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Empathy in animal-based tourism contrasting constructed care and care ethics at a captive wildlife venue

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to introduce the work of the eighteenth-century German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder on empathy to contemporary tourism. Animals and humans share a language of nature, which was an essential point of departure for Herder in arguing that the sensual must be elevated alongside the empirical in arriving at deeper truths. Herder's philosophy is used as a benchmark to examine empathy-based programmes at the Seattle Aquarium, which also speaks of a language of nature through its animal-based empathy programming. A synthesis of these two bodies of knowledge, and conceptual framework, uncovers several comparatives over the ethos, pathos and logos of empathy at captive animal venues, where we must reconcile use as a function of institutional realities and the constructed care that goes into the facilitation of animal-human interactions.

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Introduction

Expressions of empathy and sympathy towards animals are not new. To be sure, a litany of writers and scholars from bygone eras championed the cause of animals against a prevailing norm of cruelty. Niven (1967), for example, documented sympathetic advocates of the humane movement over hundreds of years, with examples tracing back to how the Egyptians valued the psychological qualities of animals, how the Mesopotamians took care of their domestic animals, and the teaching of Jainism by Mahavira in India. In addition, Niven (1967) includes the animal defence movement through early Christianity, the Renaissance, and the introduction of humane legislation in the United Kingdom and other countries. However, what *is* new is a revival of scholarship on empathy and sympathy in humans (Pïirimäe, 2020) and animal studies. Regarding the latter, biologists have discovered how empathy evolved in primates, cetaceans and elephants and demonstrated a range of cognitive and emotional behaviours, indicating adaptive mechanisms for changing and unpredictable environments (Pérez-Manrique & Gomila, 2018).

Empathy is now a topic of investigation in several disciplines (Cuff et al., 2016), including tourism (Tucker, 2016). A sub-field of tourism where research on empathy has become an important theme is animal-based tourism. An early example of an empathetic tie to animals comes from Brooks and Smith (1991) in an article written for the National Museum of Natural History Bulletin for Teachers. Brooks and Smith (1991) explained that gorillas and chimpanzees regularly receive public sympathy and conservation funding. They further observe that this

> public empathy … stems from the long-term efforts of Jane Goodall and Dian Fossey, and other primatologists who have demonstrated the close kinship between these animals and ourselves and made us aware of the dangers these primates face in a developing Africa. (p. 1)

Their statement affirms the importance of safeguarding great apes in the face of mounting tourism in Africa and the emotional connection humans have for these animals.

Still, Brooks and Smith's (1991) statement seems out of place and time in tourism because of the continued poor treatment of animals (Earthwise Aware, 2022). Furthermore, while we have theoretical guidance to use in the extension of empathy towards animals both outside (e.g. Gruen, 2009) and inside tourism (Taylor et al., 2020), missing from our literature is connectivity to the past; research tapping into the works of scholars who paved the way to a deeper affective and cognitive connection with animals, and whether this thinking has application in the present day. In an effort to fill this gap, Johann Gottfried Herder's work on empathy for animals is engaged as a foundation to build a framework for empathy in animal-based tourism. Empathy in the manner conceived by Herder reflects 'feeling in to'

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someone (Pïirimäe, 2020, p. 2) or as feeling ourselves, or our way, into the consciousness of others (Wispé, 1987). Herder's philosophy, used sparingly in tourism studies to reflect a disdain for European exceptionalism (Elliot, 2019; Sikka, 2016), is used as a comparative from which to examine an empathy-based programme at the Seattle Aquarium. A further aim is to develop a conceptual framework that identifies two principal ways – constructed care and an ethic of care – that empathy can be theorised and applied in the use of animals. Such an approach is aided by analysing institutional structures that induce and prevent empathy towards animals through a discussion of their ethos, pathos, and logos.

The paper's main point of departure is growing recognition, both in the literature and in practice, that the instrumental use of animals in tourism is no longer accepted as a favourable norm (see, for example, Fennell, 2022a; Fennell & Thomsen, 2021). Showing empathy towards animals, therefore, provides an added dimension to what it means to be responsible and sustainable in tourism.

Literature review

The review of literature is centred on three main aspects. The first is a brief foray into Herder's philosophy on empathy (he also included sympathy, which generally refers to 'feeling with' someone as observed by Pïirimäe, 2020, p. 2), but such is not a focus here. Herder's work is voluminous, and, as a result, only some aspects of his thinking are included. The second part of this section includes a summary of work on empathy in tourism (briefly) but more substantially on tourism and animal ethics. Finally, the Seattle Aquarium is presented as an example of how empathy is being used in animal-based tourism practices.

Herder on empathy[a]

Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803) was a German philosopher and theologian whose contribution to the philosophical canon was through theology, human nature, history, and language. As a 'philosopher of the very first rank' (Forster, 2002, p. 1) and firmly rooted in the belief that humans were created in the image of God, with God speaking through human action (Oliver, 2006), Herder is credited with establishing disciplines such as language, hermeneutics, interpretative methodology, and modern anthropology (Forster, 2002), and for inventing a new term that equates with empathy (*Einfuhlung*). Pïirimäe (2020) illustrates that Herder's *Einfuhlung* was conceived as a 'subjectivist concern with the depths of one's own soul' (p. 4). The focus on empathy as part of Herder's grand treatise on human nature evolved within an emerging Romantic movement that spoke against European society's arrogance, ignorance and indulgences, which judged poorly other global cultures for failing to advance to the lofty political, economic and cultural standards of Europe. Such criticism also encompassed how European society used and abused animals as a show of habitual cruelty (Steintrager, 2001, p. 72). Herder's views thus moved away from Cartesian dualisms to the belief that not only do animals have souls but also that humans are, in fact, animals. Herder even foreshadowed later twentieth-century views (Singer, 1975) on the primacy of pain and suffering as shared physical and psychological states between humans and animals by insisting that *the question of whether the suffering creature is an animal or a fellow human makes no difference* (Almog, 2020, p. 111).

Herder's philosophy

Heinz and Clairmont (2009) observe that following the work of David Hume, Herder's general approach was that empiricism fails in principle because it cannot substantiate its foundations. As noted by Forster (2002), Herder felt that

> (1) morality is more a matter of sentiments than cognitions, (2) cognitivist theories of morality … are based on a mistake, and hence useless as a means of moral enlightenment or improvement, and (3) but … worse than that, they are actually harmful to morality, because they weaken the moral sentiments on which it really rests. (p. xiii)

At the same time, however, Herder recognised the opposite was also true: idealism or affect could not be grounded in absolutes (Forster, 2002). Herder accepted that humans, unlike animals, are hybrid beings able to speak to internal sensuous representations and the objective certainty of the external world (Heinz & Clairmont, 2009). These two forms of certainty allowed for diversity and a more penetrating interrogation of truth. It is not that Herder denied reason but instead human reliance on pure reason that he judged to be far too restrictive. As Bunge (2005) observes, Herder was after a kind of rationality that was far more comprehensive by defending the position that human beings are not just rational but likewise 'historical, social, linguistic, emotional, and religious creatures' (p. viii).

