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L'animismo oggi: un'ipotesi tra filosofia e antropologia

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In this paper, I examine today's anthropological reappraisal of the concept of 'animism', with particular regard to Philippe Descola's work. I argue that Descola's theoretical account of this concept, indebted to a number of philosophical sources (notably Kant), raises some problems when we try to separate animist from naturalist societies, for it lacks a proper account of the historical dimension. Moreover, I point out that a significant number of accounts of animal minds in modern and contemporary science and philosophy does not fit the notion of Descola's 'naturalism', for these views recognize the body as a source of mental difference among different species of animals (including humans). In a final section, I submit a different conceptual framework, by separating a phenomenological animism, based on the universal cognitive apparatus of humans, from animism and science as systems of knowledge that can be learned by individuals.