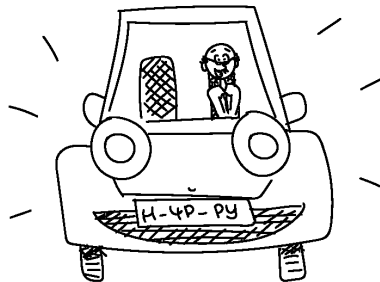


Short comic by Geanne Woertink

October 2020



Visual Thinking and Composition
Dr. Neil Cohn
Tilburg University



Comic is based on:

E. W. Wan and R. P. Chen (2021),
“*Anthropomorphism and Object Attachment*”,
Current Opinion in Psychology. 39, 88-93.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsy.2020.08.009>

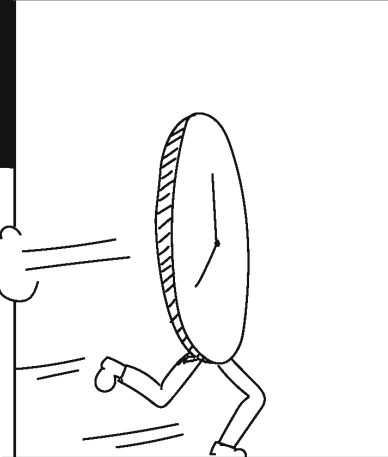
We are used to view *non-human objects* as if they are human...



Waving goodbye to our pet,



blaming our computer for being irresponsible during a system error,

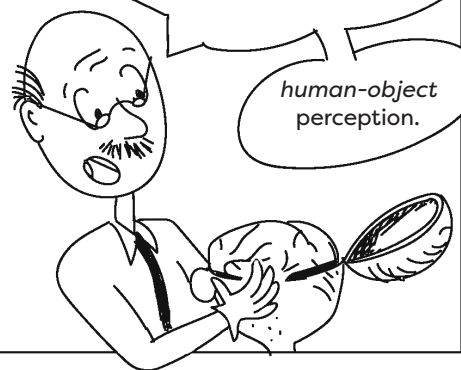


and complaining that time runs too fast (or too slowly).

This is called *anthropomorphism*.

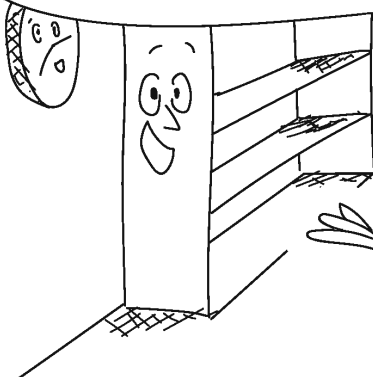


The mental processes for *human-human* perception are the same as for...



human-object perception.

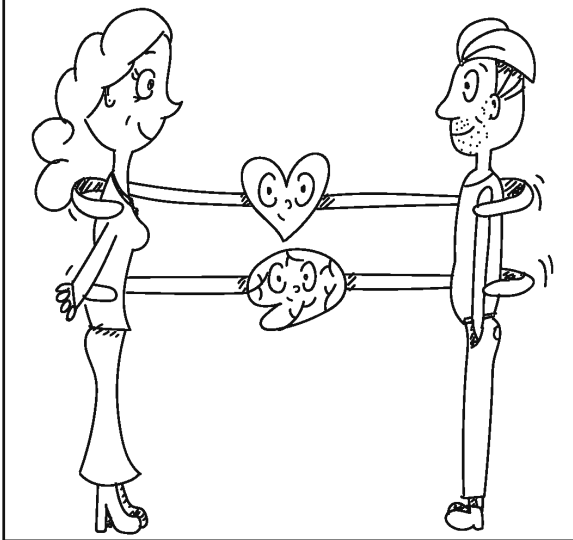
So, anthropomorphism turns *human-to-object* interaction into *human-to-human* interaction...



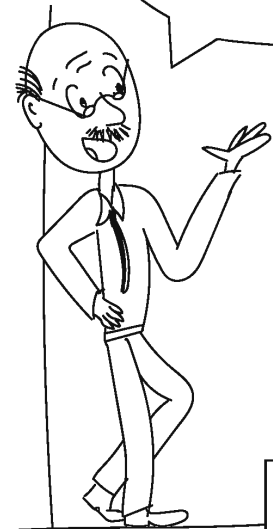
But then how does anthropomorphism influence people's *attachment* to non-human objects?



The *attachment theory* concerns the psychological and emotional bonds between people.



People have *various needs*, which can be seen in the *attachment* between a child and his caretaker...



