social Zooarchaeology: Humans and Animals in Prehistory*, Cambridge. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9781139019712.

STADEN, H.V. 2013. Writing the Animal: Aristotle, Pliny the Elder Galen. In: A. Markus (ed.) *Medical and Mathematical Authorship in Ancient Greece*, 111-144. Berlin and Boston.

STEINER, D. 2016. Making Monkeys: Archilochus frr. 185–187 w. In: V. Cazzato, A. Lardinois (eds.) *The Look of Lyric: Greek Song and the Visual Book Subtitle: Studies in Archaic and Classical Greek Song*, 108-145. Leiden and Boston.

THOMMEN, L. 2012. *An Environmental History of Ancient Greece and Rome*, Cambridge. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511843761.

THUMIGER, C. 2014. Animals in tragedy. In: G.L. Campbell (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Animals in Classical Thought and Life*, 84-98. Oxford.

TRINQUIER, J. 2017. Les animaux, caricatures de l'homme?: Le cas exemplaire du singe. *Archive ouverte en Sciences de l'Homme et de la Société*. https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-01629641.

URIBE, S. 2023. *Simia quam similis turpissuma bestia nobis: interacciones entre los romanos y los primates (s. III a. C. – V d.C.)*, Madrid.

VESPA, M. 2017. A Voice without a Muse. Primates and the Ancient Phonosphere in Greek and Roman Cultures, *Greek and Roman Musical Studies* 5, 159-177. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/22129758-12341298.

VESPA, M. 2019. Le 'Tête-de-chien' (κυνοκέφαλος) des Grecs L'Égypte au prisme des animaux. In: S. Porcier, S. Ikram, S. Pasquali (eds.) *Creatures of Earth, Water and Sky. Essays on Animals in Ancient Egypt and Nubia*, 331-339. Leiden.

VESPA, M. 2022. *Geloion Mimēma: studi sulla rappresentazione culturale della scimmia nei testi greci e greco-romani*, Turnhout.

VESPA, M., ZUCKER, A. 2020. Imiter ou communiquer. L'intention du singe dans la littérature gréco-romaine, *Mètis* 18, 233-250. DOI: https://doi.org/10.4000/books.editionsehess.29569.

WEILER, I. 2002. Inverted Kalokagathia, *Slavery & Abolition: A Journal of Slave and PostSlave Studies* 23(2), 9-28. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/714005237.

WOLFSON, E.G. 2018. *Pictorial Representations of Monkeys and Simianesque Creatures in Greek Art*, Columbia. DOI: https://doi.org/10.32469/10355/66131.

ZATTA, C. 2019. *Interconnectedness. The Living World of the Early Greek Philosopher*, Sankt Augustin. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5771/9783896657978.