Dismantling the Human-Animal Divide in Education: The Case for Critical Humane Education

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Abstract

This paper develops and explores a proposed educational framework termed “Critical Humane Education”. Critical Humane Education is based in two existing fields of schooling: humane education and critical pedagogy. It is developed in response to critiques of modern Western education as neocolonial, patriarchal, and anthropocentric. More specifically, it addresses critiques of oppressive narratives of humanity and animality produced through Eurocentric curricula and how these narratives (re)produce a conceptual human/animal divide.

The goal this paper is to develop an educational framework through which these oppressive narratives can adequately be addressed. It explores the ways in which combining the pedagogical strategies and content goals of humane education and critical pedagogy can do so. I argue it takes both critical pedagogy’s commitment to critical systemic analysis and humane education’s cross-species empathy-based approach to truly tackle these narratives in educational spaces. Through this combination, Critical Humane Education provides an alternative framework through which students are able to relearn both the human and the animal in ways beneficial to goals of interspecies justice.