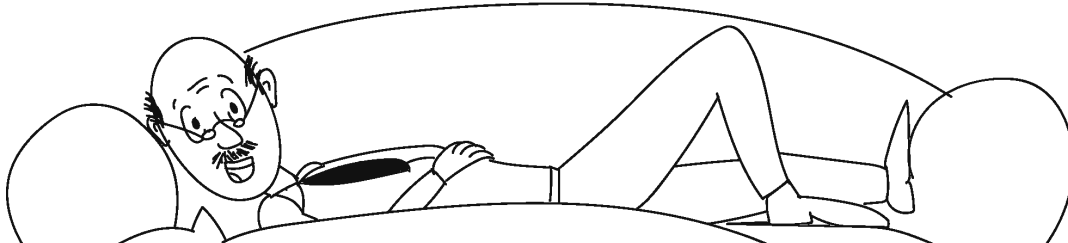
The need of the sense of *comfort and pleasantness*,



the need of *self-identity*,



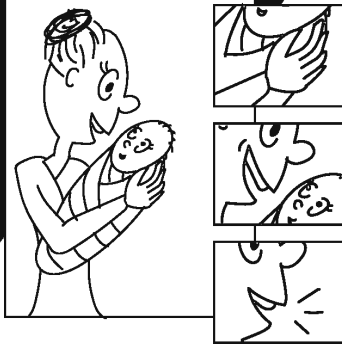
the need of *self-efficacy*.



So, the question is;
Can anthropomorphized objects offer the same?
Can objects give people these needs?

First,

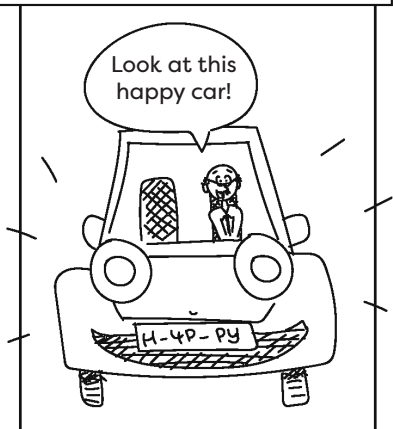
the need of the sense of comfort and pleasantness...



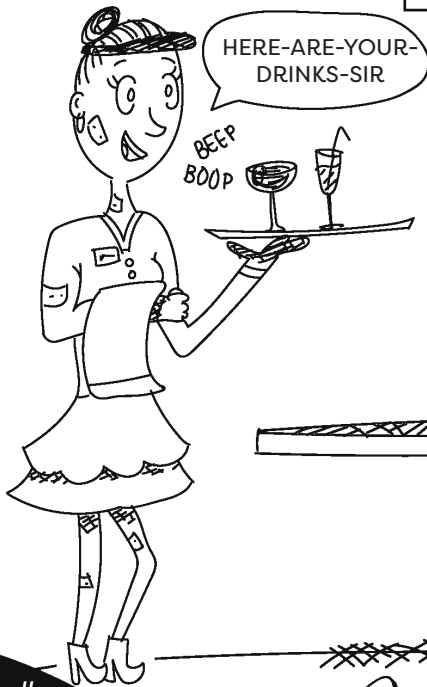
Object anthropomorphism can increase people's *aliveness* and *happiness*...



Gamblers are *more excited* playing against a "human" rather than an "algorithm".



People have stronger feelings of *arousal and pleasure* when anthropomorphising car fronts.

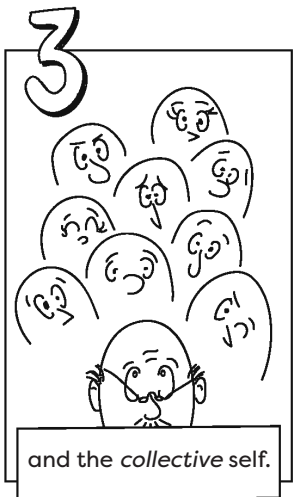
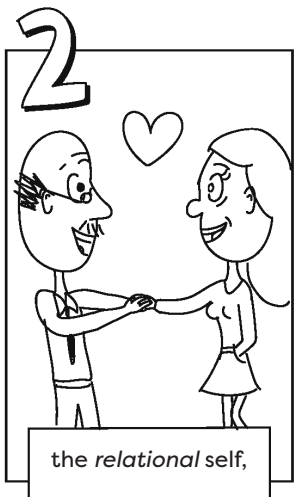
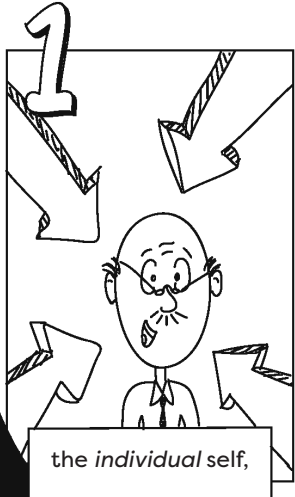


However, a high level of anthropomorphism can also lead to *discomfort, eeriness and threat*...