The preceding discussion provides a backdrop to delve deeper into Herder's more specific ideas around empathy found in his *Treatise on the Origin of Language* (hereafter referred to as the *Treatise*). Herder's first

objective was to develop a philosophy of language with deep roots in the simple and rudimentary sounds and sensations of animals and humans as 'natural language' (p. 67), establishing the most effective conduit to find proximity to animals (Almog, 2020). Animals and humans coexisted in the environment and practised a 'language of sensation' (p. 66) that expressed itself in sound. These expressions and sounds manifest in the sensation of pain that is immediate and physical rather than reflective and abstractive. The moment of origin for human language is not a function of rationality suppressing subjectivity but instead through intimate connectivity between these two opposing states (Ferber, 2010). On Herder's account:

> That the human being originally shares this language of sensation with the animals is, to be sure, evidenced more now by certain remains than by full eruptions. But even these remains are irrefutable. Our artificial language may have displaced the language of nature, our civilized manner of life and our social polite behavior and dammed, dried out, and drained off the flood and sea of the passions, as much as one wants, but the most violent moment of sensation, wherever and however seldom it occurs, still reassumes its right, and immediately resounds in its mother tongue through emphases. (Forster, *Treatise*, 2002/1772, pp. 66–67)

Herder argues that there is a destiny for the expression of passion through how these sounds can affect another person by asking: Who is there who, faced with a shaking, whining tortured person, with a moaning dying person, and even with a groaning farm animal, when its whole machine is suffering [Herder uses the metaphor of the 'finest instrument strings of animal feeling' as the mechanism of feeling bodies (Forster, *Treatise*, 2002/1772, p. 65)], is not touched to his heart by this 'Ah'? 'Who is such a feelingless barbarian' (Forster, *Treatise*, 2002/1772, p. 72). Herder also felt that civilisation separates humans from the rest of nature; the more civilised we become, the less attuned we are to understanding rudimentary linguistic usages (pain and distress in animals), and the less we can take empathy in their plight.

Herder thus felt it was essential to invert the senses so that the gaze becomes recessive to the importance of feeling our way into the world. On DeSouza's (2020) account, 'feeling in general is for Herder the foundation of all knowledge. The sense of touch is simply the very first way in which the soul comes to feel' (p. 41), emphasising the intricate connection between mind (soul) and body. Furthermore, this feeling-in provides the ability to know and to feel oneself, which is the pathway to being able 'to feel others or to feel what they are feeling' (p. 44). DeSouza (2020) refers to this as an interplay between *self-feeling* (what Herder referred to as Selbstgefühl) and *feeling-with* (Mitgefühl) as the basis of sympathy, with analogy towards the forces of attraction and repulsion and the expansion and contraction of one's will (DeSouza, 2020).

These themes are discussed in the *Treatise* based on Herder's rejection of Diderot's belief that a blind man is undoubtedly less sensitive to the pain and anguish of animals. Herder instead argues that it is first the cries of the animal and then the touching of the creature that builds on the sympathies of the witness.

> To be sure, the whole moving visual drama of this miserable, shaking creature is masked from him. But all examples testify that precisely through this masking the sense of hearing becomes less distracted, more attentive, and greatly more penetrating. There he listens in darkness, consequently, in the stillness of his eternal night, and each moan penetrates his heart that much more deeply and sharply, like an arrow! Now let him in addition take in aid the touching, slowly embracing sense of feeling, let him touch the shakings, feel the breaking, of the suffering machine for himself in their entirety – horror and pain shoots through his limbs, his inner nerve structure feels the breaking and destruction in sympathy; the death rattle sounds. That is *the bond of this natural language*!. (Forster, *Treatise*, 2002/1772, p. 73)

The connection between God, religion, and nature also manifests in Herder's, *Letters for the advancement of humanity – tenth collection* (1793–97), which reflects his ideas around peace and social justice. Herder advances an early holism in the *Letters* by grounding philosophy in nature through natural metaphors that typically explain a sense of unity of the earth's creatures. Herder felt that the 'earth is probably an organic being' (Forster, *Letters*, 2002/1793–97, p. 419), with all living beings as part of this organic being, and where sensation, cognition and love were conceived as different interconnected elements of the same life processes (Bunge, 2005). In letter 123, Herder writes that

> "The *tendency of human nature* contains within it a *universe* whose inscription is: No one for himself only, each for all; thus are you all dear to each other and happy." An infinite variety striving for a unity that lies in all, that advances all. Its name is (I wish to repeat this again and again) understanding, justice, goodness, *feeling of humanity*. (Forster, *Letters*, 2002/1793–97, p. 424)

Herder would argue earlier in the same letter that although understanding is most certainly 'the common treasure of the human species' (Forster, *Letters*, 2002/1793–97, p. 422), it is not enough. He writes, 'a

strengthened great and good will, trainings from youth on, fighting prizes and habituation, so that what is most difficult becomes easiest for us … ' (Forster, *Letters*, 2002/1793–97, p. 422). Habituation of good character, virtue ethics, along with justice, love and mercy (Martinson, 2009), and based on the inclusion of all human beings globally (unity), was the recipe for Herder in developing the correct type of moral character from the balance of reason and emotion.

Contemporary scholars identify two primary forms of empathy. Self-oriented empathy in which the agent imagines 'what it is like for me to be in your situation', as well as other-directed empathy in which 'a person represents the situation from the other person's point of view and thus attempts to simulate the target individual's experiences as though she were the target individual' (Coplan, 2011, p. 9). It is the second of these forms, Coplan (2011) adds, that allows for an experiential understanding of another's plight. Pïirimäe (2020) argues that these two forms are implicit in Herder's approach. Humans instinctively can '"feel themselves into" everything and everybody, whereby he primarily means a swift transposition of oneself into another's position (body)' (Pïirimäe, 2020, p. 31). Herder thus maintained what has been established by scholars as a 'unified conception of empathy' (p. 30) or as a 'general metaphysical principle (force), which can be found at all levels of being' (Pïirimäe, 2020), as a natural law unifying humans, nations and animals based on equity (Pïirimäe, 2020).

The following seven key themes provide a summary of Herder's thoughts on empathy, which will be used to compare against the empathy programming of the Seattle Aquarium (Table 1).

- We should take a pluralistic approach through cognitive and empathetic/sensual/affective states, i.e. humans are 'hybrid beings' in balancing emotion and reason.
- Animals as subjective others – the 'eachness of each thing'.
- 'Feeling-in' and 'feeling-with' become evident through the sense of touch – knowing ourselves and the animal as more critical than the gaze.
- There is value in habituation and good character, virtuous and moral behaviour, and justice.
- Natural language or language of sensation provides proximity to the animal other.
- There is a natural law based on holism unifying humans, nations and animals based on equity – organic interrelationships.
- Mirroring the emotions, i.e. understanding and being sensitive to the fortunes and misfortunes of others.

