

Abstract

This dissertation presents a philosophical rendering of the concept 'domestication'. Drawing from anthropological uses, I argue that the term has a critical application as a functional bridge between nature and culture. To advance this claim I present a critical history of the concept of nature in European philosophy from Homer to Heraclitus and Aristotle to Heidegger, noting the relationships of nature, culture and race. Motivated by the contributions of decolonial and postcolonial theory, I develop a historicized perspective of the concept of nature by looking at the traffic of culture and nature in the colonial context of modernity.

I argue that domestication is functionally inclusive of, and develops the social and political critiques of decolonial, anti-capitalist theories by serving as a negotiating bridge between colonial culture and the way nature was formed and framed in modernity. This philosophically updated definition of domestication demonstrates that nature as a concept is produced in colonial ways, functioning as more than mere 'backdrop' of human activity. The term domestication allows for a re-attunement to relationships- social relationships and those with nature and the environment. A decolonial attunement of the operative term domestication allows for an ethical register to emerge, which includes environmental and socio-political responsibilities and concerns. By situating and centering a material engagement attuned to the form and style of living, political bridges can accordingly be built, and linkages made with groups with different agendas including racial equality, environmental protection, land-rights movements, and food security.