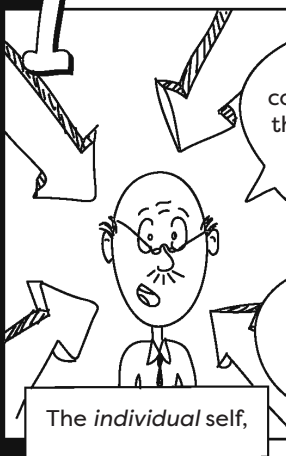
Secondly,

the need of self-identity,



Seeing non-human objects as humans influences people's self-identity at *all three levels*...

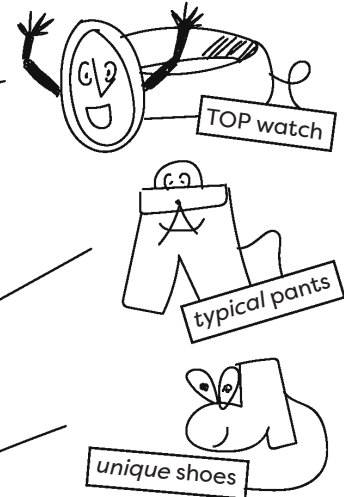
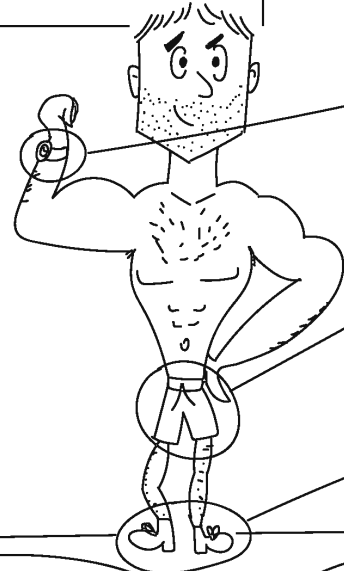
1



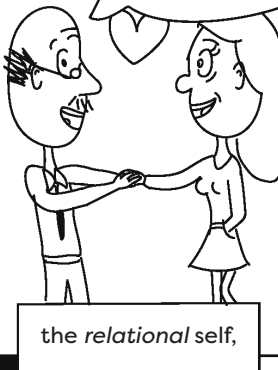
The individual self,

An object seems to contain *unique aspects* that makes the person differ from others,

people see "me" in the humanized objects.

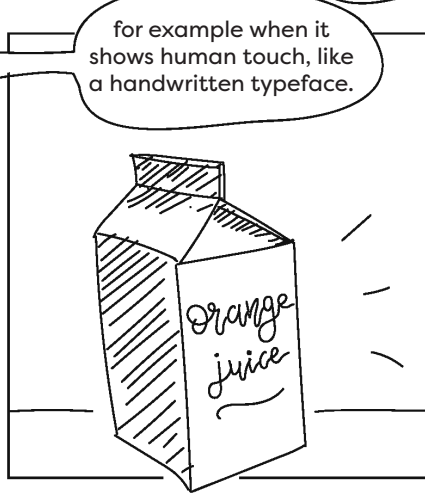


2



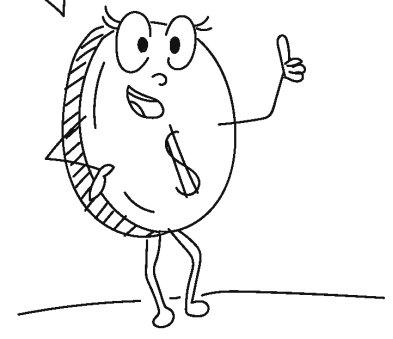
the relational self,

People can feel a strong connection with objects...



for example when it shows human touch, like a handwritten typeface.

Anthropomorphizing makes something abstract more "human". For example anthropomorphizing money increases money donations.



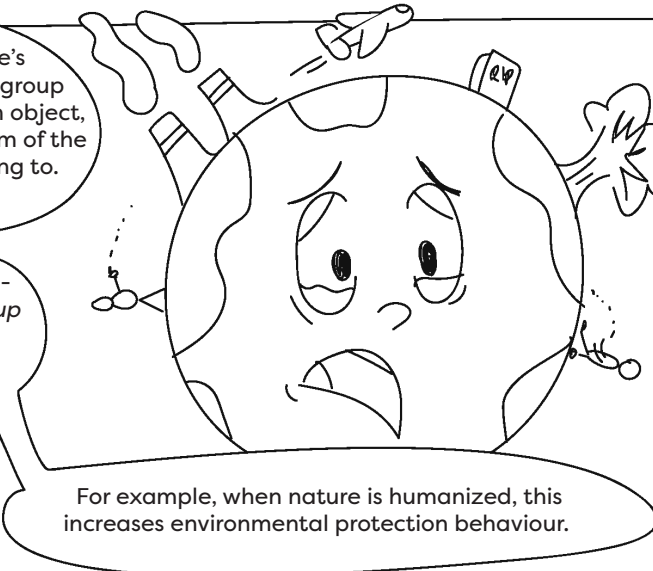
3



and the collective self.