Empathy in animal-based tourism

Empathy-based scholarship has recently spilled over into the tourism studies domain where, according to Tucker (2016; see also Tucker, 2009), there has been a 'horrifying' (p. 38) general lack of empathy extended to marginalised others. In cases where empathy has been activated, there exists an over-identification with the plight of others without actually 'knowing' their pain and plight perpetuating colonist narratives and realities (Tucker, 2016; see also Fuss, 1995). Tethered to empathy, Tucker (2016) adds, are feelings of shame (see Pedwell, 2013). Both empathy and shame are essential in creating tension, disruption and uncertainty in our thinking that disrupts our habitus, i.e. 'our ways of positioning ourselves and being in the world' [and] 'how and why individuals cannot move beyond the limitations inbred at an early age' (Probyn, 2005, p. 50). Based on research by Pedwell (2012), Tucker (2016) further argues that it is not only that we should 'know' or 'feel' for the other but that we should seek to understand better the broad structures that we find ourselves embedded as part of the critical tourism studies agenda.

In keeping with Tucker's (2016) views on the lack of empathy for marginalised others, I extend this thinking to include the use of animals in tourism, which is said to evoke strong emotions in human participants (Buckley, 2022; Shaheer et al., 2021; Staus & Falk, 2013). Empathy is briefly discussed in the context of animal ethics theories, proximity and direct interaction with animals, conservation complexities around empathy, and culture. Such has relevance given the finding that there is a distinct universal animal welfare value that is defined as 'empathetic concern for the welfare of all animals' (Lee et al., 2019, p. 169) and belief in the sentiency of animals and the need to protect them (Lee et al., 2019; see also Sneddon et al., 2016). This approach corresponds to the belief noted in the introduction that the instrumental use of animals in tourism is no longer accepted as a favourable norm.

Of the spectrum of animal ethics theories discussed in tourism, contractarianism is the most representative of conventional tourism practice. 'Rational' and 'reciprocal' humans enter into contractual agreements without due regard for the agency of animals who hold merely instrumental value. For example, although Cousquer and Allison (2012) argue for compassion in animal-based tourism, they conclude in their paper on the mountain guide's ethical responsibility to pack animals on expedition that 'Failure to pay attention to the health and welfare of the pack animals … has the potential to jeopardise the success of the expedition and, indeed,

Table 1. Merging Herder's philosophy with the Seattle Aquarium's best practices on empathy.

Seattle Aquarium's 6 best practices on empathy ⇨ towards wildlife, based on **empirical** data	Examples of concrete practices of the Seattle Aquarium stemming from **empirical** data Links to Herder's **philosophy** (superscripts, see bottom of Table)
Framing The language and behaviour of the educator have the power to discourage or encourage empathy (Chawla, 2009).	• Frame conversations about animals as subjective others with unique experiences, jobs, needs and intentions. [2, 5] • Intentionally choose words that encourage children to see animals as animate others, like pronouns and names. [2, 5] • Provide space and time for students to talk about an animal's personality, experiences, and intentions in comparison and contrast to their own. [2, 5, 7] • Verbally acknowledge an animal's experiences in conversation and allow for questions about the animal's perceived thoughts and feelings as launching points for conversation. [1, 2, 5]
Modelling In developing affective skills like empathy, valued adults and teachers play an essential role (Chawla, 2009), built through modelling, relationships, dialogue, practice, and confirmation (Bergman, 2004).	• Physically model the empathic behaviors we want students to perform – especially when you have their undivided attention. [4] • Support parents as moral role models by engaging them and modelling ways of interacting, asking questions, and talking about animals with their children. [4, 5] • Develop consistent programming messaging with students to reinforce moral learning over time. [4, 5]
Increasing knowledge By increasing students' knowledge of their own emotions and the experiences of others, students can more accurately perceive the emotions of others (Myers, 2007; Myers et al., 2009). By better understanding the 'mental experiences of animals', we can improve the accuracy of our empathy by 'integrating knowledge with feeling, and capitalizing on the motivational power of feelings'. (Hill, 1995, *p*. 141).	• Share information that helps guests understand how and why an animal behaves a certain way. [6] • Facilitate conversations that share information about individual animals, their place in the aquarium, and their relationship to their wild relatives. [6] • Draw on similarities and differences between an animal's experiences and our own. [7]
Providing experiences Interaction directly with animals initiates natural care (Myers & Saunders, 2002). Just by interacting and spending time in nature, people are more likely to develop a connection with it (Chawla, 2009).	• Provide opportunities for guests to watch, touch, and observe animals. [3] • Deeper affective connections with animals will occur if the animals are allowed to show agency (like eating, grooming, exploring, etc.), show agency while interacting with the guests (during trainings or feedings) or interact with the guests without staff presence (on exhibit). [1, 3] • Repeat experiences, if possible, to widen the opportunity for empathy. [4] • Provide information about the intent, motivation, and purpose of behaviors the guests are observing. [5]
Practice Going a step beyond spending time with animals, practice involves providing opportunities for people to successfully practice empathy and receive positive feedback when observed (Arluke, 2003). When students can successfully practice something, they build self-efficacy or belief in their ability to do it (Chawla, 2009).	• Provide opportunities for children to care for, feed, train, and interact with animals in ways that require accessing empathy. [3, 6] • Have discussions about how to know what different animals need. [3, 6] • Call out and positively acknowledge when desired empathic statements, questions, and behaviors are displayed. [5, 6]
Activating imagination When people cognitively take the perspective of another, they increase their concern for the animal's wellbeing (Berenguer, 2010), as in: 'How do you think it would feel if someone did that to you?'	• Mimicry is physically moving or perceiving the world through another's perspective. It activates mirror neurons and helps promote kinesthetic empathy (Myers, 2007). [7] • Through kinesthetic empathy, we can better understand an animal's attitudes or motor intentions just by moving as they do (Myers, 2007). [3] • Role-playing involves taking on the animal's identity based on concrete observations or species knowledge and then interacting with others or the environment as that animal. This activates connections between emotions and thoughts, allowing individuals to experience what it is like to be an animal and, in turn, increase their empathy for it (Myers et al., 2009). [1, 3, 6, 7] • Storytelling creates empathic responses as people identify with the characters (Blizard & Schuster, 2007). [1, 5] • Telling stories about the lives of animals and from the perspective of animals can increase children's connection to those animals or that environment (Davis et al., 1996). [1, 5]

