Hybrid Mindsets

Ton Haarmans · Wide Open Windows



We are accustomed to thinking of animals as inhabitants of our world. They move through the same spaces, share our environments, appear within our sensory field. Even when we acknowledge that their perception differs from ours, we usually imagine this difference as a variation within a common reality. The dog hears more, the bird sees differently, the whale senses vibrations instead of shapes. The underlying assumption remains that there is one world, populated by multiple kinds of subjects.

This assumption is quietly eroding.

Not other beings — other worlds

A sperm whale does not simply perceive another version of the same ocean. It inhabits a radically different organization of relevance. Its world is not built from objects arranged in visual space, but from volumetric pressure fields, echoic returns, gradients of density and distance, rhythmic patterns unfolding through an acoustic depth we barely register.

What appears to us as sound is, for the whale, a primary structuring medium. What appears to us as movement is, for it, orientation. What appears to us as environment is, for it, a continuous event. This is not another point of view on a shared scene. It is another way in which a world coheres.

The arrival of an inhuman listener

Until recently, every attempt to approach such worlds was bound to human perception and human concepts. We listened with human ears, segmented with human categories, and searched for familiar signs of language, signal, or intention. The animal always had to pass through the filter of the human.

What is changing now is not that we suddenly understand animals better. It is that we are building systems that no longer need to resemble us in order to detect organization. Artificial intelligence does not hear as we hear. It does not extract meaning from sound. It searches for internal regularities across immense datasets, for patterns that stabilize, repeat, mutate, and condition one another. Where human listening collapses into noise, AI constructs spaces of relation.

AI does not understand animals. It builds models of organization that no organism inhabits, and places them at the threshold of living worlds.

Between worlds

In projects aimed at decoding animal communication, AI is not yet a translator. It does something both more modest and more radical. It constructs abstract relational domains in which biological signals are reorganized, recomposed, and rendered comparable. This domain is not experiential. It is not a world. But it is not neutral either.

It is a technical in-between: a layer in which structures from different forms of life can begin to interact without yet belonging to anyone’s experience. For the first time, the intermediary between species is not another organism, but an artificial analytic system operating outside any evolved sensory regime.

From translation to deformation

The popular metaphor is communication: a future Google Translate for animals, a bridge between intact shores. But worlds do not meet like languages. They collide like climates. If any form of translation ever emerges, it will not consist in mapping words to words, or messages to meanings. It will consist in constructing interfaces between incompatible organizations of appearing.

Hybrid mindsets, if they arise, will not feel like dialogue. They will feel like deformation: the partial collapse of human relevance, the intrusion of foreign structuring principles, the loosening of what counts as object, background, persistence, or signal. Not becoming-animal — becoming unmoored.

Hybrid mindsets

Suppose AI systems become capable not only of correlating animal signals with contexts and behaviors, but of modeling the perceptual and cognitive spaces in which those signals make sense: what becomes salient, what recedes, how continuity is established, how difference appears.

Coupled to human sensory channels, visualization systems, or neural interfaces, such models would not merely tell us what animals “say.” They would scaffold

composite experiential regimes in which human perception is partially reorganized by nonhuman structuring principles.

A hybrid mindset would not be a new identity. It would be an instability: experience no longer self-grounding, but conditioned by patterns that did not arise within the human form of life.

The fracture of the human format

If this trajectory continues, the most significant shift will not concern animals. It will concern the human. The human will no longer function as the implicit format of experience. Perception will no longer silently mean human perception. Meaning will no longer default to human sense-making. Worldhood will no longer be anchored in the human mode of stabilization.

Human experience will appear as one configuration among others: biologically contingent, historically sedimented, technically alterable. Not transcended but exposed.

Before worlds

From the perspective of Origins, what is now being built is not primarily a new technology, but a new layer of conditions. Datasets, sensors, self-organizing models,

and synthetic relational environments together form a pre-phenomenal domain in which worlds can begin to take shape without yet being anyone’s world.

A technical before-world: not experiential, but formative. A space in which possible organizations of appearing can be generated, tested, and coupled to living systems. Hybrid mindsets, if they arise, will emerge from here; not from animals alone, not from machines alone, but from new conditions of worlding.

After animals

When animals enter this domain, they are not simply represented. Their forms of organization are refracted through relational spaces no evolution has encountered. When humans enter this domain, they do not merely extend their reach. They destabilize their own experiential ground.

What is at stake is not communication across species. It is the quiet detachment of experience from the biological formats that once monopolized it. Hybrid mindsets would not expand the human world. They would fracture it. They would show that “a world” was never given, never universal, never secured. It was a local stabilization, one way, among others, in which appearing learned to hold.