This is about one's *intergroup* side: if a group anthropomorphizes an object, the object *reminds* them of the group that they belong to.

this also counts for non-human objects in a *group membership*.



For example, when nature is humanized, this increases environmental protection behaviour.

SAVE MR. EARTH!

And then, lastly...

the need of *self-efficacy*.



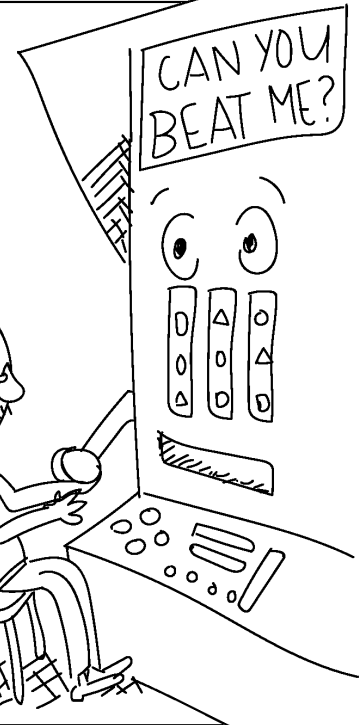
Self-efficacy is the belief in your own capabilities, it can give a sense of control, power, and dominance...

self-efficacy can be shaped by interactions with anthropomorphized objects.

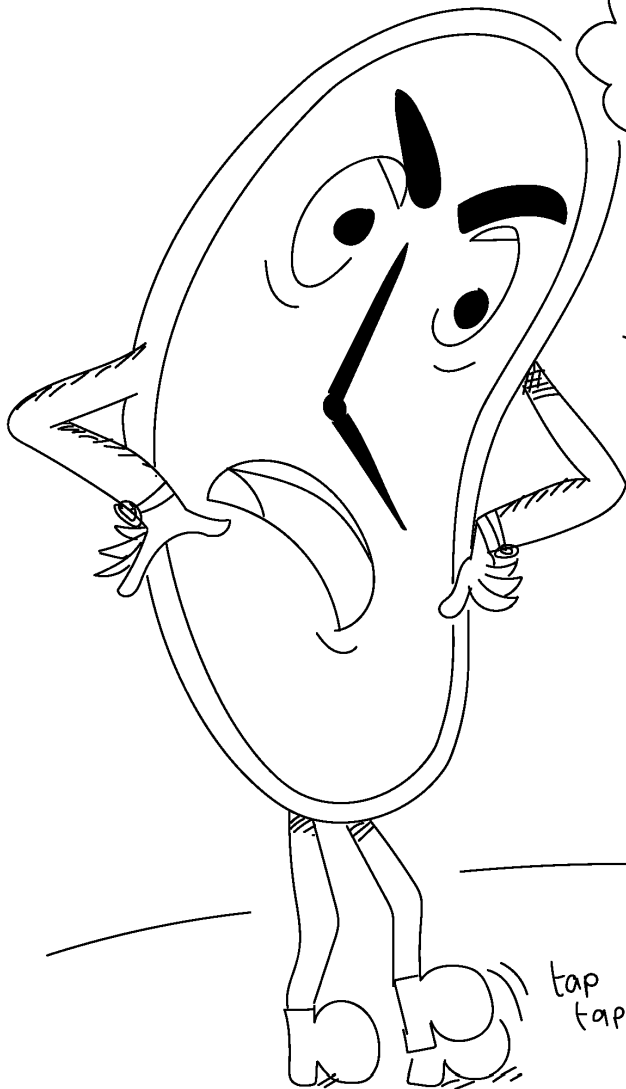


For example, gamblers feel more *in control* when they are playing against a "human" rather than an "algorithim".

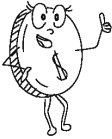
I will *definitely* beat you!



However, antropomorphism can also *decrease* self-efficacy. For example when you feel overpowered by Mr. Time...



After all this research, let's recap!



We saw that anthropomorphism offers resources that affects people's needs...



But when it imposes *threat*, anthropomorphism distances people from these objects...



Overall, people's *attachment* with an object can vary in strength.



So, keep in mind:
when you treat your *pet* like it is a human,
your relationship gets more *intimate*!