Source: Seattle Aquarium (2019).
Aspects of Herder's philosophy:
[1]Pluralistic approach through cognitive and empathetic/sensual/affective states. Humans as hybrid beings
[2]Animals as subjective others – the eachness of each thing
[3]Evidence of feeling-in and feeling-with through the sense of touch–as knowing ourselves and the animal
[4]Habituation and good character or virtuous and moral behaviour
[5]Natural language or language of sensation
[6]Holism and connection of all things; organic interrelationships
[7]Mirroring the emotions, i.e. fortunes and misfortunes of others.
NOTE:
[a]I have drawn direct quotes of Herder from the following translated works by Forster:
Herder, J. G. (2002). *Treatise on the Origin of Language* (M. N. Forster, Trans.). Cambridge (Original work published 1772).
Cited as (Forster, *Treatise*, 2002/1772, *p*. #) in text.
Herder, J. G. (2002). *On the Cognition and Sensation of the Human Soul* (M. N. Forster. Trans.). Cambridge (Original work published 1778).
Cited as (Forster, *Cognition*, 2002/1778, *p*. #) in text
Herder, J. G. (2002). *Letters for the Advancement of Humanity – Tenth Collection* (M. N. Forster, Trans.). Cambridge (Original work published 1793-97).
Cited as (Forster, *Letters*, 2002/1793–97, *p*. #) in text

future ventures … ' (p. 1856). We can argue that care and welfare should not be tied only to the success of expeditions. Nor should we only extend care and empathy to animals when exposed to large-scale anthropocentric disasters, such as the case of koalas burned alive in Australia due to bushfires because they are an iconic species used for tourism profit (Markwell, 2020). Reshaping the intimate spaces between humans and animals requires learning, devotion and compassion in reconfiguring and reimagining responsible animal-based tourism (Äijälä, 2021).

Theory that serves to deepen our understanding of empathy in animal-human interactions often focuses on the concept of care. These approaches stem from work by Kheel (1996), for example, on a feminist caring ethic for our treatment of animals, characterised by a move away from dualisms, patriarchy, and power and towards responsibility and the unity of reason and emotion – a perspective emphasised liberally by Herder, as noted above.

Past studies have compared feminist approaches against other theories, such as utilitarianism and rights. For example, Fennell and Sheppard (2011) used ecofeminist theory to investigate the horrific culling of sled dogs after the Vancouver Olympics in 2012, as did Bertella (2013) on how animals are depicted in Norwegian promotional images. Fish and crustaceans, Bertella discovered, were seen as commodities garnering little sympathy and respect (see Castillo-Huitrón et al., 2020), while more iconic animals like dogs, especially puppies, were promoted in ways that emphasised care (see, also, Tisdell et al., 2006). Ecofeminist theory was used by Bertella (2019) in adopting sustainability to challenge the anthropocentric assumptions inherent in wildlife tourism (Bertella, 2019) and to advance 'inter-species empathy' inherent in ecofeminism, which should be promoted in human leisure activities (Bertella, 2018, p. 298).

Yudina & Fennell (2013) and Yudina & Grimwood (2016) found that patriarchal, masculine, power, and socially constructed systems that underline polar bear tourism in Canada's north position bears as performers in anthropocentric and instrumental ways. Conversely, societies that extend care, compassion and kindness to animals reinforce the importance of the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of animals drawn into tourism. A study by Taylor et al. (2020) used ecofeminism and care ethics to advocate *becoming care-full* in volunteers' interactions with captive elephants in Thailand. The authors found that the experiences of abuse and cruelty evoked empathy, compassion, and feeling embedded in an ethic of care among volunteers.

A feminist approach was employed by Valtonen et al. (2020) on human relationships with the much-maligned mosquito. Intriguing in their analysis is the dichotomous notions of care and violence which compel us to confront co-emergence and co-dependency as both species travel together through life with blood as the currency of connection (see parallels with McKibben's (1999) work on tourists and black flies). The theme of co-creating or making-kin with animals is extended in work by Hoarau-Heemstra and Kline (2022), who used ecofeminism to explore how empathy can be enacted by all human stakeholders involved in tourism. Here there is recognition of animal sentience and agency that implores us to elevate their status as subjects and not simply objects used for instrumental ends, which entails responsibility for animals in such use (Äijälä, 2019; Haanpää et al., 2021; Notzke, 2019).

The normative dimension discussed above, i.e. growing recognition that the instrumental use of animals in tourism is no longer accepted as a favourable norm, has recently been explored by Fennell (2022a). Using Donaldson and Dunfee's (1994) integrative social contracts theory, Fennell argued that it is challenging to implement global principles on responsible animal use (from NGOs and other international bodies) against local animal practices, because global versus local priorities and norms often differ on religious, cultural, economic, and social grounds. As such, a series of hypernorms was suggested by Fennell to guide future practices of animal use in the future as an expression of care, with hypernorms deemed to be dominant over local practices, which were argued to be recessive (Supplementary Table 1). Hypernorms are defined as 'principles so fundamental that, by definition, they serve to evaluate lower-order norms, reaching to the root of what is ethical for humanity. They represent norms by which all others are to be judged' (Donaldson & Dunfee, 1999, p. 46). The seven hypernorms identified by Fennell (2022a) include the Pinnacle of practice; Recognition of beneficence; Non-maleficence; Enhance literacy and education; Justice; Recognise agency and self-determination; and Animal-informed consent.

Researchers have also discovered that proximity provides a more satisfying touristic experience (Zeppel & Muloin, 2008), because of close or direct contact with animals (Orams, 1997). (Recall the intricate relationship between language and empathy for Herder, above, in gaining proximity to animals.) These experiences stir emotions in extending empathy towards animals (Ballantyne & Packer, 2005). Markwell et al. (2019) found that visitors to a Tasmanian devil sanctuary established an emotional bond with animals found to be active in the enclosures and less of a bond with animals not in view. Maguire et al. (2020) found that being closer to nature and making eye contact with animals led to a

more intimate and embodied experience and stronger emotional connection (Tallberg et al., 2021; see also Bertella, 2018). However, the extent to which interpretive content based on empathy can stimulate pro-conservation behaviour has been called into question (Young et al., 2018). Cui et al. (2012) argue that the scientific, conservationist model of wildlife management necessitates keeping humans away from animals. Such a measure has the drawback of possibly reducing empathy through the elimination of proximity.

Scholars also talk of false intimacy towards animals. Sperb (2016) argues that even though advocacy for rights and conservation is based on empathy in edutainment, the separation between exploitation and conservation is often blurred. For Griffin et al. (2020), animal use is often based on maximising economic benefits, with individual and organisational self-interest taking precedence over the intrinsic value of nature – utilitarianism favoured over individual rights. There is little place for principles of 'do no harm' (von Essen et al., 2020) based on empathy and the notion that 'individuals matter', because these interfere with conservation actions such as the killing of exotic species that threaten endemic species. In a tourism context, keeping animals in captive environments is ethically justifiable from a utilitarian standpoint because more happiness is realised for tourists over captive animals in maximising pleasure over pain for all involved (Fennell, 2012). These criticisms serve to indicate that while sound in theory, the operationalisation of empathy has proven difficult especially given that it is immersed in utilitarian and instrumental realities.

