



CALL OF THE WILD NO. 4 –

(4 points) – Animal Captivity – spring 2012. Submit your COW assignment no later **than 11:55 pm Friday, April 20, 2012.**

In preparation for this assignment, go to B-Eye: <http://andygiger.com/science/beye/beyeold.html>

and look at a few scenes and photos through the (compound) eyes of a bee. The honey bee evolved from wasps 100 million years ago. Humans have been on Earth for 200,000 years. So, bees have been here 50 times longer than humans. We've kept bees only a few thousand years. We've managed to become totally dependent upon them for our crops while simultaneously initiating colony collapse on two continents. Unlike dogs and cats, bees got the short end of the "companion animal" stick. Not too late for a turn-around, of course. But you would expect them to have evolved much further in that period of time. They haven't...or are we missing the forest for the trees?

As philosophy students, bees challenge your ideas about what counts as an **individual** animal or a **group** of animals. For example, bees reproduce individually through mating and collectively as a swarming hermaphrodite super-organism. Read Ch. 2 of Thomas Seeley's *Honeybee Democracy* posted on the Moodle site for April 17th for a discussion of how bees are coherently alive on many levels simultaneously, and most advanced as a colony. Primates don't particularly shine in large groups.

Next, read German beekeeper Juegen Tautz' article in which he argues that bees (as a colony) may qualify as "vertebrate" and even as "mammal" because bees collectively have comparable evolutionary qualities and advantages as mammals. See:

https://www.google.com/#hl=en&safe=off&sa=X&ei=Q7WMT7CbD_KP0QGK7rz4CQ&sqj=2&ved=OCBgQBSgA&q=honey+bees+as+superorganisms&spell=1&bav=on.2,or.r_gc.r_pw.r_qf.,cf.osb&fp=bb242dc4ab43ba95&biw=1280&bih=617.

His book *The Buzz About Bees: Biology of a Superorganism* takes the argument even further. Do we sense this evolved super-nature?



QUESTION for C.O.W. 4: Could it be that humans have a different emotional relationship with bees than with other insects (or simply having any real relationship at all) because humans sense the presence of a functional “mammal?” Does the colony interact with beekeepers with the intelligence, awareness, and care that no individual bees (or accumulation of bees) could match? (I’m reminded of the original *Star Trek*

episode “Metamorphosis.” Watch a few clips and see whether you agree with the beekeeper analogy.)

Answer in 1000 words, based upon your experience around a hive and your discussion with Troy Martin about beekeeping, and your reading of Thomas Seeley’s chapter and Juegen Tautz’s article. How does this individual/group relationship work between humans and this particular nonhuman entity? (whatever or how many that entity consists of?) What’s the best explanation for the unique affective relationship and interaction between humans and these insects? Is this just a romantic fancy or is it based in the actual biology and phenomenology of being part of the buzz?



*“Evolutionary biology awaits an extended discussion of what an ‘individual’ is. Who counts as an individual seems obvious when thinking of ourselves, our pets, livestock, or other organisms who become detached from their parents. But individuality is not so clear-cut in other species. A grove of poplar trees consists of many trunks springing from one seed – what is the individual, a single tree trunk or the entire grove?” – John Roughgarden, *The Genial Gene: Deconstructing Darwinian Selfishness*(2009)*