The Seattle Aquarium

The Seattle Aquarium is a well-publicised state-of-the-art example of a captive animal venue that has successfully operationalised empathy. Run as a non-profit and accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), the mission of the Seattle Aquarium is centred on inspiring conservation of the marine environment (Seattle Aquarium, 2022b, online), with a focus on sustainability, the inspiration of awe, learning and improving, inclusive community, scientific integrity, and honouring place (Seattle Aquarium, 2022c, online). It is the ninth-largest aquarium in the U.S. by attendance hosting over 27 million visitors and providing environmental education to over two million school-aged children (Seattle Aquarium, 2022b). The Aquarium maintains 400 species of mammals, fish, birds, invertebrates, and over 12,000 individuals of these animal classes and is guided by an animal welfare ethic of care (Seattle Aquarium, 2023a). A well-advertised mandate of the Seattle Aquarium is reintroduction and reinforcement, which means 'breeding, rearing and releasing endangered species to reestablish wild populations' (Seattle Aquarium, 2023b).

The Seattle Aquarium offers several programmes, including (1) exhibits such as Birds and Shores, Family Activity Center, Life of a Drifter, Life on the Edge, Marine Animals, Puget Sound, Salmon, The Salmon Way, Tropical Pacific, Underwater Dome, and Window on Washington Waters; (2) public programmes such as Beach Naturalist, Cedar River Salmon Journey, Seattle Aquarium Marine Science Club, Summer Camp; (3) education programmes such as Distance Learning, and Fostering Empathy for Wildlife. For example, the Fostering Empathy for Wildlife education programme argues that 'Research shows that encouraging and developing empathy for animals in children is an important motivator toward action on the animals' behalf. Employing empathy framing allows visitors to see animals as unique individuals worthy of care and conservation' (Seattle Aquarium, 2022a, online).

In the Aquarium's *Best Practices in Developing Empathy toward Wildlife* guide (Seattle Aquarium, 2019), empathy is defined as 'a stimulated emotional state that relies on the ability to perceive, understand, and care about the experiences or perspectives of another person or animal' (Seattle Aquarium, 2019, p. 3). Consistent with the academic literature, empathy is partitioned into three empathetic abilities. While affective empathy 'is the ability to sense or sometimes 'experience' the perceived emotions of another' (Curtin, 2016; as cited in Seattle Aquarium, 2019, p. 3), cognitive empathy 'is the ability to understand the experiences of others by imagining yourself in their reality' (Myers, 2007; as cited in Seattle Aquarium, 2019, p. 3), with the need to use language communication to compare and contrast with others (Myers, 2007). Empathetic concern is viewed as parallel to compassion and 'closely linked to taking action to relieve another's suffering' (Pfattheicher et al., 2016; as cited in Seattle Aquarium, 2019, p. 4).

Captive animal venues, such as the Seattle Aquarium, are now regularly subscribing to the belief that empathy-based messages should replace the doom and gloom of extinctions and ecological disasters (Akerman, 2019; Sobel, 1996), and that empathy promotes pro-environment attitudes and behaviours (see Berenguer, 2007). Akerman (2019) identifies five techniques as best practices for building empathy for animals in captive settings: (1) Individualisation, or seeing the animal as an individual rather than a species; (2) Perspective-taking, or imagining the animal from its point of view; (3) Modelling caring, or modelling

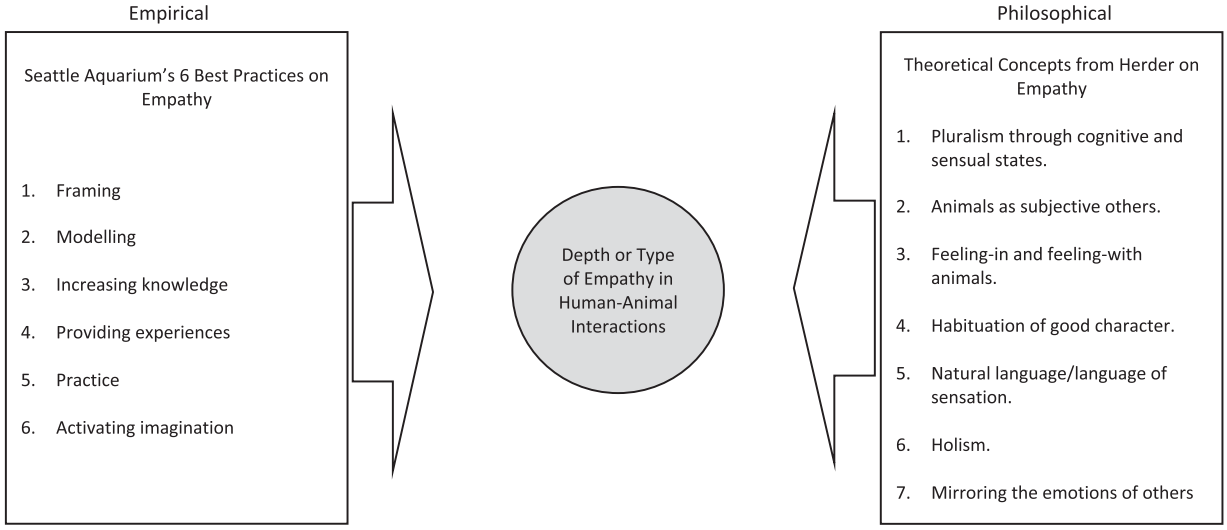

Figure 1. Conceptual framework on empathy in human-animal interactions.

how to meet the needs of animals and showing genuine empathy on the part of presenters; (4) Anthropomorphism, or ascribing human characteristics to animals in building connections between humans and animals; and (5) Transparency of intent, or the best methods to explain the learning objectives of the venue, e.g. the role of such venues as conservation centres. These five techniques are amplified in the Seattle Aquarium's *Best Practices in Developing Empathy toward Wildlife* guide (Seattle Aquarium, 2019) and are discussed in more detail below (see also Table 1).

Methodology

This paper employed a conceptual methodology in pursuing the study's aim. Gilson and Goldberg (2015) illustrate that conceptual papers have a focus on 'What's new' (p. 128) and the ability to 'bridge existing theories in interesting ways, link work across disciplines, provide multi-level insights, and broaden the scope of our thinking' (p. 128). Gilson and Goldberg (2015; Hirschheim, 2008) note there is a focus on integration and new relationships between constructs based on a focal theory or construct. The focal construct used in this study is 'empathy'.

As observed by Xin et al. (2013), conceptual research can be informed by empirical research, philosophical analysis, or a combination of these primary forms. These authors identified 12 different conceptual themes in tourism research, suggesting that often, these themes overlap in creating a fuzzy typology. In the context of the present study, I see evidence of five of Xin et al. (2013) themes, including (1) Comparing concepts in which there is a comparison of similar concepts and how they may contrast; (2) Historical analysis, where there is 'a review of the origins, development, and evolution of a concept or several concepts can be helpful' (p. 78); (3) Applying concepts to practice in achieving better performance of empathy for animals in tourism; (4) Synthesising concepts, in which the act of synthesising empathy is best achieved through a review of literature; and (5) Proposing a new concept, which is an intended aim of the present study.

The principal theme of the five identified above, which has methodological significance, is 'synthesis'. The aim is thus to embark on a process of synthesis that allows for the construction of a new understanding of empathy in animal-based tourism. Theory synthesis is one of four research designs for conceptual papers identified by Jaakkola (2020). It is characterised by conceptual integration across multiple theoretical perspectives, summarising and integrating current understanding, outlining the domain of a new phenomenon or idea, and starting with a central concept understood, as above, as the focal theory or concept.

The process followed is identified in Figure 1. In keeping with the importance of assessing both empirical and sensation-based or affective dimensions of empathy, I compared empathy according to Herder's work (the philosophical) against the Seattle Aquarium's six best practices based on empathy (the empirical) in reaching synthesis or conceptual integration. More specifically, key concepts and themes were identified from Herder described in the Literature Review (above) and compared against the Seattle Aquarium in their Best Practices in Developing Empathy Toward Wildlife stance (Seattle Aquarium, 2019). The guide identifies six best practices and characteristics of empathy

toward wildlife, identified in the first column of Table 1 (and below). The right-hand column includes concrete empathy-based practices of the Seattle Aquarium stemming from empirical data and how these practices correspond to seven key themes or concepts identified in Herder's philosophy (see bottom of Table 1). These seven in no way come close to the range of ideas that Herder expressed through his many texts on empathy. However, they are judged to be broad enough to encompass his basic approach and apply to the use of empathy in animal-based attractions. (NOTE: The best practices focus on building empathy in children but are modified to apply to animal-based tourism actors.)

The intent is to use this 'data' in keeping with theory synthesis (Jaakkola, 2020) to develop a new way for empathy to be theorised and applied in animal-based tourism. Further context is added from the section on empathy in tourism in the Discussion to shed light on captive animal venues by considering institutional structures that induce and suppress empathy toward animals.

Synthesis

The data is presented in this section according to the six best practices in Table 1. Although not exhaustive (given space constraints), representative examples of connections between the Aquarium and Herder's work are illustrated in the sections below.

Framing

The best practice of Framing is characterised by the language and behaviour of educators and how they can instil a sense of empathy in participants. Herder's language of sensation is essential here as it reflects practices such as sharing conversations of animals as subjective 'others' and the selection of words that see animals as animate others and not merely objects for human pleasure and profit. The actions of educators (operators and guides in the tourism context) are also crucial in discussing animals along the lines of subjectivity and through the language of sensation, but also in mirroring the emotions, i.e. the fortunes and misfortunes of others in contrast to their own. Furthermore, the conversation allows for thoughts and feelings of animals' affective and cognitive domains, their subjectivity and how their sensations may be similar or different to humans. Herder's concept of *Einfuhlung* as 'subjectivist concern with the depths of one's own soul' (Piirimäe, 2020, p. 4) has relevance here as participants grapple with the meaning of empathy and how it relates to their view of the world of animals.

Modelling

The second best practice of modelling emphasises the importance of operators and guides in developing tourist empathy. This includes physically modelling empathetic behaviour, identifying moral role models, and using consistent messaging in the programming of events to reinforce moral messages participants need to receive in informing their approach to empathy in animals. These modelling aspects correspond mainly to Herder's views on habituation and good character and how to develop moral values, beliefs and actions. Modelling also corresponds to natural language or the language of sensation as tourists gain an appreciation of how to interact with and discuss animals. In the context of tourism, this applies to guides and operators who should be encouraged to use these techniques to build relationships, dialogue, practice and confirmation about what is right and wrong in the use of animals.

Increasing knowledge

Recent studies in animal-based tourism underscore the importance of increasing animal welfare literacy to better educate tourists and operators on how best to decrease negative impacts on animals (Fennell, 2022c). The Characteristics of Practice column of Increasing Knowledge in Table 1 focuses on the uptake of new knowledge, not of a pedagogical nature in terms of educational outputs, but rather on the emotional context. By gaining a sense of one's empathetic outlook on the use of animals in tourism, we can better perceive the empathy of others. As operators, this might mean recognising when tourists ignore the welfare and interests of animals in favour of their interests. On the other hand, it may also mean focusing on profit to exclude other, more empathic ends. Furthermore, the knowledge-empathy synthesis is evident in this best practice, indicative of Herder's hybrid view of humans striving for goodness and a more robust moral outlook. Increasing knowledge can be actualised in practice through sharing information on the behaviour of animals, the place of animals in the Aquarium and the wild, and how their life-worlds resonate with ours. These practices are reflected in Herder's views on holism and the interrelationship between living things and their environment, as well as the mirroring of emotions and realities between tourists and animals.

Providing experiences

In animal-based forms, like ecotourism, the extant literature suggests that authentic experiences result from

direct contact with nature, i.e. getting *in*to nature to receive its benefits. Such a mindset is reflected in the Providing Experiences best practice, where the argument is that humans can actualise their innate connection with nature/animals (Wilson's, 1993 concept of biophilia) through these nature-based experiences. Herder's views on feeling-in and feeling-with provide another perspective on how empathy might emerge from such engagement. This is reflected in how tourists can watch, touch and observe animals and if animals can demonstrate their agency (Notzke, 2019) while interacting with tourists (e.g. by being fed). However, research stipulates that food provisioning is not an acceptable interaction, nor is touching animals and taking selfies (Moorhouse et al., 2015). Nevertheless, the Seattle Aquarium argues that repeating these experiences enhances empathy for animals. Furthermore, through such experiences, the more information tourists can get on animals they observe, the greater the empathy – once again a function of greater habituation leading to stronger moral attitudes and behaviours.

Practice

Practice involves moving beyond spending time with animals to practising empathy, receiving feedback when observed, and building self-efficacy. The Aquarium contends that empathy will be built from caring for, feeding, training, and interacting with animals in empathetic ways by discussing what animals need and reinforcing when tourists display empathy through their statements and questions, as noted above. As in other best practices above, there is evidence of feeling-in and feeling-with that although these animals are not showing outward signs of pain or distress (indeed, the Aquarium contends that 'Suffering is not a situation guests will find with our animal collections' (p. 4)), it may be challenging to gauge cognitive and emotional suffering.

Activating imagination

In this final best practice, the Aquarium reaffirms the importance of cognitive and affective hybridity that is so important to Herder in diversifying one's outlook on the needs and interests of others. Here there is a connection with the mirroring of emotions considering the fortunes and misfortunes of others, i.e. 'How do you think it would feel if someone did that to you?' (Seattle Aquarium, 2019, p. 12). Specific concrete practices adopted by the Aquarium include mimicry and moving in the same manner as the animal in gaining an appreciation of the animal's perspective, taking on the identity of the animal in expressing what it would like to be that animal, and telling stories about the lives of these animals. The depth of these practices corresponds with Herder's philosophy of empathy according to the cognitive–affective connection, feeling-in and feeling-with the animal, using the language of sensation, investigating organic and holistic interrelationships, and mirroring the actions and emotions of animals.

Discussion

So, what does eighteenth-century proto-Romantic philosophy have to do with present-day animal-based tourism? The synthesis indicates that all of Herder's empathy-based themes are evident in the Aquarium's programming: pluralism through cognitive and affective states; animals as subjective others; feeling in, for and with animals; habituation of good character; using the language of empathy; holism through the welfare and ecocentric philosophy of the Aquarium; and mirroring the emotions of other beings like animals. Furthermore, Herder and the Aquarium affirm human superiority and the instrumental value of animals in their own specific ethic of care. Additionally, both validate current knowledge of human-animal interactions through proximity to animals, which in the case of the Aquarium provides a better experience (Verbos et al., 2018; Zeppel & Muloin, 2008), a stronger emotional bond, and the building of pro-environmental behaviours (Markwell et al., 2019; Orams, 1997).

However, an essential point of departure between Herder and the Aquarium is that in the case of the latter, animals are not 'felt' to induce empathy because of pain and suffering in the language of Herder, but rather as a technique to allow 'visitors to see animals as unique individuals worthy of care and conservation' (Seattle Aquarium, 2022a, online). Recall that empathy in the service of suffering and pain is said not to be an issue at the Aquarium because animals never experience these negative states. Given such a focus, aspects of 'care', 'conservation', and the absence of suffering in captive animal sites at the Aquarium demand further insight.

The *ethos* (methods or information used to show that an institution or individual is reliable, accurate, and ethical) of the Seattle Aquarium is dictated by an institutional framework (AZA) that keeps animals for profit and pleasure but remains credible based on its focus on conservation, research, and education. However, evidence points to the fact that the fourth objective of captive sites, entertainment, takes precedence over the former three (Ballantyne et al., 2007). What is manifest in the practices and approach of the Aquarium,

therefore, and other related institutions, is the necessity to live by a new *pathos* that seeks to evoke empathy and obtain legitimacy by subscribing to a sustainability imperative which makes these venues and the institution altogether more attractive to the public, and which in turn justifies and legitimises human pleasure and profit. The Aquarium, thus, appeals emotionally to its audience through a range of programmes around empathy, even though animals are still held captive because empathy-based messages should replace the negative content around death and extinction (Akerman, 2019; Sobel, 1996). In synch with the intersection of the sensual and cognitive focus of Herder's empathy, the Seattle Aquarium's similar focus on facts to inform the audience on the biology and conservation status of animals (*logos*) exists as a form of persuasive language. The preceding suggests that it is not that we should only know or feel for the other but also that we should come to understand the structures (Tucker, 2016) that either promote or suppress, however intentional or unintentional, empathy – and for what purpose: conservation, education, research, or entertainment.

Although advocacy for rights and conservation is often based on empathy in edutainment (Sperb, 2016), the separation between exploitation and conservation is often blurred along economic lines (Griffin et al., 2020). What drives this ethos, therefore, is utilitarian calculus based on the principle of the greatest good for the greatest number. The AZA (2022) reports that 183 million visitors generate more than $US 24 billion annually in the United States alone. If captive animal institutions do educate visitors, they can enhance pro-conservation behaviours at a broad-scale level. However, with over 700 million participants in captive animal venues per year (IUCN, 2021), the method, if it is at all a method, is not working (Curtin, 2006; Moscardo, 2007). Moreover, a primary concern is that although we see animals as unique individuals worthy of care and conservation, these few are required to sacrifice so that many may flourish in the wild (Marino et al., 2009).

As such, in assessing the lives of captive animals in captive settings, we can go no further than utilitarianism, animal welfare, and ecocentrism (Fennell & Sheppard, 2020) because animals live within a milieu of what can be viewed as *constructed care* (Figure 2). Constructed care is defined as the adoption of a pathos that seeks to impose its legitimacy on others, like tourists, whilst being embedded in an ethos and logos framed by an institutional structure that is instrumental and utilitarian by nature. Trade-offs are thus obligatory in support of humans' pleasure and profit motives at the expense of animals (see Burns, 2017; von Essen et al., 2020).

Matched against the hypernorms developed by Fennell (2022a), it is determined that only rudimentary elements of an emerging normative perspective on care exist at the Aquarium. Although the Aquarium may be a case of best practice within its animal welfare and conservation science mandate, the *pinnacle of practice* emerges from a more comprehensive overview of empathy well beyond the boundaries of empirical science on empathy, to one that embraces a more eclectic blend of science and philosophy. The Aquarium shows signs of *beneficence* by developing a principled organisational culture that emphasises the use of ethical management practices (guides and interpreters) and by adopting new thinking on how empathy can be infused in science and practice. *Non-maleficence* or 'do no harm', although reported to be a staple feature of the Aquarium is subject to greater scrutiny given the captive nature and the inability of animals to participate in normal behaviour. *Literacy and education* remain one of the most vital features of the Aquarium, but as above, these are immersed within a very specialised and directed narrative. Fennell and Sheppard (2020) argue that captive settings such as the Aquarium represent cases of shallow or no *justice* because animals cannot live in the environments in which they were meant to live. Furthermore, although the Aquarium indicates that animals show *agency* 'while interacting with the guests (during trainings or feedings)', this agency reflects constructed care. Such is an expression of agency that corresponds to what is essential in moving from doom and gloom to more meaningful experiences for patrons (Akerman, 2019). The final hypernorm developed by Fennell (2022), *animal-informed consent*, suggests that animals show a willingness to perform the tasks that the Aquarium asks of them through an assessment of cognitive, affective, and behavioural/motivation signs. More research is needed to better understand this hypernorm, but anecdotal evidence suggests that some zoos give animals the option of performing for crowds or not (Personal communication, Daniel Bisgrove, June 24, 2022).

In contrast, an ethic of care is based on relationships, responsiveness, and responsibility to others as the chief motivational force in activating care in the service of empathy (see Slote, 2007; Taylor et al., 2020). Such a focus would not be utilitarian, instrumental, or ecocentric but instead grounded in virtue ethics, ecofeminist, animal rights, or posthumanist ontologies. The hypernorms developed by Fennell (2022a) would provide the basis around which new logos, ethos and pathos are developed in building more responsible and ethical human-animal interactions – if these interactions even take place at all. And in the most advanced

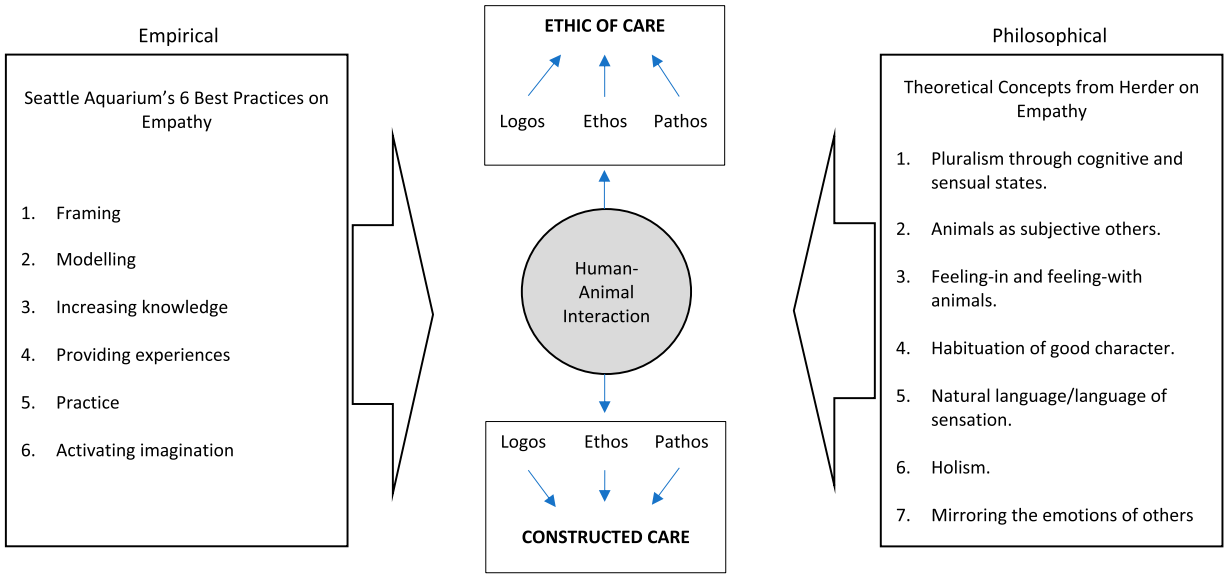

Figure 2. Adapted framework on empathy in human-animal interactions.

form, a genuine ethic of care would likely see these venues replaced by other methods and technologies with which to educate visitors. The case of animatronic dolphins as the new authentic at wildlife venues provides a model from which to imagine a world in which hybrid species (not fully wild or domesticated) are not reproduced for the amusement of crowds (Fennell, 2022b). Szczygielska (2013) referred to these animals as transbiological beings caught between nature and culture in a friction zone based on how they have been engineered for captivity.

Hence, what is essential within the empathetic domain is the need to create tension and disruption in our habitus (Pedwell, 2013; Tucker, 2016, 2009) in how we position ourselves in the world in moving beyond the self as a product of our past. We can transcend our past when we open ourselves up to know another's reality and the structures in which these realities are embedded. Such presents a new challenge to tourists and the tourism industry. The etymology of 'tourist' (from Old French) is linked to 'a turn, round, circuit', from *tourner* 'to turn' (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2022). This *being* a tourist is mainly positioned in the geographical sense as a move from origin to destination and back. Nevertheless, this moving beyond the self, this transcending, in the metaphorical sense, allows for a turning of attention – enacting our empathy and compassion – to and for the other both within (with other humans) and across the species threshold. The sheer volume of animal-based attractions, both in variety and scale, offers an opportunity to alter our habitus into a social and normative force at the intersection of self-feeling (Selbstgefühl) and feeling-with (Mitgefühl) (DeSouza, 2020).

Conclusion

Empathy for animals has been a focus of human attention for hundreds, if not thousands, of years. One of the most complete discourses on this thinking comes from Johann Gottfried Herder, who spoke of a language of sensation, not the language of entrenched cruelty so common during his time. The question that lingers is just how much further we have advanced beyond Herder's views, which must be judged as broad-minded for his time. The answer to the question might conceivably be 'not much'. Science has made advances, especially in different forms of empathy, as outlined in the Aquarium's Best Practices in Developing Empathy Toward Wildlife stance (Seattle Aquarium, 2019). However, when it comes to putting these principles into practice, we run into seemingly incommensurable snags, especially at captive animal venues, where we must reconcile use against the broad aims of conservation and where persuasive language is designed to reinforce institutional realities.

The present study provides only a glimpse into the complexity of this dilemma. Future research should investigate empathy at several different animal-based tourism venues in assessing how much further we still need to go in moving from constructed care to an ethic of care. And while it is encouraging to see the Seattle Aquarium as a captive animal venue operationalise empathy, more research is required to determine the degree to which tourists are influenced to purchase these experiences because of the focus on empathy. Additionally, more research is needed to investigate if empathy is part of a marketing and promotional

package that makes these venues socially and environmentally acceptable in the face of mounting normative pressures, as noted in this paper's Introduction.

Different ethical theories such as virtue ethics, ecofeminism, animal rights, posthumanism, and utilitarianism should continue to be used to deconstruct the acceptability of these venues. Integrative social contracts theory provided a sound theoretical foundation from which to start this process. Yet, there are others. The scales of justice model by Fennell and Sheppard (2021) provides the ability to analyse animal-based tourism venues from a number of these theoretical perspectives. Research could also measure the emotional responses that tourists have to animals in 'regular' captive venues as compared to those like the Seattle Aquarium that have empathy-based programming. Finally, cross-cultural analyses would indicate the degree to which different nationalities embrace empathy-based programming in such venues. These additional studies should provide a foundation for the continued evolution of policy at these sites, which may have relevance for many different captive and venues – including sanctuaries. Indeed, there is considerable scope for better defining what appears to be an amorphous blend of different venues that operate according to different policies, practices, and characteristics.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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David Fennell researches and teaches in the areas of ecotourism, tourism ethics, animal ethics, and sustainability ethics. His research involves the use of theory from other disciplines (e.g., biology, philosophy) to gain traction on many of tourism's most persistent issues. Fennell is the founding Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Ecotourism*.

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Supplementary Table 1. Animal-based tourism hypernorms

1. The pinnacle of practice: Includes state-of-the-art theory and practice in animal tourism but also adopts knowledge and practice from tourism more broadly, as well as other disciplinary and practical domains (e.g., ethology).
2. Recognition of beneficence: Ethical operators embrace a principled organizational culture or the advanced stages of corporate social responsibility. Operators who advance new thinking and practice should be recognized for their efforts.
3. Non-maleficence: Includes the principle of "do no harm", with particular emphasis on eliminating suffering in animals.
4. Enhance literacy and education: As tourists are largely unaware of their impacts on animals, enhancing the literacy of all stakeholders is essential in better-educating tourists and the industry overall.
5. Justice: Commitment to an advancing state of justice involves moving away from no justice or shallow justice to deeper levels based on changing the narrative of what is sustainable and responsible in the use of animals in tourism.
6. Recognize agency and self-determination: Agency is defined as "singular, intentional living beings acting on their own" (Lindgren & Öhman, 2019, p. 1202). We suppress agency and self-determination in animals for purposes of commodification (in asymmetrical operations regarding the value of different stakeholders.
7. Animal-informed consent: We should seek an adapted formulation of informed consent based on key indicative factors as proxies. Such includes detection and interpretation of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral preferences and physiological well-being as signposts for the willingness to participate in an activity.

Source: Fennell (2022a).